

Out In The Cold

And Moonlight Over Midnight And Midnight and Shimmer's Guide to Dating

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"I can't do magic as well as you can..."



"Don't worry, you can't do anything. This is just a guide to dating."

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Chapter 1-1

Out in the Cold

A cloudless, star-filled night. The moon hung low in the sky, bathing the small town of Ponyville in its shimmering light. It really was the perfect night...well, at least, if it weren't for the terrified screams of the small town's residents, and the terrifying roars of the creature pursuing them. The Ursa Minor had returned, its shimmering, semi-translucent form crashing through the town with a vengeance. A sweep of its claw took off the roof of the bakery. Its roar toppled the dress shop, the elaborately designed building rendered down to splinters and scrap. Ponies fled or cowered in their homes, hoping beyond hope for some sort of saviour to defeat this terrible beast.

It seemed that, perhaps, these cowards would be granted their wish. Four ponies stood before the ravaging, star-lit beast. Their leader, a purple-furred unicorn, her visage twisted by the arrogance that was present in the depths of her heart, took the lead, standing in front of the other three, who cowered and shook, trying to keep the terror that they were feeling from overwhelming them. They looked hopefully at their leader.

"Ah tried roping it, but it's too big!" cried the stupid orange hayseed.

"I tried flying at it, but I just bounced off!" whimpered the annoying blue pegasus.

"Please, Twilight, you have to do something!" sobbed the egotistical white unicorn. Twilight scowled at the three, and then turned her head towards the Ursa, an arrogant grin spreading. Her horn began to glimmer, her feet digging into the ground.

"Of course I will! I'm Twilight Sparkle, after all! I'll just do what I did before!" the arrogant pony called out, as her horn sparked brightly. Wind flowed around the ponies, carrying lulling music with it, designed to lull and stun the beast into a stupor. The three brightened, watching as the Ursa twisted and shudder, its eyes growing glassy.

"It's working!" they cried out in triumph!

Then the Ursa blinked. Its eyes narrowed, and with a sweep of its paw, sent Twilight sprawling, the light of her horn dying out! She groaned softly, putting a hoof to her head, trying to regain her senses. Her three friends

widened their eyes...and then took off, fleeing in the opposite direction from the Ursa! The purple unicorn gasped, as her friends abandoned her to her no-doubt grisly fate.

“W-Wait...” she whimpered, and another roar caused her head to turn. The Ursa was advancing on her. She let out a tiny whimper, tears springing from her eyes. Surely, her end was just seconds away, left behind by the people that she thought were her friends. She closed her eyes, about to accept her fate, feeling the air of the onrushing claw heading towards her...

The blow never landed. Twilight dared to open one eye, and let out a gasp! In between her and the Ursa was the most beautiful pony Twilight had ever seen, her pelt the vivid blue of a beautiful night, her hair as silvery as starlight! Her horn was shimmering with power, far greater than Twilight had ever managed, as she held the Ursa in place with her great and powerful magic!

“Hold, Ursa! I, the Great and Powerful Trixie, shall not allow you to do any more damage to this town! I banish you back to the Everfree Forest, from whence you shall never return!” The heroic, darling, beautiful pony proclaimed, a smile of confidence playing on her face, adding to her beauty. She flicked her head as if she were shooing away a bug. In response, the Ursa went flying, it's titanic form showing the surprise it was feeling as this small, yet potent unicorn sent it through the sky! That was the last one could make out of the beast, as it disappeared over the horizon. The Great and Powerful Trixie exhaled softly, and turned to look at the sprawled-out pony that she had just saved.

“There. It's a good thing that the Great and Powerful Trixie was just passing through, Twilight. Did you really think that the same trick would work twice? Silly foa-” The Great and Powerful Trixie's voice trailed off, as she face the snuffling unicorn. Now that she was up close, she really was a beautiful pony, she had to admit. Not as beautiful as herself, of course, but close. So close. Trixie felt her heart starting to patter, and she tried not to let that red blush appear on her cheeks.

“Yo-You really are Great and Powerful...” The adorable Twilight admitted, her eyes depicting the heart that had so recently been broken in half. “My...my friends...they abandoned me....” She whimpered, tears leaking down her cheeks. Trixie smiled gently, and reached out, stroking the tears away with a hoof.

“It's alright. The Great and Pow....no, I'm here.” the blue pelted filly murmured, bringing her muzzle closer to Twilight's own. The pony shivers slightly from her proximity, her watery eyes looking hopefully at Trixie.

"Y-You won't leave me?" Twilight murmured. Trixie shook her head gently.

"You'll make a perfect assistant...no...partner for me. You could be the equal to the Great and Powerful Trixie." Trixie replied, playful and loving, and brought her muzzle forwards. Twilight didn't resist, and the two fillies pressed together in a desperate, loving kiss, their hooves starting to interlock, their hearts beating quicker, as one, and Twilight's hoof slowly started to slide further down, towards the warmest part of Trixie's body...

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"*GWAH!*" Trixie bolted wide awake, panting furiously. She shivered, but it wasn't the cool of the night air that was causing it. She steeled herself, trying to force away the warmth that was still racing through her body, the heat between her legs, and to calm her heart, that was rampaging in her chest.

"Traitorous sub-conscious. That wasn't how that dream was supposed to go." Trixie murmured to herself, as she slowly forced herself to get to a sitting position. It was night time, and the small fire that she had built for herself using her magic had apparently gone out hours ago. She tentatively flicked at the ashes, as if hoping it would some how ignite again, but it was clear that wasn't going to happen. With a sigh, Trixie stood. It was clear that sleep was going to be an impossibility at this point. Not that she wanted to sleep, not if it meant going back to...to...her heart was beating harder again...

"No!" Trixie sternly ordered herself. The Great and Powerful Trixie was not *weak*. She wasn't attracted to *Twilight Sparkle*. She was the enemy, the one who had humiliated her in front of *everyone* in that flea-bitten little town. The one that had forced her to run away like a coward. To be attracted to her was completely...insane!

Not that running like she did had been her brightest move, The Great and Powerful Trixie had to admit. In her panic to save some sort of face after the defeat, she had left behind her admittedly wrecked trailer, and the contents therein. Sleeping on the hard ground, exposed to the elements, wasn't exactly what she could call fun, and it was starting to wear even on her beauty. Her hair was starting to lose it's silvery sheen under the dirt and grime, and her pelt wasn't exactly prime. But there was no way she was going to go back to ...to THAT PLACE, with her tail behind her legs. She would simply have to keep going, surely there would be some hamlet or village soon, and she would use her tricks to wow the locals, get a little money, and things would go back to normal. Everything was replaceable...well, almost everything.

Her magic books...and her hat and cloak. Losing those hurt. Just thinking about those made her want to turn around, was almost enough to swallow her pride and go back to Ponyville. Losing those felt like a betrayal, a betrayal to...

"No." Trixie repeated to herself, pushing down the sudden, but familiar pain that she was feeling. There was no point in wallowing in the past. She would simply have to move on. She was the Great and Powerful Trixie, after all, and there was no way she could be vanquished, least of all by herself. She forced herself back down into a lying position. Things would look better in the morning. She would feel like herself in the morning, The Great and Powerful Trixie. Until then, she would force herself to sleep, deny both the warmth of attraction and the pain and cold of loss access to her mind and body.

The Great and Powerful Trixie closed her eyes, and waited for morning to come.

* * * *

Her hooves hurt. It was really amazing how much her hooves hurt. The rest of her wasn't exactly feeling great, or powerful, for that matter. The sun was beating down on her back, and there was this annoying fly that kept landing on her flank, no matter how much she tried to shoo it away. She had been walking for hours, forcing her body to keep moving, even through the lack of sleep. Trixie was determined to find some sort of shelter before night fell, or else she would be forced to confront another night of restless sleep on the hard ground.

Not for the first time, Trixie wished that she had managed to save the map she had in her trailer. The terrain, she swore, was the same that she had walked through yesterday, rolling hills punctuated with carefully managed forest. She felt like she had been walking around in circles. Trixie had left the road during her flight from Ponyville, to keep anyone from following her, but now she was regretting her choice. Even with her little magical trick to find north, she felt lost.

Her stomach grumbled. She'd had very little food over the past few days.

"I'm the Great and Powerful Trixie..." She murmured, like a mantra of encouragement. Yes, she would be fine. The Great and Powerful Trixie could take a little discomfort. She was strong, she'd had to be strong for years, ever since..

Before her thoughts drifted into the dark place again, Trixie crested a hill, and the sight before her banished the bad thoughts away from her mind. A small town, slightly smaller than Ponyville had been, but still big enough for what she needed, had become visible only about half a mile away. There was something

oddly familiar about the village, but then, she had been through so many towns on her travels that she was used to the feeling of familiarity. A smile broke out across her face.

“Finally. The Great and Powerful Trixie succeeds! Time to put on a show...” She paused, and looked down at her dirty, road-worn body. “Maybe after a warm bath, some food, and a soft bed.” Her spirits buoyed, The Great and Powerful Trixie cantered down the hill, merging with the road that lead into town.

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The sun was starting to set in the sky as she made it the rest of the way to the town. She had to find an inn or something, and convince the matron to let her sleep there for a performance or something. Surely it wouldn't be that hard, not for someone of her talents.

But, the feeling of familiarity wouldn't shake from Trixie as she trotted through town. It was like her hooves knew where to go, her body instinctively guiding through the streets. It was beginning to disturb her a little. She was getting some odd looks, too. While she knew even in her dishevelled state she was still one of the most gorgeous ponies in all of Equestria, these looks were strange, as if Trixie was somehow familiar to them. Perhaps she HAD performed here, and they were shocked that such a marvellous creature could be reduced to that? Trixie, lost in thought, nearly rammed into an older pony, a white pelted mare, glasses perched on her face. She recovered, and scowled at the mare.

“Watch where you're walking! Don't you know who I am?” The Great and Powerful Trixie exclaimed in irritation, but the mare seemed not to notice, instead looking closely at the younger pony. “What are you looking at?”

“Trixie? Is that you? It IS you, isn't it! I'm your old school teacher, Belle Shower!” The mare exclaimed, and Trixie felt her heated anger instantly die, replaced with a sick coldness deep inside her. Her body quivered slightly, her pupils shrinking..

“Where have you been? We haven't seen you since-” Trixie couldn't hear anymore, she couldn't see anymore, she had to get out of here, the coldness was filling her from hooves to head, the pain lancing straight into her heart. Her hooves worked on their own, and before the mare could continue, Trixie took off, fleeing as if her life depended on it. She heard the ponies calling out after her, but she wouldn't stop. She wouldn't stop running until she was free from this place, the place she swore she'd never come back to, wouldn't stop until the

pain and the cold went away, until all the memories fled from her, and she was The Great and Powerful Trixie again...

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“So, Trixie, I believe it's your turn, why don't you give your report on what YOU want to be when you grow up?”

“Okay! Ahem...When I grow up, I want to be a magician, just like my mom! My mom is the greatest magician in all of Equestria! She's even performed in Canterlot for the Princess! She's my hero, and I'm going to perform with her when I'm old enough! Together, we'll be the Great and Powerful Trixie and...”

“Mom? What's wrong? Mom? Mommy?”

“She is very ill. We don't know what's wrong...The most we can do is make her as comfortable as possible...”

“I can't do magic as well as you can....”

“Nonsense. You're the Great and Powerful Trixie. You can do anything.”

“I'm sorry, she's gone.”

* * * *

“G...gh...” Trixie's eyes, wet and red, slowly opened. She didn't know how long she had run, except that she ran until her body gave out, and she was pitched into those fitful dreams, the memories that she had buried so deeply forcing their way back out of the vaults and locks that she had built so carefully. The coldness was still flowing through her, despite her flight, the pain constricting her chest, feeling like her heart was being torn free..

“No...no...stop! STOP!” She whimpered, putting her hooves over her head, and trying to order herself to be calm, to ignore the pain, but her mind and heart were rebelling on her again.

"I'm the Great and Powerful Trixie...I-I don't...understand..." Tears ran unbidden down her cheeks. Why was this happening? She had put this behind her. She had been strong, she had always been strong, why wasn't she listening to herself now? She had been strong since the day...since the day she died, she had done exactly what she promised. She was supposed to be the Great and Powerful Trixie! She wowed audiences and...

And...

And was so lonely.

Trixie curled up on the cold ground that had been her bed for the night, weeping softly.

It was because she had lost them, wasn't it? The magic books, the hat and cloak...her moms books, her moms cloak and hat, it was because of that, that she had left them behind. Without them, she was just that lonely little filly who had lost her mom, but with them, she was the Great and Powerful Trixie, the showmare, the one who could be strong.

Trixie wiped away the tears, swallowed her thick tongue. Yes, if she could get those back, she wouldn't have to feel this again. She had a goal. She would return to Ponyville, and demand her belongings back. The pony forced herself to stand on legs that quivered, and looked around. She had collapsed near the edge of the Everfree Forest. Trixie felt a thrill of fortune. Not only had she avoided actually entering the forest in her panic, to get to back to Ponyville would be a simple matter of trailing along the edge of the forest. Yes, this was the path that she needed to take. She'd be back to normal once she got them back.

She started to trail along the forest, trying to ignore the little tiny bit of her, deep inside, that didn't believe that for a second.

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It took her longer than she would have liked to reach Ponyville again. By the time the town and it's outlying farms came into view, Trixie was nearly dead on her feet from exhaustion. She could barely sleep as it was; every time she laid down during the night, she was plagued by the dreams and emotions that she desperately was trying to deny, that she had always kept behind the barriers that surrounded her heart. The pain of her moms loss. Her attraction to fillies, and to Twilight, despite the fading anger she kept trying to nurse against her. She was even being assailed by guilt now, for treating ponies poorly, for humiliating them in front of everyone, just like she had been.

Days weren't much better, either. There was little to eat, and she was frightened to travel too far into the Everfree Forest to look. She managed to have enough water, but little else. There was nothing else to do but to keep putting one hoof in front of the other. Sometimes she walked well into the night, the physical activity-and the pain-helping to keep the emotions from overwhelming her.

Trixie was terrified to think of how bad she must have looked at this point.

"Almost...there..." Trixie murmured to herself. Part of her wanted to confront Twilight immediately and reclaim what belonged to her, but she saw the rows of apple trees in the farm not far from the town, and her stomach promptly rebelled over all else, rumbling deep inside her gut. She began to unsteadily make her way to the farm. Surely they wouldn't miss a few apples, she would pay them back as soon as she got the bits that she had left in her trailer. She wasn't picky, she approached the first tree she got too, looking up at the succulent apples.

"Just one...or two..." She concentrated, her horn wearily glowing, her underused magic flaring. Despite her lack of strength, two apples plucked themselves from the tree, and, nearly drooling from the reverie, Trixie gently lowered them to the ground. She stooped her head down, and bit into the first apple.

"What in tarnation are you doing!?"

Trixie squealed, hopping away from the apples. Her eyes wide, she looked in the direction of the voice. It was one of Twilights friends, the orange one wearing the hat. She looked at Trixie in a mixture of anger, confusion, but mostly shock.

"Hey, aren't you Trixie? What happened to you?" She asked, taking a step towards the ragged blue unicorn. There was concern in her voice, but Trixie didn't hear it in her panic. Trixie let out an inarticulate whimper, and wheeled around, her legs digging into the ground.

"Hey, wait!" Trixie took off, her hooves pattering against the ground...and then buckled. Her body, worn out and weak, finally gave out on her, and she saw the ground rushing up towards her.

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She was comfortable. That was the first thing that she noticed when she awoke. Her body had triumphed over her mind, and blessed her with a deep, dreamless sleep, and while she still felt terrible, it wasn't as bad as she had been. She slowly forced her eyes to open, getting an eyeful of pillow. She really WAS in a bed, a comfortable bed, the first time that she'd been in one for so very long. She snuggled into it, grateful for the warmth and softness, that momentarily blunted the cold that was still writhing deep inside. She laid like that for a few more moments, before deciding that she needed to know where she was. Slowly, she peeked her head up.

She was in a library, from the looks of the rows and rows of books. A bed in a library? The whole thing seemed absurd...but then, she couldn't complain. She half-thought of trying to sleep again, but she rejected the idea with a shiver. She didn't want to face the dreams again. It had only been exhaustion that had saved her from them this time, but now, no. She would get her books and hat and cloak, and then she would sleep soundly again. She slipped out of the bed, and unsteadily landed on her hooves. She paused, noticing a mirror, and slowly walked towards it.

The sight of the haggard pony that looked back at her nearly sent her careening back underneath the sheets. Her hair had grown far too long, and it was worn and frizzed, the silver looking more like grey. Her eyes were red-rimmed and puffy. Her blue pelt was matted, there were obvious nicks and cuts all along her legs, and perhaps worst of all, she swore she could count her ribs. She blinked, trying not to cry. She noticed that someone had taken the time to clean her, but it had clearly been an awkward situation, with her being unconscious. Trixie exhaled softly. Once she was the Great and Powerful Trixie again, it was going to take a long time for her to recover physically, but she would. The Great and Powerful Trixie could do anything, do everything that Trixie couldn't. She trotted to the door of the room she had woken in, and peered out. She was definitely in a library, the room she was in an offshoot of the main library. She slipped out into the main room, walking slowly and carefully, and froze.

Sitting at a desk was her 'enemy', the lovely purple unicorn that had shown her up. Twilight Sparkle was reading a book, flipping the pages with her magic, and Trixie stood there, just watching, feeling her heart pattering fiercely in her chest, some of the...warmer...dreams that she had been having racing through her head. She tore her gaze away, shaking her head fiercely. She couldn't! She felt the warmth in her haunches, and the red starting to form in her cheeks.

Forcing her eyes away from Twilight, she instead turned to the desk that she was reading from. Carefully piled on the top of the desk were a small pile of

carefully maintained books...and a vivid, midnight-purple cloak, with a hat placed on top. Twilight had them! She was reading through her mothers books! She just had to reach out, and take them from her, and she could be Great again...

"Those are mine, Twilight Sparkle!" Trixie called out, and was almost horrified at how weak and raspy her voice was. Her enemy blinked, and turned around, concern etched in her face, the same sort of concern that Trixie had previously seen in that orange pony.

"Trixie, you're awake. Are you alright? What happened to you?" She asked, and Trixie shivered, almost backing up, as if the compassion in Twilights voice was physically affecting her. The anger that had momentarily flared up inside Trixie nearly was extinguished, but she tried her best to fan it with the last scraps of her pride.

"What do you care? The G-Great and P-P-Powerful Tr-Trixie doesn't need y-your co-compassion!" She sounded so weak.

"I care because Applejack found you passed out and half-dead on her farm! And...I was concerned about you before. You ran away before we could talk..." She gestured with a hoof towards the pile of books on the desk. "I thought your name was familiar, and the books in your trailer surprised me, so I looked it up. I didn't know your mot-"

"Give those back to me!" Trixie cried out, her horn wearily sparking back to life. The books and clothes flew from the desk, the hat and cloak wrapping around her body, the books landing near her. She quivered softly, arching her back, puffing her chest out proudly.

She was the Great and Powerful Trixie again!

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She didn't feel any different. In fact, wrapped in the outfit that her mother had worn, that she had inherited, all she could think of was how much she missed her. How much it still hurt when she thought about...

"T-Trixie? Are you crying?" Twilight gasped softly. The blue unicorn shook her head, but it was futile. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, dripping onto the floor of the library. So this was it. The Great and Powerful Trixie was gone. She had been fooling herself thinking that she could bring her back. All that was left was weak, lonely Trixie.

"Trixie? What's wrong? Oh, you silly pony, please tell me what's the matter..." Twilight slowly walked forwards, approaching the shaking unicorn. She reached out with a hoof, touching her comfortingly. Trixie felt the warmth, the concern, and the last bit of resistance broke. She launched herself at the surprised Twilight, the books at her feet being knocked over, the hat flying off her head, and began to sob fiercely, pressing her body against Twilights. Twilight wrapped her hooves tenderly around the crying Trixie. It didn't matter just who this was, and the trouble she had caused for Twilight the first time they had met. She held Trixie tightly, whispering comforting noises to Trixie, as the cloak-clad unicorn sobbed, letting out the pain that had been tearing her insides apart.

Soon, the sobs quietened, and the tears started to slow, but Trixie didn't move, and Twilight didn't release her.

For the first time in a long time, Trixie truly felt warm.

Trixie didn't know how long the two stayed like that, but it felt like hours. She was pretty sure that she had fallen asleep for awhile, but surrounded by Twilight's warmth, the dreams hadn't come back. She was feeling lighter, now, as if a giant weight had been removed from her shoulders. Slowly, and with great reluctance, Trixie pulled away from Twilight, briefly looking ashamed.

"You must think I'm pathetic..." Trixie whispered, but Twilight shook her head gently.

"No, it's alright, Trixie. You've been through a lot, and needed to get it out. Everypony has to, sometimes. Are you going to be alright?" The tenderness in her voice was evident, and Trixie decided to be honest.

"I don't know. I don't know what to do now..." She admitted, both to herself and to Twilight. It was odd, though. It was...a liberating feeling. "I don't think I can be the Great and Powerful Trixie again." Twilight smiled gently, and flicked her horn, the fallen hat raising off the floor, and gently landing on her head.

"I don't think it's right to ignore your gifts. You are a very talented pony, after all. Maybe it would be better to figure out what the Great and Powerful Trixie *should* be. I think Midnight would have preferred that." Trixie blinked in surprise, as Twilight continued. "I didn't realize that she was your mother.."

"Y-You know about her?" Trixie asked, slightly shocked, a faint blush on her cheeks. But she wasn't the only one, Twilight's cheeks turning slightly red.

"I got to see her when she performed in Canterlot, when I was a little filly. I had her picture up on my wall for ages..." Twilight's eyes turned to the floor, and she looked slightly downcast. "I was really sad when I heard what had happened. I think I cried for a week. It...I'm really sorry, Trixie. I can't imagine that must have been like."

Trixie snuffled slightly, tears leaking down her cheeks. But she was smiling, the good memories of her mother playing through her mind, the good times, her love and warmth...

"I...I miss her." She said, and then looked at Twilight. "But...f-for the first time in a long time...it doesn't hurt as much."

"Maybe you could tell me about her?" Twilight asked, tentatively, but hopefully.

"I think I would like that."

* * * *

They spoke throughout Celestias day, and even deep into Lunas night. It felt good to share the stories that she had hidden so deeply inside, for so long, to such an attentive listener. Sometimes they would burst out laughing, and sometimes Trixie would end up in Twilight's arms again, weeping softly, but it felt...right. They even began to speak of magic, reading through Midnight's books, Trixie describing effects that she had remembered. It had been far too long since she had actually read the books, instead of just possessing them. But being with Twilight, and the lightness that she was feeling for the first time, made her want to learn more, to truly become the Great and Powerful Trixie that her mother had seen in her, even when Trixie herself had misunderstood.

It was midnight when Trixie glanced out the window.

"I...should probably go...and get out of your hair. N-Now that I have what I came for, I should leave..." She said with great reluctance. Twilight blinked, and shook her head fiercely.

"You don't have to, you know. In fact, you're still not healthy, you really shouldn't, but even still, why don't you stay? I-I mean, it would be nice to have a friend with the same sort of interests. You could even be a research assistant...or partner, if you wanted." Trixie's heart pattered slightly, and she bit her lip, looking out the window.

“What about your friends? And the others? They're probably going to hate me for what I did last time I was here.” Twilight smiled tenderly, and reached out, putting her hoof over Trixie's own, making the blue filly look at her.

“You don't give them, or you, enough credit. I've learn a lot about friendship being here, and one lesson that I've learned is that friendship...even more...can come even in the most unlikely of places...” She looked into Trixie's eyes gently. Trixie's heart was beating harder, and their muzzles were so close, all Trixie had to do was lean forwards...but she didn't think that she had the bravery to do it....

So Twilight did it instead.

Trixie's eyes flew wide open as their lips met, their bodies starting to press up against one another, Twilight's front legs resting around Trixie's neck. They stayed like that for what seemed like an eternity, until Twilight slowly pulled away, smiling softly at Trixie. Trixie shivered slightly, and then leaned herself tightly against Twilight, letting out a soft laugh.

“Alright, you win. I'll stay. Congratulations...” Trixie whispered softly, and Twilight tilted her head curiously.

“Congratulations?” Trixie smiled knowingly in response.

“You managed to truly defeat the Great and Powerful Trixie. You're the first to do so, save for herself.”

The two ponies giggled softly, and then leaned in for another kiss, and Trixie knew that if ever she got cold again, there would be someone there to warm her.

Chapter 1-2

Lighting The Fire

A truly fine day was blessing the land of Equestria. Celestias sun hung high in the sky, its light gently radiating down on her subjects. The cloud detail had cleared the sky of all but the smallest, puffiest of clouds, ensuring there was no chance for rain to ruin the day. All in all, it was the perfect summer day, ideal for young lovers to spend lazy hours showing each other their affections. It was unfortunate then that the newest couple in Ponyville was having the first disagreement of their burgeoning relationship.

“Do you *have* to tell her?” The blue-pelted pony begged her partner, as they lay side-by-side on the deck that was built in the upper level of Ponyvilles library. Her lover, a fellow mare, her body clad in deep purples, exhaled softly, a quill and parchment hanging in the sky through her magic. This argument had been going on for quite awhile, and it was beginning to wear at her mood.

“Of *course* I have to tell her, Trixie. She's my mentor, she deserves to know about us.” She stated, with finality. Perhaps even just a week ago, Trixie would refuse to back down, but things had changed, and she had learned something important: to know when to admit defeat.

“Alright, Twilight, you win.” The unicorn conceded to her opponent, and Twilight smiled gently. She turned her eyes to the parchment hanging in the sky, and the quill began to do its work, following its owners commands.

“Dear Princess Celestia,

In the time I have spent here in Ponyville, I have learned a great deal about the nature and magic of friendship. Now, by chance, I have learned an important new lesson, one about feelings beyond friendship, the lesson of love. I have fallen for someone, Princess, and I seek your blessing of our relationship. Her name is Trixie, and she has grown very dear to me. Please, when you are not busy, I would invite you to meet with her. I look forwards to your response.

Your Faithful Student,

Twilight Sparkle”

It had come as a bit of a shock to Trixie when she learned that the Princess was Twilights teacher, and she was definitely worried about what she was going to think. But it was too late for complains now, because with a final flourish Twilight signed the letter, and looked encouragingly at the sulking midnight-blue pony beside her.

"I'll just take this to Spike, so he can send it to the Princess. You'll see, Trixie, it will be okay." Trixie nodded weakly, and watched as Twilight stood up, and trotted into the library proper, leaving her alone. Trixie laid there on the deck, trying to convince herself that everything would be okay. The sun, previously so comfortable to her, seemed to be getting even hotter, beating down on her laid-out form. The bright orb seemed to be hanging lower in the sky, large and red. The small, puffy clouds had dispersed.

"What's taking her so long?" Trixie muttered to herself. Perhaps it was her nerves, but it felt like Twilight had been gone for longer than she should have been. Her brow was starting to dampen with sweat, and she looked up at the sky. The shimmering orb looked even larger than it had a few moments ago.

In fact, as Trixie watched, she realized that it was moving right towards her.

Trixie let out a squeak of surprise, and quickly got to her feet. The sun really was getting closer and closer! She started to pant, feeling light headed, her eyes wide. The blazing sphere descended close enough that she could almost touch it, and then began to unfold, Trixie letting out a cry, cowering, as she was briefly blinded by the blaze!

"So, you are the mare deceiving my student!" A booming voice commanded, the voice of a goddess. Trixie forced one of her eyes open, to behold a shining cross between pegasus and unicorn, glowing with the brightness of a great and terrible desert sun, the leaves of the tree the library resided in starting to burst into flames!

"N-No! It's not like that!" Trixie protested, but the Goddess glared, the fire and light of a star piercing through the quivering unicorn. "I-I, we-I mean.." Trixie stuttered, any defence dying in her now-parched throat.

"Silence!" The goddess of the sun bellowed, causing the wood of the deck to start to splinter and smoulder. "I can see right through you, deceiver, trickster. I know of your crimes." Trixie whimpered, the heat starting to overwhelm her,

and she weakly lifted her head, seeing that the Goddess was no longer alone. She was accompanied by twisted parodies of Twilights friends. They stared down accusingly at Trixie, the angelic servants of a wrathful goddess.

"She humiliated us!" They cried as one, again and again, calling out Trixies crimes and mistakes, exposing them out to dry and burn in the sun.

"I'm sorry!" Trixie begged, prostrating before them, begging for mercy. "Please, I know I made mistakes, but I want to make up for it! Please!" The Goddess that had appeared before Trixie looked scornfully down at her.

"For your crimes, for your deceit of my student, I condemn you!" The deity commanded, and began to blaze even brighter than before. So bright that Trixie couldn't see anything but light, and she let out a scream as her very being was overwhelmed and seared away...

