

Celestia's Notebook

The Third Alicorn

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Chapter 1

Greenleaf 12th 3472 EE

Yay, new paper scent! Luna will write this up all formal when we present our findings to the Academy, but this will record my personal observations. Celestia here, and this will record our researches into way to allow ponies to use each other's abilities, and whatever else I happen to think of.

But maybe I should say who we are, and why, for posterity. It has to start with my mother and uncle, Marelin and Belgarhoof, fraternal unicorn twins, and oddballs even by the loose standards of the nobility. When my mother married Eperon, a pegasus stallion, it shocked those pointy-headed idiots, but when uncle wed a 'common' earth pony, though there's nothing common about Auntie Ponydra, the entire nobility nearly died of apoplexy.

Which might have been a good thing. 'Unicorn have the right to rule because of their inherent magic' my fluffed pinion feathers! 'It is the unicorn's burden to care for the other, lesser breeds.' As one of those 'lesser breeds', though not as lesser as 'those poor earth ponies', and someone who has researched the whole matter intensively, I can officially declare the whole thing a giant smelly pile of horse-apples!

It can be demonstrated that all breeds of pony have their own inherent magic; it's just that unicorns can use it more flexibly through their horns. Earth ponies' magic is almost entirely focussed in their supernatural strength and endurance, while we pegasi have our magic tied to our flying ability. Without a degree of control over gravity and inertia, we wouldn't even be able to get of the ground, let alone fly as fast or far as we do. Our magic is equal in power, but different!

Sorry, ranting there. Fortunately while it may have shocked them, there's not much they could do about it. 'The poor are mad, the rich merely eccentric', and when you're also the two most powerful mages in the whole of Equestria, you pretty much 'sleep where the Ursa Major sleeps', in other words, wherever you like, and with whoever you like, as no-pony has the horn to stop you, in both senses of the word.

The very fact that the three of us children exist prove that all ponies are sub-races of a single species. Each of our different forms are simply a remarkably stable linked set of dominant traits within the species. The magical dominant traits do seem to form orthogonal sets, so it'll only ever express as Earth pony, unicorn or pegasus in a particular individual.

When two different breeds have offspring, there's a fifty percent chance their children will express a particular set of traits, and I have evidence that it is not gender linked. For example a unicorn stallion and pegasus mare could have either a unicorn or pegasus foal, but it could be either a colt or a filly in each case.

Of course, given the common prejudices on inter-racial breeding, supporting data is hard to find, and even harder to verify. That's why Proceedings threw out my paper on the subject. 'Poor data collection', 'unverifiable results', 'not suitable for publication'...

Why couldn't they just admit that if they published it, the implication of equality it suggests might alienate some of their powerful unicorn patrons, and might no longer get their financial... I mean, valued support. What foals! But we will show them, we will show them all!

Ranting again, stop it Celly, you're not a mad scientist, furious yes, but not insane, at least not yet. Back on topic. I am a pegasus, like my father before me, while my younger sister Luna is a unicorn. Our cousin, Atlas is an Earth pony, though for all practical purposes he's like our big brother, and together we are... The Equality Crusaders! Equality Crusaders Go!

Sorry, haven't done that since we were foals, though it sounds better with a fanfare. Note to self: get Luna to work out a spell effect that automatically triggers some sort of fanfare when the words are read. Naturally, while we had the noble upbringing, it was pretty much the three of us against the world, or at least our snotty nosed unicorn peers.

Fortunately, while our magic powers are different, our power level has breed true. I create shockwaves going at full speed, Atlas can lift building sized rocks and kick a dragon into unconsciousness with a single buck (well he shouldn't have melted Luna's ice-cream with his fire breath), while Luna can cast dozens of different classes of spells, and her telekinesis can also tote castle sized rocks around.

Of course, that's less than helpful in the social side of things, which get vicious. Luna, despite being the unicorn of the group, or maybe because of it, always got the worse of it. She's the youngest and takes things so seriously. Atlas and I do our best to protect her, and no, you're wrong when you assume how.

Atlas is the one who can return the exquisitely polite insults with verve and aplomb, while I'm the one who's more likely to hold up a hoof in front of some noble's muzzle and ask them if they'd like a closer inspection at trans-sonic speeds. Of course, pranks are a better way to exact vengeance, and for a pegasus in a unicorn's world, there are interesting possibilities. Heh heh heh!

Note to self: rubbing hooves together gleefully while you cackle requires your wings to flap, and flapping wings are not good for a desk full of papers. Additional note to self: Invent some sort of stick with jaws on the end that are driven via a linkage by your own jaws, the better to pick up papers without having to kneel.

Nevertheless, we had the money for private tuition, and to engage in private research, which helped, as I doubt we could have found a sponsor otherwise. I'm the ideas mare, interested in anything and everything. My flank-mark is a solar disk, because I believe in lighting the dark places of the world with knowledge, well, that's my take on it. Luna says it's for my sunny personality, and Atlas says it's because I'm flaming mental. Dear boy, he knows me so well.

Luna has a lunar flank mark, which matches her explorations into the mysterious nature of magic, changing the world as the moon changes phases. Which works well for an arch-mage class spell developer and artificer. Atlas has a hill emblazoned with the formula for a normal probability distribution, which is what the shape of the hill conforms to. This is probably because he's the best mathematician and arithmancer in Equestria.

With the three of us working together, we should be able to come up with some ideas to really shake things up. I come up with the crazy notions, flying around the phase space of ideas at high speed and, coming back with souvenirs. Atlas will do the maths to make them rigorous and basically

put them to work, and Luna will take the theory and translate it into functioning spells and artefacts.

Our basic plan is to find ways to allow each sub-race access some of the abilities of the two others. If unicorns and earth ponies can fly, and pegasi and earth ponies can do magic, and we can give a unicorn or pegasus the strength and endurance of an earth pony, the unicorn nobility's cheesecloth justification for social control will go out of the window.

I have some ideas in each area. A spell to create wings on non-pegasi, controlled by the will of the subject. I have a particular insight into this, considering who I am. Adding the same degree of weight and inertial control would be tougher, though that would have other applications.

Develop it as a separate rune set, and you might be able to invest artefacts with it. You could even make a flying chariot that a pegasus could pull. I'm sure we could find a use for that. Note to self: Bounce the idea off Luna. Slave it to the pegasus's own flight magic? How do we synchronise it for a team?

Of course, I have at least two non-magical solutions, based on my study of how air moves. The big advantage would be that it would be independent of unicorn magic, so they could not prevent it. Hot air seems to rise, why I'm not sure of yet, but it can carry small objects, ash, leaves, and paper scraps with it.

If you could somehow catch hot air in a large enough, light enough bag, it might lift it, and even carry something attached to the bag. There are also some vapours given off by alchemical processes that show the same behaviour without being heated. Either way trapping the airs is the trick, as even the finest cloth has gaps in the weave.

Or we could create an artificial pegasus wing out of cloth and lightwood. I have studied the clouds flowing over my own wings as I glide, and I think the air on the top goes faster. Certainly the effect somehow creates an upward force, even when the wing is held flat. Again, creating such a thing would require a non-porous cloth. Maybe some sort of gum, or varnish might seal it up.

Duplicating Earth pony strength would require some sort of spell, mimicking the way Earth ponies draw strength from the ground. I have some ideas on

how to model the spell effect, and hopefully with study, Atlas can develop a rune-set we could embed on horseshoes. I've always wondered why they call them that, horses are fictional creatures from fairy tales.

The big one is of course, unicorn magic. There, there is only one real solution, an artificial horn equivalent. A more advanced version of the paper picker-upper could substitute for telekinesis, at least at close range. Note to self: Study hoists and cranes, there might be some useful ideas there. But more varied effects would require a focus.

We could either make it so it can be held in the mouth, or have some sort of headband so it would be worn where a unicorn's horn goes. Mapping out the magical flows in a unicorn body is our first priority.

Just you wait Equestria, a new dawn is coming, one where no pony will be looked down upon because of her race, and Celestia will be the one bringing it! This definitely requires mad laughter and gleeful rubbing of hooves together... After I find a paperweight.

Chapter 2

High Sun 18th 3472 EE

We have a sort of winner and a loser, but even the loser has an unintended win. Luna almost bent her horn into a corkscrew trying to duplicate fully feathered pegasus wings. Trying to duplicate something that complex from raw magic... then I had an inspiration, look to other flying creatures for simpler structures. The butterfly proved to be exactly what we needed.

The world is filled with so many wonders... You know you could do a song about that. Note to self: Write a song about that. Who knows when it may come in useful?