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Trixie let out a soft groan as she opened her eyes. It was early in the morning, the sun shining through the window, accusingly washing over half-awake mare. She let out a quiet moan, and forced herself up, careful not to disturb the two other occupants of the room. Spike, the baby dragon, was curled up in his basket, and Twilight was still asleep in the bed opposite to Trixies. The unicorn felt her cheeks blush slightly as she watched Twilight sleep, her body rhythmically moving up and down in time with her breathing. She felt grateful that she hadn't woken them up as well.

Trixie laid back, chiding herself for her overactive imagination. She had been sleeping so well over the past week. Unlike the dreams that had been plaguing her before that fateful night, however, Trixie knew exactly the source and reason for this nightmare.

That day was the day that Twilight was going to introduce Trixie to her friends.

Trixie flicked her horn, and one of her mothers books floated off the bed stand next to her, opening up to the page that she had left marked. She could only hope that reading would ease her worry about what was going to happen that day. It wasn't like it was a true "introduction" to any of them. Throughout the week, Twilights friends had been popping in and out of the library, to check in on her as she helped Trixie convalesce. Each time they had visited, however, Trixie tried to make herself as small as possible, barely responding to questions, and never making eye contact. Despite Twilights reassurances, Trixie was still worried, and still felt guilty, about how she had treated everypony in Ponyville

the last time she was there. Twilight had used the excuse that she was still feeling physically unwell, which was the truth admittedly, to excuse her lack of sociability.

They hadn't even come close to telling them about their relationship yet.

Trixie realized that she had read the same line in a particularly challenging invisibility spell about seven times, and gave up. She quietly slipped out of bed, and headed for the mirror. Trixie really was worried about how Twilights friends would react to her, but it couldn't be delayed any longer. Twilight had insisted that the best thing for her now was to start moving and stop hiding in the library. Trixie herself had to admit that she really was feeling better, as the pony that peered back at her in the mirror proved. Her pelt had regained its sheen, and her hair, while still quite long, was back in order. The cuts and nicks on her legs had mostly healed, and she was gaining weight again, her ribs disappearing back into her body. It was really amazing how much of a difference that rest, comfort, and an attentive partner had made to her.

Trixie allowed herself a small blush, looking through at the red in her cheeks, and beyond that, the slumbering pony that was the cause of it. The best part of the past few days really had been Twilight. Their relationship at this point was less grand and romantic, and more comfortable and kind. It was tender kisses and soft caresses that made the recovering Trixies body tingle with delight. There would be plenty of time for grand romantic gestures once Trixie was less Twilights patient, and more her partner. For now, she was content to spent the evenings laying against that lovely mare, as they both read through Midnights books, the heritage that Trixie had been gifted.

She only wished that she could figure out why Twilight had kissed her in the first place. Oh, she knew quite well why Trixie herself had reciprocated the kiss, having accepted the emotions that she had been denying since that night with the Ursa Minor, but Twilights reasons were still a mystery to her. She wanted to know, but was terrified to ask, as if the act of doing so would break the spell that night had woven around them.

Twilight let out a soft groan, dispelling the self-examination that Trixie had been giving herself. She inhaled softly, and put on a brave smile, turning away from the mirror, and moving over to Twilights bed, bending down to give her a soft, loving nuzzle.

“Good morning, Twilight...” She whispered into her ear, pressing fondly against her. “Today's the day, isn't it?”

"Trixie?" The purple unicorn blinked wearily, trying to clear the morning fuzz from her brain. "You don't normally wake up earlier than me." She slowly sat up, returning the gentle nuzzles Trixie was giving her, before looking at her with sudden concern. "Did you sleep alright? You didn't have more bad dreams, did you?"

"No, no, nothing of the sort." Trixie didn't see the need to concern Twilight with that silly dream. "I just woke up early because I'm excited, is all. Big day, go meet your friends, be all happy and nothing bad at all happening, right?" She probably was laying it on a bit thick, and it was clear from the expression on Twilights face that she wasn't about to buy it for a second.

"Right, well..." She crawled out of bed. "If you're eager and ready, then why don't we get an early start? Applejack should be working in the fields right about now." Twilight said, looking out the window. Even if she wasn't buying Trixies false enthusiasm, she wasn't about to let it stop her, either. She had carefully devised and scheduled this day so that they would catch each of her friends alone, allowing Trixie to meet and deal with them individually. Trixie had to admit, she was quite thankful that Twilight was such a capable planner. She briefly checked her hair, and headed towards the door.

"What about Spike?" Trixie asked, gesturing at the still-slumbering baby dragon.

"Oh, let him sleep. He's been working extra-hard lately with two ponies living here." Twilight replied, opening the door to the outside world, and waited for Trixie. "After you.."

As Trixie passed Twilight, her fellow unicorn leaned in and gave her a reassuring kiss on the cheek, that sent those familiar tingles shooting down her spine.

Maybe today wouldn't be that bad, after all.

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Halfway to Apple Acres, Trixie's brief bout of optimism was nearly blown away from her by a streaking rainbow.

"Well, if it isn't the *Great and Powerful* Trixie!" Twilight winced slightly as Rainbow Dash proceeded to smash her carefully laid out schedule to pieces by descending down from the clouds to meet them. Rainbow Dash was supposed to be the last one they met with, after Trixie had gained some confidence and

forgiveness by meeting with the others whose sense of pride-and reactions to that pride being wounded-wasn't as strong as Dashes.

"Hi, Rainbow Dash." Twilight said warningly, casting a slightly worried glance at Trixie, who had an unreadable expression on her face. Dash smirked playfully, looping circles around the two unicorns.

"Your friend take on anymore Ursa Minors recently? Maybe that would explain why she's not looking so great and powerful anymore?" Dash continued to push at buttons, and Twilight bristled slightly.

"Dash-"

"You're absolutely right, Rainbow Dash." Trixie interrupted, causing the two ponies to blink in surprise, looking at her.

"Trixie?"

"I am?" Rainbow said in a confused voice, and Trixie continued.

"Oh, how could I be foolish enough to think that I, Trixie, could possibly match the awesomeness of you, Rainbow Dash?" She said in the same theatrical, but convincing, tone that she had taken on during her performance.

"Wait, are you serious? Are you making fun of me?" Rainbow Dash said, clearly looking confused at Trixie's words, an expression shared by Twilight's own. Trixie bowed her head lowly and humbly at Rainbow Dash.

"Of course not, Rainbow Dash. You really are the coolest pony in all of Equestria, and I should have never tried to match you. It was only my...my jealousy! Please, forgive me for trying to embarrass you!" Trixie exclaimed, throwing herself dramatically on the dirt.

"I..uhm...of course! I can see why you'd want to." Rainbow Dash said, her confusion turning into pride as her confidence was fed. "Well, everything turned out alright, so I **THINK** I can forgive you." She grinned brightly, her wings beating fiercer. "Your new friend is better than I thought, Twilight. I like her!"

Twilight, looking between the bowing Trixie and the pride-filled Dash, tried to think of what to say, and managed only to sputter out a couple of words.

"Thanks, Dash..."

"Well, I woke up early just to meet up with you two, I think it's time for a nap!" Dash exclaimed, and before the unicorns could bid their farewells, zipped off into the clouds. Twilight watched her go.

"Well, that wasn't too bad." Trixie said, and Twilight blinked, casting a glance at her as she picked herself up off the ground, dusting herself off and smiling.

"How did you..." Twilight had been so certain that this would be the hardest confrontation.

"It was appealing to her pride. I really do feel bad for what I did, but I knew that trying to apologize normally wouldn't work." Trixie kept smiling. "Fortunately, I have a lot of practice of bolstering someones ego. I did it to myself all the time."

Twilight paused, and then giggled.

"You put on quite the act." Trixie puffed her chest out with pride, tapping it with a hoof.

"I was a showmare, remember? I thought about putting her name in lights, but that might have been a bit too much." Trixie started walking again, Twilight trotting alongside her, the two laughing with one another. Trixie had to admit, she felt not just happy, but confident in herself for the first time in a very long while.

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The scenery graduated from town into farmland, brilliant rows of bright and shiny apple trees. Trixie felt her stomach gurgle slightly, remembering the last time that she had been here, and just how hungry she had been. They looked for Applejack, who had probably been the one who had visited Trixie as she recovered the most. She had brought her so many apple-based products that Trixie figured the vast majority of her weight gain was from apple crisp and apple pie.

It was only a short matter of time before they found Applejack, tending to a sickly-looking apple tree. She called out in greeting to the two.

"Hello, Applejack. What's wrong with the tree?" Twilight responded, as the two approached. Trixie looked up at the tree. It certainly didn't look very good, there was some sort of fungus or mold growing on the leaves, which were starting to wilt and turn brown.

"Ah don't rightly know, Twilight. It's been getting worse all week, and I'm afraid that it's going to spread to the others." Applejack sounded worried, and Twilight picked up a branch that had fallen from the crippled tree, examining the leaves. Trixie rubbed her hoof in the dirt. She knew next to nothing about farming or plants, but still felt the desire to try and help. She really did owe Applejack an awful lot. However, Twilights eyes suddenly sparked with recognition.

"I think I've seen this in one of my books..." She looked up at Applejack and Trixie. "I might be able to help you, I just have to go check something. Why don't you two stay here, there's no point for both of us to go back, Trixie."

"W-What?" Trixie replied. This wasn't part of the plan, Twilight was supposed to be with her as they did this!

"Oh, it'll be okay, Trixie." Twilight said, already getting ready to go. "I'll only be a few minutes, and it's Applejack, it'll be okay."

With that, Twilight ran off, leaving the two alone. Trixie looked at the earth pony, and Applejack looked back at the unicorn.

"So..."

"So..."

This wasn't going to do. Trixie took a deep breath and continued.

"Thank you...for helping me, Applejack." She said, lowering her head slightly. "I'm sorry for trying to steal from you...and hogtying you, too."

"Ah, it ain't nothing, Trixie." Applejack said, shaking her head. "Ya'll can hardly be blamed for doin' that when you were so hungry. Ah would have given you some for free if you had of asked."

Trixie blushed slightly, and looked hopefully up at Applejack.

"Besides, ah can hardly stay mad at someone whose makin' Twilight so happy." Trixie blinked, and that blush suddenly went from slight pink to blazing red. "Though, if you do anything to hurt her, ah'll be the first to run you outta Ponydale." The orange pony continued with a warning.

"Y-You...know?" Trixie squeaked out, her hoof embarrassingly kicking at the dirt underneath her.

"How could ah not? Ah saw the way you were lookin' at Twilight, sugarcube, and you've been the subject of all of Twilight's conversations all week. It don't take an expert to figure you two out."

"So...you're okay? With it?" Trixie asked cautiously, looking around for the fire and brimstone to start at any moment.

"As ah said, as long as you're makin' my friend happy, ah'm perfectly fine."

"T-Thank you. That means a lot to me." Trixie said quietly, the embarrassment fading, and a smile spreading again. She really was a comfortable pony to be around. The conversation turned to the tree, Trixie making guesses at what could be wrong, and Applejack generally rejecting them. In a lull in the conversation, Trixie decided to take a chance. She had to try to find out, and, looking up the tree, asked the question that had been nagging at the back of her mind.

"Why...why do you think she fell for me?" Applejack blinked at the question, and then tilted her head, a thoughtful look on her face.

"Ah don't rightly know." She saw Trixie's expression, and continued. "But what ah do know is that when ah found you, Twilight was the one who insisted on takin' care of you. An' she was the one who cleaned an' fed you when you were still sleepin'. Ah think she musta been having these feelings before now."

"Really?"

"As ah said, ah don't rightly know. Ah'm just guessing. But ah don't think that's yer problem, Trixie. Ah think yer afraid of bein' lost."

"Lost?" Trixie repeated, confused.

"From what Twilight has told me, thinks are a mite confusin' to you right now. Ah can't imagine what it must be like to be questionin' yourself like this. Ah think you're afraid of losin' Twilight 'cause that's the one thing you have right now that's certain." Applejack explained, and Trixie felt a slight chill down her spine.

"What...what would you do if you were me?"

"It's alla matter of figurin' out who you want ta be. Take me, ah'm an apple farmer, an' I'm happy at that. It's like findin' your cutie mark all over again, ain't it? Ah wouldn't worry, you'll find it. Anypony that coulda been through that much an' survived is stronger than even they know."

Trixie smiled sheepishly at the comment, and then nodded. She was about to say something when Applejack pointed behind her, and Trixie turned to look, only to see Twilight dashing back towards them, carrying a book with her magic.

"I figured it out! I figured it out! It was in Super Naturals." She called out, stopping in front of them, panting softly. She laid the book down on the ground. "Just mix these together, and apply it to the trunk. You can return the book when you're done with it of course." She smiled excitedly. "So is everything okay here?"

"Ah think so. Ah certainly don't have any problems with your taste, Twilight." Trixie blushed slightly and rubbed her head with a hoof.

"Applejack is nice...Thanks, again, for helping me." Trixie said.

"Mah pleasure, Trixie. Ah'm sure everything will work out alright." Trixie smiled at Applejack, and the two unicorns starting walking away.

"What did you two talk about?" Twilight asked with interest.

"Oh, well, just girl stuff." Trixie replied with a smile.

* * * *

"Pinkie Pie, this is Trixie. Trixie, Pinkie Pie."

"Ooh, does this mean that we can have a party?"

"I...guess?"

"YAY! You're the best, Trixie!"

The rest of the schedule went about as well as Twilight had planned. Pinkie Pie was just happy to have an excuse to throw a party, although Twilight had extorted a promise that Pinkie would hold it anywhere but the library. Fluttershy was just as her name suggested. The conversation had very few words, but she seemed happy enough.

Rarity was a little tougher, still decidedly peeved over the fact Trixie had turned her hair that horrible shade of green.

"It took me four hours to fix!" She had complained, and it had taken the promise that Trixie would buy a dress when she came around to making some money to finally placate her.

All throughout the day, Trixie was distracted. It wasn't that Twilights other friends weren't nice, she was actually quite thrilled at the idea of having them as friends for her own. She had rarely stayed in one place in one time during the days after Midnights death, never really spending enough time to bond with anypony. But she kept going back to her conversation with Applejack earlier in the day. Trixie had to admit to herself it was the truth. So what could she do about it? One thing she knew was certain was that she wanted to be was with Twilight, but her life had to be more than that.

What did she want to be?

Well, that answer was obvious, wasn't it? Twilight herself had told her as such on that night, and the happenings of the day had confirmed it. Trixie knew exactly what she wanted to be, she only had to have the bravery to go ahead with it.

As the two headed towards the library, Trixie stopped in her tracks. Twilight realized that she was no longer walking beside her, and turned.

"Trixie? Are you okay? I know it's been a long day, and with Pinkie Pie planning that party for tonight, I thought you might need to rest a bit." Twilight said, concern in her voice. Trixie shook her head and smiled.

"No, I'm okay. There's something that I need to go and do before the party, I'll meet you there, okay?"

"Are you sure?"

"There's only one thing I'm more positive on, and she's standing right in front of me. But I need to go spread my metaphorical wings and be on my own for a bit, alright?" Twilight tapped her hoof, clearly uncertain, but then nodded softly. Trixie bent forwards, and gently kissed her on the lips.

"It'll be okay, you'll see." With that, she was gone.

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To say that Twilight was distracted for the rest of the day was an understatement. When you spent over a week taking care of someone, it's only natural to worry about them when they leave. That only gets worse when you have personal feelings for them.

All that equalled to the fact that Twilight had worn a groove in the libraries floor with her pacing. Even with Spike trying to comfort her, she was still

nervous, especially as the sun dipped into the horizon, and the time of the party came about with no word from Trixie. Her nerves got even worse as they made their way to the party, and there was still no sign from Trixie.

Pinkie Pie had opted for a party in the outdoors, around the central building. Twilight wondered if it was Pinkies doing, or just the nature of irony, that meant Trixie was going to make her second impression in the same place as she had her first. A crowd had already gathered, including all of her friends, the party already in full swing. Pinkie Pie bounded up to her.

"Twilight, Twilight! I got everyone to come, and got streamers and balloons and everything's ready!" She looked around curiously, even peeking under Twilights legs, as if the blue unicorn would be hiding underneath her. "Where is she? We can't have a party without the guest of honour!"

"I don't know. She said she had something she needed to do, I haven't seen her since this afternoon." Twilight said, the rest of them walking up to her.

"Ah'm sure it'll be okay, Twilight." Applejack.said comfortingly.

"I don't know, she was acting a little strange earlier, I'm worri-"

Before Twilight could continue, the center of the square suddenly exploded in fireworks, causing surprised ponies to turn their attention in that direction. They were met with a magically enhanced voice echoing out over them.

"Come one, come all, come and witness the amazing magic of the Great and Powerful Trixie!"

"Oh no.." Twilight whispered, a chill running down her spine, and quickly began pushing her way to the front, followed by her friends. She got to the edge just in time to see, in a flash of smoke and sparkles, Trixie appear clad in her cloak and hat, a brilliant, theatrical smile on her face.

"Watch in amazement as The Great and Powerful Trixie performs incredible feats of pony magic!" More sparks and fireworks, and Twilights head lowered slightly, her body trembling gently. She didn't know what to say. She had reverted back this quickly?

"Hey, she's doin' it again!" Rainbow Dash protested, pointing over at the cloak-clad unicorn.

"Twilight, ah'm sorry.." Applejack apologized, before glaring fiercely at Trixie. The magician ponies front hooves were waving, and a bouquet of flowers appeared before her. With a flourish, The Great and Powerful Trixie swept them up, then brought them around, and with a final gesture, offered them to Twilight. She raised her head slightly, looking up in Trixie's eyes, and gently took the flowers. The chill she had felt was gone, as she realized that everything was going to be okay.

"Now, let the Great and Powerful Trixie tell to all the tale of the most beautiful, and magical unicorn in all of Equestria! Together with her brave friends, they faced danger and death in their quest to bring dawn to the endless night, and freed the Princess of the Moon from the bonds of hatred that trapped her!" Trixie exclaimed, removing the hat from her head, her horn glowing brilliantly. As everypony watched, enthralled, a panorama painted itself onto the fabric of reality.

Once side depicted six brave ponies, their leader, a beautiful purple unicorn, at the head. On the other, the dangers that they faced. As Trixie began to weave her story, the panorama shifted in design in time with her, showing how each threat was faced and defeated with courage and friendship, punctuated by additional effects from the storyteller.

Trixie looked out at the sea of those in the audience, her eyes coming to rest at the six who had made their way to the front. Their eyes were wide as they beheld the spectacle of their own story, and the praise Trixie bestowed on them. Twilight was holding the flowers that Trixie had created, and no one but Trixie saw the love on her face.

This is what she wanted, what she was. Just because she had gotten it wrong the first time, didn't mean that she wasn't allowed to try again. Her dream wouldn't die unless she let it die. She wanted to be a storyteller, a magician, like her mother, to weave dreams and reality to create happiness for people.

So, just as the audience had lost themselves in watching, The Great and Powerful Trixie lost herself in the weaving of the performance, creating a seemingly endless moment in time.

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The crescent moon was high in the sky when the party finally broke up. Soon, there were only two ponies left enjoying the night sky, and each others company. Twilight, still holding those flowers, and Trixie, clad in her star-filled outfit, leaned against one another.

"So what did you think of the show?" The performer asked her most important audience, who sniffed the flowers with an embarrassed, but very happy expression.

"I loved it...but between the flowers and your praise, I think half of Equestria knows about us now." Twilight said with a soft laugh.

"Well, I decided that now was the time for grand and romantic." Trixie admitted, leaning in and kissing the her lovely audience member. The kiss lingered for a moment, before Twilight pulled gently away to admit something.

"When you first started, I thought you had gone back to before. I was worried...I shouldn't have doubted you."

"Well, I can see why, so I'm not angry. You told me that night that I should find out what the Great and Powerful Trixie should be, and today Applejack said much the same thing." Trixie said, wistfully looking up at the skies. "I knew what I wanted to be, though. I was just afraid to go for it."

"And now?"

"Not anymore. I'm not afraid anymore. I know this is right." Trixie murmured, nuzzling Twilights neck lovingly. "So, I'm also not going to be afraid to ask this question."

"What question?" Twilight asked, in between the soft, happy noises coming from her throat at the nuzzling.

"Twilight...that night...why did you kiss me?" Trixie said slowly, with a little trepidation. Twilight blinked, and then smiled, gently pulling away from Trixie to look her eye to eye.

"There aren't many unicorns whose special talent is magic, you know." She started, and Trixie nodded, listening. "When I first saw you, I thought you were amazing. Here was another pony whose special talent was magic, she seemed to be so brilliant at it, and she was so beautiful too..." Trixie blushed, and then let out a soft laugh.

"I'm sure embarrassing your friends, and then the deal with the Ursa Minor didn't exactly help with your image of me, though."

"Well, no, but it was still there, deep inside. When Applejack found you, I knew that I wanted to help you." Twilight said, and leaned her head against Trixies, their horns touching gently, both of them starting to gently glow from the

touch. "When you woke up, I was surprised and honoured that you laid your heart out to me as you did. I realized, during that time, that you had the same feelings towards me. It was etched on your face, and those emotions I felt the first time I saw you came rushing back. Maybe it was a bit rash, but it felt like the right thing to do at the time."

"And now?" Trixie asked, parroting Twilight.

"It definitely was the right thing to do." Twilight finished, and smiled. Trixie blinked away the tears that had formed in her eyes, and the two looked upwards, the crescent moon warmly shining down on the two lovers.

"I think you should tell her." Trixie broke the silence once again.

"Who?"

"Your mentor, Princess Celestia. It wouldn't be right to keep this from her."

"Really? Are you sure?" Trixie nodded at Twilight. "Alright. In the morning. But for now, the evening should be ours, don't you think?"

The two ponies stood, and started walking for home. When the morning came, they would have to face the bustle of real life.

But, for now, their world consisted only of each other.

Chapter 1-3

Water, Food, Shelter, Companionship

It was Twilight, and she was lonely.

Which, the studious pony admitted to herself, wasn't exactly fair of her to feel so possessive of her companion. In the few days after the splash Trixie had made in her reintroduction party, the magical blue unicorn and her act had become the hit of the town. She was performing every night at the center of town to throngs of over-awed ponies. Twilight had to admit that Trixie really was in her element on stage, and was happy that she was blooming brilliantly.

The after-performance parties didn't hurt, either.

Twilight had been there for every performance that Trixie had put on, and had the numerous bundles of flowers to prove it. Their relationship was the worst-kept secret in Ponyville, as Twilight was sure that everypony at this point had some idea that the two young unicorns had fallen for one another. Her friends certainly knew at this point, because apparently she was pretty bad at keeping secrets herself. Even *Pinkie Pie* had guessed what was going on between the two of them.

Tonight was different, unfortunately. A problem in Twilights studies had arisen, forcing her to spend a late, quiet night in the library deciphering ancient texts and magical formulas. Trixie had assured her that she would be fine, that she had distracted Twilight from her studies so much in the past few weeks that she knew that Twilight had to catch up.

She felt a brief gust chill her flanks, and she looked up curiously at a window that she was certain that she had closed earlier in the night. A quick flick with her horn settled that, and she turned back to her studies.

As Twilight poured carefully over a fifth, fiftieth, or five hundredth (she had lost count) tome, she had to admit that she had grown to enjoy the distractions. Not just Trixie, all of her friends were busy with their lives, or attending the performance. Even Spike had gone off on some fools errand to try to catch the attention of Rarity. It wasn't that she disliked studying now, in fact it was the enjoyment that she got through reading and acquiring information that had been distracting her from how quiet the library was, and this challenge was particularly interesting. But, it was the times when she turned away from the

book, and took a break from her studies, was she distinctly aware of just how alone she was feeling.

At one moment, she swore she felt something tracing along her back, in a way that she had learned in recent days that she very much liked, but when she turned, there wasn't anypony there. Twilight shook her head slightly, and turned back to the book. She was very close to cracking this problem, and she could report her results back to Princess Celestia. Perhaps she would also give another prod towards her mentor about Trixie, as well. The Princess hadn't responded from the missive they had sent the day after the party, and it was beginning to worry Twilight a little. She tried to console herself that the duties of a Princess were very important, but Celestia usually got back to her quicker than this.

Twilight was interrupted from her studies by a light tracing along a particularly ticklish spot on her side, another discovery she had made in the past couple of days. She let out a gasp, and then looked around. There wasn't still wasn't anypony there, but that trace suddenly turned into urgent tickling! Twilights eyes widened, and she started to let loose with gales of laughter. The purple-pelted unicorn felt her legs start to give out on her, from the ticklish stimulation.

"W-Who is doing this!?" Twilight exclaimed, between gasps and laughter. Finally, her legs gave up the ghost, and she felt her body fall to the floor, the slight pain quickly washed away by the tickling. She shuddered and writhed in laughter, as the tickling finally died down, and she felt a hoof press against her side, a familiar blue unicorn manifesting into vision, clad in that spectacular hat and cloak, a look of triumph on her face.

"Finally, the Great and Powerful Trixie has triumphed over her mortal enemy!" She exalted, her free hoof tapping her chest with mock pride. Twilight caught her breath, and then looked up at her partner.

"You shouldn't claim victory before the enemy is defeated, Trixie." Her horn glowed brightly, and Trixie let out a gasp, her cheeks reddening, and nearly fell over, releasing Twilight from the floor.

"Hey, that wasn't fair!" Trixie protested, a slight smile tickling on her flushed face. Twilight giggled softly, and then paused for a moment, as something came to her.

"Hey, you figured it out!" Twilight exclaimed, and Trixies smile widened into one of true pride. Trixie had been spending the past couple of days trying to

master one of the hardest spells in her inherited spell books, one even Twilight hadn't been able to successfully cast yet. It was a true invisibility spell, one that didn't just block the unicorn from sight, but blocked the noises they made and their scent as well.

"I figured it out last night, but I decided to wait until now to show it to you." Trixie grinned playfully, and kissed Twilight on the cheek. Twilight shifted slightly, turning that kiss into one on the lips, the two unicorns moving closer to one another...

Their momentary reverie was interrupted by the library door opening, and a disgusted voice calling out.

"Ugh, are you doing that again? I think I'm going to be sick." The baby dragon who had just opened the door protested, and the two lovers released, embarrassed at the interruption.

"Spike, how about some privacy?" Trixie protested.

"Hey, I live here too, before you got here, and I don't want to see yo-HURGH!" Spike was interrupted from his rant by his swelling cheeks, his hands going to his throat. Twilight rolled her eyes.

"Really, Spike? Don't be gross." Twilight said, as Spike opened his mouth, but instead of what the dragon had suggested would come from him, a green, sparkling mist shot out, and assembled into a regal scroll. Twilight blinked, and quickly took the scroll. "It's from Princess Celestia!"

"Really? See what it says!" Trixie replied, as Twilight was already unraveling the scroll, and began to read out loud.

"My Faithful Student,

Please forgive me for the lateness of this reply. It has taken several days for me to decide on how to respond to this news. You must understand that I only want the best for you, Twilight, my dearest student. For that sake, I cannot in good faith give my approval for thi-"

"What?" Trixie gasped, and even Spike looked surprised. Twilight felt her voice start to tremble, but managed to keep reading.

"I cannot in good faith give my approval for this relationship. I have dispatched a team to collect you and Trixie. They will bring you to Canterlot, where we will discuss this matter further. They will arrive in the morning.

Yours Truly,

Princess Celestia."

Twilight blinked, realizing that tears were starting to drip from her eyes. This wasn't the response that she was expecting from her teacher. She looked up slightly, trying to figure out what to say to Trixie, only to see her kicking herself in the shin slightly.

"Ow." Trixie murmured slightly, and then scowled to herself. "I guess it isn't a dream this time, after all."

It was going to be a long night.

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Indeed, the night passed with little peace, and almost no sleep for the two lovers. It was only until after midnight that Twilight, worried and feeling more than a little betrayed, had finally managed to fitfully get some sleep at Trixie's insistence. Trixie herself had managed to catch a few hours of sleep, but woke an hour or so before sunrise. The unicorn spent the night looking out at the window, towards the horizon, until she saw the appearance of the first sliver of the sun heralding the coming day.

At this moment, she had never more hated the sun. Trixie had always preferred the moon, which she supposed was fitting, considering her cutie mark.. But this was more personal than that. She had been spending the night trying to think of why Celestia would have rejected her. Had the Princess been aware of her past behavior and actions, and wouldn't accept her because of that? She had to admit to herself that perhaps that was the reason. Twilight was the Princesses star pupil, after all.

She could see the carriage that was sent for them in the distance, following the sun. It would only be a little while longer, but she wanted Twilight to get as much sleep as she could manage.

It just didn't fit from what Twilight had told her, and what little she could recall from what her mother had told her after her numerous trips to perform at the courts of Canterlot. Midnight had told her that she seemed to be a kind, humorous person, had spoken with great fondness towards Celestia. Most of all, this line of thought frightened Trixie, because that meant that the reason must be personal for the Princess.

She cast a glance at Twilight, watched her twitch and squirm in her sleep, and narrowed her eyes slightly. Princess Celestia had hurt Twilight, even unintentionally, with her words. Even taking their relationship out of the equation, Trixie owed Twilight a great deal, for healing her when she was sick, helping her rediscover herself. She wasn't going to walk away from that. She wasn't going to walk away from her. No matter what a Princess might think.

Time had flown as quickly as that golden, pegasus-manned carriage. They were flying over Applejacks farm. Trixie exhaled softly, and stood, to go and wake Twilight. It was time to face the light.

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They spent the ride in the carriage in relative silence. Since the letter had come late in the day, and they had to leave so early, there was no time to tell their friends what had happened, and so had left Spike behind to inform them. Twilight was reading to try to calm her nerves, and Trixie had never actually flown before, so she was doing her best to keep her breakfast in her stomach. Slowly they began to approach the mountainside city, and Trixie inhaled softly. She'd never actually been to Canterlot before, and the idea slightly frightened her. She was supposed to go with her mom on her next performance there, but she had gotten sick before that could happen. Trixie had chosen to wear her hat and cloak, hoping that Princess Celestia would perhaps recognize it, but now she was worried it would just look tacky.

The carriage shifted, and that caught the attention of Twilight, who looked out, over the city.

"We're almost there." She remarked, the steadiness in her voice distinctly forced. Trixie took a deep breath, and dared to look out the carriage, trying to keep from turning too green. Indeed, the blessed ground was rapidly rising to meet them, the pegasuses preparing to make a landing in one of the castles courtyard. She was going to be never more thankful to touch the ground again, and swore that she would walk down the mountain when it came time to leave.

"I don't think I'm ready for this." Twilight admitted, and Trixie had to agree. The bravery she had mustered during the night had vanished, replaced by queasiness and the sick feeling of anticipation. The carriage touched on the ground, and Trixie disembarked gratefully. If it weren't such an important situation, she would be kissing the ground. Twilight followed after her, and they were approached by two young unicorns, who bowed slightly in greeting.

"The Princess sends her greetings, and wishes to see you immediately." One of the handmaidens said to the two, and Trixie and Twilight looked at each other.

"I guess we're going to get this over with immediately." Trixie observed, and Twilight nodded in agreement. The handmaidens beckoned them to follow, and the visitors did as they were asked.

Even in her wildest dreams, Trixie never believed the castle was quite this large, or this busy. The halls were filled with ponies going about the business of the day, occasionally glancing at the small group. Every once in awhile, Twilight would exchange greetings with people that she recognized, but Twilight admitted to Trixie as they walked that she herself barely knew anypony in Canterlot. She had spent so much time in her studies that, apart from Princess Celestia and Spike, she hadn't made any personal relationships with other ponies until she was sent to Ponyville. Trixie, too, was garnering attention, and did her best to put on her bravest face, trotting along clad in her hat and robe.

Every once in awhile, she swore she heard people speaking her mothers name under their breath.

It came to a surprise to Trixie that they hadn't been lead to the throne room, but rather found themselves at what Twilight recognized as the doors to Princess Celestias personal chambers.

"I thought this would be more formal." She said softly in Twilights ear. The purple unicorn shook her head softly, but before she could reply, the handmaidens turned to them.

"The Princess is waiting for you, please go in." They opened the doors to the chambers. Trixie and Twilight looked at each other, and Twilight reached out, rubbing one of Trixies front hooves with her own, seeing the blue unicorns trepidation. Steeling her nerves, Trixie and Twilight stepped through the doors.

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Princess Celestia was more beautiful than Trixie had been picturing. Her pelt was white as pure snow, her wings and horn delicate but strong, and her mane and tail shimmered in the air softly. As the two entered, Princess Celestia rose from the seat she had been lounging on, and walked towards them. She was...much larger than Trixie had been anticipating as well, towering over the two unicorns. She smiled softly at Twilight, and the two pressed their heads together fondly, like a mother hugging her child.

That was when Trixie truly realized that this wasn't a matter of royalty disapproving of her subjects choice in mates.

"Princess Celestia..." Twilight said softly, her voice both grateful to see Celestia, and questioningly.

"Twilight Sparkle, my faithful student. Thank you for coming so promptly. I apologize for the trouble that I have caused you." The Princess said, her voice as light as the sun.

"I just don't understand, Princess, why?" Twilight asked, almost begged. Princess Celestia smiled comfortingly.

"All in due time, Twilight. I must greet our other guest, after all." She turned to look at Trixie, and Trixie felt her knees quiver, and she struggled to bow without falling over.

"Princess Celestia, I am the Gr..I am Trixie." She said, and chanced looking up at Princess Celestia's face. For the briefest moments, her expression had seemed to change, turning to one of recognition, and sadness. Trixie wondered over this change, until it vanished, turning back to that smile.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Trixie. Please forgive me for the trouble I am causing you, as well." Her voice was gentle, leaving Trixie just to wonder why on Equestria things were unraveling like this. She slowly and unsteadily got to her feet, and Twilight found her voice first.

"Please, Princess, why can't you approve? I thought you would be happy for me.." Twilight asked, her voice unable to disguise the hurt she was feeling.

"Tell me, Twilight, how long have you been researching the magic of friendship?" Celestia replied a question with a different question. Trixie frowned slightly, trying to figure out where this was going, and even Twilight sounded confused at the seeming change in direction.

"You know it's been it has been a few months, Princess, since I started." Twilight said, her head tilting. Celestia nodded softly, and looked at the two ponies.

"You have just answered your own question, my beloved student."

"What? I don't understand!" Trixie exclaimed, and then immediately clapped her hooves over her mouth, as if the Princess would reduce her to ash for questioning her. Instead, Celestia smiled sympathetically at her.

"You are so early in your studies on learning friendship, my dear Twilight, so inexperienced with others still."

"I don't understand, Princess..." Twilight replied, and Celestia continued.

"Love...Love is a far more advanced magic, advanced and potentially dangerous. One that can backfire on you far too easily, leave you open for people to hurt you grievously. You're still so inexperienced, that I'm afraid you could be misused." Trixie blinked, feeling a surprising surge of anger rush through her, returning the bravery that she had lost earlier.

"I wouldn't hurt Twilight!" She protested, her pelt bristling, her voice raising in the anger she felt. "I won't take advantage of her! I owe her!"

"You cannot promise that." Celestia replied, her voice even but firm. "Even if your words are true, which I believe they are, you can still hurt her without even meaning or wanting to." She looked at Twilight, who looked confused, trying to process what Princess Celestia was telling her.

"But...what's wrong with finding out?" Twilight asked, softly. Celestia reached out, gently stroking her cheek with a hoof.

"I just think you should take this step by step...I do not want to see you get hurt. Please, at least take some time here, and think on my words." Trixie bit her lip slightly, looking between the two. Celestia turned, looking at Trixie. "My dear Trixie, you are a performer, are you not?" Trixie blinked, and fumbled for her words.

"Y-Yes. I-I've only just really started doing it right, though. I mean, I've been performing every night for Ponyville recently."

"How would you like to perform for the court?" Trixie and Twilight gasped slightly, Trixie's eyes widening. "If you would be willing, I would like you to

perform at dawn, so both my sister Luna and I can both view it. I assume that would give you enough time to prepare?"

Trixie felt conflicting emotions. On one hand, to perform for both Princess Celestia, and the returned Princess Luna, as well as the rest of Canterlot's Court, was a desire she had harbored ever since she was a child, and heard the stories her mother told her of her performances. On the other hand, Trixie knew why Celestia was offering this. It would occupy Trixie's time and effort for the day and night, and give Twilight time alone to think on Celestia's words without her input. She took a moment, and then opened her mouth, about to refuse...

"I think you should do it, Trixie." She was beaten to the punch by Twilight.

"W-What?"

"You can't turn down this opportunity, Trixie, no matter what you're thinking.." Twilight said, and Trixie was about to protest, until she met Twilight's eyes. She realized that she truly meant it, she wanted to allow Trixie her chance to follow that dream...

"Alright...I would be honored to perform for you and your sister, Princess." Trixie murmured softly, and gently bowed, still feeling the twisting in her gut. Celestia smiled softly, and nodded.

"I have set up a guest room for you to prepare, Trixie. Now, it has been a long time since I have visited with Twilight, would you allow us some time alone?"

She couldn't refuse, no matter how much she wanted. She closed her eyes, refused to let tears leak down her cheeks, and then gave a single nod. She turned to go, casting a final glance to Twilight, and headed out of the room.

* * * *

As day slowly turned to night, Trixie's fears were proven right. She and Twilight had not been able to see each other throughout the day, save for at dinner, which ended up being a stately affair that had allowed Trixie no time to speak with her. Trixie had to admit to herself that Celestia's words did have some truth to them, and she had spoken them with conviction. While Trixie tried to convince herself that it was still worth it, the idea that she might somehow hurt Twilight still hung heavily in her heart.

Trixie scrunched up another ball of paper viciously, throwing it fiercely against the wall, to join the other failed plans that she had been trying to

generate for this performance. How could she be expected to come up with a performance worthy of Canterlot, and the Princesses, while she was in this mood? Not only was there the intense possibility of losing Twilight, along with the fretful thought that Celestia might be right, but now Trixie was going to become a laughing stock in front of all of Canterlot.

Trixie looked out the window in frustration, and realized with a chill down her spine that it was getting to be the middle of the night. She was running out of time. She put her hooves on her head, groaning loudly.

"Twilight..." She murmured to herself. She had to see her, even for a few moments. Trixie thought for a moment, and then was struck by inspiration. She *had* a way she could see her. Her eyes closed, and her horn began to glow. She felt the magic start to wrap around her body, obscuring her from view, blunting the noises her hooves and breath would make, and masked the scent her body would give off. Her mothers invisibility spell, that she had so recently managed to master, would come finally come in handy for more than just appearing and disappearing on stage, and playing around with Twilight. Thus cloaked, she slipped out of her room, and started to run, unseen and unheard by the few night guards still on duty.

About half an hour later, and several twists and turns later, Trixie had to admit that she had perhaps not thought this out fully. The castle was extremely unfamiliar to her, and she wasn't completely sure just where Twilights room, or more likely the library, was. Not only that, she had become so lost that she wasn't sure just how to get back to her room. She was just about to give in, reappear and ask for help from a guard, when she turned a corner, and realized where she was.

She had managed to stumble back upon the doors of Princess Celestias personal chambers. Which was a bit of a relief, because she could retrace her steps from there. However, as she looked, she realized that neither guard nor handmaiden seemed to be present. While she couldn't be sure of Canterlot protocol, that seemed odd to her. So odd that her curiosity was peaked. Perhaps, at least, Twilight might be there, and Trixie might have been able to intercept her after she left Celestias side. She slowly approached the door, and heard soft noises coming from the room within. Confident in her mothers spell, and driven by the need to hear what was going on inside the room, she got as close to the door as she dared, straining her ears to try to pick up the noise that had been just tantalizing out of the reach of ineligibility.

Her eyes widened when she heard soft weeping coming from inside. It wasn't coming from Twilight, but the Princess. Trixie let out a soft gasp, realizing

she was intruding on a private moment that she was never supposed to hear. Her stomach looped with guilt and shock, and she felt her hooves working to move her away from the door. She could still hear that soft weeping ringing in her ears, and she turned quickly, scampering away desperately from the door, and the sobbing Princess therein.

It took her the time it took to reach her guest room to calm her beating heart. She opened the door, slipping inside, and closing it behind her. She rested her head on the door, her eyes closed, trying to forget what she heard.

"Oh, hello. I'm glad you're back, I was afraid that you had left for good." Trixie's eyes widened, not just because there was someone in the room with her. It was because she hadn't canceled the invisibility spell yet. Slowly, frightfully, Trixie turned to face the pony who could pierce through the veil she had cast over herself.

She was smaller, though still taller than Trixie, and her colors were a deep dark blue, her cutie mark black like the night sky, with a moon shining in that darkness. There was no mistaking the familiar resemblance.

It was Princess Luna, the newly returned sister of Celestia.

"Oh, right, you're wondering. Well, I recognize that spell. I made it to play pranks on Celestia when we were children. Which should make you wonder how you came in possession of the spell." The Princess of the Moon smiled, her eyes sparkling with a surprising amount of mischief. "You've been getting into trouble, haven't you, Trixie?"

There wasn't any point in holding the spell anymore, and it was starting to get tiring. Trixie dispelled the invisibility, blushing slightly.

"I was looking for Twilight."

"Of course you were." Luna chuckled softly, looking Trixie up and down. "You know, I can see the resemblance. I can see why you would bring her pain."

"What do you mean?" Trixie questioned that enigmatic statement.

"It's no matter, yet. I just wanted to talk to you, personally. I hope you don't mind, but I've been watching your shows from afar."

"Y-You have? What did you think?" Trixie worried, trying to think back. She had used the Elements of Harmony story that Twilight had told her a couple

of times, but she was pretty sure she had treated Luna fairly. At least, she hoped.

"I think you're brilliant!" Luna said, clapping her hooves together, almost like an enthusiastic fan. "Of course, I haven't been able to see many shows in the past 1000 years or so, and there weren't many before then, so maybe I can't be too good a judge, but you're wonderful!"

Trixie blinked, honestly shocked.

"Plus, you do your shows during the night, and out in the open, where I can actually see them! It's great!" Luna exclaimed, a bright smile on her face. "That's why I want to help you with your new act."

"Pardon?" Luna waved a hoof towards the large pile of crumpled papers that lay on the floor.

"You seem to be having trouble, and I would hardly want your first performance in Canterlot to be a failure. I happen to know a story that you can use, that might just be of help you. If you're smart enough to use it properly, of course." There was that smile again, as if Luna knew the mysteries of the universe.

Which, Trixie thought, might be entirely possible.

"Well, alright. It's not like I have any other ideas, and I'm running out of time in any case." Trixie said, and listened attentively as Luna began to speak, thankful for the distraction from her problems with Twilight, the weeping from Celestia she had heard, and the nerves that she was feeling.

Once Princess Luna was finished, however...

"W-Why are you telling me this?" Trixie whispered, feeling the tears running unbidden down her cheeks. Her heart hurt, beating painfully in her chest.

"Because it's important, and because I think that you'll be able to use it." Luna smiled sadly. "Because Celestia is my sister, and I hurt her so badly myself. I want to help her. Not just her, but Twilight as well, for freeing me from the hatred that was bound me. I want them both to be happy, and I think Twilight will be happy with you. Finally, because if anypony were to tell this story, it *should* be you."

Trixie nodded weakly. It was true. She slowly stood, and despite the tears still leaking down her cheeks, strength returned to her eyes.

"I know what to do."

"Great!" Luna exclaimed, clapping her hooves again. "I look forwards to it. It should be an interesting performance, that's for sure."

"Thank you...thank you for helping me, telling me this."

"You're welcome. The night favors lovers, anyway." Luna said, as she left the room with all the grace of the stars.

Trixie closed the door. She had a lot to prepare, needed to be well-rested for this special performance, and so very little time to do either in.

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Dawn was coming, that moment in time where day and night intermingled. The crowd had assembled in the main courtyard, a stage carefully set up for the star of the show, who was currently relying once again on her mothers invisibility spell to hide her from view as she looked out on the crowd. Front and center were the two Princesses, and Twilight. Luna had an eager smile in anticipation and knowing. Celestia was showing no signs of the weeping that Trixie now knew the reasons for, but instead the benevolent smile she was famous for. Twilights face was conflicted from what Trixie could tell, and it was fair of her to be so in the situation she had been put in. Maybe this would tip the scales. As the sun made the sky behind the stage turn red, she began.

With a spectacular explosion, Trixie dropped the invisibility spell, appearing as smoke cleared!

"Come one and all, for I am the Great and Powerful Trixie, here to delight you all with magic and tale!" The blue unicorn exclaimed in that magically-enhanced stage voice, the crowd gasping in delight. She could see Twilight perking up, and the two Princesses watching attentively.

"For her first performance here in Canterlot, the Great and Powerful Trixie has wracked her brain, for not any simple tale or trick will do for the auspicious audience before her. But, as if the moon herself has inspired her, Trixie has divined of a story that can only fit this time, and this place. I call this tale: The Sage and the Storyteller!" The crowd watched in awe, as Trixie threw her arms up, fireworks exploding forth, painting the red sky with deep blue flashes. Even

the two Princesses starting to become rapt in her words. Twilights looked at Trixie in confusion, as if trying to figure out what she was about to do.

It was now or never. She could only hope, as she made her magic write the tale in pictures upon the sky, that the Canterlot dungeons were clean.

"Once upon a time, there was a Sage, whose wisdom and kindness lit the land she ruled like a star. She had seen many suns, and dedicated her days to helping those ponies that believed in her, and in turn, they praised her for her compassion and strength.

But the Sage was lonely. All knew of her as the Sage, but not the mare who lie beneath, who still grieved over what she had lost through her many years. Her only solace was her Pupil, who had been granted to her when the Pupil was still a child, and who the Sage loved as if she were her own.

One day, in the Sages court, a beautiful Storyteller appeared before them. Mischievous and kind at heart, and skilled in the arts of magic, the Storytellers words colored the sky, and pierced to the hearts of all those that listened.

But the Storyteller, too, was lonely. The mare behind the Storyteller had lost her mate in a terrible accident, and her soul still ached from the loss. Her only solace was her Daughter, whom she had been blessed with before her mates tragic death.

As the Storyteller regaled the Sages court with story and song, she caught the attention of the Sage. After the performance, the Sage approached the Storyteller, to give thanks for the joy that she had given her audience. But the Storyteller was perceptive, and the Sage was wise, and by chance they found the lonely mares hidden behind their masks. They spoke well into the night, telling their lives, losses, and love, forging the links of the friendship that would follow."

Princess Celestia's face was unreadable, and Trixie felt her heart pounding. She controlled the fear, calling upon the true bravery that she had learned from Twilight and her friends.

"The Storyteller lived far from the Sage, but after that night, the Sage insisted that the Storyteller perform for her and her court again. So the Storyteller became a regular fixture at the court, entertaining the crowds that followed the Sage, and afterward each performance, the mares would talk to each other, deep into the night.

Things would change on the fourth performance. A regular part of the Storytellers act was to create flowers with her magic, and offer them to a member of her attentive audience. But this time, to the Sages surprise, as the flowers appeared, the Storyteller offered them to her. The Sage looked from the flowers to her, and saw not the Storyteller, but the mare, and knew that things would be forever changed if she accepted them.

It took but a moment, but the mare reached out, and took the flowers. In that instance, they were no longer Sage and Storyteller, but two mares who dared to follow their hearts."

Trixie could feel the wetness starting to build under her eyes, but let them alone. The tears were appropriate. Celestia surely had to know by now.

"Life and responsibility could not be denied for long. The Sage had her duties, and the Storyteller had her work. However, once a month, the Sage and Storyteller would meet under the stars and ever-watching moon, and be as one.

It was the eighth such lovers dalliance when the Sage had come up with a solution. She would invite the Storyteller to move to her court, and perform only for them. The Storyteller had gained such renown that such a move would be unsurprising. The Sage believed in the idea, for not only would the Storyteller be close, her Pupil would have a companion, to teach the magic of Friendship to her. The Storyteller desired the idea, for not only would she be with the Sage, her Daughter would have the chance for the proper training for the magical ability that she was starting to blossom into. Thus, under the stars and moon, the two mares made a pact. The next time the Storyteller would visit the court, one month from that night, she would bring her Daughter with her, and the visit would be forever.

However, Life can be unfair, no matter who you are."

Trixie took off that hat, her head lowering, her eyes closing. The crowd was silent, rapt in attention, so Trixie could just hear the soft breathing coming from the main target of her tale.

"A month passed, and the Storyteller, nor her Daughter, arrived. The Sage began to worry, for the Storyteller had never been late before. So worried, in fact, the Sage left her court, traveling to the small village that the Storyteller and her Daughter had lived. There, she learned that her fears were both well-founded, and far too late.

For, dear listeners, in the month that has passed, the Storyteller had fallen to an illness that no pony magic could touch, one that had wasted her flesh and spirit, withering the once vital mare to a shell of what she had been, before taking her life just days before the Sage arrived. Grief-stricken, the Sage attempted to find the Daughter, in hopes of honoring the spirit of her lost love, but the Daughter, her mind poisoned by grief and pain, had fled to the far reaches of the land.

Thus, in one terrible moment, the Sage felt she had failed the Storyteller, the Daughter, and her own Pupil."

Weeping. She couldn't tell whose it was. It might have been her own. Things were coming to a climax, and she couldn't afford to falter here. She raised her head, that hat being pulled back on.

"But our story does not end here. The years passed, and the Sages pain scarred over, as she threw herself into the love of her subjects, the love of her Pupil. She was even blessed with the rebirth of her Sister, who she had long thought lost.

One day, the Sage received a letter from her Pupil, who had grown into a beautiful young mare. In that letter, the Pupil revealed that she had fallen in love, but the Sages blood chilled when she realized that the Pupil had become united with the Daughter, who the Pupil had helped come to her senses. Shock tore open the scars that she thought had healed, and she took desperate action.

She desired only to protect her beloved Pupil from the pain that she had felt, so long ago, when she denied them, and none could blame her, for love

can bring pain. But what she forgot was the joy of those monthly dalliances, the comfort of being with the one who understands the deepest reaches in your heart. The pleasure of a lovers caress, the thrill a tender kiss. How these things were worth the possibility of pain.

She forgot, too, that she could cause pain to her Pupil through her actions, even when she meant well."

This was the moment.

"Thus, its fallen upon the Daughter to *remind her of what she's forgotten!*"

The crowd gasped, as the Great and Powerful Trixie swept her hoof across them, pointing to the center, where Princess Celestia was. Celestia sat there, Trixie trying to decipher the expression on her face, looking for some sign that she had pierced through to her heart. Princess Luna looked between the two, a hopeful look on her face. Twilight...

Where was Twilight? Trixie's pointing hoof wavered slightly, but that lapse was only for a moment, as there was a brilliant flash beside her, Celestia's apprentice appearing next to her. The scales had been tipped.

"Please, Princess, let me experience this for myself! I'm willing to take the risk, it's worth it!" Twilight exclaimed, and Trixie could feel the warmth of her body pressing slightly against her own. "When I'm with her, I can feel this warmth and strength deep inside me, when we touch, I feel this tingle...I know I want to be with her!" The two young mares on stage looked across the shocked, silent audience, towards the Princess that they had poured their hearts out to.

Tears welled in her eyes, but Princess Celestia smiled, a soft, happy, nostalgic smile, and closed her eyes. She bowed her head, and spoke.

"I think you know how this story should end." Trixie smiled, and then turned to Twilight.

"Swayed by the pleas of her Pupil, and the Daughter, the Sage remembered the joys of love, and allowed them to pursue their hearts." Trixies hooves met Twilights own, and they looked into each others eyes.

"And so, at the dawn of a new day, the Pupil and the Daughter leaned forwards, and met with a gentle kiss."

As the sun breached into the sky behind them, they did just that.

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"It's a shame that you cannot stay longer, Twilight." Princess Celestia said, as the two Princesses and the two lovers watched the carriage that would take Twilight and Trixie back to Ponyville. The purple unicorn smiled, looking up at Celestia.

"We left so suddenly, that I'm sure our friends are worried about us. Besides, Ponyville is my home now."

"Also, we left Spike alone, and he's sure to get into trouble without Twilight." Trixie said, and the four ponies chuckled to each other. Trixie turned to the smaller, night-colored Princess, who was looking very tired. It was very late for her, after all. Trixie bowed softly to her.

"Thank you, Princess Luna." Trixie said, the gratitude clear in her voice. "It would have not been a successful performance without you."

"Yes, I do wonder where you learned that story, dear sister." Celestia said, looking down at her younger sister. Luna smiled mischievously back at her.

"You should not have spent so much time talking to the moon over the years, if you didn't want me to know, sister." Luna said, the joy apparent in her voice. "Plus, you can't tell me that it didn't turn out as it should have."

Princess Celestia closed her eyes, and allowed herself to have that same nostalgic smile cross her lips.

"I suppose you're right." She admitted, and Luna turned back to the bowing Trixie.

"Now, my faithful pupil-" Luna started.

"*Faithful pupil?*" Celestia, Twilight, and Trixie interrupted in varying tones of amusement and surprise. Luna huffed playfully.

"Well, why not? You have Twilight as your student, why can't I have one? I did help her, after all! Besides, look!" Princess Luna poked Trixie's cutie mark with a hoof. "She's got my moon on her flank! It's clearly meant to be!" The three chuckled softly, and then Trixie nodded.

"I guess even the Great and Powerful Trixie cannot argue with that. Very well, I'll be your pupil." Trixie gave in, smiling.

"Of course you will! Now, I expect lots and lots of letters, you know! I want to know all about your studies and your performances!" The Princess of the Moon exalted in her triumph. "Now, my faithful pupil, I put a book in your bag that will be useful to you with your studies. Be sure to tell me how it helps you!"

Trixie rubbed her head, chuckling softly. Princess Celestia turned to Twilight, gently nuzzling her student.

"I have something for you too, Twilight Sparkle." One of the Princesses handmaidens stepped forwards, and gave Twilight a bound scroll. Twilight blinked, holding it in the air with her magic.

"A letter?"

"Only open it when you are on your way home." Celestia said, and stepped back. It was time to go. Trixie and Twilight clambered onto the carriage, and then waved to the Princesses.

"I'll write to you soon, Princess Celestia! Thank you!" Twilight called out.

"So long, Twilight Sparkle and Trixie!" Celestia said, and then paused for a moment. "And Trixie? Your mother would be proud of you." Trixie felt her cheeks heat red, and rubbed her eyes for a moment.

"Thank you, Princess...that means a lot to me."

With their final farewells done, the carriage took off, climbing high into the sky.

It was about an hour into the flight that Trixie remembered her promise to herself that she would walk down the mountain, rather than fly. Her stomach was doing loops, and she looked over at Twilight, who was busy reading a book that she had gotten from the library during their time in Canterlot, desperate for a distraction.

"I think you should open the letter, Twilight."

"You think?"

"She did say you could open it in the air, and please, I'm desperate to try and find something to keep me from losing my lunch." Twilight nodded softly. She broke the seal, and unraveled the letter, beginning to read.

"To my Faithful Student,

Sometimes, the teacher must learn a lesson herself. I can only hope that you can forgive a silly foal for the mistakes that even one who has seen many years can make. Thankfully, my brilliant pupil, and her equally brilliant partner, was there to help her see the light again. I wish you and Trixie all the happiness in the world.

Yours with Love,

Princess Celestia."

"Well, this is a reverse of the usual." Twilight observed, a bright smile on her face. Trixie stood up, and shifted to press next to Twilight, nuzzling her tenderly, her stomach not feeling so bad now. Twilight rolled up the letter, putting it away. "Have you looked through the book that Princess Luna gave you?" Trixie blinked, and shook her head. Her horn glowed, and her bag opened, a red covered book floating over to the entwined lovers.

"No, I haven't. Why don't we take a look..." Her horn moved, and they began to flick through the book, skimming the contents therein. It only took a few moments for both Trixie and Twilights cheeks to turn blazing red. "P-Princess Luna has a naughtier mind than I thought she did."

"Y-yeah.."

"How on Equestria am I going to write letters to her about this?!" Trixie protested to Twilight. Thankfully, the awkward moment was interrupted by one of the pegasus pilots calling back at them.

"Madams, we're almost at Ponyville." The two picked themselves off the bottom of the carriage, and looked out. Sure enough, the small town was rapidly approaching, and as Trixie watched, she felt the queasiness she was feeling dissipate. She glanced over at Twilight, who was looking out for her friends, for their friends, and gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek. They were going home, the first true home that Trixie had known of for a long time. There were friends waiting for her, and the pony she loved was at her side. Perhaps Princess Celestia was right. Her mother would truly be proud of her.

As the carriage descended homeward, Trixie looked forwards to a future that was as bright and warm as the sun that was behind them.

Chapter 1-4

Reaching Midnight

Part 1: Dawn

The rays of the sun flowed down on the small town of Ponyville, as the morning entered into full blossom. Ponies of all stripes were slowly starting to rouse from their slumbers, and in the tree-building that was Ponyville's library, the Great and Powerful Trixie was one of them.

Trixie let out a happy little moan, as she slowly drifted into the waking world, for she felt the comfortable weight of a lovely pony nuzzled up against her back, cuddled close to her, the pony's warm breath teasing nicely against the back of her neck. Trixie kept her eyes closed, just soaking in the physical sensations, a smile spreading across her face. It was time to face another lovely day.

It had been months since Trixie's rather...spectacular Canterlot performance, and to say that life was going well for her would be an understatement. The last time she had been this honestly happy was when her mother was still alive, back when she was just a little filly. Her performances brought in packed houses every night, as word of her performance at Canterlot had spread. She was even getting offers to perform in other cities, but she had yet to take any of them up on their offer. She had to admit that she was a little reluctant to leave Ponyville, because it felt, well, like *home*. The first true home that she had in so very long. All of her friends were here, the friends that she had never had before. Of course, she seemed to be getting involved in more adventures than ever before, but it was worth it. Especially considering the pony snuggled up against her back, who was the largest reason for her happiness. The relationship between Trixie and Twilight was coming into its own ever since Celestia gave her blessings, and Trixie now was having a hard time to believe that she had ever tried to deny what she felt for the studious pony.