The newly dubbed Flutterwings spell does exactly what it says on the jar, creating a beautiful pair of butterfly wings on the back of a pony. Said wings are then under the control of the pony, and combine with the levitation ability that is also a part of the spell to grant them flight. Unicorn, Earth ponies, they can all now fly.

There are some downsides, firstly that it takes a lot of power to cast. But co-operative spell casting could overcome that. The wings only last three days, and they are rather fragile. So while flight is possible, great speed and acrobatics aren't. But this is a first effort. And they are very pretty.

Still working on developing the rune sets for separate levitation, its one thing to decompose the magic flows, and even be able to describe them arithmantically, another to invest runes with the correct patterns to duplicate it. Purely working on pegasus powers may be part of the problem, if we can compare unicorn levitation, we may be able to reduce the symbology for a unified approach that should be simpler...

But working with power flows gave us a chance to study the Earth pony earth stance ability. That's where we hit a problem, and my analysis says it's a fundamental one. Attempting to draw strength from the ground is tied into the basic nature of Earth ponies.

Extrapolating it was easy enough, and creating a spell to invest other ponies with the ability was one of the easiest tasks we've set ourselves.

There's just one problem, which is that it doesn't work. Without that Earth nature, there's too much resistance. Luna can do it a bit, though she has a tendency to cause cracks in the earth due to uneven power flows, but it takes twice as much of her magic as she gets back. And the ratio would be worse for less powerful unicorns.

Myself, I can't get any effect from it. The great and powerful Celestia can't do something any Earth pony foal can do almost as soon as they can walk. Pegasi are creatures of the air, and the clouds, and the ontological resistance that causes reduces any earth power flow to next to nothing. I should be happy, proof that Earth ponies do have their own uniqueness is good, but it isn't spectacular. And investing horseshoes with a suitable rune set... not possible, the toughest bronze or iron would melt from the power mis-match.

But I am happy, and not just because of the new insights this reveals. While I can't draw power from the earth, under the spell I can reverse power flow and the effect and from my pegasus magic, make clouds take on certain earth-like qualities. I found it out quite by accident, but after some experimentation, I've been able to sculpt complex shapes that hold their nature for hours after I've left them.

And whereas the one is nigh impossible, this reverse effect synchronises with pegasus abilities so well that it lasts for... well, I'm not sure, Luna cast it over a month ago and I'm still under the effects. The natural power leakage from my body seems to sustain it. A second spell is implicit in the first, one, which would allow a unicorn or Earth pony to walk on clouds, though not control or shape them.

Just imagine if all pegasi had this power, we could build our own cities, castles in the sky. I know that seems the opposite of our general intent, but with an improved flutter-wings spell, and with the far simpler spell to allow non-pegasi bodies to walk and rest safely on them, unicorns and Earth ponies could visit. But they'd be pegasi homes, not roosts begrudged by the nobility, or under their control.

If only it was as easy to free the Earth ponies from such dominion. They do most of the heavy work and don't get any appreciation, and less dignity than we pegasi. Listen to me, I sound like a Cutie-Marksist. While I completely agree with the philosophy that work and workers should be

respected, whatever type it is, 'Each according to their needs, each according to their cutie-mark.' hides its own flawed assumption that all levels of effort should be respected equally.

If there is no reward for people who excel, what is the point of trying? Every-pony would do the absolute minimum to get by, and nothing would get done. Of course, there's no way that would remain stable, you'd replace dominion by aristocracy with dominion by autocracy, a dictatorship. A meritocracy would be better, but that would still leave some ponies out in the cold. Rene Descarhorse, an Earth pony himself, once said, 'A pony is more than their cutie-mark', and I believe that too.

There must be a way to balance individual freedom and dignity with the requirements of the herd, reward the best to do their best while still making sure those who are less able have some chance to better themselves and have comfortable lives. And that includes unicorns as much as any pony.

After all, not all unicorns are nobles, though some are far nobler than the aristocrats who take that title. At least as many or more are skilled artisans, crafting the tools we need for our everyday life. Generally their magic is far more focussed than the nobility's, but superior in their own fields, pun not intended.

I knew this but didn't really think on it, as I've spent far too much time around the other sort. Of course, not being a noble doesn't automatically mean you'll be nice either. In fact some of them are even more stuck-up and toplofty than the nobility they're trying to copy. What I'm trying to say, rambling as usual is that things are more complex than my first entry made them out to be.

Atlas of all ponies brought all this home to me recently. He regularly travels around Ponyville, the principal town on our lands, and he's struck up friendships with a number of the unicorns and Earth ponies there. Certainly everyone knows him, and likes him. One in particular is the daughter of the alchemical supplier, a unicorn mare by the name of Blue Mane. I think big brother's got a case of the hots for her, in fact a whole wagonload of cases.

I was overflying at the time, so I saw and heard it for myself. Clearly he'd decided to go collect the materials for our latest series of experiments himself, and taken the opportunity to stay and chat with Blue Mane. I may have flown down and landed on the roof purely to rest my wings. If that put

me right next to the chimney and a way to listen in, that was purely coincidental. Besides, you never know when a sister may need some juicy blackmail material on her brother. Heh heh heh!

Note to self: Investigate the possibility of putting in tubes inside a house specifically for carrying sound.

So there he was, chatting away though his usual aplomb was slightly less evident. Not that I think Blue Mane would mind she would probably have listened to him reading a work on philosophy in Zebrican. Methinks she is not averse to his attentions, and I also don't think she's interested because of his title. I've done a little investigating since, and she does seem to have a good head on her shoulders, calm, pleasant, almost no one had any harsh word to say about her, or her family.

Except for the final player in the drama, who entered stage left, or at least through the front door. Silver Tongue is her cousin's brother-in-law, and spends most of his time and money in Canterlot, attempting to social climb, and only comes to Ponyville to borrow money off his family so he can spend some more. He's one of the non-nobles who's even snootier than they are.

Clearly he didn't know who Atlas was, especially since my brother never bothers to take an escort or wear noble clothing. He immediately lit in on big brother yelling at him about 'a common Earth pony talking to his sister as if they were equals' and 'get back to your master's house before I have you whipped'. He rattled on about his powerful friends in Canterlot, and how disgraceful it was, while big bro just stood there and took it calmly.

Blue Mane was clearly mortified from the sounds she was making, but she couldn't get a word in edgeways, the bozo was so in love with the sound of his own voice. Then he rounded on her, and demanded to know what she was thinking disgracing the family like that. He lambasted her and she burst out crying. Then he exited the shop at some speed, and not under his own power as the hoof prints on his chest showed.

Big brother stormed out and proceeded to beat him like a drum, to the amusement of passersby. It seems Silver Tongue isn't popular in Ponyville generally. I was ready to fly down and help, but Atlas was handling things quite nicely. Obviously Silver Tongue was no match for my brother

physically, and it's hard to work up a spell when you're being forced to eat flowerbed by a hoof on your head.

Then the Watch arrived, and called for them to stop brawling. Atlas finally let Silver Tongue up, and the unicorn immediately started yelling about having him arrested, and how his powerful friends would see he never saw daylight again. The Watch captain asked 'How can I help Milord?' and bozo the pointy-head took it to mean him.

He started going on about how he'd been assaulted, and how they should drag the offender off in irons. Watching his face when the Captain made it clear he was speaking to Atlas gave me a little warm glow.

Atlas finally introduced himself, and Silver Tongue realised just how much trouble he was in. He went from protesting to pleading in a heartbeat. And of course Blue Mane was stood in the doorway, stars in her eyes. Blue Mane's father, a nice old stallion called Indigo, came out and started apologising profusely.

Atlas handled it all with his usual common sense. He assured Indigo that he didn't blame him for his relation's drooling idiocy, and promised to have the door fixed. He told the Watch to dump Silver Tongue in the cells for a night, which was a lot less than he could have done for the insults he'd been given.

I don't think we'll have any more trouble from him, even if things go the way I expect. After all, Blue Mane is far better for big brother than any of those vicious, spiteful unicorn fillies I had to put up with in Dressage school. I only hope that someday I can find some stallion that does for me what she does for him just by being there.

Enough maundering. Romance later, science now! I have some further ideas about non-magical flight I want to play with, and it would be wonderful to take the whole package to the Academy rather than releasing our ideas piece-meal. I will have plenty of time for love.

Chapter 3

Harvest 23rd 3472 EE

Oh yes! Go Celly, go Celly! I finally have a unifying hypothesis, and it has opened many methods of non-magical flight. And we may have a lead on how to provide a substitute horn for non-unicorns, allowing them to cast spells with their innate magic. But more of that later.