Trixie smiled blissfully, and her ears twitched, as she heard sudden clattering in the room. She slowly opened her eyes, about to scold Spike gently about making noise so early in the morning. She blinked wearily, and confusion spread across her face, as she saw Twilight standing in front of the bedroom mirror, combing at the bed hair that she really did have a cute tendency to get. Trixie frowned. That couldn't be right, Twilight should still be in bed, she could feel her weight against her. Trixie blinked a couple of times, trying to coat the

fuzz out of her eyes, and then gave herself a sharp poke to one of her forelegs, to ensure that she wasn't dreaming one of the dreams her overactive subconscious had a tendency to give her.

Thus, she determined that a) she was awake, and thus this wasn't a dream, and b) Trixie wasn't seeing things, it really was Twilight was standing at the mirror. The unicorn's head tilted slightly, as if seeing something in the mirror, and glanced back at Trixie. She seemed to have an odd blush on her face, the one Trixie recognized from whenever she gave Twilight flowers during her performances.

"T-Twilight?" Trixie murmured, confused and sleepy. She lifted her head slightly, feeling the other "Twilight" nuzzle against her, trying to keep Trixie from moving so much.

"Good morning, Great and Powerful Trixie." Twilight said, her formally arrogant nickname now Twilight's pet name for the blue unicorn. "You look as confused as I was when I woke up. Well, here..." Twilight walked over to the bed, gently nudging Trixie, getting the confused magician to crane her head, to look behind her as best she could. Her eyes widened.

The pony snuggled against her back, breathing so nicely against her neck, was a cute, midnight blue pony, her horn nestled against the pillow, her wings wrapped against Trixie. She was slumbering deeply, a pony whose day was night, and night was day.

And that was when Trixie remembered last night.

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"That was another great show, oh Great and Powerful Trixie!" Twilight said as the two mares trotted home. Trixie's hat was perched on her head, and yet another bunch of flowers was being carried. "Although, you keep giving me flowers, I think there's getting to be an awful lot of jealous ponies in Ponyville." Trixie puffed up her chest with pride.

"Well, of course. I am the most beautiful pony in all of Equestria, after all." Trixie said, jokingly prideful. "There only a few select ponies that could possibly match her enough to be her mate." She pressed up against Twilight, their muzzles meeting, starting to kiss with one another, as they reached the door to the library.

"Is Trixie getting an ego again?" Twilight murmured, their horns caressing one another, their magic starting to sparkle, caressing and stroking over each

others bodies, starting to reach the secret areas that they had discovered on each other. So involved with one another, they didn't notice that the door to the library, that had been locked when they left no longer was.

"Maybe...maybe I need to be taught another lesson..." Trixie said with a giggle. They slipped into the library, their bodies growing warmer, their breathing heavier...

"I'm sorry, am I interrupting something?" A playful voice called out. With loud gasps, the two unicorns tore themselves away from each other. Brilliant red blushes washed over their faces, and they looked at the pony that had intruded on them.

"P-Princess Luna?!" Trixie gasped, looking at the Princess of the Moon, who had settled on a seat, clearly have been waiting for them. A book was perched on the table next to her. She frowned slightly.

"I believe that's 'teacher' to you. Or 'beloved teacher' works just as well." Luna gently scolded her 'student'. Twilight stepped forward.

"What has brought you to Ponyville, Princess? We weren't aware that you were going to visit.."

"That's because this is a surprise visit, Twilight, dear. I've come because I need to scold my student, she's been very bad." Trixie blinked, and looked very confused.

"What are you talking about, ah, teacher? I've sent you **more** letters than Twilight sends Celestia, because you've been insisting." She protested. Luna simply lifted the book that was on the table. The two ponies squirmed, their embarrassment growing, as they recognized the distinct cover of the book.

"I gave you this, and expected you to bring me your findings on it. You haven't done that yet, Trixie..." Princess Luna scolded, but there was an odd look in her eyes. Trixie, in her embarrassment, was having a hard time placing it.

"T-Teacher, that book...you can't be serious, w-what you want is incredibly private! You can't expect me to wr-write about things like that. I mean, its between Twilight and me..." Trixie squirmed hard, not noticing that Twilight was looking at Luna's expression with interest.

"But, I'm your teacher..." Luna said, and her head seemed to be tilting down slightly, and Trixie recognized that her eyes were growing downcast. Trixie blinked in surprise.

"Teacher?"

"I'm sorry..." Princess Luna whispered softly. "This was foolish of me." Her body shifted, starting to stand.

"You want to know what it's like." Twilight announced, interrupting the conversation between teacher and student. "You've never experienced it before, have you? Not just *that*...but the feelings that go along with it." Luna shifted from hoof to hoof, and Trixie looked concernedly at her teacher.

"...No..." Luna finally managed to whisper out.

"Would you like to?" Those words got both Luna and Trixie just looking at Twilight.

"T-Twilight?" Trixie questioned, and Twilight looked at her mate gently.

"If it weren't for her, we probably wouldn't have the happiness we have now, right?" She reasoned. "So...why can't we share it with her, even for only a night, so she knows what it is?" Trixie closed her eyes, and then smiled softly. It was true, they owed the Princess of the Moon a great deal. Not only for their happiness, but how Trixie learned of her mother's own, a story that had been lost. She just nodded softly, smiling at Twilight.

"Trixie? T-Twilight?" Luna murmured, her eyes wide. She let out a gasp, as the two unicorns' horns glowed, and their magic wrapped around the Princess, drawing her close to their warm bodies, their heads nuzzling at the shocked, shivering Luna, who pressed against them, the two lovers beginning to teach the lonely Princess.

The Book got a lot of use that night.

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"I can barely believe that we did that." Trixie let out a soft, embarrassed groan, as she remembered their actions of the previous night. She looked at Twilight, slowly trying to extract herself from the cuddling, slumbering Luna.

"She just looked so lonely at that point. It sort of reminded me of you, Trixie, when you came back to Ponyville." Twilight said, laughing softly.

"Besides...it wasn't bad, was it?" Trixie paused for a moment, thinking, and then shook her head, a smile spreading across her face.

"No, it really wasn't.." Trixie shifted slightly, and winced, as the Princess cuddled against her moved just enough to start to wake her. Princess Luna let out a soft groan, her body beginning to move. Her head raised slightly, her eyes blearily looking out into the bright room.

"Whose waking me..." She let out a gasp, as the Princess realized where she was, who she was with, and what they had done.
"Ohmygoshohmygoshohmygosh..."

"Rainbow Dash did that when she met the Wonderbolts for the first time." Twilight pointed out, clearly amused. Trixie grinned at her flushed teacher.

"Was that enough of a report for you, my beloved teacher?" The blue unicorn said teasingly, nuzzling at her. Luna let out a happy whimper, and nodded fiercely. Trixie grinned with pride, finally having an advantage over the mischievous Princess of the Moon.

"Than-thank you." A brilliant smile spread across her face, and the tired Luna quivers with delight as Twilight joined in, rubbing at the other side of her face. "I-I don't expect this again. I just wanted to know what it was like, just this once..."

"Oh, silly Luna...I'm sure there are plenty of ponies who would like to be with you. You'll find someone just for you..." Twilight reassured the pony. Luna nodded, her smile bright across her face, and laid back, her eyes starting to close, as the sleepiness started to claim her again.

"Thank you..." She murmured, as Trixie pulled out of the bed, looking down at the slumbering Princess. She chuckled softly, and then looked at Twilight.

"So, are you going to write to Princess Celestia about this?" Twilight blinked, and shook her head fiercely.

"N-No, I think she can stay in the dark about this one...as you said last night, this sort of thing is incredibly private, right?"

"Chicken."

"Yes, absolutely." The two ponies laughed together, as they left to face their day, leaving the sleeping Princess to her happy dreams.

Part 2: Noon

Trixie hated doctors. She hated clinics, hospitals, waiting rooms, and hospital beds. The smell of disinfectant and the sterilized, blank walls. She hated everything to do with the medical profession. She had ever since spending long, long hours with her dying mother, as doctors and nurses fruitlessly pursued treatment after treatment, trying-and failing-to discover the source of the disease that wasted away at her, sapping her spirit and ravaging her body. She never, ever wanted to deal with the medical profession again, to the point where, during her convalescence, when one of her wounds wasn't healing right, and Twilight had suggested taking her to the hospital, she nearly had a panic attack at the thought.

So, if Trixie hated dealing with anything medical so much, why was she spending a fine mid-day sitting in Ponyvilles clinic, getting poked and prodded by an unfamiliar nurse, as opposed to having lunch with her girlfriend, having adventures with her friends, or even just working on her show?

The guilt-trip of her love, of course.

It had been a few weeks since Twilight and Trixies little...encounter...with Princess Luna. Luna had left in the evening, and ever since then, the two unicorns had been getting almost constant letters from her. The experience that she had with the two seemed to have broken a barrier for Luna, as she actively wrote about her social experiences, and her romantic attempts. She had even asked the two for advice, which was rather hard, considering both Twilight and Trixie had, in truth, little experience in the world of dating and romance, apart from what had brought them together. In return, however, Luna had been progressing as an actual teacher, giving Trixie eager advice on her magic and performances, which Trixie quite happily embraced.

Apart from the shift in Princess Luna, life had been progressing normally. Well, as normal as one gets in the town of Ponyville. But over the past few weeks, Trixie had been feeling...well, not quite right. Actually, she had been feeling ill. At first she put it down to a simple bug, but hadn't let up for a few weeks now. Her stomach often rebelled at her, especially when eating some foods with strong aromas. She was feeling incredibly worn out, to the point where she actually had to cancel one of her shows, which was the first time since her coming-back party that she had done such a thing. But what scared her the *worst* was the dizzy spells, because she vividly remembered one of Midnights first symptoms was the same thing. It was when Trixie admitted this to Twilight was when the purple pony had finally put her hoof down, and insisted

that she go to the clinic. Trixie had tried to protest, but she wasn't having any of it, and the unicorn could be spectacularly stubborn when she wanted to be.

Trixie just wished that her appointment hadn't coincided with a conference that Twilight had to attend about her research.

Trixie's attention was caught as the white pony, her flank emblazoned with a distinct red cross, finally stopped examining her. She indicated Trixie should sit down, and the worried unicorn gratefully did, sitting on the other side of the desk, the pony who had been examining her having the oddest look on her face...

"Well, Miss Trixie, I believe congratulations are in order." She began. Trixie blinked.

"Congratulations? Wait, there's nothing wrong with me? Then why am I feeling like this?"

"I can assure you, while the symptoms might seem a little frightening, the cause is much more benign. Miss Trixie, you're with foal. Congratulations." The nurse offered, smiling happily. Trixie looked at her, baffled and sceptical.

"I think I want another opinion."

"May I ask why?"

"Because...Because I can't possibly be like that! It's impossible!" Trixie protested. The nurse reached out, and gently touched her hoof.

"Now, now, I know you're scared, but it's a joyous occasion. Who is the stallion, may I ask?"

"No... no, you don't understand, it's *impossible*." Trixie protested. It was the nurses turn to look confused. Unbelievable, had she found the only person in Ponyville that didn't know? "Have you been to one of my shows?"

"Oh, yes! You really are spectacular. My own fillies love you." The nurse exclaimed. "But I don't see how that explains that you can't be with foal."

"Do you know who always gets the flowers in my show?"

"Oh, yes, Twilight Sparkle! She was such a great help during the 'Baked Bads' incident." The nurse pony said in recognition. "She always has this cute look on her face when you give her those flowers, like... oh..." Comprehension spread across her face.

“Yeah.”

“But...” The nurse tilted her head, and the look on her face clearly showed that she thought Trixie was hiding something. “Oh, dear, if you cheated on Twilight with a stallion, you're just going to have to...”

“I didn't cheat on Twilight!” Trixie yelled, starting to breathe heavily. “I haven't even ever been with a stall-”

Three giggling, playing ponies, heady with desire.

“H-Hey, Twilight, check this spell out.”

“Oh?”

“Ever wonder how the other side lives?”

A Flash of Magic.

“Oh Celestia.”

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Twilight sighed softly, as she opened the door to the library. That meeting had taken far too long, and she had missed Trixie's appointment. It had been on her mind all day, that worry in the pit of her stomach that something terrible was wrong. She knew Trixie's mother had died of some terrible ailment, and the sheer thought of the same thing happening to the blue unicorn made her innards twist in fear.

As Twilight stepped into the library, she knew something was wrong right away. The shades to each window had been closed, casting the library into darkness. She trotted slowly, a curious expression on her face.

“Trixie? Spike?” She called out.

“Twilight, over here!” Spike's voice called out from the back of the room. Tripping over a stool in the darkness, Twilight winced slightly, wringing her leg out, before finally meeting the baby dragon near a table.

“Spike, what's going on? Why is it so dark in here?”

“I don't know, ask your girlfriend.” Spike said in irritation. “It's been like this since I got home too.”

"Trixie? Where is she?" In response to that question, Spike simply pointed under the table. Twilight frowned, and knelt down, peering under it. Twilight gasped. The blue unicorn was curled up, hiding underneath the table. She looked very pale, and her body was quivering with fright. That worry in the pit of Twilights stomach suddenly filled her entire body.

"H-Hi, Twilight..." The magical pony began, almost cowering from Twilight. "N-Nice day, huh?"

"W-What did the doctor say?" Twilight asked, her head sticking in under the table, trying to nuzzle at the frightened Trixie.

"Well, it's good news. I'm not sick." Trixie whispered, and that got Twilight very confused. She looked baffled at Trixie, trying to parse how the good news that she had gotten from the doctor would somehow equal hiding underneath a table, doing her best Fluttershy impression.

"Not sick? Well, that's great! But...then why are you hiding?" Trixie sank even deeper, and looked nervously away from Twilight.

"Well, you see... I'm... pregnant."

"What?"

"I'm pregnant." Trixie repeated, acting more and more like the custard-pelted pegasus. Twilight sighed, putting a hoof to her head.

"Didn't quite catch that." Trixie's eye twitched softly, and took in a deep breath.

"I'M PREGNANT!" She yelled, her eyes wide. Twilight gasped softly. Spike's eyes widen, and he looked at an invisible watch.

"Well, look at the time, I wonder what Applebloom is doing! I'm going by now!" With that, the dragon boy fled from the awkward scene.

"What? But, that's..." Twilight said, her brain trying to process the information.

"Remember the night with Luna? The spell I cast on you?"

Suddenly hiding underneath the table was looking like an appetizing option

"Y-You mean...I'm..." Twilight sputtered, and Trixie reached out with a hoof, stroking along one of her forelegs.

"Congratulations, dad." Twilight shivered, and felt a little dizzy. But it was odd, while the fear and shock was certainly raging through her, there was another emotion, a happiness that burned deep within her. She slipped under the table, snuggling up against the quivering blue unicorn, nuzzling against her. They laid like that, together, quiet, for a long time. It was Twilight that finally broke the silence.

"What do you think about all this, Trixie?" Twilight whispered softly, and a slight smile spread across her face. The surprising happiness was starting to beat the fear. "I know it's completely unexpected, but it's not *bad*, is it?" Trixie looked silently into space for a moment.

"I'm scared..." She finally admitted.

"Well, it's okay to be scared, I'm scared too, but..."

"N-No! It's not like that. Not at all..." Trixie said, and turned to look Twilight in the eye. Twilight could see the instinctual fear in her loves eyes. "What if...what if I die? What if we both die? What if sh-she or he is left all alone?"

Twilight closed her eyes, getting the idea. But she shook her head hard.

"If something happens, by some terrible chance we both are lost, she won't be all alone. I promise."

"What do you mean?" Trixie said, unbelieving, but Twilight kissed Trixies cheek lovingly.

"If we're both gone, she'll still have all our friends. There will still be the Princesses, and everypony else in Ponyville." She smiled. "She'll be surrounded by people who love and care for her, I promise." Trixie looked down for a moment, and then raised her head, hope starting to dawn in her eyes. She nodded softly, rubbing the tears out of her eyes, and leaned tightly against Twilight.

"Well, the Great and Powerful Trixie won't die anyways. Now, she just has a better reason no to." Trixie grinned weakly at Twilight, and the two mares started to giggle with delight. They slowly began to extract themselves out from the table, Trixie standing unsteadily, but looking much better.

"I think we scared Spike there." Trixie commented, as she pulled open the blinds, sunlight filling the room once again.

"Oh, he'll get over it. We should go out to celebrate. This is something TO celebrate, right?" Twilight asked tentatively. Trixie stopped for a moment, and then a bright smile spread across her face. She nodded firmly.

"Absolutely." Trixie's horn glowed, and the front door opened. The two unicorns started to leave...only to come nose to nose with a pink-pelted earth pony, her eyes starry.

"You're pregnant! Oh my, this calls for a party! I have to get streamers and cupcakes! Ooh, have you decided on a name yet? "Pinkie Pie" is a great name! You should name her after me! Oh, Oh, Oh, there needs to be cake at the party and I need to get some balloons and...I can can be 'Auntie Pinkie! It'll be great! " Pinkie Pie continued on like this, and Twilight grinned, looking at Trixie.

"You see? She won't be short of people who love her."

"She may get *too much* love around Pinkie Pie." Trixie replied, returning the grin as well. They laughed together, as they stepped out into the afternoon sun.

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### **Part 3: Evening**

The sun was starting to dip in the sky, and it was packing down time for Apple Farms stall in Ponyville's marketplace. It was going a little quicker this time than normal, however, as magic grasped hold of the baskets of apples, starting to load them onto the wagon.

"Really, sugarcube, are you sure you're up ta this?" The cowboy hat wearing pony asked. "Ah wouldn't want to hear scoldin' from Twilight 'bout me pushin' you so hard when you're so close to...ya know."

Trixie, Applejack's companion let out a soft sigh, and looked at Applejack.

"What Twilight doesn't know about won't hurt her. Besides, I'm not able to perform, and I'm bored! I have to do *something*."

"Ah never really took you for a workin' pony, though."

"Who do you think pulled my cart when I was travelling? The Great and Powerful Trixie wasn't a stranger to hard work, she just didn't like it very much."

Trixie muttered softly, as she loaded another basket onto the wagon. "Besides, it's not like I'm incapable of doing a little magic in my state."

The Great and Powerful Trixie was just feeling Great and Big right now. Nine months of pregnancy would do that. She winced, as a pang of pain and pressure ran through her body, not for the first time today. Applejack glanced at the wincing Trixie, and then glared at her sternly.

"Alright, darlin', that's enough now. You go an' sit down." Trixie was about to protest, but her body was screaming that would be a very good idea right now. She trotted over, sinking gratefully into a patch of grass, and watched as Applejack continued to set down. Her front hoof instinctively moved to her swollen body, and her eyes closed. Perhaps the most frustrating part of her entire situation was how occasionally useless that she felt. She had been forced to give up performing a couple of months ago, when the effort, both physical and magical, had grown too much for her to manage. Twilight had assured her that her main job was taking care of the foal inside her, but it was still frustrating.

Trixie smiled slightly, as she felt the foal inside her shift. She had to admit that the rest of it had been worth it. While she still occasionally had a pang of that old fear, the excitement and... love... that she felt towards the pony inside her seemed to be overwhelming everything else. Also, being waited over, mouth over hoof, by Twilight wasn't exactly terrible either, even if the purple pony was getting a little overprotective as the months went on. The sheer amount of books that Twilight had collected on the subject of pregnancy and parenthood was truly stunning, and Trixie had caught her on more than one occasion reading deep into the night. Trixie winced as another pang rocked through her, centered on her lower body. It had been going on all afternoon, but they seemed to be coming quicker and quicker, almost like...

Oh dear.

"A-Applejack?" Trixie called out, and the orange pony looked at the settled blue unicorn, whose eyes were wide with shock.

"What's wrong, sugarcube?"

"I think I need to go to the clinic... I think it might... you know, be time."

"Oh, horse apples."

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“Dear Princess Celestia, I have...No...Dear Princess Celestia, I am writing to report my latest findings on the...no, that's...agh!” Twilight crumpled up the scroll, and tossed it hard against the wall. She slumped, her head hitting her writing table. She could barely concentrate on her studies for the past few weeks, and it was getting worse with every day of anticipation. She was just thankful that Princess Celestia seemed to understand the situation, although there was that letter gently scolding the two for not being more careful with magic of that nature. They still hadn't told Celestia about the third partner in that fateful night, but it was beginning to dawn on Twilight that Celestia probably had guessed by now. Twilight groaned softly, putting her hooves over her head, trying to enjoy the brief moment of silence.

That was immediately interrupted by a spectacular crash behind her. She bolted straight up, and looked behind her. A rainbow maned pegasus had flown through the open window, and managed to crash herself into one of the bookshelves, scattering books everywhere. Twilight scowled.

“Rainbow Dash! What are you doing? I just sorted through those!” Twilight exclaimed in exasperation, starting to pick up the books. Dash bolted up, and flew to Twilight, grabbing a hold of her and starting to pull her off the ground! Twilight yelped, letting go of the books, and squirming in Dashes grip. “Dash!”

“There's no time! Stop struggling, or I'm going to crash again!” Dash protested, as they zipped out of the window, Twilights legs kicking as she was rather frighteningly high off the ground.

“Dash, what are you doing, let me go!” Twilight realized the ramifications of what she just said. “Let me go **ON THE GROUND!**”

“Applejack told me to get you to the clinic as quickly as possible! Trixie's having the kid!” Dash said, her forelegs hooking tightly around Twilight, keeping the unicorn tightly in place. Twilights eyes widened.

“Go faster!”

“Heh, I thought you'd never ask!”

One very short, but very stomach churning trip later, Twilight was bursting through the doors of the clinic, and immediately confronted the rather surprised receptionist. Dash trotted in after her, rather surprised as Twilights land speed when she was motivated.

“Where is Trixie? Has she had the foal yet? Tell me!” The receptionist coughed slightly, and regained her composure.



"You must be Twilight. She only really just started having noticeable contractions, it's still going to be several hours yet. If you'll follow me..."

"Oh...right, of course. I knew that." Twilight blushed, looking embarrassed, as she began to follow the receptionist. She DID know that, but she had let her panic and excitement momentarily get a hold of her senses. It was only a few moments until she arrived at Trixie's bedside, who still had Applejack beside her, comfortingly. As soon as Twilight got there, the two unicorns embraced, and Trixie blushed slightly.

"So, are you ready for this?" Trixie murmured, looking lovingly at Twilight. Her body shivered, as another contraction raced through her.

"No, absolutely not." Twilight laughed.

"Hey, you're not the one whose going to be *doing* this!" Trixie scolded, and then put on a face of mock arrogance. "Of course, it falls to the Great and Powerful Trixie to be doing all the hard work. Just more proof on her innate superiority over the accursed Twilight Sparkle!" Twilight rolled her eyes.

"Can we call it even for the whole Ursa Minor thing?" She asked, kissing at Trixie's cheek.

"Yes...well...the Great and Powerful Trixie is willing to accept that compromise. Just as long as Twilight Sparkle doesn't leave her side throughout any of this..." Trixie smiled gently. "Or ever, for that matter." Twilight nodded, resting her head against Trixie's.

"I think that's a fair deal."

\* \* \* \*

"THIS ISN'T A FAIR DEAL AT ALL!" Trixie screamed, her eyes wide. It had been several tiring, contraction filled hours, the evening lapsing deep into Lunas night. But it was close now, very close. "I want more benefits on my side! Ahh-ah-ah...oh Celestiaaaa!"

"Just a little more, Trixie! You can do it! You're the Great and Powerful Trixie, remember? This isn't anything!" Twilight encouraged, staying close to the panting blue unicorn. The nurse was giving directions, but those were lost, background noise.

"I want..dinner every night for a year! And...and...aahh! And hoof rubs whenever I ask for them! GAAHH! Forget it! I'll face the Ursa Minor! You can

have this foal now!" Trixie let out another squeal, clenching her eyes shut. She could feel it, just a little more...

A cry pierced the room, a young voice making it's first noise, mingling with the chime of a distant clock. Twilights eyes widened, as the nurse pony began to clean a small, squirming form.

"It's a filly...congratulations." The nurse said as she wrapped the small form in a blanket, tenderly giving it to Twilight. Trixie, despite her exhaustion, slowly pushed herself up, leaning against Twilight and peered down at the blanket.

Two cute, lavender eyes peered back up at them, a light purple muzzle making soft, squeaking, happy noises as she beheld her parents for the first time. Trixie rubbed her eyes, barely believing, tears of happiness streaming down her cheeks. She looked over at Twilight, who had much the same expression.

"So...what should her name be?" Trixie whispered, her breathing deep, as she tried to recover from the exhaustion that seeped through her body, tempered only by the love that had ignited through her. Her own little family...

"Well, it's obvious, isn't it?" Twilight returned. "There's only one name that would fit."

"Which is..." Trixie asked, as Twilight slid slightly into the small bed with her, that young foal snuggled between them.

"Midnight. Her name is Midnight."

Trixies face lit up, and she nodded softly, pressing herself tightly against her strange, but beautiful family, the door bursting open as their friends rushed to congratulate them, and their new happiness.

"I think that's perfect."

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The End Of Out in the Cold

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# Chapter 2-1

## Moonlight Over Midnight

Move.  
Move.  
Move!

The tiny purple unicorn filly stood defiantly on the highest hill near Ponyville, her horn glowing brilliantly, as she stared at the object of her defiance. The moon, hanging in the starry night sky. She would do it. She would do it, she would move the moon, no matter what. Then she could be with her Princess Mommy, forever and ever. There would be no more obstacles to them being a family. If she was her daughter, she should be able to do this! She had to be able to do this!

So that tiny purple unicorn filly kept it up, despite her lack of training, despite her young age, her horn glowing like a fallen star, regardless of the fact that the moon had been staying mockingly, stubbornly still in the sky, regardless of the filly's wishes.

Just please...please move.

I want my Mommy.

But perhaps even the cosmos can be swayed by the plight and pure emotion of a young child. Perhaps the stars and the moon can heed that desperate call. In a world of beauty and magic, perhaps the universe isn't uncaring of somepony's dreams, no matter how small they are.

Slowly, almost painfully, the Moon began to move, the unicorn letting out an excited gasp, as she could feel the celestial object coming under her control, her magic grasping the Moon as easily as she could grasp one of the apples from Aunt Applejack's farm. She could do it! She was doing it! Shining like a star, the filly felt the tingling of the potent magics that she was wielding surging through her body, changing her very nature.

"Midnight."

The young filly turned her head, and she was there. As graceful as the night, as beautiful as the stars. She stroked the filly's cheek with a hoof, and her eyes were full of pride and joy. The filly let out an happy little sound, as the Pony of the Night took her hoof, and extended those night-sky wings. She looked expectantly at her child.

"Midnight..."

The filly looked back at herself. Brilliant wings had extended from her back, and the filly quivered with joy. She really was...she really was her daughter! The Princess smiled gently, looking down at her. Together, the two began to beat their wings, the small town starting to disappear beneath their hooves.

"Hey, Midnight..."

They were dancing in the stars! Her and her Princess Mommy, their wings beating, their magic embracing them, and they were dancing in the stars together, the twinkling lights surrounding the two ponies, as they embraced, mother and filly. The filly could feel her mother's warmth, hear her beating heart, as she snuggled her head up against the Princess' chest. They would be together now, no longer would they be separated by duty and distance, they would...

"HEY, MIDNIGHT! WAKE UP!"

The stars disappeared. The moon disappeared. Her wings disappeared. Her mommy disappeared.

She began to fall.

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"GAH!" Midnight let out a gasp and bolted stock straight, her head leaving the open textbook that she had been using as a pillow. She began to blink the sleepiness out of her eyes, and her hazy hearing picked up the chuckling of her fellow study mates.

"You know, for someone with your name, you were the first one of us to fall asleep, Mids." One of her study mates... no, one of her friends said with a chuckle. Her name was Inkwell, an apt name what with the splotches of rainbow that covered her blue pelt: the result of an accidental swim in a vat of rainbow

during a class trip to Cloudsdale when she was a little filly. They tried to clean her, of course, but they never were able to clean those stains off of her pelt and mane. She was still a bit of a klutz, but a nice enough pony nonetheless. "It's not even *THAT* late, you know."

"Yeah, just because *you* might know the effects that the lunar phases have on magic by heart, doesn't mean the rest of us do!" complained the only male of the group: Dusty, which rather fit his grey coat. He was normally a nicer stallion, but the stresses of exams and study was starting to get to him. He was a pony who was driven to succeed, and Midnight could hardly blame him, considering that he came from Meconium City, and that wasn't a place that anypony particularly wanted to go back to.

Midnight didn't mention to him that her Momma had written the textbook that they were studying.

"Oh, really now, Dusty, we're all tired." The final studier scolded gently in a voice that was clearly trying to be more sophisticated than she could really manage. Red pelted with a white mane, Diamond Shell was from Manehattan, and tried so hard to fit the part, even though Midnight had long ago learned that her family wasn't that well off. The only thing that disturbed her about Diamond Shell was that she was an unabashed Trixie fangirl; her hair even now was being kept in the same style as her mom's.

Midnight blushed hard as she mumbled her apologies, the dream still flickering in her head. She hadn't had *that* dream since she was a filly. To have it now, as a nearly adult mare, was somewhere between embarrassing and *completely* embarrassing. She could only hope that she hadn't said anything during her little catnap, especially considering the environment in which she had fallen asleep to begin with.

It was nearing the end of her first year at the University of Canterlot, and that meant one thing: exams. While Midnight had excelled through the year in her studies, exam season was still just as stressful to her as it was to anypony else. So she and her friends had decided to study together, so that everypony would have the benefits of each other's strengths, and be able to get help with their weaknesses. On this night they were in Midnight's room, which really was far messier than perhaps it should have been. Without Spike to help her (or her mothers to scold her), Midnight had long since lapsed into the traditional freshpony trap of 'I'll do it later' when it came to cleaning. At least she hadn't gained the legendary freshpony 15.

This was the third long night of studies, and while Midnight was, much like her mother, quite capable of finding pleasure in studying and reading, even she was starting to see the words starting to blur together on the page. Despite her friends' complaints and teasing, she could see the same exhaustion on their faces as well.

Friends.

She had to admit, her social life had blossomed during her time at university. She had always had a bit of a hard time making friends her own age, only having one or two while growing up in Ponyville. She very much took after her Momma Twilight in her awkwardness in social situations, and certainly some of the trouble she had gotten into hadn't exactly endeared her to any potential friends. The now-infamous Sex Ed incident alone had pretty much made everypony in her class - if not her entire school - afraid of her. It wasn't just that, though. It wasn't *just* her own actions. There was another reason, as well...

The fact of the matter was that Midnight often felt...overshadowed...by the company that she kept. By her family. Not just being the daughter of The Great and Powerful Trixie, or Twilight Sparkle, the Princess' Protege, but her 'Aunts' as well. Like Rarity, the Equestria-famous fashion designer, or Rainbow Dash: Wonderbolt, and all of them the Elements of Harmony, the ponies that had saved the world from Endless Night, a tale that her Mom had spread far and wide, throughout the cities and towns of Equestria. She had long realized that it made it imposing for other ponies who knew of those relations to actually approach her, and those that had often did so to try to take advantage of her relations to such important ponies. So often, ponies just didn't see her, who she was. Instead they saw the important ponies that she was related to.

At University, it was different. It was her first chance to have relationships where she could be judged on her own merits and flaws, without all the baggage of history and connections. Oh sure, there were some suspicions; she knew that she was a fairly famous pony just for who she was. Practically *everypony* in Equestria knew who Midnight was, but even that celebrity was acting as a cover: there were at least eight unicorns that she had met in her first year of university alone that shared her name. Evidently it had become a rather in-vogue name for the parents of unicorns to call their newborns, and few actually knew what the 'true' Midnight looked like. Her mothers were quite careful to keep her fairly out of the limelight, wanting her to grow up with as little burden as possible. Thus, it was a simple task to keep her family history vague, style and even magically dye her hair a very different shade of pink, to make it look like she was just another unicorn with that name, and then go out, try to shake off the

awkwardness, and actually make friends on her own merits - just like how Momma had when she first arrived at Ponyville...

It wasn't that she was ashamed of who she was and where she came from; she cared so deeply for them it hurt sometimes. It was just....it was easier this way. Easier to keep the two parts of her life separate.

"Please Midnight, try to keep awake, it's hard enough to study with Diamond here going on and on about some party that she wants to go to." Dusty grouched, flipping through the text book in irritation.

"Oh, please! The 3G isn't just 'some' party. It's *the* party. Only the elite are allowed to go! Oh, how I wish I could be there..." Diamond Shell clasped her hooves together, her eyes starry as she daydreamed.

"The...'3G'?" Inkwell asked, confused.

"The Grand Galloping Gala, of course! It's only a couple of weeks away, and I'm simply dying to go. Oh, the stories that I've heard, the ponies one could meet, I must find a way of going..."

"I wouldn't bother. Even if you could get in, the Gala's more boring than one of Professor Hoof's lectures. The four of us should instead go to the bar that night and celebrate getting through our first year. We'll have more fun that way." Midnight said off-hoofedly, her eyes scanning the lines of her book. Her vision was having a hard time returning, the words on the pages were still mixing together hopelessly.

"That's not actually a bad idea, I'd be in for that." Inkwell said, and Dusty nodded in agreement. Diamond, however, was not sated.

"How would you know? You're from *Ponyville*, you can hardly tell me that you've been to one...Have you?" She asked, and Midnight nearly choked.

Of course she had been. Admittedly the last time she had to go was when she was a little filly, but she remembered being so incredibly bored that at one point she had just nodded off at the table she'd been sitting at. The only good thing of that night was that it had meant that she could sleep over at the Castle, and get to spend some time with her third mother...

"N-No, of course I haven't! I mean, I've just heard, you know, through the grapevine." Midnight responded, letting out a nervous chuckle

"Oh, well, that sounds just like some jealous ponies trying to make themselves feel better. You should be smarter than to listen to them, Midnight." Diamond said, and everypony else rolled their eyes. "Besides, even if that were *ordinarily* true, this 3G is going to be special!"

"Alright. Fine. Since we seem to be done studying..." Dusty gave up with a sigh, closing his textbook in irritation. "Just why will this 'Gala' be so special?"

"Well, because none other than the Great and Powerful Trixie will be attending!" Diamond said, puffing her chest up. "

Midnight blinked. Now, that was a surprise. While Momma Twilight attended the Gala every year, mostly to support Celestia, Midnight remembered that after a few years of going, Trixie eventually got so fed up with the entire thing that she told Twilight that the only way that she could get Trixie to go to the Gala again was over her dead body... and that everypony there was a bunch of stuck-up, egotistical (She remembered Momma had to bite her lip to keep from giggling at that) sycophants. So why was she going? Either Twilight had managed to convince her somehow, or maybe there really was something special about this particular Gala. She did have to admit, she wondered why they hadn't spoken to *her* about this...

"Well, it's possible she'll be performing at the Gala this year, isn't it?" Inkwell asked with a yawn, any enthusiasm she might have had dampened by the long hours of study.

"I don't know, darling, though I've heard rumours that there's something peculiar about this Gala."

"Hey, what time is it anyways? I think I'm about to nod off again." Midnight broke in, trying to change the subject.

"It's about half past a purple pony." Dusty said with a smirk, and Midnight rolled her eyes.

"Oh, please, don't you think I haven't already heard all the time jokes about my name?"

I mean, reall-wait, did you say half past midnight?!" Midnight exclaimed. Was it really that late? It was almost time for her to arrive!

"Uh, yeah, that's what the clock outside says."



“Alright, study session’s over!” Midnight sprang up. It was that late!

“Why, what’s going on?” Inkwell said with bafflement.

“Uhm, no reason, just, you know, tired, got to get up early tomorrow, bright and sunshiny?” Midnight said nervously. Why was she as bad a liar as her Momma?

“Rriiiggghht...” Dusty said, the skepticism clear on his face. Midnight began to usher the three out quickly, occasionally giving them a gentle poke with her horn to ‘hurry them along’. “Ow! Geez, okay, okay! If I didn’t know better, I’d think Mids here was trying to get rid of us. Got somepony ‘special’ comin’ over or something?”

“No, just tired! Just...just tired!” She said, herding them out into the hall of the dorm. “Now, uhm, good night, everypony! See you tomorrow!”

The three muttered their good nights, as Midnight closed the door on them. She turned around, her horn glowing, as she quickly began to clean her terribly messy room, doing more hiding than actual cleaning...

“She is such a terrible liar. I think you’re right, she does have somepony special coming over.” She heard Inkwell agree with Dusty, their voices fading as the trotted down the hall.

They had *no* idea.

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After an hour of frantic cleaning, Midnight’s room was as clean as it was going to get on short notice. She stood there panting, trying to catch her breath, when she heard the gentle knocking at her window.

Her guest had arrived.

She turned, her horn glowing, and she opened up the window. Squirming her way through the small opening in a less dignified manner than one would expect from her position, the Princess of the Moon let out a soft gasp, and blushed slightly.

“Could I get a little help, dear? I seem to be a bit stuck.” Luna said apologetically, and Midnight let out a gentle giggle, moving to help her Princess of a mother into her room.

One of the benefits of attending the University at Canterlot was... well, that meant that she was living in Canterlot. What this truly meant hadn't been impressed on Midnight until the last night of the first week of university, when she had been awoken by her mother gently nudging her awake. That was when it truly dawned on Midnight: because she was living in Canterlot, the distance between her and Luna had suddenly shrunk a great deal. It was much easier for the Princess to slip out for a couple of hours every week or so to visit somepony who was living in Canterlot, as opposed to taking a proper trip to Ponyville. Suddenly, getting to spend time with her third Mother wasn't just something that happened on special occasions...

Mother and child embraced once Midnight had helped Luna in. Normally they met either in the Castle, or in one of Canterlot's parks or gardens, but Luna had insisted on meeting her in her room this time, knowing full well how busy Midnight would be with studying.

“It's good to see you again, Mother. I missed you last week.” Midnight said fondly, as she moved to put on the kettle for some tea.

“I apologize for that, sweetheart, it's just this Gala that we're putting on, there's so much to do in preparation. I never realized how much work Celly put into these things...” Luna let out a gentle sigh, and Midnight sat next to her, blushing slightly.

“It's okay. I've gotten to spend so much time with you over the past few months...” Midnight's cheeks were red, as she looked at her Mother. “I-I've really enjoyed it...”

“As have I, more than words can say...” Luna replied with a gentle smile, wrapping her wing around her daughter. “It's going to be hard to see you go back to Ponyville, even for the summer.”

“I know...I'm going to miss you too...” Midnight murmured, her eyes closed.

“So how are exams going?”

"Not bad...really busy, though. I just got done studying with some of my classmates."

"And did you find anypony special yet? What about that cute mare I met at Rainbow Dash's party, you speak to her recently?" Luna said, a slight tone of teasing in her voice.

"M-Mother!" Midnight blushed fiercely, and Luna chuckled gently, giving her daughter a nuzzle.

"I'm only interested, I'm only interested!" Luna smiled. Midnight squirmed, looking for a way out of this uncomfortable line of conversation. A thoughtful expression crossed her face, and she looked up at Luna questioningly.

"Wait, you said you're working on the Gala?"

"I did."

"But you've always told me you *hated* those things! You told me about all the excuses you've made to get out of the Gala!"

It was Luna's turn to blush.

"That's true, normally I can't stand it, but this Gala is going to be special...I hope, at least." Luna said, an odd look on her face. Midnight's ear twitched slightly. First she learned that Trixie was going, and now Luna...what was going on?

"What's going to make this so special?" Midnight asked, and then suddenly felt a little chill, as Luna looked at her, her mother's eyes piercing deeply into her own. Midnight could see in those eyes both excitement, and a certain...worry? Anxiety? "W-What?"

"I've been speaking with your other mothers, and...well..." Luna fidgeted slightly. "We think you're old enough for this, now. You've grown into such a fine young mare...I just wish I could have..."

"Old enough for what?" Midnight asked, both out of curiosity, and to keep Luna from going too far into the guilt that Midnight had long accepted wasn't necessary. Luna took a deep breath, as if gathering her courage.

"At the Grand Galloping Gala, I want to...I want to formally announce you as my daughter, to everypony, to Equestria." Luna let out quickly, and with those

words, Midnight saw cracks in her carefully constructed world appear, threatening to cause everything to collapse.

That Princess Luna was Midnight's 'Third Mother' had always been kept fairly quiet. Oh, sure, all of Ponyville knew the truth, and the servants and guards of the castle had gotten used to seeing a little filly run around the Castle with the Princess on certain special weekends, but for the rest of Equestria, that connection simply did not exist. Well, outside of the occasional tabloid headline that suggested that Luna had a love child somewhere. It had been a careful choice by her parents, to allow Midnight to grow up in Ponyville, to give her as normal a life as they could.

"I mean, you wouldn't have to be involved in the court or anything. Oh, sure, there'd be some title...personally I'm pulling for 'Princess', if that jerk Blueblood and his son can be 'Princes' then surely my darling daughter can be a 'Princess'." Luna started to almost babble uncomfortably, as if sensing her daughters trepidation.

Why now? Everything had been going so well, too! If this happened, she wouldn't be 'Midnight' anymore, she'd be back where she had been, no pony would see her for her anymore! In fact, it was going to be even worse! Everypony would know that she was the daughter of the Princess of the Moon! Niece to the Princess of the Sun! How could anypony approach her now?! Her friends...they'd never...

*But isn't this what you wanted? A tiny filly voice whispered deep inside of her. Isn't this what you just dreamed about?*

Midnight tried her best to ignore it.

She would...she would simply have to come up with some sort of excuse to why she couldn't do it. That was it. She would look her Mother in the eye, and come up with some reason not to do this. She would use her exams, or something. M-Maybe even try to get it pushed back to once she graduated, give her time to think of a more permanent...

She would understand. She lifted her head.

"Mother, I...." Her eyes met Luna's own, and her voice died.

Luna's eyes...she recognized it now. It wasn't just the anticipation and hope of being accepted, there was the opposite as well. The fear, the fear of being rejected. Rejected by Midnight...

She had only ever seen that once before.

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Canterlot was amazing!

Midnight was on her very first by-herself trip to the Castle where her Princess Mommy and Gammy Cestya lived, and so far it had lived up to all of her expectations! So far, she had been shown the room she would be staying in (Even at her young age, Midnight was pretty sure that the two were spoiling her. Most toy trains weren't big enough to ride on... probably), gotten to see Gammy Cestya raise the sun, and had lunch in the royal gardens with the two Princesses!

But the best thing, the very *best* thing, was that she was going to get to spend all *week* with her Princess Mommy!

But as the day wore into the afternoon, Princess Mommy was starting to get tired, because she normally slept during the day! Thus, the decision was made to take Midnight to the library, because the little filly had picked up her Momma's love for reading, and Luna could use the quiet to get some sleep, without leaving her foal. So Midnight had spent the last hour reading, snuggled up against her slumbering Princess Mommy. She flipped the last page of the book she had been reading, and closed it. She hadn't just picked up her Momma's love of reading, she had picked up her talent for it, too.

Quietly, the little filly slowly slipped out from the cuddle her Princess Mommy had her entrapped in, and began to look around the library, looking for another book to read, trying to be as careful as possible to keep from waking Luna.

After a few minutes of looking, a book caught her eye. Bound in deep brown covers, it looked very old, and emblazoned on it's front was a stylized bust that reminded her a lot of her Princess Mommy, though she had to admit the green eyes that the pony had were a little creepy. Maybe it was a book about her? Her curiosity piqued, she cracked open the book, and began to read.

*Once upon a time, in the magical land of Equestria, there were two regal sisters who ruled together...*

It was! It was a book about the two Princesses! She definitely had to read this now! But before she could get too far, she heard Luna beginning to shift. While she thought she was being quiet, quiet for a filly is more than loud enough to wake the dead, let alone a slumbering Princess.

"Midnight?" Princess Luna murmured quietly, her bleary eyes looking in her daughters direction.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Princess Mommy, I didn't mean to wake you up..." Midnight said with regret. "I was just trying to find a new book to read..."

"Oh, it's alright, my darling. Did you find a good book?" Luna murmured quietly, smiling softly while trying to blink the sleep out of her eyes. Midnight nodded excitedly, and lifted up the book that she found, showing off that emblazoned Princess bust on it's front.

"I did! I think it's all about you and Gammy Cestya!" Midnight exclaimed cheerily. "I can't wait to read i-Mommy?"

Luna's eyes widened, and Midnight saw an unfamiliar emotion spread across her mother's face. Terror.

"Mommy? Are you okay?" Midnight asked worriedly.

"NO!" Luna let out a cry, suddenly lunging forward! Before Midnight could react, Luna's teeth grabbed the top of the book, and tore it from the startled filly! Midnight let out a cry of surprise, falling back onto her rear, her eyes widening, the tears starting to bead in her eyes. What had she done to make her Princess Mommy so upset?

"M-M-Mommy?" Midnight let out a terrified whimper, looking up at Luna. The Princess panted hard, and seemed to come back to reality. She dropped the book, and her terror was replaced by guilt.

"I'm...sorry...Midnight. I didn't mean to scare you...but..there are events in my life...embarrassing ones...t-that you shouldn't read about." Luna murmured, her eyes not meeting Midnights own. "I just...don't want you scared of me. Ever..."

Midnight looked up at her mother, and gently stood, her momentary panic being replaced by concern. There was just something in the tone of Luna's voice, in the words that she chose...

"I-I could never be afraid of you, Princess Mommy..." Midnight murmured quietly, slowly walking up to the shivering Princess, and nuzzling up against her. Luna paused, looking down gently at her daughter, and slowly wrapped a wing around her. She settled down, her horn glimmering, taking the book and opening it.

"Then...let me read the story to you. It's an ancient story, and a sad one...but it has a happy ending."

And so, Princess Luna began to tell the tale of the two sisters. To tell of the loneliness and frustration, of the birth of Nightmare Moon, and how Celestia was forced to banish her to the moon with the Elements of Harmony, despite the sorrow in her heart, to save all of Equestria. But she continued past what the book told, of Nightmare Moon's return a thousand years hence, told of how six brave ponies opposed her, and in doing so, managed to free the Princess from the hatred in her heart. How she was gifted a second chance, and the forgiveness of her elder sister.

And with that, Princess Luna finished her tale. Midnight had been silent throughout the story, and Luna felt a gentle chill down her spine, as she looked down at her daughter. Now that she knew the truth, the truth about her and Nightmare Moon, would her daughter be afraid of her now, afraid of what she had done? Would she never be able to see her as her 'Princess Mommy', but instead as a terrifying monster?

She needn't have worried.

Midnight trembled gently, and began to cry, tears leaking down her small cheeks. She looked up lovingly at Luna, and pressed her tiny body harder against her, her forelegs wrapping around the surprised Luna's neck as the tiny filly hugged the Princess tightly as her little body could.

"Mommy...Princess Mommy, you never have to worry about being lonely again..." She sniffled gently. "I'll always love you...even if you were to turn into that terrible pony again, I would always love you, and I would find a way to save you, just like Momma and my Aunts did..."

Luna blinked, feeling the tears forming in her eyes, and quickly returned the hug. She nuzzled the little pony fiercely, and let out a little sob.

"I am glad for that, my little Midnight... I will love you forever... and where love is... Nightmare Moon could never be. Thank you so much."

Mother and daughter did not let go of one another for a long time.

\*\*

She couldn't do it.

No matter what she thought, no matter her own worries, she couldn't say no. It would be tantamount to rejecting Princess Luna, and that's just something she couldn't do. Her mind kept flashing back to that day in the library, to that night on the hill, and there was no way that she could let her mother down, no matter her what her reservations were.

She forced a bright smile onto her face.

"...I'd love to...I'm so happy to.." She murmured, and surprised herself because that little filly voice that she heard before seemed to come out, making her sound far more sincere than she thought she would. Luna broke into the brightest, most relieved smile that she could manage, and hugged Midnight tightly with her wings and front hooves.

"Oh, I'm so glad...I was a bit worried, but I guess I was being silly. I can't wait to be able to present you up on stage, to everypony...my daughter..." Luna said, the excitement and pride creeping into her voice. "Oh, Rarity will be glad too! She's started making preparations for your dress, and she's already saying it's going to be one of her best works!"

"Oh...oh, great, of course." Midnight nodded, feeling the churning in her stomach. Luna reached, gently stroking Midnight's dyed hair.

"I do hope you'll return your hair to it's natural colour, you have such lovely hair. I just don't know why you'd... you'd... *hide* it like this.." Luna murmured in motherly tones. Midnight blushed hard, and leaned up against the Princess, her eyes closed. "Oh, and, of course, if you have any friends that you want to attend the Gala, I'd be more than happy to get them tickets to attend..."

Midnight didn't say anything, and the two stayed like that for a few minutes, until Luna slowly broke away.

"Well, I don't want to keep you awake any longer, I know that you have exams in the next few days, and I don't want you to fail them on my account." Luna said, starting to stand.



"Oh Mother, it's okay, I've studied and I'm all prepared, I promise." Midnight replied, trying her best to keep the nerves out of her voice. Luna frowned slightly, as if remembering something.

"Oh, I almost forgot, Twilight told me to tell you 'that day' is coming up soon...she knows that you can't leave for Ponyville during exams, but if you could send Trixie a letter, she'd really appreciate it." Midnight felt a slight chill, and let out a soft sigh.

"I will, Mother, I could hardly forget that day." Princess Luna nodded, and exchanged her farewells with her daughter, before slipping out of the window (aided a little by Midnight giving her a gentle push out). Midnight watched her go, and then turned to flump on her bed, besieged by nerves and frustration, worry and regret. How on Equestria would she be able to deal with this? It didn't help that there was that small filly deep inside of her, bouncing around excitedly, conflicting with her other emotions...

The sleep didn't seem to want to come that night.

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"I screwed up that exam so bad." Midnight groaned, putting her head on the table, her hay smoothie forgotten. Dusty and Inkwell rolled their eyes a little, but Inkwell was kind enough to pat Midnight sympathetically.

"I find that hard to believe, Miss 'Top-Of-The-Class'. You were done with the practical before the rest of us were, and I saw the prof, she seemed pleased." Dusty pointed out unsympathetically. Inkwell shot him a glare, then turned back to Midnight.

"Now, now. I'm sure you did just fine, Mids. Although, you do look tired, is everything okay?" Inkwell asked kindly, and Midnight slowly lifted up her head, trying (and failing) to rub the bags out from under her eyes.

"Nnh...I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm just tired, I didn't sleep well last night." Which was the truth. She was pretty sure that she hadn't gotten a single wink of sleep the past few nights, something that hadn't happened since her first few nights at university. The Gala was lurking like a terrible doom on the horizon, and each day that passed would draw it closer, so her mind seemed to compensate by making each day as long as possible.

"Yeah, I'm sure you *didn't!*" Dusty said teasingly - something that Midnight would have normally responded to with some sort of retort - but she just let out a little groan, causing her two friends to look worriedly at each other. "Hey, I was just teasing, I didn't mean..."

"Hey everypony! Guess what?!" The fourth member of their group, Diamond, exclaimed as she ran up to the table.

"Come to rub in the fact that you didn't have an exam today?" Inkwell muttered, as she rubbed her face.

"Don't be snippy." Diamond retorted, as Midnight lifted her head towards the new arrival, glad for the interruption.

"Hi, Diamond, what is it?" Midnight asked as Diamond settled down at the table.

"Through...certain sources...I found out the reason why the upcoming 3G is so special!" Diamond exclaimed. Her two friends groaned, but Midnight's eyes flicked open wide. No way, she couldn't know, could she? But then, all it would have taken is one loose lipped party planner or servant or even an overheard comment or two, and...and...

"Oh, geez, this again? Alright, I'll bite, what is it?" Dusty said with a sigh.

"Well, keep this among yourselves, but I've heard that Princess-" Midnight began to rise, intent on stopping Diamond, but it was going to be too late..."Celestia is going to unveil her son!"

"What." That was Inkwell.

"What." That was Dusty.

"What!?" That was Midnight. So close, yet so far. Thank goodness. She let out a sigh, rubbing the bridge of her nose with a hoof. "You know, you shouldn't listen to everything the tabloids say, Diamond."

"Hrmph, I can assure you my sources are reliable." Diamond huffed, and the other two ponies at the table began to laugh.

"Midnight's right, I see those things at the store all the time, I just don't know how you can possibly believe them!" Dusty exclaimed, and even Midnight was beginning to laugh.

"Yeah, they're always claiming things like that! Princess Celestia has an illegitimate son, Princess Luna has a daughter from a lovers tryst, it's all the same thing." Inkwell added, and Midnight's laughter suddenly turned into choking and gagging. Her three friends looked at her oddly.

"Are you alright, darling?" Diamond asked, and Midnight began to wave her hoof in reassurance as she tried to catch her breath.

"Fine, fine, just... smoothie...went down the wrong way..." Midnight took deep breaths, and settled down in her seat. "Hey, um, actually, that reminds me, I know it was my idea, but I won't be able to go to the bar with you guys the night of the Gala."

"Wait, what, why?" Inkwell asked curiously.

*If you have any friends that you want to attend the Gala, I'd be more than happy to get them tickets to attend...*

Maybe...maybe she COULD tell them. They were her friends, right? They'd understand, right?

What was the worst that could happen?

\*\*

She was so pretty.

The teenaged Midnight, only six months away from graduating, was so sure that this was the one. Her name was Shimmer Snowflake, she was a year older than her, and she had only just recently moved away from home to Ponyville. She had literally run into the beautiful, white-pelted, red maned pegasus when stepping out of the Library one day. She'd been on the stoop when Midnight opened the door without looking where she was going, and the two ended up in a pile of tangled limbs on the ground.

The irony was, this immediately had broken the tension between them; the two had ended up giggling at their predicament, as they slowly untangled themselves from each other. They seemed to click immediately, and Midnight's offer to buy Shimmer a cup of tea in apology for crashing into her was immediately accepted.

She was a writer, as her cutie mark signified, which suited Midnight just fine, seeing as the unicorn loved to read. She seemed to hem and haw a little when Midnight had asked to see some of her writing, but eventually relented and showed her. They were cute, emotional, well written romantic stories, and while the characters in them seemed strangely familiar, Midnight found them compelling. The stories, and their author.

So one day, Midnight took a deep breath, gathered her courage, and asked Shimmer out on a date... an offer that was accepted.

That was three months ago, and the past three months had been some of the happiest the unicorn could remember. The two had been drawing closer since the day they met, so close that there had been moments, that if they had a chance to be alone...

Eventually, that chance had presented itself. Mom Trixie had a big weekend show in Manehattan, and Momma Twilight and Spike had elected to go with her, leaving Midnight all by her lonesome. It gave her the opening they had been looking for.

It was a plan that she and Shimmer had come up with, the two would go on a date the night the three had left, and Midnight would simply go with her at the end of the night to her apartment, and the unicorn simply wouldn't leave until the morning of Sunday, well before her parents got home, giving the two ponies two whole nights to do...well, what it was that nearly-adult ponies who were attracted to each other did when they were alone with each other.

So far, the plan had been going *swimmingly*. The date had been incredibly successful, full of gentle caresses and meaningful looks, paying less attention to what they were doing, and more to each other. Finally, as night fell, Midnight became convinced that this was the right night: It was a new moon. The two ponies were taking the long walk to Shimmer's cottage on the outskirts of town, nuzzling and giggling with one another, growing closer and closer. Midnight was starting to feel brave; maybe if everything went right, she'd even be able to try out those rope tricks she had learned from her Mom, for more than just tying up some bullies...

That's when there was a rainbow blur, and a familiar voice calling out from behind to her, interfering with their carefully laid plans.

"Heyya, kiddo! Long time, no see!" Midnight and Shimmer blinked, and turned around. Midnight broke into a smile, and quickly rushed to hug the newcomer.

“Auntie Dash! It's so good to see you again! I thought you were on tour!” Rainbow Dash was looking as fine as the last time Midnight had seen her, four months ago. Her mane and tail were as beautiful as always, and she was dressed in the bodysuit that signified to all and sundry that she was a Wonderbolt, a member of the most elite flying team in all of Equestria.

“Oh, I still am, technically, but I got some really good news today, that I just had to share with my friends.” Dash smiled, giving Midnight a gentle nuzzle. Midnight went wide-eyed. There was only one piece of good news that she could think of..

“No way...really?!”

“That's right, kiddo. You're looking at the new *Captain* of the Wonderbolts!” Dash boasted, her chest puffing up proudly. Midnight let out a happy squeal, clapping her hooves together.

“That's so amazing! I'm so happy for you, Auntie Dash!” Midnight congratulated, and then remembered the third pony on the street. “Oh, where are my manners, Aunt Dash, this is Shimmer.”

“Oh? A girlfriend, eh? Well, she's a cute one, you have good taste, kiddo.” Dash and Midnight turned to look at Shimmer, who had the oddest look on her face. Rainbow Dash blinked. “Hey, is she okay?”

“Shimmer?” Midnight asked curiously.

Shimmer Snowflake let out a squeak of ecstasy, and promptly keeled over in a dead faint.

Their weekend plan was a bust, of course. Even once Midnight and Dash managed to revive Shimmer, the weekend had turned into an impromptu party (organized by Aunt Pinkie, of course), celebrating Dash's good news. While Shimmer was invited, she spent most of the party overwhelmed by the company Midnight kept. This only grew worse when Midnight's third mother, the Princess of the Moon, made her presence known to congratulate Dash, and use the party as an excuse to spend time with Midnight and the others. She was exceedingly polite to Shimmer, and the young pegasus was one of the few to learn of the parental relation, but that only served to overwhelm poor Shimmer even more.

Their relationship never really recovered from that moment. Their talks, which had been about each other, turned into discussions about the others. Gazes that were originally meant for each other turned into skyward looks. Their adventures and passions were to be smothered, as if Shimmer was expecting a lightning bolt from the sky from a particularly vengeful Princess to strike her for daring to lay a hoof on her beloved daughter.

They drifted away from one another, made only worse when Midnight left for University.

She still held out hope, though, that one day, maybe the writer that she had fallen for, the pony with whom she had shared those lovely three months, would manage to break through the barrier that had formed between them...