I mentioned the rising of hot air, the rising of certain unheated vapours such as philostogen, a burning gas that forms when acid is run through metal filings, and the airflow over a pegasus wing, all of which create a lifting force on objects. It came to me in the tub; it has been known since ancient times that things float in water if they are lighter than the volume of water they displace. Even a heavy clay pot can float if the space inside it is empty making the overall weight less.

Air also has weight, observe windmills, or the pressure against your wings. What the same thing can happen? If philostogen were a gas that is naturally less dense than air, it would rise as a bubble of air in water. But that does not explain how heated air could do so. Wagon wheels do though. Heating it fits the metal band that holds the pieces of a wheel together on. This causes the band to expand, so it slips on over the wood. When it cools, it shrinks back to normal. Once again air could expand when heated, meaning less air in a volume.

Note to self: Visit the smith for some new horse shoes, something with a gold chased sock would work. Second note to self: Ask Luna about some sort of sticking charm powerful enough to replace horse shoe nails, I don't think any-pony enjoys getting hoof piercings any more than I do.

The lifting force of a wing was a tough one, but I think I have it, from watching and feeling my wings pass through thin cloud as I glided. The cloud, and air flowing over the top went faster, and travelled a longer route over the convex wing surface. Once again the air was stretched over a larger surface, which meant it had to be less dense.

Atlas is helping me to quantify these observations, providing us with formulae to describe the sizes of effect we need to create pony-carrying devices. When he can drag himself away from making goo-goo eyes at Blue Mane. Snicker. After all, what with getting materials to generate philostogen, and igniferous oils for heat sources, not to mention chemicals for varnishes, he has a perfectly valid reason to spend lots of time down at the Alchemists shop. Smirk.

I shouldn't tease. But the way he gets all embarrassed when I mention it is too cute! No, bad Celly! Even if I was a unicorn, I'd have no right to go horning in on his love life, not that I think they've gone further than a few nuzzles and cuddling. I will have to rise above my baser impulses, which should be easy for a pegasus.

Anyway, after some research, and a lot of messing about with varnishes and glues, we have taken fine silk, though a fine grade of linen or cotton works as well, and applied a lacquer with pegasus hoof clippings dissolved into it during the preparation with aqua fortis. This seems to provide a suitable material for constraining air or philostogen, though less so for the latter.

The cloth can be sewn into bags before painting, which minimises leakage. Luna remarked how our test model, lit from below by a wad of cotton steeped in igniferous oils, looked like a small moon, and so we've started calling them balls of Luna as a joke. It used heated air, and was open at the base, while our Ball of Luna that contained philostogen had to be sealed. It was also far more expensive to fill due to the acids needed to generate philostogen.

We tested a larger model using the heated air method and I followed it up a goodly distance in open sky. The sun was bright, and I started wondering if the sun is a ball of philostogen, surrounded by it's own shell of air. After all, we can see the moon is a sphere from the changing phases, and any pegasus who flies up high enough to where the air thins out can see the curvature of our own world.

Well, not every pegasus, I found I could use that new ability to manipulate clouds to constrain a pocket of denser air around me, but the view was fantastic. I could see the boundary of the air, like a blue horizon, the clouds

so far below they looked like snow covered mountains, part of the ground. I wish I could have carried a sketch pad with me.

We've continued testing that cloud controlling spell, and it's so well synchronised with pegasi magic it's contagious simply from contact. I think within a few years every pegasus will have the power, and it will pass on to new foals. Maybe one day we'll build chariots of cloud, or some flying machine that will work without air and travel beyond the air, visit the moon and sun for ourselves.

I worked out a way to deduce their distances once, using the angles of their shadows at a particular moment, and hourglasses and my own speed to synchronise the measurements. According to my calculations, and Atlas's the moon is hundreds, and the sun tens of thousands of times further away than the width of Equestria. Even at my top speed it would take days to reach the moon, and years to reach the sun.

Note to self: When visiting the sun, would require some sort of heat protection spell or clothing. Investigate. Maybe we should just go at night instead.

Speaking of chariots, Luna has been busy and it's produced results. We now have a rune-set we can engrave into a chariot's wheels and traces. Once empowered, when a pegasus wears the traces, her flight magic is shared with the chariot. I'm going to carry Luna in our test vehicle up as high as I went, and she can do some sketching. Who knows, if things go as well as I hope, I may be able to give Atlas and Blue Mane a unique trip for their honeymoon.

I just wish we were having as much luck at finding alternatives for a unicorn horn to focus magic other pony races' magic. We've managed to come up with a design, a short stick of magically resistant wood, such as oak or rowan, or gold, combined with a central core of magically conductive material. Pegasus and phoenix wing feathers, a thread of unicorn mane, dragon bone, hundreds of others. We've tried them with mixed results. What seems to work for one pony utterly fails for another.

It's looking more and more like each Wooden Alternative horn Device or WAND (nifty acronym, I thought) would have to be custom crafted. Not impossible, but we'll need to change our research priority to identifying and typing magical energy flows, so we can simplify the process enough to be

practical. I think another month's work, and we'll have a whole slew of demonstratable alternative flight methods to show the Academy, and enough results on the WAND project to show it's possible. I can't wait!

Chapter 4

Leaf Fall 30th 3472 EE

I've finally calmed down enough to write about this. When I first got the news it took Atlas sitting on me and Luna's full telekinetic power to stop me rushing off and doing something foalish. As it is I spent a week out in the badlands, working off my mad. Trolling gryphon tribes into hunting me for their lunch, then beating the pinion feathers off of them, helped some. And that dragon shouldn't have looked at me funny.

I'm not making sense, something I've often been accused of. So lets take things in sequence. We put together our presentation, and it was a massive success. We demonstrated our spells and models, and explained the principles behind them, running well over our allotted time. We got a standing hoovation, the first ever in the history of the Academy.

There were a lot of neigh-sayers who seemed to thing that a group of dilettante nobles, especially a 'mixed' group such as ours could possibly develop anything useful. I think we pretty thoroughly demolished them with our demonstration. Our prototype gliding wing got particular attention, and the balloona (Ball of Luna is just too cumbersome for everyday use, and besides Luna gets all embarrassed at the name.)

So why am I furious? Because of what happened afterwards. The Royal court learned about our demonstration and immediately responded. Their first ukase makes all clouds over Equestrian soil Crown Property, to be taxed and assessed as land is so that it can be used 'for the greatest good of Equestria' (read 'for the greatest good of the top clique of nobles that run the court.').

Flying chariot ownership is restricted to unicorns, and non-magical flying devices are forbidden. Apparently they would present too much risk to existing air traffic. The exception is balloonas, but only if they are powered by heating charms woven into the bag. Fires in the sky are also apparently too great a hazard to traffic. No matter that the slowest pegasus can run rings around a balloona, even towing a chariot.

Finally, and this demonstrates what they are really saying, all further research into WANDs is forbidden on pain of life imprisonment and mutilation. Apparently, only those born to magic (unicorns) are able to fully understand it, or handle it safely. To give pegasi or powers forbid Earth ponies that power would be to unleash disaster.

No matter that no one's actually tested this idea, except for us, and as far as we've been able to tell there's no problem, apparently it's a 'law of nature'. They've taken every development we've come up with, every new idea that was meant to make ponies equal and free, and turned them into tools of social control.

Well, I'm still furious, but it's no longer a purposeless fury. I had an epiphany as I was standing over the unconscious body of that dragon. I looked at a triangular mountain with the sun just setting at it's peak, and a bare crescent moon at one limb, while a smaller mountain sat at it's other side.

Rather than creating tools to equalise ponies, why not make the ponies themselves equal? If all ponies had the magic of unicorns, the wings of pegasi and the strength and toughness of Earth ponies, the existing clique of unicorn nobles would not be able to stand against them.

We three can make a start. With our researches into magical energy flows, we have plotted and typed each races' magical patterns, and should be able to figure out a way to share them. That's where that mountain came in, it suggested a triune, one of the simplest power sharing rituals among unicorns. If the arithmancy carries over, all the participants will get not triple the powers they had, but sextuple. Of course, it would be considered impossible by standard

It's defined by the number of ways a set of entities can connect. Of course, no-one's ever figured out how to create a sharing ritual with more than 5 entities, as synchronising that many individuals and controlling 15 times their power is about the limit of the state of the art in ritual circles, the Pentium. I believe we can adapt a standard three entity circle for our purposes, one that allows the three users to safely consume the six times power increase, known as a three ate six configuration.

If we three do it, our base power levels should mean we three would become the most powerful entities in Equestria. That should help us

prevent any backlash or persecution. If we can expand the method to others, we can create an unbeatable block that they would hesitate to try overwhelm by force. And if they try to legislate against us, all they'll be doing is stopping themselves from joining in.

Atlas is uncertain, but he's willing to follow my lead, as he's at least as angry as I am. Luna is excited by the prospect, I should have guessed from the way she uses the Flutterwings spell whenever she can. Seems little sis has wing-envy. We will have to do our experiments in secrecy, to prevent them from being pre-empted.

Though with any luck, if they find out and try to ban this, we can play up the persecution angle, since as far as anyone will be concerned, the experiment will only affect us. Atlas is convinced with our family's political power we can make a stand on the basis of the Crown interfering in our rights as nobles (to do whatever the hell we like!). Put on that basis, we should be able to get support from nobles who don't want to see their own privileges eroded, if we prepare in advance.

Sorry, I had to go find a rainstorm. Talking politics, especially the kind that goes on in noble circles always leaves me feeling dirty. Note to self: Could we manifest a cloud inside a bathing room, and heat the water as it falls? Or maybe manifest the cloud from the hot water in the tub. A hot shower might be an interesting experience.

We have a new plan, and this time we will succeed. Equality Crusaders go!

Chapter 5

Winter Wane 7th 3473 EE

Figuring this hetro-thaumic triune out is proving a lot harder than we expected. Everything in the literature assumes a homo-thaumic combination, three sets of unicorn magic. I knew we'd have to make major adaptations, but we're practically having to rewrite the scroll from scratch. It's awesome!

I do have some progress to report. In normal power sharing rituals, the 'pushing together' of the different unicorn magical energies produces a repulsive effect. The thaumic energy level in the centre of the ritual is much higher than the ambient, and like a raised water source, tries to flow outwards carrying the sources with it.

Note to self: A raised water source would be a practical alternate method of creating a shower of hot water? Creating a cloud from the bath water works, but only for pegasi. You could have a series of holes in the bottom of the tub, uncovered by a panel when you wanted it. Think about this later.

A good part of the design of a ritual diagram for a power sharing ritual, whether triune or pentagram, is building in anchoring to stop the unicorns in question being thrown to opposite ends of the room. Ohhh! Actually, if we could do this for a triune of pegasi, and deliberately broke one corner of the triune, it would make an excellent launcher, even better than a catapult. That sounds like fun!

However, the pressure isn't there when mixing different types of magic. Instead, it appears that attempting to share the powers of different races of ponies produces an attractive force. After some experimentation, I've come up with a hypothesis. The mixing of magic seems to create a sink, or a cancelling out, drawing more ambient magic in, and the ponies involved with it.

This could prove useful, as it the magical energy can be redirected into the spell effect, meaning we may get an overall power level of more than six

times our original powers. However, we need external anchors of some kind to avoid being sucked into the effect ourselves.

If that happened, it could result in anything from the creation of a single creature combining all our bodies and minds (which, no matter how much I love my sister and cousin, is closer than I want to get) to what happened to the enchanted iron statues we'd used as place-holders. Ouch!

On the other hand, our protective shields held, and some of the drops of molten iron landed in a water bath on my alchemy workbench. They formed perfect spheres, or pretty near. I wonder if we can duplicate the effect deliberately (dropping molten iron into water to get spheres, not blowing up parts of the lab). I've worked out plenty of ways to do that, sometimes intentionally.

Note to self: Idea! Could a group of those metal balls arranged around an axle act like a set of rollers under a big block? Might be an alternative to greasing cart axles. Balls that bear the load of a cart, an interesting thought, but what to call them?

I just realised those iron statues came out of nowhere... ouch, now that's a creepy thought, statues that are enchanted to animate, and attack ponies, but can only move when your not looking. Don't blink!

Note to self: Write up the idea as a story, so I can tell it to Luna the next time we have a sleep-over. It'll scare her out of her socks! It may even be better than the Alfalfa monster gag.

So, iron statues. Gems are an excellent buffer and mediator for unicorn energies especially moonstone and diamond, and often used at the point where the unicorn actually stands in a ritual diagram to connect her into the network. Luna long since invented rune-sets she could carve into the stones to buffer her higher power level. With some theoretical research from me, and some arithmancy from Atlas we've improved it even further, creating large capacity magical stores.

Since we are breaking new ground, and occasionally parts of the walls in our research, we really need stand-ins for ourselves. Atlas commissioned a couple of dozen half scale statues of us, with a gap where the heart was. Replace that with a gem filled up with magic, add some power-flow runes to

allow it to ground and a control rune linked to the original, and you have the perfect stand-in, able to feed magic into the triune on command.

The real trick was figuring out a storage medium for me. Atlas was easy, almost any gem fits with an Earth pony, but to our surprise, simple quartz worked best. Or maybe not so surprising, it's solid, useful and practical, so there is a fit. But pegasi don't have any earth linkage, as we found out in our earlier experiments. However, a crystal of ice condensed from a cloud works nicely and even takes the power-runes easily. Keeping it frozen is easy enough with my powers, or Luna's.

You may be wondering how we transferred power, Earth ponies and pegasi not being able to manifest it except through our abilities? Well, we did have all that research on wands, and it was illegal to take it any further. However adapting it to draw off power into a storage element rather than directing it into a spell effect is not. Of course, we're keeping this whole thing a deathly secret anyway, against spies.

Oh on a completely different topic, Atlas has finally popped the question to Blue Mane! I was beginning to think we'd have to lock the pair of them in a room until cousin Atlas stallioned up and asked her. We are having the wedding next month, on the fourth of Budding. It shall be the greatest party in the history of the Fife of Maresia.

Note to self: Find out what they want as a wedding gift. Invent it if necessary. Maybe the shower design I was thinking about.

I'm definitely giving them a ride up to the edge of the air, so they can see what Luna and I saw. From up there, you don't see the Fifes, and you don't see different types of pony. All you see is a green, growing land. Maybe if more ponies saw it that way, we wouldn't need to do what we're doing, but I'm the only pegasus who can fly that high, especially with a chariot.

And diving back down at insane speeds was fun! Even Luna enjoyed it, once she'd cast some of those new sticking charms she's developing for horse-shoes to keep her in the chariot.

Enough wool-gathering, I've got to go collect some ingredients for filtering some of the magical reagents Luna's using in her latest spell effort... Oh, it looks like we need fresh wool as one of the ingredients, so looks like I'm wool-gathering after all.

Chapter 6

Budding 4th 3473 EE

I should be at a wedding, or rather stuffing myself with candied oat-cakes and honey glazed carrots at the reception. What? It takes a lot of metabolic energy to fly as fast as I do, even with pegasus magic helping out. Luna always tells me I'll end up looking like her namesake at full. Though she's not averse to spiking the odd pastry off the buffet herself.

Wait, fly back, I'm writing why we weren't at the wedding. Wedding called on account of disaster, the history books will probably write. It appears that certain of the most uptight and powerful of the unicorn nobility attempted a nice piece of economic warfare, the frou frou maned, pointy headed egotists! And it was partly my fault.

I've been encouraging the spread of the cloud manipulation spell effect to other pegasi, and I was a bit surprised at how little resistance the court put up. I see now that it was because it would allow them to enforce their decree about cloud ownership. And I thought that was just to stop pegasi using them to build homes.

We each had to pay a tax to get the clouds delivered, not a big one, the other nobles would never stand for it, and it wasn't until it was too late that we found the Fife of Maresia's tax was incorrectly processed. We ended up getting about half our money back, and about half the clouds we needed. They actually destroyed clouds that would have crossed our land.

I know it may sound ridiculous, but if you understand the geography you'll see. The Fife of Maresia stretches from Ponyville, which borders the King's own domain and the demesnes of Canterlot, over to the Eastern Spires mountain range. Much of Equestria Antiquate is to the west, and during spring, the prevailing winds are north-west, up out of the Horseshoe sea. We're last on the delivery route, so to speak.

Without the early spring rains at the right time, our fields would suffer, and our harvest would be poor. And Maresia has a lot of agriculture, it's one of our major trading commodities. We've been building up manufacturing,

encouraging artisans to settle here with financial aid, and the new flying chariot industry, but we need that trade surplus to bring in the gold to invest in it.

We managed to piece it together after the fact, but there was nothing solid for us to take to the king. We had enough wells and rain to avoid a drought, but we were in serious trouble. It was a lot of long faces in the Citizens Council when we met to decide what to do.

I'd better explain that too, as it's not the way most Fifes are run. Both mom and uncle are engaged in their own researches a lot of the time, and so are we, but we all do our part in the running of the Fife. Auntie Ponydra and Atlas spend the most time at Canterlot, doing the diplomacy thing.