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Maybe it wasn't the best idea after all.

"Nnh, just a family thing I have to go to." Midnight said, trying to look as casual as possible. It wasn't like she was lying, after all. Not exactly.

"Well...okay." Inkwell said, clearly looking disappointed, as did the other two. Midnight let out a sigh, and rubbed the back of her head with a hoof.

"I'm gonna be a bit busy over the next few days, but..uhm...I'd really appreciate it if we could meet up again here in a couple of days? There's something I have to do then that I'm not looking forwards to, and I could use the support afterwards." *And that might be the last time that you see me as only Midnight.* She mentally added.

"Of course, Mids. We're here for you, no matter what. You know that, right?" Dusty said. Despite his abrasiveness and sarcasm, Midnight could hear the concern in his voice. She nodded softly.

"What do you have to do?" Diamond Shell enquired.

"Oh, I just have...to go see somepony."

"That doesn't sound too bad, unless it's your parole officer or something."

"She's...not alive anymore."

The table went quiet. Midnight fidgeted, playing with the straw to her drink. She felt bad for springing it on that like them, and she didn't...didn't want her last few times with them to be marred by that. Slowly, she looked up at the three, and gave them a small, but heartfelt smile.

"Also, I just want you three to know, that I'm really glad you're my friends."

"Geez, Mids, it's not like we're not going to be seeing each other again. So what if it's the summer vacation, we'll see each other in the fall, right? Stop being so fatalistic, things ain't gonna change between the four of us." Dusty scoffed, and the other two nodded firmly. Midnight blushed softly, and tried to ignore the voice inside that was telling her that it wasn't true.

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It was such a simple memorial for such a flamboyant personality, Midnight reflected, as she stared at the grave of the pony who was her namesake.

Grandma Midnight. The only family member that she had never had a chance to meet, having died around a dozen or so years before her successor was even borne. And yet, she had such an impact on the young mare's life.

When she died, Celestia had taken possession of her body, and had her interred here, on a windswept ledge above Canterlot, allowing her to watch over her beloved Princess.

She seemed almost like a dream, a figment of the imagination to the younger Midnight. Sure, she had heard the stories from her mothers, and had heard Celestia talk fondly about the stage magician, but to Midnight it produced the same far away imaginings as the rest of the stories that she had been told in her young life, never anything concrete. She could only wish that she had been able to meet her... which was about as likely as her childhood dream to be able to move the moon.

What was concrete to her, what was real to her, was the effect the elder Midnight had had on *her* Mom. Never mind that she was the one to bring Trixie into the world, the love that she had given Trixie, and the grief that she had left, were the things that had left the biggest impact to Midnight. That was what had shaped her Mom, and helped to forge her into the pony - and the mother - that she was today. That was the reason why she was up here, paying her respects to her namesake, on this wind-swept ledge, all by herself...

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"I want you to be very careful around your Mommy today, alright, Midnight?" Twilight told her over the breakfast table, gently ruffling the young fillies mane. Midnight had already had her suspicions that something was wrong: She *never* got up before Mommy in the morning. Spike, always, and Momma, whenever she had had a long night of study, but never Mommy. This only proved that her worries were correct.

"Why, what's wrong with Mommy?" Midnight asked, as she shovelled cereal into her mouth. It was going to be such a fine day, too, she was hoping that she would be able to convince her mothers to take her and Spike out on a picnic, maybe even to Auntie Fluttershy's cottage. She loved helping feed the animals...

"It's her sad day today, dear. You remember, don't you?" Twilight said comfortingly, and Midnight nodded softly. She remembered now, every year Mommy had a sad day. She remembered last year, Mommy had spent all day in her parents bedroom, and she had heard her crying and heard Momma trying her best to comfort her. In the end, Momma Twilight had sent Midnight to stay with Auntie Rarity for the day, unable to focus on both her and Trixie.

It looked like it was going to be as bad as last year, when Trixie finally made it to the table. Her eyes were already red and puffy, and when Twilight offered to make her breakfast, Trixie turned her down. She simply had a faraway look on her face, not seeming to focus on the here and now.

Midnight hated it! She hated seeing her Mommy like this! Every other day of the year, Mommy was so strong, loud and bright, like a shining star in the heavens, that to see the change hurt Midnight deep in the heart. She had to do something this year, she had to!

"Mommy? Why are you sad?" Midnight said innocently, as she slipped out of her chair. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Twilight look at her warningly, but she wouldn't be deterred this time. She moved to hug Trixie: an act that seemed to surprise the saddened unicorn. She looked weakly down at Midnight, not seeming to understand, as if seeing Midnight for the first time. Midnight flushed slightly.

"Midnight..." Twilight said gently, and moved to take the filly away from her mother. But before she could, realization seemed to flicker in Trixie's eyes. She shook her head at Twilight, and moved to gather Midnight close to her, holding the filly close, giving her head a gentle nuzzle.



"My darling...do you remember when you thought I went to live with the stars?" Trixie said quietly. Midnight shivered at the memory. She nodded slowly, remembering just how much it hurt..."Well, on this day, many years ago, my mother went to live with them forever."

"You mean...she can't come back? Like you did?" Midnight asked meekly, not really understanding the meaning of everything, except the pain that it seemed to bring her Mommy. Trixie shook her head gently, fresh tears starting to drip down her cheeks.

"No, she can't. It wasn't her choice. I'm sure if she did have the choice, she would have never left... That's why I'm sad, my little one..." Trixie murmured, gently nuzzling against Midnight's head, inhaling the scent of her young, lively daughter. "But she's not completely gone, you know."

"She's not?"

"No, because she lives on in me...and she lives on in you, my beautiful Midnight. And seeing you, I'm beginning to realize something. My Mother wouldn't want me so sad that I couldn't spend a such an nice looking day with you, with your Momma Twilight. With my family. We should enjoy every day that we can have with one another." Trixie whispered. Her eyes were still dripping with tears, but a smile had formed. A weak, small one, but a smile nonetheless. Twilight moved, to embrace Trixie and Midnight, stroking the two comfortingly.

"Are you sure, Trixie?" Twilight said, the typical concern apparent in her voice. The stagepony nodded softly, looking down at her daughter, then up at her mate.

"Yes. I'm sure she'd scold me for not taking every chance that I got, just in case..." Trixie replied, and Twilight seemed to understand. "Besides, maybe it would be best to temper a day that has bad memories, with *good* ones."

"Well, then... I'll go wake up Spike, and we'll put together a picnic lunch or something. Maybe we can convince our friends to come with us." Twilight kissed Trixie's forehead, looking relieved, before heading into the room that Midnight shared with Spike to wake the still slumbering dragon. Trixie watched her for a moment, before looking down at the filly nestled up against her. She nuzzled her lovingly.

"Thank you..." She whispered into Midnight's ear. Midnight blinked, looking confused.

"For what, Mommy?"

"For being you." Trixie replied. Midnight's ears twitched slightly. She still wasn't completely certain on everything that her Mommy had told her...but she seemed happier now.

And that was enough.

\*\*

She had sent a letter to her Mom, of course, she would have without being reminded by Luna. No doubt Twilight and Trixie would spend the day quietly with their friends. She doubted that Trixie would ever feel strong enough to be able to visit her mother's grave. But, since Midnight was living in Canterlot, she felt almost...an obligation to go. Despite her almost dreamlike nature to the young mare, the elder Midnight had gifted her with so much (not the least of which being her name) that she felt she deserved a visit, and the flowers that she had laid on the grave site.

Midnight's reverie was interrupted when she heard hooves clacking down behind her. She blinked, and turned around. Who else would be coming to visit?

"Celestia..." Midnight breathed gently, as the resplendent Princess of the Sun approached the grave, alone, without the guards that seemed to naturally follow her around, no matter where she went. The elder Midnight had had a relationship with Celestia, that was why she was here, of course. Midnight began to back up out of the way, turning to go. "I-I'm sorry, I'll leave, I'm sure that you want some time alone."

Her protests were stopped by a large wing stroking along her back. The Princess shook her head gently.

"No, please. I would love it if you would stay, Midnight. I should have expected that you would be here on this day too." Celestia said quietly. She looked a little more subdued than normal, but Midnight supposed that was only natural. The Princess gently laid her own bouquet in front of the grave, a beautiful cornucopia of bright flowers, obviously taken from the castle gardens. She lowered her head, her eyes closed, and the young mare could only guess what she was thinking.

They stayed like that for a few moments. Midnight wouldn't have dreamed of interfering with Celestia's remembrance. All she did was watch her, seeing that lovely pastel mane and tail drift in the wind. Midnight inhaled softly, as Celestia's appearance had started to drag those worries that Midnight had been having back from the depths. She was starting to realize how Celestia must have felt during the start of their dinner nearly a year ago, when Midnight had tried to refer to her as royalty instead of family. She could only picture of living like that, for a thousand years or more...

Midnight fidgeted slightly, rather hating herself for thinking such things at a time and a place like this.

"She would have been proud to call you her granddaughter, just like I am." Celestia finally broke the silence, and Midnight's train of thought. The younger mare looked at Celestia with awkward surprise.

"Wh-what?"

"You've grown into such a fine young unicorn. Your mothers have done a wonderful job..." Celestia praised her, and Midnight blushed. She looked down, not particularly feeling like she deserved those words. Celestia, ever perceptive, read the expression on Midnight's face. "Is something the matter, my little pony?"

"I...it's nothing, Celestia." Midnight tried to convince her. She turned away from the Princess, as if meeting her in the eye would divine all of her secrets to her 'grandmother'. She felt her heart pattering slightly.

"You're very much like Twilight, you know: a terrible liar. If you feel like it, you can talk to me about it, we are family..." Celestia said softly, comfortingly stroking the smaller unicorn. It only made Midnight feel worse; she wasn't deserving of this at all, like...

"I-I can't...you'd hate me..." Midnight finally whispered out, a strangled sob escaping from her lips. Princess Celestia blinked in surprise, and moved to nuzzle Midnight firmly.

"I find that hard to believe, my dear." Midnight began to cry all the worse, and as the Princess pulled her close, she felt the warmth and beauty of the Sun radiating through her undeserving body. The stress and worry finally broke through:

"I-I don't know if I can do this, G-Gammy!" Midnight sobbed out loud, reverting to that childhood nickname. "I don't know if I can do the Gala...b-be presented like that...I-I don't deserve it, anyways..."

Celestia frowned slightly, and that look alone, which Midnight took to be disapproving, was more than enough to send the unicorn into near hysterical babbling.

"I-I'm worried that everypony won't be able to see the real me but instead being the Princess' daughter! It was hard enough being surrounded by Twilight and Trixie and Rainbow Dash and...and...I didn't really realize it until I went to university but I like my friends and I'm worried I'll lose them! I know it's silly, I know it's silly, but...but..." Midnight shook hard, between sobs. "And the worse part, the worse part, is that I really really really want this I want to be Princess Mommy's daughter and want everypony to know it but I don't...I..."

Midnight's babbling turned into fierce sobs, as all of her worries and shame were out in the open, it felt like her entire soul was on display for Celestia. She squirmed slightly, surely she must be so disappointed in her now. And then her Moms would be, and she would deserve it, because she was throwing away such a great gift just for some silly petty concerns...

"I understand, Midnight. I was worried of this." Celestia's words were soft, and kind. Midnight's eyes widened, and she slowly looked up, braving the Princesses eyes.

"H-Huh?"

"I haven't spent over a thousand years as the ruler of all Equestria without gaining an understanding of the isolation that can cause." Celestia said tenderly, and slowly guided Midnight to the ground. She pulled her close, as a mother would her child. Midnight sniffled and wiped her eyes with her hooves.

"W-What do I do?" Midnight said weakly. "I want this...I want this so bad. I *am* proud to be their child, to have grown up with them and all their friends...to be your granddaughter. But I'm also afraid..."

Celestia was quiet for a moment, her face introspective, as she gently held the young mare.

"A very smart pony once told me something, Midnight. She told me that it didn't matter where a pony comes from, prince or pauper, they have masks that can hide who they are from the world. This mask can be made out of anything: where they come from, who they know, the mistakes that they made in the past." Celestia said, petting along Midnight's back gently. "But all is not lost, for there are ponies in the world who truly are meant for you, and they have the ability to pierce through that mask, to see the pony within. But they can only do it with help."

"What do you mean?" Midnight asked curiously.

"You cannot allow yourself to be defined by one thing, Midnight. You cannot allow that mask to become the face that you show to the world. Yes, you're the daughter of my sister, you're the daughter of the Great and Powerful Trixie and Twilight Sparkle, but that's not all that you are. You're talented at magic, you're smart and kind, a little bit of a klutz..." Celestia smiled playfully. "A university student whose dorm is far too messy... and no, you aren't fooling my sister by trying to hide everything under your bed, my dear Midnight."

Despite herself, Midnight let out an embarrassed chuckle. The darkness and stress that had been flooding through her was starting to lift.

"So, what you're saying...is that it's as much from the inside, as the out?"

"Yes...I'm not going to lie to you, Midnight. Sometimes it will be a little tough. But as long as you can show the mare inside, even just a little, you'll find the ponies who are there for you." Celestia smiled fondly. "Like you are for me. You and your mothers, and their friends. "

"I guess I know now why you pull all those pranks...and why you scolded me when I called you 'Princess'." Midnight blushed hard, a smile starting to slowly flicker across her face. Her heart wasn't beating as hard as it had been. Celestia nodded, smiling reassuringly.

"And remember, my lovely Midnight, that no matter what, you will always have ponies that will care for you, and who know the true you, deep within. Your family." Celestia kissed Midnight's forehead gently. Midnight slowly straightened, like there was a tremendous weight lifting off her shoulders...

"That's really good advice, Gammy...did my Momma write that to you?" Midnight asked. She thought back to the dozens, if not hundreds, of letters that Twilight had written to Celestia on the subject of friendship, love, and family.

“No...while your mother has told me of many of the lessons she has learned, this particular one, I learned from a different source. It's a lesson we had to learn together.” Celestia's eyes drifted, and Midnight followed her gaze, to the memorial in front of them.

It seemed like she owed her other Grandmother for one more thing.

“Thanks, Grandma Midnight...” Midnight said quietly, and Celestia tilted her head.

“So, have you decided what you're going to do, then?”

“Yes...yes, I have.”

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“Alright, we want to know what's going on, right now!” Midnight blinked in surprise at Dusty's demand. She had arrived at the cafe (taking the trip down on Celestia's back, like she was a filly again), only to find that her three friends had already beat her there. They had serious expressions on their face, and Dusty's sudden assault had left her a little flummoxed, which was making it difficult to come up with a response.

“It's just, Midnight, you've been so down the past few days, it's been worrying us.” Inkwell offered, and Diamond Shell nodded in agreement.

“Please, darling, we're your friends, whatever it is, we want to help you!” Midnight looked down, her heart fluttering slightly. She had put her friends through such worry over this, and they didn't even know why...Well, regardless of what would happen, they deserved to know.

“Alright, but we need to start at the very beginning for you ponies to understand.” Midnight explained as the three leaned forwards expectantly.

She dragged in a deep, sucking breath.

“I'm...Midnight. *That* Midnight.” Her horn glimmered, and she dispelled the dyeing spell in her mane and tail, the pink dissolving into her blue with purple striped locks. The statement hung in the air for a moment, and Midnight tensed...

“Well, it's about TIME you admitted it, darling!” Diamond Shell clapped her hooves on the table, and Dusty let out a groan.

“Agh, you couldn't wait until next year, could you? Now I owe Inkwell five bits!”

“That's right! Pay up, chump.” Inkwell said with a smile, and Midnight looked at her friends, positively stunned.

“Wait...y-you already knew?” Her friends laughed softly, and Inkwell reached out, gently patting Midnight's hoof.

“Mids dear, we love you, but you're a terrible liar. You flinched every darn time their names came up.”

“Definitely not subtle at all. I mean, 'Midnight' from 'Ponyville'? Ponyville's a small town with an even smaller unicorn population.” Dusty pointed out, and Midnight blushed hard.

“Not to mention, darling, that even with you dyeing your hair like that, you must admit the family resemblance is startling.” Diamond finished.

“Well, if you...if you knew, why didn't you say anything?!” Midnight protested, still reeling from the revelation. Inkwell smiled at her sympathetically.

“Well, you seemed to go out of your way not to bring it up, so we thought it might be a sore spot for you. We were waiting for you to say something. Honestly, we were a little worried that you had some sort of nasty falling out with them, and that you just didn't want to talk about it.” The other two nodded in agreement to Inkwell's statement. Midnight let out a sigh and shook her head softly. Suddenly she was feeling a little silly.

“No...never...it was never that.”

“Then what was it, darling?” Diamond Shell asked confusedly.

“It was...it was just a fear of mine, and I'm...I'm deeply sorry for not telling you all. Which sort of brings me to the next thing, the next reason I've been acting strangely the past few days...it's not something I can explain here. It wouldn't be fair to the ponies who this means so much to, so, uhm, here.” Her horn glowed, and three tickets floated out from her saddlebags, to the three unicorns. Dusty and Inkwell looked at them, confused.

Diamond Shell knew what it was right from the start.

"T-These are tickets to the Grand Galloping Gala!" She squealed with delight, and Midnight nodded.

"You were right, Diamond. Well, I mean, partly. The Celestia-has-a-son thing was completely off. But there is something special about this Gala, and I would...I would be honoured if you three would attend it. If you could be there for me." Midnight said quietly, her eyes meeting her friends. They looked down at those golden tickets for a long moment.

"Of course we'll come, Mids." Inkwell said. Dusty nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, this thing ain't really my bag...but you're our friend and we're gonna be there for you, for whatever this is."

"Oh, darling, I would love to come! Oh, my, the *Gala*! I've been dreaming for this day since I was a little filly!" Diamond finished, grasping that ticket like it was a treasure. Midnight rubbed her head ruefully.

"Oh, uhm, but I wasn't lying, Diamond. The Gala really is a bore. Believe me, I remember." Midnight admitted, and the other two tensed up for a moment, but no matter! Diamond Shell remained unfazed.

"Maybe that's true, but I'll be with you all, and I'm sure that it'll be alright, no matter how dreary the party is."

"I like the sound of that!" Dusty exclaimed. Midnight's face flushed as the three began to talk amongst themselves about this new plan. She could still feel that lingering sense of worry deep down in the pit of her stomach, but it didn't seem to be overwhelming her anymore. In fact, a growing sense of optimism - and trust for her friends - was starting to bloom inside her.

All she could do now was hope for the best.

\*\*

The days seemed to blur by. Midnight got through the rest of her exams, but her life was far from calm. Dress refitting, rehearsals, 'spa days' insisted upon her by Aunt Rarity, getting ready to go back home to Ponyville for the summer, even the brief amounts of time that she got to spend with her friends, how she seemed to be sleeping soundly once again... everything seemed to conspire to fill her time to the brink and make the Gala come that much quicker.



And before she knew it she was backstage, listening as Celestia and her Mother gave their welcomes to the assembled ponies of the Gala. Not that Midnight had had a chance to enjoy the Gala-or rather, enjoy her friends' and family's company. Makeup and final fittings had pretty much killed most of the day... plus there was that inconvenient fact that Midnight had to pretty much keep herself in hiding until she was introduced. It would only be a few minutes now, a few minutes until a part of her life changed forever.

Midnight dared to peek out of the curtains that she was standing behind. The crowd was huge, and Midnight shivered slightly. Her nerves were returning at this late hour, as she looked out at that sea of unfamiliar faces. She barely recognized anypony...but slowly, her eyes began to pick out the ones that were most important to her. Her friends, standing in the back, even Diamond Shell looking uncomfortable in the unfamiliar environment as they all looked around expectantly, trying to find the final member of their group. Her grandparents, chatting with one another. Her Aunts, and their families. Those butterflies were starting to diminish now, but there was something missing, something wrong..

She couldn't place her mothers. They didn't seem to be in the crowd. Where were they?

"You shouldn't be peeking at the audience before the show, darling, you'll only get yourself nervous. Take it from an old showmare." A familiar voice, teasing but warm, surprised her. She turned around, which was admittedly a hard proposition with the dress she was wearing.

"Mom? Momma? You're here?" Midnight asked. And sure enough there they were: Twilight Sparkle, the Element of Magic, resplendent in her Rarity-designed Gala dress, and The Great and Powerful Trixie, wearing her distinctive hat and cloak. But even those old clothes seemed new again; it looked like Trixie had finally relented and allowed Rarity to spruce them up, returning them to a glory that they hadn't possessed in years. Midnight trotted forward to press fondly against her parents, tears of happiness welling in her eyes.

"You didn't think that The Great and Powerful Trixie and her beloved Twilight Sparkle would be content to just *stay in the audience*, would you, my darling?" Trixie said playfully, as she gave Midnight a loving nuzzle.

"We were just as involved in that night as she was, after all!" Twilight added, and her two parents giggled quietly, a private joke for the two of them. Trixie stuck her tongue out playfully at her mate.

"From what Trixie recalls, she was the one who had to bear most of the burden. Which reminds me, Twilight Sparkle, by terms of our deal, you owe me a hoof rub after this is all over." She said with a smile.

"Oh, you're never going to let that go, are you? She's a mare now!" Twilight protested, but she had the same look on her face. It was an old game for the two mates.

"Never, Twilight Sparkle. Not until the day we both die. And even after that." Trixie stated, the two parents nuzzling and giggling with each other as if they were young lovers once again. Midnight's own smile was bright. Her nervousness had completely evaporated, banished by blue and purple...

"I'm so glad you two are here..." Midnight admitted, "It's been a little nerve-racking the past couple of weeks..."

"We're your parents, Midnight. And we always will be. Of course we'd be here to support you, on this very special day." Trixie said proudly, giving her daughter a loving stroke on the cheek with her hoof.

"Besides, I needed to deliver the very last piece of your dress." Twilight said, her horn glowing. Midnight blinked questioningly. "Every Princess needs a tiara, after all."

It appeared in a flash of magic, and Midnight let out a gasp. Twilight's head flicked gently, and she slowly slid it over her daughter's head.

"I couldn't...I mean, Momma..." Twilight smiled gently at Midnight's flustered protest, and shook her head.

"You're my daughter...you're as worthy as anypony to wear it, if only for a night. Now, let's get ready, I think they're almost ready for us." Midnight fell quiet. She strained, listening to the two Princesses on stage. Sure enough...

"I could not be prouder to be on this stage today. Today is a very special day for me, and for my sister, for our family." Princess Luna was explaining, and Midnight tensed. She took a deep breath, and the nerves threatened to come back, but she was flanked on each side by Twilight and Trixie, and that was enough to keep it down.

"Now, I'm sure many of you have heard the rumours. How I have a child, how I am a mother. The mysterious visits to Ponyville, the occasional sighting of a filly in the Castle. I am standing here tonight to tell you..." The tension in the audience could be cut with a knife.

"That they are absolutely true." Now the crowd erupted into surprised murmurs. Only a select hooffull could keep their calm. Luna and Celestia allowed it for a few moments, before hushing the crowd.

"Now that she is of age, I would like for you to meet her now. From the deepest depths of my heart, I hereby present to all of Equestria my daughter: Princess Midnight, and her other parents."

This was it. The curtains raised, and Midnight slowly stepped out into the limelight, trying her very best not to trip, not to let the butterflies to explode in her stomach. She moved to stand in front of everypony, moving past Princess Celestia and her mother, and stood on display for all of Equestria, her relationship revealed for all to see. Her ears twitched, picking up the stunned murmurs of the crowd. They were mystified by the revelation of not only the daughter, but of the mothers as well. Twilight and Trixie stood with their fellow mother, looking proud and beautiful, and Midnight...

Midnight was at her finest, her coat shiny and beautiful, her horn polished. Her mane, now in her proper, natural colours, was neatly trimmed and styled so much like her showmare of a mother. But that wasn't all, for Rarity's hard work over the past few weeks hadn't been for naught. Her dress was elegant and sleek, the colours the dark blues and purples of the night. Tiny gems were carefully planted all over the dress in such a way that in the light, they would twinkle like night stars. Perched on her head was her Momma's beautiful tiara, with that lovely purple star at it's head. But the most eye-catching part was the wings, a pair of artistic 'wings' emerged from the dress on her back, the masterpiece of that dress, almost life-like, as if she were a real alicorn... if only for a night.

"Greetings to you all. I am Princess Midnight, daughter to Princess Luna, to Twilight Sparkle, and to The Great and Powerful Trixie." Midnight recited, bowing low to everypony in the audience. Her eyes flickered nervously over the entire crowd, who had fallen largely silent (apart from that quiet murmuring). What were they thinking? What were her friends think-

“WOOOOOOO!” Came a cry from the back, and every head turned to the three ponies at the back, who were starting to clap their hooves against the ground eagerly!

“Way to go, Midnight!” Midnight broke into a smile, as she returned to a standing position. Her friends...and soon, they were joined by her family, her Aunts, and the ponies that they were close to, they were all clapping and cheering, making a louder ruckus than the rest of the crowd would have been capable of at their best. She felt a gentle nuzzle, and her Princess Mother was beside her, without a care for what anypony else would think. Slowly, almost by force, the rest of the crowd began to pay their respects. Midnight hardly heard them.

The ponies that she cared about, family and friends: *those* were the ones that Princess Midnight heard, the ones that she saw. The only ones who mattered.

She smiled, tears in her eyes, and bowed low once again, to them.

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“So, we don't have to call you 'Princess Midnight' all the time, do we? Because that's going to get real annoying, real fast.” Dusty said after Midnight had finally made her way to them. Once she had gotten off the stage she had been besieged from all sides by ponies she didn't recognize, wanting to know everything about her. There was even a rather disturbing proposal from Prince Blueblood about Midnight marrying his son! Thankfully, however, her mothers and Aunts had come to her rescue, with Aunt Rarity in particular taking great delight in shooing Blueblood off.

“Ugh. If you three start calling me Princess, I promise I will belt it out of you.” Midnight replied, rolling her eyes. “That's the last thing I want you three to do.”

Dusty chuckled. Diamond, meanwhile, seemed to be marvelling over Midnight's dress.

“It's absolutely gorgeous...oh, I'm so amazed...” Midnight blushed at Diamond's attention, and happened to glance at Inkwel, who had a pensive look on her face.

“Inkwel? Is everything okay?” Midnight asked, a bit of worry in her voice, the same fear creeping up just a tad. The rainbow-splotched pony blinked in surprise, and fidgeted a little. “C'mon, you can tell us...”

"It's just...you're not...gonna leave us behind, are you?" Inkwell whispered. "I mean...you're, like, royalty now, and...and we're just a bunch of college students..."

*But they can only do it with help...*

Midnight reached out, gently caressed Inkwells cheek reassuringly, and smiled.

"Hey, I'm still Midnight. Just 'cause I've got some title doesn't mean I'm any different. I've always been Luna's daughter, after all. We may all come from different places in life, but what we have in common is that we're friends with each other. That will never change." She said.

Inkwell paused for several moments, a look of thought on her face. As she thought over what Midnight stated, an impish smile broke over her face.

"We could always call you 'Prinnie', then..." Midnight's face took on a sour look for a moment, before she playfully bapped Inkwell's head.

"Don't think that I won't banish you to a dungeon somewhere just because you're my friend!" The splotched pony looked shocked for a few moments, before she broke down in laughter, and hugged Midnight tightly.

"Well, now that that's resolved, there's only one thing I've been wondering, here, Mids." Dusty asked, as the two mares released the hug. Midnight blinked, and looked in his direction.

"What is it?"

"Just...tell me..." Dusty rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Just how on EQUESTRIA is your family even possible?! I thought it was strange when you had *two mothers*, considering you look so much LIKE them! You're clearly not adopted! But *three*? I mean...I mean..."

Midnight giggled softly, as Dusty was reduced to sputtering.

"I have a very...unique family. What can I say? I'm....I'm blessed."

"Yeah, but...but...How?!"

"Any more than that, and we're getting into *very* private territory. Do you *really* want to know? I'm still regretting the day I asked them myself."

“Uhm...I think I'll take your word for it, then.” Dusty said, a faint blush on his face. The four friends laughed, Midnight hugging each of them in turn, just for the sheer joy of having them in her life.

“I'm not interrupting anything, am I?” A new voice interrupted, and Midnight turned to see her lovely Princess Mother. “I was just hoping that I might be able to get a dance with my daughter?”

Midnight blushed softly, and looked back at her friends. But before she could ask, Dusty pushed her forwards.

“Go on, then. We'll be here once you finish.” He said, with a look of mock annoyance on his face. Midnight smiled, as Inkwel and Diamond Shell nodded firmly, smiles of encouragement on their faces, and she knew that it was the truth. They would be.

“Thank you...” She said to them, and walked with her Princess Mother to the dance floor. Luna looked back at the three, and then to her daughter.

“Well, they seem nice...it's good to see that you have some great friends, my daughter.” Luna said. She looked more proud than Midnight had ever seen her before. This night was as much her night as Midnights own.

The two, mother and daughter, slowly took the beginning stances of the dance. It felt like they were the only ones on the dancing floor.

“Yeah, they're the best...” Midnight said quietly. “Just like my family.”