(Where do you think he got his manners from? Belgarhoof is my uncle, and I love him dearly, but while he suffers foals gladly, adults who act foalish get short shrift and the sharp end of his horn. He's to diplomacy what a pegasus is to deep sea diving.)

They're aided by Gladstone, our Senechal, and a noble unicorn from one of the few families who are allied with us. Of course, dad and I are always there to take a message.

Note to self: Find some faster way to get messages around. Wink along ley-lines the way Luna or mother does? But there would need to be a carrier medium, a magical one. Work on this later.

One of the reasons we knew there was skull-skulduggery was that Gladstone came down ill at exactly the right time to be unable to check on the progress of our rain requisition, food poisoning they say. Atlas was here working on our project, and Aunt Ponydra, bless her, was more worried about Gladstone than checking a minor administrative detail.

Anyway, the rest of us take turns doing the dull administration stuff, and one of the reasons it doesn't take too long is that we only provide policy and leadership, and let the towns and counties implement it themselves. Hence the citizens council, a body of town leaders and respected tradesmen from all over the Fife, who provide us feedback and raise any problems that need solving.

It's held at Maresia Keep, the castle at the centre of our Fife, and our main work place There, unicorns, pegasi and Earth ponies, all listened to with equal weight given to their words. After all, they're the experts in their fields. Sounds obvious enough, but there is no other Fife where the words of an Earth pony, no matter how sensible, would be given consideration by a noble.

So there they were engaging in a pity party, when I decided to take away the trenchers and shut down the buffet. Spanrow, a big earth pony and leader of the farmers was calling it the worst disaster the Fife had ever faced. I stood up and told him that I thought it would be our finest hour.

Then I laid out the plan I'd come up with (C'mon you knew I had one, grin). It was outrageous, insane, complex, and would require everyone working their tails off. But and not only supply us with the water we needed, but use their biased laws against them, and also scare the horse-apples out of those smug pointy headed idiots who thought the Fife of Maresia would just raise it's tail and take it in the rump from them. I think the fact that I actually used that last phrase shocked them out of their stupor.

We took every flying chariot we had, and every one we could convert, and flew in convoy to the Horseshoe sea. Of course we had to assign ownership to a unicorn for each, but our Fife has a lot of unicorn artisans. They were all taught the basic rune-crafting to create a flying chariot out of a normal one. Blue Mane was one of them.

I got together the pegasi and taught them a couple of things I'd learned from our experiments with the cloud shaping power, the ability to condense a cloud and use it to keep something cool. It's how we kept those ice crystals stable. I've also used it to cold distil a soluble salt out of a liquid before, very useful in my alchemical experiments.

We passed over several other Fifes, ones owned by our opponents, but they couldn't complain, as they'd pushed for free access to the skies for flying chariots (after all they were the ones using them). We flew out over the sea, and then came the clever bit. Most of the chariots carried unicorns, and they all cast freezing spells on the water.

The effort was lead by Luna, Belgarhoof and Marelin, using one of our newest triunes, which had been inscribed on the floor of a large wagon we'd converted for flight. Dad, I mean Epheron, or rather Belepheron, as

uncle had granted him use of the family prefix and I were towing it. As you can imagine, it was rather powerful.

When we'd frozen a big enough area for a ritual diagram, we moved the spell casting on board. As unicorns got off, we lowered each chariot into the water, and allowed it to freeze into the face of the ice, along with a number of long ropes. And of course, every unicorn not adding to the freezing spell was staring to inscribe flying chariot runes into the ice face, plus a few that we'd developed for pegasus power transfer.

When we had a suitable block, the Earth ponies who'd travelled in the remaining chariots dived into the sea carrying the ropes (and wearing leather goggles we'd manifested earlier). They swum down, and once in contact with the sea floor, drew on their earth powers tipped the entire block around so the chariots were facing sideways.

It took some careful management and a bit of levitation magic as well as some outright carrying, but we managed to move all the unicorns to the new surface without any falling in. There they started extending the ice block, and carving in the runes as they went. Pegasi landed and used the condensation spell to make sure the ice was free of salt. It only worked on the surface but the ice could be pushed down with levitation to fuse at the lower side.

Actually, some of the surfacing Earth ponies claimed to have seen and heard the mythical sea ponies, though that was probably the cold talking. Only Earth pony toughness could have survived the cold at all, and only the coldness of the ocean that early in the year made this even possible. Still, a few were singing the siren song they thought they'd heard, though I don't know how so many ponies hallucinated hearing 'shoop-de-doop shoop-shoop-de-doop' at the same time. Maybe it's something like the roaring you hear in a sea shell. Time enough to explore that later.

Eventually we had a long, massive block of near-pure water, inscribed with chariot levitation runes and pegasus power transfer runes (remember, ice crystals are the one type of crystal we can empower). So the unicorns laid out matting they'd carried in saddlebags and had a rest while we pegasi took our turn. They also had towels for the Earth ponies.

Every pegasi, including me and my dad, pushed our power into the block, through the specialised runes charging it with thaumic energy. The entire

thing started to float higher in the water, uncovering the chariot harnesses on the front face. Then we had to rest, well most of us. Food from saddlebags was distributed, and there were even a few iron braziers and firewood to warm us.

Once we pegasi were recharged, we took up the harnesses and basically lifted the whole thing into the air, aided by the unicorn contingent's levitation magic. It was slower than a regular chariot, and harder to manoeuvre, but as long as a few were pulling it, it stayed up in the air, so we could ever take shifts.

I say we, I was in harness the whole way back. After all it was my idea, and I am, I can say without modesty the most powerful pegasus in the Five. It took the rest of the day and a night to travel back. It does mean I was rather out of it when we flew past Canterlot the next morning. But I'm told the mass dropping of jaws as we flew past was audible in Ponyville, which meant my work there was done.

While we'd been away, a large contingent of Earth ponies under the direction of Atlas had been digging the irrigation channels and blocking up small valleys to act as the reservoirs that would feed them. Obviously we dropped off sections at the various reservoir locations, and the earth ponies stomped on them to break them into slush.

Of course, I didn't see most of this, as when we got back to Maresia Keep, I staggered up to my bed and collapsed for a day and a night. I am eternally grateful that it took those affronted pointy heads at Canterlot that long to put together a delegation to come arrest us.

Oh, it was wonderful watching Atlas at work. His whole more in sorrow than anger tone, crossed with the way he acted like he was explaining the obvious to foals, and the exquisite way he pushed the horn in and twisted. Everything we'd done was completely legal. It wasn't a cloud, so it wasn't covered by the Crown ownership or taxation rules.

We'd even registered it as a chariot, and paid the licensing fees for it and the other new ones, all legally registered to unicorns. Two can play at bureaucratic games, and Gladstone pulled that one off like a champion, sliding it in under the muzzles of the nobles in question.

I think having the chance to take them to pieces verbally was one of the best wedding gifts I could have given Atlas, and the look on their faces as they realised they'd been given the horn quite thoroughly was a pretty nice gift for me and Luna. I loved the offer to do the same for them if they found they didn't have enough water. Maybe they've also gotten the message that you do not buck Maresia and get away with it!

The whole thing demonstrated just what we could accomplish if we worked together, not as unicorns, and pegasi and Earth ponies, but as ponies each with different skills and different abilities to offer. When that sort of unified effort is possible all over Equestria, then our work will be done.

The only downside is that we've had to reveal at least some of the things we've been working on, the most worrying the pegasus power transfer into ice crystals. However the essential secrets of a hetro-thaumic triune and the power sharing ritual remains safe. For that matter, the results I've gotten from the monitoring spells attached to the main triune will help our research immensely, even though it was all unicorn.

But I still have one major problem to solve, what to use as external anchors? Nothing we've tried has enough power to stabilise us, not at the projected power of the ritual diagram. Oh well, I'll work on that another day. For now I've a celebration to go to. We may not be having a wedding, but we are having a party to celebrate out-witting the nobles and securing water for all. Candied oat-cakes ahoy!

Chapter 7

Greenleaf 14th 3473 EE

Well, ever since we gave the worst parts of the nobility of Canterlot the horn, things have quietened down. Well, except for the wedding. Blue Mane is the second unicorn filly I've ever had more than a passing acquaintance with who hasn't been some entitled, titled, flat muzzled, horn pointing, dense as forest, smug, whiny brat.

If you're wondering, the first one is Luna. Blue Mane is charming and funny, some-pony who pretty much redeems the whole sub-race and gender. She's been at Maresia Keep pretty much the entire time since we flew our iceberg, and she and Luna have become as thick as thieves.