Then, the music began, and mother and daughter began to move together in tandem, their worlds reduced in that moment to each other. In the corner of her eye, Midnight could almost make out twinkling lights, surrounding the two. Whether it was a trick of the light or a trick of magic, it didn't matter.

They were dancing amongst the stars.

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The End of Moonlight Over Midnight

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# Chapter 3-1

## The Proposition

Spike sighed. He didn't know how much longer he was going to be able to put up with this.

"For Pete's sakes, Midnight, just go over there and talk to her!" The young-but-growing dragon scolded his 'little sister'.

"You don't understand, Spike, she probably hates my guts..." Midnight whispered, her gaze casting longingly at a certain red-haired, white-pelted pegasus who was nearby.

This scene had been repeating itself *constantly* over the couple of weeks since Midnight had returned home to Ponyville. Midnight mooning over her ex-girlfriend, without being willing to do *anything* about it.

Take this day, for example. Trixie was due to leave on tour the next day, and as usual when the others couldn't come, they would have a big family meal the night before. Unfortunately, when Spike began preparations for the meal (and he *always* was the one who cooked, he never trusted the others after the now-infamous Winter Celestial Festival Incident) he had learned that a shopping trip was in order.

Midnight had volunteered to come with him, and he really should have known better than to accept her help, considering the path took them past the cafe the two had so often frequented.

So, sure enough, she...her name was Shimmer, wasn't it? Shimmer had been there, and what should have been a five minute trip had turned into a fifteen minute trip: Five to shop, ten for Midnight to fret.

Mooning over a pony, but not doing anything about it, Spike didn't understand that at *all*!

"C'mon, Spike, let's just get going..." Midnight murmured, and began walking again. The dragon let out a sigh and raced to catch up. This was going to keep up forever at this rate...

"Hey! *Midnight!*" A voice called out after them, followed closely by a loud crash. The two stopped short, and turned around to see Shimmer trying to extract herself from the tablecloth. "Wait! Wait a second!"

"Shimmer?" Midnight asked, and let out a gasp of surprise as Spike pushed her forwards, helping to close the gap between the two mares. If this would head this silliness off at the pass, Spike was all for it. "W-What can I do for you?"

Shimmer just looked at her, her eyes exploring Midnight's nervous face.

"How long are you going to keep doing this?!" Shimmer finally exclaimed, frustration evident in her voice. Midnight took a nervous step back, her ears curling.

"Doing what?"

Shimmer flared her wings and she stomped the ground with one of her hooves, grinding it against the pavement.

"Oh, come on! Do you think you're being sneaky? I've seen you every time!" She said, and Midnight squirmed with embarrassment. "It's very hard to miss a pony with your profile, you know!"

"Shimmer, I'm sorry, I just..." Midnight sputtered, but Shimmer wasn't giving her the chance to mount a defense, seizing on the opportunity that she had, and barraging ahead.

"I geeked out over meeting Rainbow Dash! And I got a little scared about upsetting your mother...s. I... I was nervous! Anypony would have been! I don't get a second chance? Please?" Shimmer was practically on top of Midnight now. Her eyes watered and her lower lip quivered pathetically.

Midnight blinked, and soon Shimmer's blush was joined by Midnight's own. Her hoof kicked nervously on the ground, stirring up dust.

"I-it wasn't your fault. I should have warned you. I should have said something. I should have... should have done *something*. And I didn't. I just... gave up."

"Then, you mean?"

"Uhm...that I'm willing to give it a second chance if you are. I-I wanted to try after I got back! But I got scared that you wouldn't want to speak to me again after all



that happened.” Midnight whispered, having a hard time looking Shimmer in the eye.

“Oh, you silly filly...” Shimmer reached with a hoof, forcing Midnight to look her in the eye, and smiled. “I’m free Thursday night. It should be a good night for our second first date, don’t you think?”

“Y-You mean...”

“I’ll be looking forwards to it.” Shimmer said with a gentle giggle. With a flap of her wings and a just-slightly-too-flirtatious-for-Spike’s-tastes wave of her hoof, she was gone. He let out a sigh of relief.

“*Finally*. C’mon, Midnight, we gotta get going...Midnight?” Spike looked over at the purple pony, who was standing there with a stunned, and very, very happy expression on her face.. “Oh no.”

She couldn’t be...  
Not like her...

Midnight began to bounce around, giggling with glee, totally oblivious to the dozen or so weird stares ponies were giving her.

“Yesyesyesyesyes!”

Spike sighed. He didn’t know how much longer he was going to be able to put up with *this*, either.

# Chapter 3-2

## Dress Sense

"This one? No... This? No... Aggh, damn it!"

Twilight Sparkle had learned much in the nearly twenty years that she had lived in Ponyville. She had learned many things; friendship, love, and motherhood prime amongst them. Beyond that, she was a veritable bastion of knowledge, from the magical to the mundane, the esoteric to the everyday. Indeed, it could be said that Twilight Sparkle had more knowledge, had learned more things in her lifetime, than could be contained in the library that was her home.

As she watched her only daughter, the light of her life, bustle around her room in a panic, tossing through her clothing, and trying desperately to comb and style her hair in a dozen different ways, none of the knowledge that was at her beck and call seemed to be applicable for a young, love-struck mare who was desperate to make the best of the second chance she had been given.

"Dear, I think you're worrying too much. I'm sure Shimmer will like you in anything you wear." Twilight half winced as she watched her daughter in the act of brushing her mane with the kind of desperation one normally reserves for, say, fleeing an angry hydra.

"It's got to be better than 'like', Momma! Everything has to be perfect! I've got to *impress* Shimmer! Everything has to go right!" Midnight babbled with a nervous tone in her voice that Twilight found painfully familiar. Every stroke of that brush was now directed at a single lock, that kept falling back between her eyes, mocking the unicorn's best efforts. "I've already booked reservations at the best restaurant in Ponyville, got tickets to Miss Lyra's recital in the park; Shimmer loves her, and reserved 'our' table at our favorite cafe, but that's not enough! I've got to do this ri-DAMN IT!"

Midnight slammed the brush down on the counter, eliciting a wooden creak of protest from the furniture and a nervous frown from her mother. That stubborn lock still laid between Midnight's eyes, as if mocking her and her efforts to tame it. The flustered unicorn glared at the offending hairs, then slowly turned to look at her mother in the mirror. Twilight felt a chill down her spine.

"Momma, what did *you* do to impress your dates?"

There it was. The question that she had been fearing most of all. Twilight Sparkle, the smartest pony in all of Equestria, was left without a clue. She tried to hide her nerves behind a small laugh.

"M-Me? D-Dates?" She fidgeted, as Midnight turned to look at her questioningly. "Y-You know I didn't date that much before your Mom..."

At all. She didn't date *at all* before The Great and Powerful One.

"Well, what about when you two were first getting together? What did you do?" Midnight pressed, her eyes desperate, pleading her ever-wise Momma for some small snippet of information.

"D-Dear, we didn't exactly...fall in love in the normal way, you know that, your Mom told the story..." Twilight's mind raced. Had they ever been on a normal date? They had been comfortable before they were grandly romantic, and with Trixie being a performer, and the romantic things that they *had* done didn't seem applicable in her daughter's situation, and she certainly couldn't talk about the...private...things they had done at home, and...

Wait.

At home. That was it!

"Momma?" Midnight tentatively asked. Twilight had been quiet for a few seconds.

"Now that I think about it, dear, I have something that just might be able to help you out after all!" Before Midnight could protest, Twilight ran out of the room at top speed. The young mare sighed and returned to the piles of clothing that she had cast about. Why weren't any of these good enough?

Fortunately, it was only a few moments until Midnight heard her mother gallop back into her room.

"Here we go, this should be able to help you, why don't you give it a read?" Twilight offered, as Midnight turned to look at her. In the clutches of magic, a peculiar book hung in the air...

No.

No way. It couldn't have been.

Midnight felt heat rushing to her cheeks. Surely not, not the secret Book that her two mothers kept hidden in their room...

Perhaps a little more excitedly than she should have, her horn flared to life, and she took the book, feeling excitement tingling down her spine. Finally, she would get a chance to read through....

*"A Young Pony's Guide To Dating!?"*

"I knew I had seen a book on dating somewhere in the library! It's been kicking around here ever since I moved in, but I'm sure it'll help!" Twilight smiled proudly. Looking at the book, Midnight couldn't help but be disappointed.

"G-Gee, thanks, Momma..." She forced a smile, and flicked the book open. As if by serendipity, it fell to a page that seemed to offer a solution to her problem...

*"You always want to be dressed at least two levels of formality above your date. If she shows up wearing nothing and you show up in a full gala dress then you are in the best possible situation. She will be aware of how much more important and beautiful you are than her and will accept that she would be lucky to have you. The impression is made even more powerful if you wear such a gown to an otherwise unfitting location, like a baseball game."*

"That's it!" Midnight exclaimed. "My Gala Dress!"

"Your *Gala Dress*? Don't you think that's a little much? Besides, you could barely move in that!" Twilight said.

"It's what the book says! The reasoning is a little strange, but I am trying to dress to impress, and what's more impressive than my Gala Dress?" Midnight exclaimed, a scarily familiar look in her eyes.

"I-I guess, but..." Twilight was cut off by Midnight kissing her cheek.

"Thanks so much, Momma! I need to go see Aunt Rarity for the dress, and her help putting it on! Last time it took three hours to get it on, so I need to get started right now!" Without letting Twilight get a single word out in return, Midnight was already heading for the front door.

"You're welcome?"

Twilight Sparkle, the smartest pony in all of Equestria, began to wonder if she had made a mistake.

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"I must say, darling, I am rather surprised that you wanted to wear this again!" Rarity exclaimed, as she slowly tightened the corset around her wincing niece. "What did you say you wanted to wear it for?"

"It's for a date tonight!" Midnight managed to gasp out, the air in her lungs in precious short supply. "I'm trying my best to impress her!"

"A date? Ahhh, the romance of young mares! Tell me, darling, where is she taking you?" Rarity hummed, as she finished with the corset, and settled in, applying the layers and layers of that ornate dress onto the fidgeting pony. "Darling, please hold still, or this will take forever!"

"S-Sorry, Aunt Rarity. And *I'm* taking her-"

"Wait, dear Midnight. No, no, you're the *lady* in this relationship, she should be working to impress *you*!" Rarity scolded. "After all, you are *royalty*!"

"I...don't think it works that way, Aunt Rarity, and I don't want to her to think of me as *royalty*!" Midnight shook her head. "No, I'm going to make sure that everything goes absolutely *perfectly*. Shimmer deserves no less."

"Well, if you say so, darling..." Rarity said skeptically. "But I must commend you for your fashion sense, at least! My my, I must have rubbed off on you a little more than I thought when you were growing up! Wearing this dress is going to absolutely wow her!"

"Do you think?"

"Oh, my, yes! Just, please, please, *please* try to be careful with it! It's one of my masterpieces, you understand!"

Midnight smiled.

"Oh, Aunt Rarity, I'll take good care of it. I promise."

# Chapter 3-3

## Wining and Dining

*“The best things in life come to those who wait. If you rush to your date and arrive too early, she will think you are desperate. However, if you show up late, it will be her who is anxious. She will be worried that you have bailed, and will be grateful when you arrive, regardless of how late you are.*

*We recommend a half hour up to an hour, any later, and you will be cutting precious time from the date itself. By doing this, it will make it seem like you can get a date from anypony at any time. This helps to solidify the fact that you don’t need to be doing this, and that you are doing more for their sake than yours. If you can get this image into their head, they are practically yours!”*

Shimmer fidgeted, and looked up at the clock for a third time.

Twenty minutes.

Where was she? They had agreed to meet at 6 o’clock, and now it was 6:20. Had Midnight stood her up? She wouldn’t have thought so, Midnight wasn’t that type of pony, but maybe she had decided that last time had ended so badly...

Twenty-five minutes.

Shimmer let out a sigh, and kicked a hoof against the ground. This wasn’t like her at all. Had something changed while she was at University?

Thirty mi-

“SHIMMER!” The pegasus nearly jumped out of her skin. The landing was no picnic either: only a miraculous sequence of wobbling and desperate prayer let her avoid an undignified face plant.

“Midnight, where have you been? You’re thirty minutes lat-” Shimmer trailed off, as she beheld what her date was wearing.

She had seen it before. Midnight’s Gala had been in all of the papers the day after, and that brilliant dress that the newly-announced Princess had been

wearing had been front and center. But this was her first time beholding that lovely piece of dark, delicate, and flowing fabrics, those wings raising high in the air. She looked beautiful, she looked stunning, she looked...

"Uncomfortable. You look really uncomfortable in that..." Shimmer said with concern, and it was the truth. The dress had never been meant to be more than a show dress with limited mobility, and Midnight was clearly suffering that now. She squirmed in the dress, and smiled weakly.

"But d-do I look good? It takes forever to get anywhere in this, that's why I'm so late!" Midnight fluttered her eyes and half smiled, caught halfway in between apologizing and fishing for a compliment.

"You look great! But now I feel a little under-dressed," Shimmer said. She had only selected a simple, but cute, yellow sundress. It had seemed perfect for the date that they had planned, but now she wasn't so sure. "I didn't expect that you would be..."

Midnight blinked, and the briefest moment of panic flashed in her eyes.

"I-I just felt like dressing up for you, that's all! Uhm...you look absolutely wonderful, Shimmer..." Midnight said, a light pinkish hue rising in her cheeks.

"Well, wonderful. Shall we?"

"We shall! I made reservations to the best restaurant in all of Ponyville! Prepare to be wined and dined like you've never been before!"

\*\*\*

"Yes, we have reservations tonight, under 'Midnight'?"

"Midnight...Midnight...no, ma'am, we don't have any under that name. I'm sorry, no reservation, no table."

"But...I made them three days ago."

"If you did, then you would be on the list."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Why, yes."

"Well, then..."

"You're somepony who doesn't have a reservation."

"Do you have any tables available tonight?"

"Why, certainly!"

"Great, we'll take a table for two."

"Excellent, please come back at midnight."

"..."

"What? Why is this restaurant closed? It was open yesterday!"

"Ma'am, all of my staff just quit. I ain't got no food to feed you with, I ain't got no pony to cook you that non-existent food with, an' I ain't got a waitress to serve you that non-existent non-cooked food with. You and your marefriend just get outta here."

"I'm...not even going to ask what happened here."

"Fire."

"W-We'll be leaving. Good luck with all this?"

"*So much fire!*"

\*\*\*

*"You must always make yourself appear cultured in every sense. When you go to a fancy restaurant (and you absolutely must go to the fanciest restaurant in town), order "The Usual". It does not matter if you have never been to the restaurant before, by ordering "The Usual", you make it look like you are a regular and know your way around luxury.*

*Failing that, just glance it over and then say something that sounds French. The waiter probably won't speak French, but he will be too embarrassed to admit it,*



*so he will simply bring you the finest food. Furthermore, you will impress your date. Works every time."*

"What use is being a Princess when you can't throw it around a little? Now we're stuck in the last restaurant in town." Midnight grouched as they picked their way through the tables. She tried to ignore the glares that were being cast in her direction, as her over-sized dress brushed against chairs and jostled tables, interfering with ponies' dinnertime.

Midnight was relatively sure that something had spilled on her along the way, but she wouldn't be able to check until she took the dress off.

"Oh, it's alright. We've been to this place a couple of times, this is...nice." Shimmer tried her best to be encouraging, as they located an empty table. Midnight's horn glowed, as she pulled Shimmer's chair out for her.

"That's just it, though! I wanted to be able to take you to a really *good* place, not a diner that we've already been to..." Midnight said, trying to hide the pout forming on her lips. Once Shimmer was comfortable, she began the long task of settling down herself, her dress foiling her efforts to sit like a normal pony would. It took a few long moments, but she finally managed to get mostly comfortable. Mostly. Shimmer reached across the table, gently stroking one of Midnight's hooves with her own.

"I'm alright with anyplace we go, you know that." She reassured, and the two mares smiled at each other. Their waitress, an older, grey and white pelted mare, came to take their order. The bags under her eyes betrayed her tiredness, and the terseness in which she spoke revealed that this was a pony who was reaching the end of her shift, and glad for it.

"Yes, we'll take The Usual, please." Midnight spoke with refinement, putting on an almost regal air. Both her date and the waitress fixed her with blank stares. Midnight felt her collar heat up slightly. "The...Usual...?"

"Miss, I'm really not sure where you're going with this. What do you want?" The waitress said, lacking in patience and politeness.

"Midnight, what are you talking about?" Shimmer added, confused. Midnight coughed hard, and her cheeks went red. Time for Plan B.

"Yes, two *Fleur de marguerite* sandwiches, please."

“What? Look, filly, speak normally, would you? I ain't got all day.” The waitress tapped her hoof in irritation, and Shimmer was blushing in embarrassment. Midnight let out a soft sigh, and gave up.

“Two Daisy Sandwiches, please.” The waitress stalked off after taking the order, muttering something not too flattering, and Shimmer looked at Midnight oddly.

“What was *that* about?” The pegasus questioned, and Midnight couldn't help but sigh again, feeling a little deflated.

“Nothing, just...nothing. Let's move on. How...How have you been doing since I left for school? We haven't talked in so long, what's new in your life?” Midnight asked, both desperate to change the subject, and out of genuine curiosity. It had been far too long since they had spoken...

Shimmer blushed, and stammered slightly, before murmuring something under her breath.

“What was that?” Midnight asked, tilting her head in curiosity. A slight chill ran through her. Could it have been something embarrassing, that she didn't want Midnight to know about? It *\*had\** been about eight months...

“I said, I'm in talks with a publisher...” Shimmer said a little louder, blushing and looking proud at the same time. Midnight squealed excitedly, and grasped Shimmer's hoof tightly between her own.

“Oh, that's so great! I knew somepony would finally recognize your talent!” Midnight said, leaning towards Shimmer. The pegasus was looking very pleased with the attention that her date was giving her.

“Well, there's nothing solid yet, but it's looking really good.” Shimmer admitted, the two mares staring at each other across the table. Midnight playfully and daringly moved her hoof under the table, to rub against Shimmer's own.

“So is it the Silver Lining stuff? I love the Silver Lining stories.” Midnight said excitedly, and Shimmer grinned in response.

“You only like the Silver Lining stories because you came up with her name!” Shimmer accused, giving her hoof a gentle kick under the table.

“Hey, that’s not fair, I still would have loved it even if we hadn’t named her after that ‘pegasus’ I drew for my Momma!” Midnight huffed playfully.

“Well, alright, but no, it’s not the Silver Lining stories. It’s a new series I’ve been writing recently.”

“Oh? What is about?” Midnight asked curiously, and frowned a little as Shimmer squirmed a little in her seat.

“Well, you see, it’s about this Princess, and her adventures in love...” Shimmer said, looking a little flustered. Midnight smiled knowingly, leaning forwards a little.

“A Princess, huh...” She murmured approvingly, and Shimmer nodded, blushing.

Their conversation lapsed slightly, as they looked into each others eyes. The moment was theirs alone, and they slowly began to lean towards one another...

“Attention, please, everypony!” Their waitress announced as loudly as her tired voice could manage, clearly aggravated at having to be doing this. The two gasped in surprise, their heads bonking against one another, Midnight’s horn fortunately avoiding impaling Shimmer. Once they recovered, they irately glared at the waitresses direction. She seemed to be plastered tightly against the doors to the kitchen. From within, Midnight thought she could pick up crashing, and faint squeaks...

“Due to an...unexpected...Parasprite infestation, we regret to inform everypony that the kitchen must be closed! We do have a musician coming in to deal with them, but she won’t be arriving for another two hours. Until then, we need to keep the kitchen sealed to prevent them from spreading. We apologize for the inconvenience, but we’re going to have to ask everypony to leave.”

There were groans from the disappointed patrons, and Shimmer shrugged a little, trying to look optimistic.

“Well, maybe we can go have a picnic? That would be nice...” She offered, but Midnight wasn’t having anything of it. She swore to herself that Shimmer was going to have a nice dinner at a restaurant, even if it killed her! Surely a minor Parasprite infestation wouldn’t be that hard to deal with, Aunt Pinkie had handled them just fine!

She stood up, and waved her hoof, getting the waitresses attention.

“Excuse me, but I can get rid of your Parasprite infestation!” Shimmer looked at her.

“Really, Mids, that's okay...”

“We're going to have a proper dinner, I promise, Shimmer! Aunt Pinkie's told me a thousand times on how she got rid of the huge Parasprite infestation before I was born, and while I might not have the instruments on hand, I'm sure I can replicate the sounds with my magic.” Midnight explained, already on the move towards the kitchen, forcing Shimmer to catch up with her.

“You sure about this, filly?” The waitress said, sizing the unicorn and the pegasus up. “Hey, you look familiar, ain't you Twilight Sparkle's daughter? Didn't she make that infestation-”

“What's the worst that can happen?” Midnight interrupted. “You're going to be eaten out of all your supplies if I were to screw up somehow or not, and as long as you keep the kitchen sealed, they won't go anywhere else. At the best, I'll be saving you money.”

“Your funeral, then...” The waitress said with a sigh, and she opened the doors just long enough for Midnight and Shimmer to slip in, before closing them with an ominous slam.

They stepped into chaos. The cooks, the few that hadn't escaped, were cowering under tables as dozens of multi-coloured, flying orbs with mouths devoured every edible thing in sight. Midnight took a deep breath, and stepped forwards.

How did Aunt Pinkie say that song went again?

She began to weave the sound-producing spell, and an infernal racket began to flow from her horn. Shimmer winced, and covered her ears with her wings, and the cowering chefs plugged their own ears with their hooves. Midnight shuddered, as the sounds started to get to her as well. She wasn't sure if the music she was playing was completely accurate, but the Parasprites seemed to be slowing down, their adorable faces slowly turning towards her.

“Hey, it's working!” Shimmer cried out, and Midnight smiled in pride. It was! They would have a lovely dinner yet, and what was more, she had impressed Shimmer! This was what the book was talking about in it's own unique way,

impressing your date! She let out a happy little squeak, before looking up at the Parasprites.

They were all looking at back her.

“Is this what’s supposed to happen?” One of the chefs asked, and Midnight had to admit to herself that she wasn’t completely sure.

Then the Parasprites smiled.

Open, wide smiles.

Showing bright, shining teeth.

So, so many teeth...

“Oh, Celestia.”

# Chapter 3-4

## At the Theater

*"If you and your date go to a performance, remember, the fillies love a running commentary. The louder the better. If you can get your voice louder than the ponies on stage, you have succeeded. It doesn't matter exactly what you say, or how informed your argument is. Just the act of speaking makes you look smart, and provides entertainment to your date and those around you."*

Alright, so dinner had been a disaster, and they were never, ever, ever allowed back at that diner ever again. But it was still early in the evening, and there was plenty of time to turn the date around! One bad experience did not a bad date make!

And this? This couldn't fail.

A beautiful summers evening, the stars already starting to twinkle in the sky. The soothing, almost hypnotic sounds of Lyra's harp, as she played for the small audience that had gathered quietly for this outdoor recital.

It was going so well that Midnight didn't even mind the fact that she was almost assuredly getting grass stains on her dress. The stress of the disastrous dinner was starting to evaporate into the night air, and she felt a gentle weight start to press against her side, felt Shimmer's head lean up against her own.

"This is so nice..." Shimmer whispered, looking adoringly up at the lime-green performer up on stage. Midnight felt her cheeks flush with delight. She knew Shimmer absolutely loved Lyra (to the point where if Midnight were a different pony, she might be jealous), so when Midnight had learned that she was putting on a concert on the night of their date, she had spent a long night huddled in a tent to ensure she was first in line for tickets.

And it was worth it! Midnight turned her head, to look at the lovely pegasus who was her company. She was the prettiest thing here, at least to Midnight's eyes. The gentle music of the harp was echoing through the park, and there were no other noises to interfere in on the atmosphere, not even a cough or a throat being cleared coming from anypony.

Yes, this was it. It was the perfect moment, it was exactly what Midnight had been hoping for, what she had struggled and planned so much for. She leaned in, intent on kissing the cheek that was presenting itself to her...

"Hark, my beloved!"

Midnight flinched back, and looked around fearfully, trying to ignore the chill that ran down her spine. Ponies around her looked about in irritation, trying to find the source of the noise that had interrupted the atmosphere they had been so careful in maintaining.

No, it couldn't be *him*. He was safely back at Canterlot, far, far, *far* away from her.

Even if *was* him, she would simply pretend that she hadn't of heard anypony! She snuggled closer to Shimmer, who smiled, having been far too distracted by the concert and her company to be distracted by any errant voices. Shimmer turned to look at her, delight sparkling in her eyes, and that chill was replaced with a delightful warm tingle. They began to lean forwards, their lips about to meet...

"Ah, my beloved! Once again our paths cross. Truly, our fates are intertwined with one another!"

The moment evaporated as quickly as it had begun, as that voice repeated itself, closer now. The two slowly looked up at the pony who had so rudely interrupted them, and Midnight let out a despairing sigh.

He really was the spitting image of his father. Midnight knew ponies took after their parents, she of all ponies was proof at that, but Prince Blueblood II looked so much like his father that Midnight was privately convinced that he had simply, one day, budded off of his father in a strange form of mitosis. It would certainly explain a few things.

"What are *you* doing here?" Midnight hissed quietly while Shimmer looked confusedly between her and the intruder into their privacy. Blueblood flashed a dazzling smile, one that had enraptured many a young mare that didn't know any better.

But Midnight *did*.

"Why, I have come to this...delightful little town...to partake in it's...quaint country charm, of course! I felt it would be a refreshing change from the court."

"Uh-huh. Your dad put you up to this, didn't he?" Midnight sighed.

"My *illustrious* father believed that it would be a good chance to spend time with my fiancée, and yet here I find you, in the hooves of another mare! How scandalous!"

They were starting to get more of an audience at this point, as eyes turned towards the drama that was unfurling in their midst. Midnight felt her eyebrow twitch, as a slight headache formed behind her eyes.

"Fiancée? Midnight, what's going on? What is he talking about?" Shimmer asked, with what sounded like panic in her voice. Midnight had to head this off at the pass, and quickly.

She sprung to her hooves, as quickly as her dress would allow her.

"Blueblood, you are not my fiancée! We met *twice*, after the Gala, and that was because your father kept shoving you into my path! I don't know what ideas he's been feeding you, but it's not going to happen! Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm trying to spend some time with my marefriend."

Blueblood tilted his head, looking between the standing, seething Midnight, and the sitting Shimmer. She was looking pleased at Midnight's loud exclamation that they were lovers.

"*Marefriend*? You are attempting to tell me that this is not some form of youthful experimentation? My Purple-Pelted Goddess, you cannot be telling me that you are a fillyfo-"

"You use that term, and I will force-feed you my bustle. I'm not sure which part of this dress is the bustle, so it *might take a few attempts*!" Midnight yelled, the anger clear and rising in her voice. Anypony who was looking on, when recalling the incident later, would have sworn that they had seen Midnight's eyes go from blue to green. Blueblood (the Second) took a step back, and Midnight hoped beyond hopes that it meant he had given up.

Instead, however, he turned from the seething Princess, to Shimmer, his demeanor shifting from romantic, to one of scorn.



"You, filly. What can you possibly have to offer her?" Shimmer blinked at the question, and squirmed with discomfort under his gaze.

"Well...I...I make her laugh, and..." She began, and Blueblood looked at her blankly, as if not even considering that an answer. His silence caused Shimmer to continue groping for an answer.

"And...I'm a good listener..." Blueblood cocked an eyebrow at that. That was a *thing*? Shimmer coughed slightly, and her eyes traced nervously for a moment from the handsome, intimidating stallion, to Midnight.

Who was blushing hard, a particularly goofy little smile on her face. A soft, pleased giggle escaped from the unicorn, bolstering Shimmer's courage.

"And I write her poems..." She said, puffing her chest out. Just a little.

"A *writer*? Well, at the very least, you seem to be a *little* more civilized than most that live in this...lovely town. Nevertheless, you gaze upon the visage of Prince Blueblood (the Second), of the illustrious Blueblood line. I can trace my lineage back a thousand years! You cannot possibly believe that you are in the same *league* as I, do you?"

"I don't think Mids really cares about that sort of thing. Especially not with *her* lineage" Shimmer quirked a smile, starting to feel the rhythm. "But she'll flip over a good poem. And there's one last thing too, and that's the most important one of all."

Midnight blushed furiously, the goofy smile spread further across her cheeks, and her eyes were as starry as the night sky her mother was famous for.

"Oh? And what would that be?" Blueblood asked, skepticism evident in his voice.

"I'd go through *anything* for her." Shimmer stated, starting to rise, staring confidently at the noblepony.

At the same time, driven by her words, Midnight had started to moving closer to Shimmer, clearly intent on rewarding the pegasus with some kind words of her own, and perhaps a nuzzle or two before presenting an united front towards Blueblood. Unfortunately, in the meeting of these two romantic gestures, when Shimmer stood, her hoof came down on a part of Midnight's dress just as the

unicorn was moving herself, which as it turned out was a very unstable place to put one's hoof.