You know, that's a very odd idiom. I would have thought thieves would have to be fairly bright to have any success. Maybe if we hadn't been born to the nobility, the three of us might have had to turn to a life of crime.

With me to 'case the joint' from the air and do 'second story work' (after all any-pony who's rich enough to have a second story on their house would be worth our attention), Luna to take down magical defences and locks, and Atlas as inside pony (no-pony notices another Earth pony labourer), I think we could be quite successful, in fact I know so.

Well, rather than relieving those prong-headed posers of their valuables, we'll be relieving them of their control of Equestria, and like that old legend Robbing Hoof, we'll be engaged in more equitable redistribution of what we take. But more on that later, for we talk now of weddings.

As I said, Luna's become closer to Blue Mane than I have, even opened up to her more than any-pony outside the family she's ever met. Well, except for Silver Spoon, her Earth pony maid, but that's not quite the same. I'm really happy for her, little sis needs more friends. She's become more assertive too, never more so than when Silver Tongue showed up, looking to apologise.

Luna was there as soon as he was let in, flanked by a pair of household guards wearing full armour and hoof-blades. She looked like some hero of

ancient times as she stood by Blue Mane, horn glowing like the full moon. Gone was the diffident pony who would have hidden behind her guards, this was a Luna ready, able and willing to buck some major flank on behalf of her friend.

As it happens, it wasn't necessary. Silver Tongue was cut off from family funds after his little escapade, and it seems that having to shift for himself has forced him to grow up a bit. I think his fair weather friends in Canterlot left in droves as soon as his bits went bye-bye. Looks like he's gained some pony-sense from the experience.

He made a most handsome apology, both to Blue Mane and to Atlas. He even gave them a wedding gift, a token, but a well considered one, which in my book gets him more points than something outlandish. It was a pair of magically linked necklaces, one for each of them. They have a sympathy spell that allows each pony to feel what the other's mood is, and a general sense of where they are.

Luna was taking nothing for granted, and gave them a pretty thorough magical going over, but that's all they were. It gives me hope for the future. Maybe he had to have his muzzle rubbed in it, but if even a bigot like Silver Tongue can change his cutie-mark, then maybe we can push through reforms more easily than I'd imagined, once we rub the nobility's collective muzzle in the fact that their so precious 'destiny to rule' is a load of horse-apples.

Blue Mane's mother isn't with us any-more, and she has no sisters, so Luna and I stood as her bridesmaids, along with Silver Spoon, and Sundancer, my maid. I never knew Luna was such a clothes-horse! I like to keep things simple, high speed, low drag, which means Sundancer's job is pretty easy. She's a pegasus too, but that's a matter of practicality, not prejudice. No-one else can keep up with me.

Note to self: Raise Sundancer's pay, and do something nice for her for putting up with me. Make sure Luna and Atlas know so they can match it for Silver Spoon and Baggin.

So I like to keep things simple clothing-wise. However, between Luna, Blue Mane, my mother, Atlas's mother and the half dozen or so tailors, seamstresses and random passersby, I went through more outfits than a

mercenary with itchy hooves. My only relief was that it wasn't as bad as what Blue Mane went through. The difference being she enjoyed it.

I think the head seamstress, Beauty, couldn't decide what to do with my wings, or Sundancer's. However, I was not going to let them be bound, so she had to work with them. Add to that all the fancification, decoration and level of grooming that I never usually have time for, and by the end of it, I was scared to move in case I ruined something. I'll admit though, the final product was worth the effort.

It's odd, but there was something similar happening for Atlas. He's the only stallion among our generation of the family, and the only other noble near his own age to whom he's close is Gladstone. There's our master at arms, Sergeant Apony, who's not noble, or even a unicorn, but that Earth pony taught Atlas everything he knows about the fine art of doing unto others before they return the favour.

However, Blue Mane, though she doesn't have any sisters, has a couple of big, strapping brothers. They filled out the grooms-pony side of things, along with Gladstone, Apony and Baggin, Atlas's pegasus valet, though despite the fact that they'd all been polished and primped as much as we had, it was a question from looking at them whether they were going to a wedding or war.

There was a good reason, after all he'd recently humiliated some fairly powerful nobles, and with the wedding being a public event, we decided to take precautions against any possible unpleasantness. Doing something like that would be stupid beyond belief, but while few of our rivals are actually drooling idiots, despite what I may have said, sufficient arrogance and outrage could generate a pretty good substitute.

So, while we were so floofy I thought we were going to float off without the aid of wings or a balloona, the tailors had gone for matching blue and gold military cut tunics for them. I may have mentioned that Atlas is built along the general lines of a stone keep, and he wore a mouth-blade on a baldric across his back. Most of the unattached females were drooling enough that we could have managed without that iceberg.

Apony was an ebony statue and wore his hoof blades, shined up to a blaze. In short, he looked like the reason the fight finished. I heard him chivvying the others as they were getting ready, just as if they were raw

recruits. He was using that old 'flanks and fetlocks' line he's used on every new group of household guards since I was a foal.

Neither Chalcedony or Saxony, Blue Mane's brothers could match those two, but neither of them is a half bushel weakling either. Rather than wearing blades they weren't trained with, they carried their own tools. Saxony is a herbalist, and Chalcedony a gem-smith, but that's rather misleading. Both are the sort who go out after their own raw materials, and I wouldn't want to be the bandit who picked a fight with Saxony's sickle, or Chalcedony's pick.

Even Baggin was carrying a wicked little poinard mouth-blade. He's from a western Fife, the Shire, but he's utterly loyal to our family, and to Atlas in particular. His sister caught the eye of a particularly unpleasant 'noble' scion, Alfalfa, and was about to be taken as a concubine, read slave. Of course, her duties didn't require her to keep her wings...

Atlas, fresh at Court, for we were barely out of foal-hood at the time, overheard bozo the unicorn boasting about what he was going to do, and decided to do something about it. Of course, he convinced his dear sisters to help him, not that either of us needed any convincing. She and her family mysteriously disappeared, the filly in question from a locked room in Alfalfa's manse. On a completely unrelated note, I said I knew we had the talent to be a team of thieves.

Tricolor, for that was her name, still had her wings but had burn marks on her withers and belly. It seems Alfalfa had a fondness for playing with fire, or at least red hot pokers, possibly compensating for something. Shortly afterwards he had an unfortunate accident with a set of stairs, a hot poker and any dynastic pretensions he may have had, minimal as they were.

As valet, Baggin was of course the ring bearer, for both Atlas and Blue Mane. While as tradition dictates the ceremony was performed by a smith, and there was a brazier by him, the Fife of Maresia has abandoned the barbaric practice of sealing the marriage of a non-noble to the family by branding.

The three big windows at the south end of the great hall are glazed, unlike the simple shutters on most of the keep windows, and each window is made up of stained glass. We had it commissioned and it was worth every hoof mark. The left shows the land and fields in warm orange brown tones,

the centre the sky with the planets circling the sun, and the right an abstract gold and yellow representation of magic.

Of course, they represent the three kinds of pony, but the meaning is a little more subtle. No panel is bigger than another. All three work together to produce something better than they could alone. No-where more so than that day. The sun was co-operating, with a little help from myself and a team of pegasi, and it shone down through the window, bathing the entire hall in multi-coloured light.

Note to self: It takes an expensive pigment to create coloured light in those window panes, but the ice crystals we've been forming seem to produce an entire rainbow when the light hits a them right. What's with that? After we've done the power enhancement thing, figure out why this happens, and see if it's possible to reify it with magic. It might not have any practical use other than producing cheaper dyes, liquid rainbow maybe, but that would be good for Maresia's trade balance by itself.

The ceremony was simple enough, an invocation to our ancestors to bless and watch over the marriage, an exchange of vows, and an exchange of rings. Though once again we broke with tradition. Normally for nobility the rings would be fitted for each others horns, but with Atlas being an Earth pony, we went with torcs that went over the fetlock, properly shorn in Blue Mane's case. It also makes them the most expensive wedding rings ever, but this is one case where no-one begrudges it.

At the end of the ceremony, we all sang the traditional song of well wishing for the happy couple, though I don't think they noticed it they were so deep in each others muzzles. Luna was crying like a river, and even I... well the sun was very bright, and I found my eyes watering. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

I also felt so... joyous. While few of the noble families were there, except for the handful allied to us, common ponies of all breeds made up the numbers, indeed they were crowding out in the courtyard, even outside the bailey. Everyone stood together, sang together, celebrated together. It was nice that our wedding party was also a mix of every-pony.

Okay, so there was a massive party for all afterwards, but I honestly don't think that's why some ponies travelled from other villages in the Fife to be there. It's the sort of thing we've been wanting to see our whole lives, and I

can't think of a better wedding gift for Atlas. It gives me hope that we will prevail, make Equestria over in the same image.

Of course I stripped down and loaded up on food as fast as possible, because I had a little trip to take them on. Luna souped up the enchantments on the chariot so I could provide a liveable bubble for all three of us, and shield them from the high speed winds. Blue Mane has seen me fly before towing the iceberg, she was helping maintain the cold spells, but she's never seen me buck it up to full power.

The sunset where the sky thins out is unlike anything I've ever seen, and I was glad to share it with them. It had already set by the time we lifted off from the keep, but once I got high enough and fast enough, we caught up. So they got a twofer.

But the big significant thing happened on the way back down. Being up there reminded me of my idle musing about the nature of the sun, and I had an inspiration. I had thought about trying to use the sun, moon and the earth under us as anchors for the hetro-thaumic triune, but there was one huge problem.

To create an anchor, you must have a sample of what it is you're using, an obvious application of the law of sympathy. While any lump of undisturbed earth or rock would do for Atlas, getting the other two would prove a little tricky. As for all of us using earth, we need different anchors, 'pulling' in different directions to make this stable. It would be like tying all your pavilion ropes to one tent-peg.

My big idea was, philostogen can be generated, and if the sun is primarily philostogen we can use it as a sample. As soon as I was back and out of harness, I dragged Luna down to our laboratory, and made up some philostogen. Even with the sun not up in the sky, some fairly simple sympathy spells proved my hypothesis. So we have my anchor!

That left only Luna, where to find a rock from the moon? I may have flown up to the edge of space but that doesn't mean I can fly across those kind of distances. However, it was as if some sort of dam had broken. There is something that falls from the sky that we collect, those sky-fall stones, meteorites in the classical dialect.

Our family has always paid a finders fee for any that fall on our lands. The metal ones often make far better tools and blades than any normal iron, and take magic more easily, maybe because having come from beyond, they aren't saturated with our own world's ambient magical field.

The stone ones are little more than curiosities, but we collect them, as they share the same quality, and are occasionally useful for powerful warding stones. What I realised, the moon, as far as I can see with my keen vision, looks like it might be made of the same stuff. Could one of them fallen or been knocked from the moon.

The answer was yes, we found a recently fallen meteorite that responded very strongly to the similarity spell. With this, the last piece of our work falls into place. The triune is worked out to the last sigil, the most powerful ever created, and self sealing. Once the ritual starts, nothing gets in and out until it finishes, a safety precaution.

We have a transfer medium for each of us that will regulate the power for the sharing, and now we have anchors to stop ourselves getting sucked in. We can wait two weeks, so Atlas and Blue Mane can have their honeymoon, but then we get it set up and go for it! The only thing is, we need a name for what we'll become.

Flying unicorns is incomplete, and doesn't recognise the Earth pony qualities, I was thinking a tweak to the nobles. Unicorn means 'one horn', but since we'll have all the powers, how does Alicorn sound? Hmm... maybe shorten it to Alicorn? It has a nice ring to it. Anyway, in just a few short weeks, the whole future of Equestria is going to change. That is a promise.

Chapter 8

Rising Sun 20th 3473 EE

Our shared madness is over. I write these words to confess my guilt, my part in what happened. We have become what we wanted to be, and much more, but at a cost far higher than we would have been willing to pay!

The power sharing ritual was going well, we'd established our linkages and power was flowing nicely into the triune, both from our own magical auras and from the ambient magical energy. We could feel the intense pull of the core, but our anchors were holding perfectly.

Most of all, the triune was perfectly balanced and containing the energies without a problem. I'd figured out a wrinkle in the containment wards from the measurements we got during the iceberg tow, so now a part of the energy went into reinforcing the triune in step with the rising energy level.

It was when the power flow started to feed back into the transformation spell that it happened. I could feel an intense pain inside my forehead as a horn budded there, but I could also feel the magic swirling around it, and flowing into it. Luna's sides must have been very painful, they twitched and shivered as pegasus wings budded from them. Atlas had the worse of it as he had both things happening but he withstood it with Earth pony stoicism.

However, as the power flow rose to it's peak, the mood charm on his necklace started to glow. That wasn't supposed to happen, the energies we were manipulating were focussed entirely on ourselves. Suddenly, we could feel a power drain from Atlas's side of the circle. The pull from the core and the links to Atlas also weakened, and the pull from our anchors was suddenly unbalanced in their favour. Worse still, the imbalance was causing the highly charged containment wards to oscillate wildly.

Luna just had time for a horrified gasp, and I tried desperately to stabilise the triune again with the powers of my new horn. It was like trying to shape liquid fire, but I did not want to find out what would happen if the containment wards failed. The amount of energy stored in the triune was immense, far beyond anything we'd ever handled before.

Of course, there was also the problem that with the anchor lines more powerful than the forces they held us against, we would be drawn into our anchor entities. Luna would be bound into the moon, myself the sun, and Atlas the ground. Without our sentient force to control it, the entire ritual, and the wards would collapse anyway and the energies would be released.

There was too much power flowing through the ritual to simply stop the spell, and thaumic hysteresis made it impossible to even balance the containment against the wildly fluctuating power levels. Luna was helping me by then, but it wasn't enough. We were barely holding the containment together, but we could feel ourselves fading away. I could even see the walls of the lab becoming co-existent with an endless sea of fire, and Luna later told me she saw an endless grey plain under a black sky under harsh stars.

I don't know if it was a matter of rapid calculation, or just an inspiration, but Atlas saw what would happen as well as we did, and came up with the only solution he could think of. What he did in response was both brilliant, and terrible. He threw his power, not into resisting as we were, but into empowering his earth anchor.

His connection to the earth was empowered, and so was his ability to draw on that connection, the most basic Earth pony magical ability. He then threw that additional power into strengthening our linkages, stabilising them and feeding the force that was pulling him in through to them. He kept us from being pulled into our anchors as he was, and gave us more power to work with.

He held us there, even as he was drawn through the flags of the floor, and we'd almost managed to stabilise things to the point where we could drain off the power safely. However, his final disappearance caused a massive shift in the forces surrounding us, and we flung away. The last thing I remembered was the unbalanced triune finally giving up the ghost and released a massive blast of magical energy.

When we awoke, we were lying on the floor of our lab, myself in a shallow pool of molten lava, which felt to me like warm porridge, and Luna in a circle of grey dust and rock that smelled of sulphur and saltpetre. Needless to say, the power released had completed the transformation. We were

both Alicorns, and we'd grown as big as the largest of our guard ponies. There was a third circle of warm brown soil, but no Atlas.

I don't remember the next few minutes too clearly. We stumbled over to the circle of dirt, and collapsed by it, crying. Luna was first to do more, casting a few quick diagnostic spells to discover what had happened. I could see the magic, feel it, and understand exactly what she was doing, I have spent years studying spell-craft and theory, but until that moment, I never understood what it meant to wield it.

I could read the results as well as she, our cousin had been drawn deep into the earth, far below any mine or cavern. Our only relief was that he was asleep, unconscious even, since the only thing worse than being trapped down there would be being aware of it. We tried to raise him back to the surface, but his tie to his anchor was beyond even our new powers to affect. When the ground beneath us started to shake, we had to stop.

Until then, neither of us had really been aware of a further change. Both of us had been empowered many times beyond my most optimistic estimate, but not all that power was from within us. Each of us was now the terminus of a powerful ley-line, one that reached off into the sky. As you can guess Luna's reached to the moon, which was in it's waning crescent phase, and mine to the sun.

We could draw on their power to enhance our spells, and feed power back, something that later became critical. I've figured out the fantastically unlikely combination of circumstances that had converted our anchor lines into stable ley-lines, but at the time we were too stunned to do more than accept it. However, we decided to go find help. Both our families were in residence, and with both my mother and Atlas's father adding their wisdom, we might still be able to retrieve him.

What we found was an empty castle, items and clothing, even jewellery left where they'd dropped. No signs of a struggle or a frantic evacuation, just absence of anything pony. Anything live in fact, animals and plant life was just as absent. We could also feel the remnant of the magical shock-wave that had been unleashed, an ambient magic level many times that of the rest of Equestria.

I wondered what happened, and then found another aspect of my link with the sun. I could see what had happened, I could learn of events

everywhere the light of the sun reached, both past and present. Luna had a similar power for the light of the moon, and saw it with me. It was the shock-wave of course, such powerful magical energy, backed by the manna of entire worlds. It was too much for anything living to handle, except for three entities at the eye of the storm, conceived in just that environment.