Now, Midnight had never been particularly graceful. Oh sure, she could move properly just as long as she put her mind to it, but it *really* didn't come naturally to her. In fact, she had a second special talent for tripping and bouncing her head off things. But even she couldn't hope to match Shimmer in the four-left-hoof department: the pegasus pony was a master of the ancient art of stepping on things that she shouldn't.

And so, the end result of this spectacular moment of dual-klutz was a sickening tear of fabric, and Shimmer being sent stumbling to the ground, her legs somehow getting bound in the strip of silk that she had accidentally torn from Midnight's dress. She began to struggle, which only made it worse.

Midnight stooped to help her, only to hear a soft, derisive snort from behind her.

"I do apologize, my dear diva, for I would never dream of questioning any of your decisions, but I must ask why you're thinking of choosing that surprisingly graceless pegasus...." He trailed off. "Unless you feel she'd be a way to get further dresses from your parents, but why? Exactly! You need to get more dresses in order to increase your already wondrous beauty to capture my heart!" he said, oblivious to his surroundings.

Midnight's eye twitched fiercely as she tried in vain to wrap her mind around the fact that this pompous white foal actually believed a word of what he just said. She whirled on Blueblood II, giving his chest a painful poke with her hoof.

"Shimmer has more grace and dignity *tied up* than you do *ever*! Get this through your thick head, *Prince*. You are not my fiancée! I am not, I repeat, *not* interested in you!"

With that, she turned back to Shimmer, to help untangle the struggling pegasus, an apologetic look on her face. Blueblood was quiet for a long moment.

"Ah, I believe I am beginning to truly understand..." He finally spoke, and Midnight blinked. Had she finally gotten through his thick skull? Did he finally get it?

"Of course, my heliotropic muse! How silly I must have seemed, almost foalish even, as impossible as that may seem! Naturally, a brilliant and noble knight such as myself must win the hoof and heart of such a lovely beauty such as

yourself with his marvelous deeds, and not simply with his astute grasp of the noble tongue. So that is what I shall do - I shall go forth on a noble quest, one that this little... writer... of yours would beg me to be able to tell! A quest that all our glorious descendants shall sing my praises! I do not fault you for wanting this lovely, if lowly, filly to keep you from more masculine fare as you wait for me, my lovely lady. I must ask a thousand pardons for having ever thought I could win your beauteous hoof with anything short of the greatest deeds known to pony kind!"

Midnight and Shimmer just *looked* at him, neither knowing what to say. Midnight felt her head throb as he looked down at the tangled-up Shimmer, flashing her another "winning" smile.

"You, storyteller! I require from you a quest befitting the most beautiful of goddesses that will stun even the most fickle of the royal classes! Being from your... picturesque village, I know it will be a strenuous task for you, but as a teller of tales you must know what might possibly be a fitting task, as of the legends of old that my delicate lady would require of a knight as noble as myself."

Flabbergasted, Shimmer began to do the only thing that came to mind: answer his question.

"Well, let's see, generally good quests can involve exploring new lands...or maybe coming back with some sort of treasure or exotic gift...some stories have them vanquishing a great beast and bringing proof back of their heroism..." At this point, her mind finally caught up with her mouth, and her jaw went slack.

But it was too late, as the glimmer of inspiration glowed in the "knight's" eyes.

"Most certainly, I now know what I must do to win the hoof and heart of my magenta enchantress! Fear not for my well being, for I shall return to you, my wondrous Midnight, with proof of my heroic deeds, and my undaunted love for you! And verily you shall swoon into my awaiting embrace! I am away!"

With one last flourish, the noblepony dove through the crowd, leaving two very stunned mares in his wake.

Midnight let out a sigh, as she finished untangling Shimmer, helping her to her hooves.

"I'm really sorry about that, I...didn't expect..." Midnight's voice couldn't hide her disappointment. This was going so well, and now...

"It's alright, you couldn't have...eep..." Shimmer trailed off, her eyes widening. Midnight blinked, and began to look around. It didn't take long to figure out what Shimmer had been frightened by.

*Everypony* was looking at them. Not just the audience, but Lyra up on stage, irritation clearly etched on her face, her hooves no longer playing along that harp.

Midnight let out a nervous chuckle.

"Uhm...Encore?"

# Chapter 3-5

## Humor

*“Making jokes can be hard, and if they fall flat it can spoil the entire evening. Nothing is as bad as no reaction at all for your jokes, so it is best to ensure that your joke absolutely will get a reaction of some kind. Few things get as strong a reaction as fear. As such, we recommend using scary things in order to make your jokes work. Remember! Giggle at the Ghostie!”*

“I can’t believe that we were kicked out of Lyra’s recital...” Shimmer pouted unhappily, as they began to settle into their favorite outdoor table, at their favorite little cafe.

Midnight couldn’t believe it either. First the Parasprites, and then Blueblood, this whole date was turning into a disaster! Adding to that, so much of it was her fault, nothing she did seemed to be going right! Shimmer must have been wondering just what she had seen in Midnight now. Honestly, she was surprised that the pegasus hadn’t completely given up on her at this point...

No!

No, she couldn’t think that way. There was still time to pull this around. First, a lovely hour or two sipping tea and chatting, and then they’d hike up the hill just outside of town, and look out at the stars together.

*It would be perfectly romantic and nothing would go wrong.*

“Is your...is your eye twitching?” Shimmer asked, and Midnight shook her head fiercely, clearing her mind of such despairing thoughts. Already a pony was there to take their order.

“No, no! I’m alright. Still just reeling from Blueblood. So what are you thinking that you’re going to order? I noticed that the special is Azure Lily Tea. I hear that stuff is pretty rare, they have to harvest it from the Everfree Forest, but it makes for a really tasty tea.”

"Alright, that sounds good. Two Specials, please!" Shimmer said, and the mare nodded, writing it down and walking off. Shimmer turned to look back at Midnight. "What was *with* that stallion, anyways?"

"Oh, don't even get me started." Midnight groaned. "Him and his father have this delusion that we're going to be married one day, ever since I was announced as Momma Luna's daughter. Personally, I think it's a status thing, at least in his fathers eyes."

Shimmer giggled softly.

"It sounds like becoming a Princess isn't all sunshine and roses, unlike in the old fairy tales."

"Well, it certainly hasn't helped me with getting into restaurants!" Midnight said with a giggle, and soon the giggling turned into outright laughter, the mood lightening. Their server set down two cups, filled with a brilliant blue tea. She looked at the two laughing mares oddly, and shook her head, walking off.

"So, what did it feel like?" Shimmer asked, once she finally caught her breath.

"What did what feel like?"

"Being up there on stage at the Gala, being confirmed as Princess Luna's daughter in front of everypony."

Midnight frowned, remembering back to that fateful night.

"It was both the proudest, and the scariest moment of my life. The scary came first, and it was pretty bad for awhile, but when I was up there, with all of my family and friends supporting me, being able to show to everypony who I was, who my parents were..." Midnight trailed off, but the smile that had spread across her face was more than clear enough for Shimmer to understand.

"It sounds like it was a great Gala, better than the ones you've told me about." Shimmer remarked, as she lifted her cup.

"It was probably the best night of my life. There's only one thing that could have made it better." Midnight said, gathering her own cup up with her magic.

"What?" Shimmer asked, the cup at her lips.

"If there had of been a certain pegasus there on that night, that I could have had a dance with."

Shimmer went scarlet.

"Midnight...oh, my, you know I don't dance very well..."

"That's okay, neither do I. We'd probably have ended up all tangled together on the dance floor, but it would have been worth it." Midnight finished, and with their eyes dancing with one another, the two mares took a sip of their tea.

It...It *could* have tasted better...

"Ugh..." Shimmer was the first to sputter, as Midnight forced herself to swallow. "It's...so bitter...and sweet at the same time...Is there a little bit of a salty aftertaste, too?"

"Gah! This stuff... Maybe it's an acquired taste?" Midnight gagged, trying to keep the tea down. It was strange, she had read that Azure Lilly had a smooth, light taste when made as a tea...

The two took another experimental sip, with a result that was much the same as their first: lots of sputtering and coughing, and definitely no pleasure to be had from the experience. The stuff was starting to give Midnight a bit of a headache, centered around her horn.

"Do you...do you think it it's just ush?" Shimmer asked, her voice starting to have a strange lisp to it. Midnight peeked around, checking out the other patrons. Sure enough, she could make out several other tables, where ponies were grimacing in distaste.

"No, I don't think it's just us, I think they must have screwed up, I can see other ponies having problems as well."

"Thish is awful! I think my lipsh are going numbh..." Shimmer said, pressing a hoof against her aforementioned lips, poking at them as if that would send feeling back into them.

"Your lips are going numb? It's giving *me* a headache. What is this, some kind of joke? What cafe would serve such terrible tea?" Midnight exclaimed, perhaps a little louder than was polite, but the headache seemed to be getting worse. Not only that, it almost felt like it was traveling up her horn, and it was starting to

make her irritable. She glanced across the table at Shimmer, and she thought it almost looked like Shimmer's lips were beginning to swell.

"I doubt think I lib dish jobe." Shimmer managed. Her cheeks went red, and she tried to hide her face.

"I think I'm going to go check with the barista. There *has* to be something wrong here." Midnight stood up, and Shimmer began to follow. They trotted over to the counter, but there was nopony there. They were about to turn away, when Midnight's ears twitched. She thought she heard voices in the back room, and strained her ears in an effort to make them out.

"*What* did you say?" One of the voices, a stallions, yelled in anger.

"I-I said, I think there's been a slight mix-up with the order I gave you..." The other voice, a mare that she didn't recognize, squeaked in fear "A-A silly little mix-up, you see, with the Azure Lily. We may have given you the wrong type of plant. We'll refund your money, of course!"

"Well, with what?" The stallion said impatiently. "What plant *did* you give us?"

Listening to that conversation, realization was already beginning to dawn on Midnight.

Azure Lily.

A blue plant.

Just like...

"Oh no." Midnight groaned, and began to examine Shimmer's face, much to the pegasuses surprise.

"M-Mphph?" Shimmer's lips were huge and puffy, making it impossible to speak, and as Midnight watched, familiar blue dots began to form.

"I....may...have given you Poison Joke instead. I-In my defense, they look almost exactly the same!" She heard the panicking voice of the mare, confirming Midnight's suspicions.

"POISON JOKE!?" The stallion roared, loud enough this time for *everypony* in the cafe to hear. Ponies looked down at the blue tea that they were struggling to



consume. Midnight heard cups smash to the floor. "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! I'M RUINED!"

"W-We'll pay for the treatments! I promise!"

Ponies began to shriek and scream in surprise as blue spots began to form all over their bodies, wings were inverted, hooves became tangled, and tongues swelled. Terrified of what she would find, Midnight slowly reached up, and touched her aching horn.

It bent.

"Mmmph." She heard Shimmer beside her, and Midnight hung her head, feeling the horn hit the top of her muzzle.

"You said it." Midnight replied, as her head thumped against the counter. Her horn audibly squished against the hard wood. The door to the back opened, and Midnight winced softly, preparing for the inevitable.

"Attention, please, everypony...."

# Chapter 3-6

## The Scenic Lookout

*"While the scenic lookout spot is a staple of many dates, they can also be extremely risky. Firstly, you must never look directly at the sunset; looking directly at a sunset, no matter how pretty it is, can cause permanent eye damage. Unfortunately, many ponies are very badly educated about this and your date may attempt to look directly at the sunset. Bringing up the topic of eye damage can very quickly kill the mood, however, so you should do whatever you can to prevent your date from looking at the sunset without explaining why."*

Instead of a couple of hours settled in their *former* favorite cafe, enjoying each others company, those precious hours were instead filled with desperate scrubbing, foul-tasting medicines, and desperate dunkings in awful-smelling concoctions.

But at least they were free of the Poison Joke.

Her dress was now in absolutely *terrible* shape. It was wet, improperly put on after the cleaning, torn in places, and just as she feared, both grass and food stains had formed on the delicate fabric. It was going to take a couple of weeks of hard work for Aunt Rarity to get her masterpiece back into its former showroom condition. She could just see the twitching eyebrow, hear that half-sob, half-laugh.

At this point, most normal ponies would have given up.

Everything had been a disaster.

Everything.

It was only by sheer willpower that Midnight was keeping from just running away sobbing, and hiding in her secret place until summer was over. She didn't even know why Shimmer had agreed to go stargazing with her at this point. When she had asked, she had half-expected the pegasus to flee all the way to Cloudsdale to get away from the Aura of Disaster that had formed around the unicorn.

But here they were, snuggling on a blanket together, looking up on the night sky. It was beautiful one this night, too. Not a single cloud marred the sky, the moon was a lovely crescent, and the stars seemed to stretch out into infinity, creating a beautiful masterpiece that would be the match of any artist's works.

She idly wondered if Twilight had sent a letter to Luna, to get her to make as lovely a night as possible for their daughter.

The only thing that even remotely interfered with this night was the sounds coming from the nearby Everfree Forest, it sounded like the residents of that wild, untamed, and dangerous place were especially restless tonight.

"It's so beautiful..." Shimmer whispered, practically the only words that had been spoken since they had settled down there. Shimmer snuggled up tightly against her. Midnight felt a thrill of hope. Here they were, just the two of them, and she could almost feel Shimmer's heart beating in time with her own. There wasn't any need for words, they both knew what the other was feeling and thinking. It was like a wondrous spell had been laid upon them.

So enraptured by each other, by the night sky that they were sharing, they paid no mind to the noises in the Everfree Forest, the fact that they were drawing closer, and that some of them were beginning to sound like distinctly panicked yelps.

"Shimmer..." Midnight murmured, drawing the pegasus's attention. The red-maned mare turned, smiling at her, a look that took her breath away. This was it. She leaned forwards...

That was when something else took her breath away: A third pony crashing into them, sending all three of them crashing to the ground in a tangle of hooves and wings.

"What on Equestria!?" She felt Shimmer squirming, caught within the folds of her dress, trying to break free without causing anymore damage to the poor outfit. Midnight struggled hard, and managed to get untangled enough to come face-to-face with the third pony, who had so rudely crashed into them.

It was the last pony that she had *ever* wanted to see again.

"*Blueblood!?* What are you *doing* here?!" She protested, her horn glowing, starting to untangle the three with her magic, untying the knots that they had managed to get themselves into. Prince Blueblood the Second, looking more

than a little haggard and battered, drew himself up as regally as possible, as he hid his rasping gasp under a soft, somewhat unsure laugh, his valiant grin showing at least one lost tooth.

"My lady Midnight! And her consort and scribe! Fancy meeting you here, but then, you must have stole along after my grandness in order to witness my quest firsthand! Admirable, but it is not safe for frail flowers such as yourselves to be out on what is really such a fine evening, so if we can withdraw to a better lit-"

"Answer the question, Blueblood! Have you been stalking us? That's just *creepy!* And why do you look like you've been crashing through the Everfree Forest?!" Midnight exclaimed, anger starting to simmer again, now that another moment had been lost. Having extradited the two ponies from her, both of them hanging briefly in the air with her magic, she proceeded put Shimmer delicately back on her hooves.

Blueblood, on the other hand, she simply dropped to the ground.

"Ah, it is very... easy to see, my lavender nymph, I was on my grand quest, and quests obviously lead to the darkest and most dangerous lands where the weak and foalish cry for assistance from valiant knights such as myself, and I had of course the grand conception of facing down the most ideal beast to slay. One that has caused your family much trouble in the past, and its pelt would have made for the most perfect dress to drape over your beautiful frame which shines in the night of-"

"GET ON WITH IT!"

"Hour after hour, I hunted the beast, eventually tracking it to it's lair, where I engaged it in a tremendous clash! A battle for the ages! Let it be said that I fought with the prowess of legends - the strength of a thousand Earth Ponies, the agility of a thousand Pegasuses, and the force of magic of a thousand Unicorns, but due to unforeseen circumstances, and the underhanded and filthily contemptible trickery of the beast's low cunning, I have been forced to make a... tactical withdrawal for the moment to gather my indomitable forces..." He started to stagger to his hooves, looking ready to bolt.

"What is he talking about?" Shimmer whispered to Midnight, and the purple pony shook her head.

"I have no idea what he's-"

A titanic roar filled the air.

“Ah, yes. That would be the beast. If you will excuse me, Lady Midnight, I must....regroup. In Canterlot. But fear not, my Lady! I shall return!” Prince Blueblood babbled, and another tremendous roar echoed through the night, nearly causing the noble to jump out of his skin. “Within a reasonable time frame I shall return in time to rescue you, of course! It should not take much longer than six to eight weeks.”

Another roar, and he went so pale, you could see it through his white pelt. The normally relatively unflappable prince stammered as his eyes bulged wildly with the resounding crashes of huge claws tearing through the undergrowth.

“Er..at the head of an army. Yes. Until then, my beautiful Lady, I must take my leave!”

He turned on his hooves, already taking off before Midnight and Shimmer could stop him. Trees crashed behind the two mares, causing the two mares to look behind them.

All they saw was blue, and stars, and teeth.

And those angry, yellow eyes.

“W-We have to get out of here! Run, Midnight!” Shimmer yelped, her wings spreading, and she was already taking off.

But Midnight just stood there, looking at those eyes. She was a little, helpless filly again, tangled up in roots, unable to move, the monstrous celestial bear bearing down on her...

It recognized her. Even after over a decade, it still remembered her. It's eyes narrowed, remembering the humiliation that it had suffered because of her, but now, there would be no protective showpony this time to save her.

It roared, and Midnight was sent sprawling, terror blanking everything else out but those eyes, and those teeth, and those claws. Just like in her nightmares...

It's claws raised high, glinting in the moonlight, blaming the purple pony for every humiliation and hurt that it had suffered, intent on paying her back tenfold.

Midnight shivered, seeing that clawed death descending towards her for a second time in her life.

A flash of white and red streaked like a bullet, crashing into the Ursa's eyes, denying that death for a second time! Midnight let out a gasp, the action breaking the hypnotic terror that she had been enraptured in.

Shimmer renewed her assault, throwing her body forcibly at the beast's eyes, crashing into it again and again. The beast bellowed, its weak spots being harried by the fluttering, flying gnat of a pony that kept assailing it!

"Midnight! Snap out of it and run!" Shimmer called out, and Midnight forced herself to her hooves again, just in time to see the Ursa Minor swipe at Shimmer. While the beast missed the heroic pegasus with its claws, the sheer air turbulence was enough to buffet her, sending Shimmer off-balance. She was sent spiralling to the ground, stunned.

Something snapped inside Midnight. Her hazy vision became cloaked with green.

She slowly turned towards the beast, letting out a half-despairing giggle.

"Boy, did you pick the wrong night to do this." Midnight felt the anger and frustration welling inside her, bubbling from a deep, dark place inside her, a place she hadn't realized existed before now. "This was my second chance! Everything was supposed to be PERFECT!"

The Ursa roared, charging once again at the now-defiant unicorn, but Midnight surrounded herself with magic, and made her move. Much akin to her azure mother before her, vines and roots began to pull up from the ground around her, reaching out to lash around the surprised beast's limbs! Midnight's face crooked into a mad grin, as she watched the Ursa struggle.

"But no! NO! Lost reservations! Parasprites! Deluded nobles! Being poisoned! Deluded nobles AGAIN! Now Ursa Minor, Round Three! I guess it makes sense, my Mommas both beat you, I might as well too! I'm sure if I have a foal of my own one day, they'll beat you up too!" Midnight couldn't help but yell in frustration. It was almost like she was seeing the world through a green haze, watching as the beast strained to get closer to its prey. It tugged uselessly at the vines ensnaring it, but for every one that snapped, three took its place.

Her horn flicked, and a tree uprooted itself from the Everfree Forest, torn from the ground by her magic. She slammed the tree ruthlessly into his mouth, muzzling the beast's defiant roars. The Ursa whimpered, now terrified of the wrathful unicorn, who was surrounded by a potent aura of magic. Hundreds of vines and roots wrapped around it's limbs, pinning it tightly. Ursa was pulled from the ground, it's limbs starting to flail helplessly as it dangled in the air.

"And the worst part is that it's MY fault! EVERYTHING I did BACKFIRED! EVERYTHING I did made things WORSE!"

The unicorn's horn flared brightly, a miniature sun lighting up the night. The vines began to stretch taut around the Ursa Minor, akin to a slingshot being pulled back, the helpless monster being drawn closer to her.

"I just wanted ONE NIGHT. I just wanted ONE NIGHT without any DISASTERS! But now! But now!" Midnight yelled, tears starting to drip unbidden down her eyes. The Ursa Minor's eyes widened, the previous bestial fury replaced by terror, and for a very good reason.

"Just...just...leave us ALONE!"

She released the tension.

Midnight panted hard, her head pounding, the ugly darkness inside her writhing. She watched as the Ursa Minor was sent sailing, launched like a rocket back deep into the Everfree Forest. Confident that it had been sent far enough, she turned to check on Shimmer, only to see that the pegasus was looking at her, shock in her eyes.

Her anger evaporated. The green cloak was pulled from her sight.

Off in the distance, there was a soft thump, and the ground shook beneath their hooves.

The last of her willpower broke, and Midnight began to snuffle, tears starting to roll actively down her cheeks.

"I'm so...so sorry..." She whimpered, and her horn began to glimmer once more.

"Midnight!" Shimmer called out, but the humiliated purple pony disappeared with a flash of light.

# Chapter 3-7

## After The Date

She just wanted to be alone. She couldn't go home, Momma Twilight would no doubt want to know how the date went, and she wasn't willing to face that yet.

No, to be alone, there was only one place she could go.

In her teenaged years, Midnight had chafed under her lack of privacy. A library wasn't exactly an ideal place for *one* pony to live and have privacy, let alone an entire family. On top of that, having to share a room with a slightly sarcastic dragon for a "brother" was not what Midnight would call 'private'.

It also didn't help that she was convinced that her Momma Luna was able to spy on her during the night. After all, she had known where she was that night she tried to move the moon...

All of this made it hard for a teenaged Midnight to do the things that a hormonal young mare occasionally felt the need to do. So, unknown to her parents, she had secretly used her magic to construct a small 'hideaway spot', little more than an underground room with a bed, a table, and a bookshelf, just outside of town. It wasn't much, but it had served as a bastion of privacy in a life that had little of it.

Here she was again, hiding from the world like a heartbroken filly, sprawled out on her bed with her head buried in a pillow, trying to shut out the rest of the world. She was finally free to unleash her unstable emotions where nopony else could see her.

Shimmer would never want to see her again, that much was certain. She could hardly blame her, you couldn't exactly call it a successful date when you nearly get your date *killed*. Midnight bit her lip, her body shaking against the bed. She had been granted a second chance, and she completely *blew it*!

Her horn flared to life at the same time as her anger, and that book, that absolute *failure* of a book, was thrown into the wall. Midnight pulled her head up from her pillow, glaring defiantly at the dent it had left. Her magic kept a tight hold on that foul piece of "literature", and crying in anger, she smashed the book again and again against the wall, until finally pages began to jar loose from it.



Satisfied, she let the book fall to the ground, sunk her head back down into the pillow, and began to sob her heart out.

It went like this for an hour, or maybe two. One of the things this little refuge didn't have was a clock, after all. It was only when her body began to betray her, her stomach protesting against how empty it was, her head suffering from a terrible migraine, did the heartbroken unicorn slowly pick herself up off her bed, and leave her hidden burrow, lamenting the fact that she had forgotten to restock her small cache of sweets inside it.

The walk home was a long, lonely one.

Her hoof met the door to the library, and she took in a deep breath. She could hear chatting within, and prepared herself for the worst. At least Mom Trixie wouldn't be there, at least it would only be Momma Twilight and maybe Spike, if he wasn't someplace else this night. The humiliation was going to be bad enough without a huge crowd trying to comfort her about it.

She pushed open the door, and went wide-eyed as she saw the scene inside.

Settled at the table, being poured tea by her Momma, was Shimmer. She flashed a relieved smile at Midnight, and Twilight turned to look at her daughter.

"What...what are you doing here?" She stammered.

"Oh! Midnight! You're just in time, I've been having a lovely visit with your marefriend. You didn't tell me she was a writer!" Twilight smiled as she spoke, and Midnight gawked at them both, her eyes flicking between her mother, and her...marefriend?

"So, are *all* of our dates going to be this exciting? I'm not sure that I can handle fighting an Ursa Minor on *every* date, but I can work on it!" Shimmer said with a giggle, sipping her tea.

"I-I don't understand, I thought for certain that..."

"I think it would make for a good story, you know? A Princess and her consort go out on a date, and end up having to battle the forces arrayed against them!" Shimmer went on, casting aside Midnight's feeble protest. "Don't you think, Miss Sparkle?"

"Oh, yes. I know I'd read it." Twilight said with the sort of smile that only a mother who was in the process of embarrassing her child could have. Indeed, Midnight was already beginning to squirm. Had they been *planning* this double-team? "Well, if I didn't know it was about my daughter, at least."

"Why, it even will have a happy ending, if the Princess is smart enough to recognize it." Shimmer finished, her gaze turning back to Midnight.

"Shimmer, I don't understand...the date went *terribly*, nothing...nothing went right at all! I tried so hard to make it all perfect, and all that happened was just complete disasters, and me screwing up all over the place..." Midnight sputtered.

"Yeah, but what about between all of that? Between the monsters, and the silly attempts to impress me when you didn't need to, you missed out on the fact that *we were having a good time*." Shimmer said with a playful huff, before standing up, and walking over to Midnight, her expression turning more serious. "Besides, what I said to Blueblood was the truth."

"That...that..." Midnight recalled back. While at the time, the words had been hidden in the tumble and tangle of the accident that happened seconds later, their potency was starting to burn through now.

"I'd go through *anything* for you." Shimmer finished, and Midnight felt heat warm her from her hooves to her horn, her heart beating fiercely in her chest.

"I'd do the same..." She admitted, looking into her eyes, the world starting to close to just them...

So, of course, Twilight took this moment to interject. She cleared her throat, causing the two young mares to squeak in surprise.

"I don't know much about dating, Midnight, but I do know about *love*. I know that if you really love somepony, *nothing* can get in the way of that. Especially not a bad date." She said softly, her eyes wistful, remembering back to the early days with a certain azure magician. "Just as long as you don't let it."

"So what you're both saying is..."

"I know what I'm saying, and that's that I have the night after tomorrow free. Would you like to have our second second date?" Shimmer asked, and Midnight blushed hard. She slowly nodded, and a brilliant smile spread across her face.

"I'd love that, more than anything. I'll tell you one thing, though..." She reached into the folds of her damaged dress, and retrieved the even more damaged book, and tossed it onto the table. "I'm never following the advice in that book again."

"*A Young Pony's Guide to Dating?*" Shimmer asked curiously, starting to open the front cover. Twilight gawked at the damage the book had sustained, and glared accusingly at her daughter.

"What did you *do* to that book, young filly? I raised you to treat books better than that!"

"Momma, that book is awful! Half of the advice is just *baffling*, the other half is apparently completely *useless*, and all of it is written almost insultingly or cluelessly!" Midnight protested, her hoof stomping on the floor for emphasis. "I think I would have gotten better dating advice asking a dumb *rock!*"

"Be that as it may, that book isn't ours! It belongs to the library! You should know better!"

"This book was written by a Blueblood." Shimmer interjected. Midnight blinked, and Twilight's mouth hung open, in the middle of her rant.

"W-What?" Midnight was the first to be able to speak.

"His name isn't on the cover, but see here, in the bibliographical information? Blueblood Decadion, Prince of Adana."

"Oh." Midnight took the book, staring at the information, before her eyes looked up to meet her mothers. "Momma?"

"I'll take it out of circulation. You go walk your marefriend home." Twilight said, disgust on her face. She took the book by magic, gingerly, as if she was afraid to let it touch her. "It was a pleasure to meet you, Shimmer."

"Same to you, Miss Sparkle!" Shimmer said, and Midnight nodded, guiding her out the door of the library. As soon as they were outside, Shimmer began to giggle. "Oh, you silly filly. No wonder why you were acting so weird at points tonight, if you were trying to let that book guide you."

"I know, I'm sorry, I just wanted to make sure that we had a good time, and it's not like I have many sources for good dating advice..." Midnight let out a sigh.

"Listen, there's only three things that you need to remember to make sure that we have a good time. We'll call it *Midnight and Shimmer's Guide to Dating*, okay?"

"What..what are they?" Midnight asked. Shimmer stopped walking, and Midnight followed suit. They were the only two ponies on the street.

*"Step 1: Remember to be yourself."*

*Step 2: It doesn't matter what you're doing, or where you're doing it. All that matters is who you're doing it with."* Shimmer started out, smiling tenderly at Midnight.

"W-What's Step 3?" The unicorn asked quietly.

*"Step 3: Kiss your date early and often."*

So they did.

\*\*\*

Their dresses were in tatters.

Their hair and makeup were now in disastrous condition.

Their stomachs were grumbling from the lack of food.

The parasprite infestation had spread, forcing all the restaurants in Ponyville to close their doors.

Yet, as they walked home, there was nothing but wide smiles on their lips, and love in their eyes.

And somewhere else in Ponyville, a certain fashion designer felt a terrible chill run down her spine.

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The End of Midnight and Shimmer's Guide to Dating

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