As the shock-wave washed over them, they just vanished, so quickly they surely didn't even realise what had happened. We watched in horror as our families, our personal servants, the castle staff, every-pony and every living thing within a league of the castle, gone as if they never existed. The structures, having little magic were untouched, though every enchanted artefact had been utterly destroyed.

Beyond that the magic weakened enough that things and ponies simply changed, along with every other living or magical thing. We saw the greater part of Maresia go from a peaceful, productive Fife to a bizarre wasteland. The edge of the effect stopped just short of Ponyville, and we immediately flew there.

Well I say flew, but no sooner had we lifted into the air then we transformed. I became a blazing comet of solar fire, and Luna became a dark mist. Another aspect of our new power, presumably triggered by our desire to get to Ponyville as quickly as possible. Both of us travelled the distance which would have taken even me a half hour in a moment.

Our purpose was two-fold. First, to check that Blue Mane was safe and sound. She'd been visiting her parents house when the accident happened. Second, to look at her locket, for we both remembered the glow it had given off just before things had gone so wrong.

It seemed like all of Ponyville was out on the streets, staring in the direction of the castle. We ignored the looks of shock and cries of alarm as we reformed and landed. We simply raced into the alchemists shop and straight up to Blue Mane's room. She was there, lying sobbing on the bed, the locket thrown against the far wall.

Our new senses could tell something else, there was a second magical form within her, a new foal, hers and Atlas's. Even in our shock, Luna blushed furiously as her unspoken desire to find out when it had happened,

triggered her moon clairvoyance followed that thought with images of what had happened under her moon.

Blue Mane brought her back with two words, in a tone of loathing I never thought I'd hear from her. "Silver Tongue!"

Luna was suddenly all business again, and ripped that locket apart. Considered abstractly, it was rather ingenious, a combination of power channelling and dissipation runes, which only became powered up when in a sufficiently powerful magical field. The basic charm work that produced the mood sensing effect obscured any trace of them until active.

Our clairvoyance back-tracked the events that lead up to it, the fear our iceberg stunt had engendered in that clique of conservatives, the decision to destroy us and any credibility our research had. Luna even managed to share her thoughts with me, an aspect of her domain I've been unable to duplicate, and we pooled our knowledge.

They'd found out about the pegasus based triunes (suddenly, the disappearance and unexplained deaths of several pegasi from the Fife suddenly made a lot more sense) and thought we might try the same thing with Earth ponies.

They had no idea of what we were really after, the concept of a hetro-thaumic triune never entered their minds, but to be able to empower both other, 'lesser' races would give us a massive strategic and political advantage and make hay of some of their deepest held beliefs. Allies would join us and reap the benefits, and they'd be left out in the cold. So they decided to destroy us, and Atlas's marriage to Blue Mane gave them the opening, or rather Silver Tongue did.

While he didn't move in their circles, he was friends with some of their younger relatives who did. He didn't change, just dissembled when he returned, well enough to fool even Atlas. In truth, he hated my cousin with a passion that grew every day. He'd have set the trap even without the large sum of Hoof marks they promised him, and later paid, rather than having him killed for knowing too much.

The idea was that whichever locket Atlas wore, he'd have it on or near him when we were trying to develop Earth pony triunes. He'd be an obvious

participant. The power drain would unbalance the triune in a magical explosion that would wipe us and anybody nearby out.

They could then claim we'd destroyed ourselves with our dangerous experiments, avoiding any blame and giving them a perfect reason to push through further restrictions on magical research. It would have worked too, as there would be no-one left who could say otherwise.

Of course, it disrupted a triune a thousand times as powerful, and the devastation was a thousand times as great. Also, unfortunately for them, there were survivors, and we knew everything. In day and night, we could see every plot, every secret meeting and hidden agenda. In short, we saw everything that had lead up to this moment, including the fact that our iceberg, rather than scaring them straight, had triggered the destruction of our family and Fife.

It was that realisation that sent us both into insanity.

They'd looked to destroy us, and in that moment they succeeded. There was no longer a Celestia there, or a Luna, only The Pitiless Sun and Nightmare Moon.

My memories of the time after that are hazy, distorted, though I've now seen everything that happened through my solar clairvoyance. I still shudder at what I did, no matter how I want to deny it, the Pitiless Sun was and is a part of me, the sum of all my rage and despair, amplified by the power of an alicorn, piled upon my horn and thrust into the hearts of my foes.

Silver Tongue was first, easy to find. He was carousing in a tavern in Canterlot. We landed outside, and ripped the entire front off with a light touch of our combined telekinesis. Luna hauled him out, and held him up in front of the shocked crowd. He called for help, panicking, but no-one wanted to approach the pair of us, Nightmare Moon with her cloud-like aura of shadows, and my own flaming corona.

Among his cries were demands to know who we were, and that is all we said to him, who we were, and what we'd once been. Luna added only that he would pay for what he'd done, then crafted images, illusions in the air showing his crimes. There were denials, then demands, and finally pleading.

He might as well have said nothing. Luna turned that dream, or illusion power inward on him, drawing up his worst nightmares, his deepest fears and making him live them. I think it was a mercy when I finally touched him with the sun's power. I understand the processes that go on within it, though there are no words in Equestrian to describe them, but I can say that that fire is far hotter than any flame.

He vanished in an incandescent halo, an outline too bright for ordinary ponies to even look upon, and not even ashes remained. Some careful diagnostic spells might have detected some odd gasses in the area, but to all intents and purposes he'd vanished. That finally made the onlookers turn and gallop away, screaming.

We were systematic, hunting down each and every conspirator. The first few in Canterlot were easy, we out-ran the word of our approach easily. We winnowed through the castle, brushing aside the guards who tried to stop us with our telekinesis like a goose-filly herding her charges with a switch. Some were severely injured by being flung around, but the majority were spared.

I take no credit for that, I don't think the concept of mercy, or restraint was a part of either of our alter-egos. I believe it was simply that they were goal oriented to the point of monomania. Throwing guards aside was simpler than destroying them. I did wonder why The Pitiless Sun didn't just call down a flare to turn the whole of the city into a bubbling lava crater, something well within her power.

I've come to the conclusion that the only thing that spared Equestria a greater massacre was that destroying the guilty ones at a distance and watching remotely just didn't satisfy the need to end them as deeply as being able to look them in the eye, have them know the reason, and that there was no escape.

I just thank the ancestors that we only went after them and not their families. Once again the actions were single minded, the conspirators were the ones who had attacked us, they were the ones that would be destroyed. Nothing else was important. That also showed in the way our alter-egos acted when some of the guards of out-lying Fifes attempted to put up a defence.

Our insane alter-egos ignored any attackers until they actually attacked, and then smashed them in the most efficient way possible. It also showed just what our new bodies were capable of withstanding. They threw their most powerful combat spells, hurled by their best unicorns using triunes based on our newly published designs.

They might as well have been throwing thistle heads, no thistle heads would at least have stuck. The spells either rebounded or were absorbed, causing no damage. Throwing burning twigs or a cup of water on a blazing bonfire does not affect the bonfire one bit.

A group of pegasi attempted to dive-bomb Pitiless Sun with a ballista arrow slung between them, a twenty hoof long shaft with a forged iron tip that could go through four hooves of solid stone wall or twice that many ponies with ease. They were perfectly on target, and had released it with at least as much force as a ballista would have given it. It struck me full on the chest, and rebounded, tip bent like cheap pewter.

Eventually the slaughter was done. Everyone involved in the plot from the nobles who planned it to the artificer who'd created the lockets was not just dead but reduced to super-heated gasses. With their task done, Nightmare Moon and The Pitiless Sun returned to Maresia Keep.

That is where I am now, where we awoke for the second time. We've found out one other fact about our new condition, we can't die. I've had some hours to do some tests and diagnostic spells, and it appears our life-forces are tied into our anchors, which may well mean we will exist as long as they do. The results suggest that even if we found some way to damage ourselves, we'd regenerate from pretty much anything.

So I sit here, writing by the light of my horn. I will bring this journal up to date, and then try to sleep. I made Luna take a sleeping draught, the most powerful I could prepare, and managed to convince her to let it work on her. Potions don't affect us any more than spells, unless we let them. Well, it should give her a night free of nightmares, or Nightmare Moon.

Tomorrow we will venture forth into the world, and discover what has happened since our rampage. Will we be considered monsters, feared worse than hydras or feral dragons? Whatever our status, we still have a duty to those in Ponyville, and the other, smaller villages of the Fife that were outside the radius of effect.

We will do what we can, and try to atone for our actions. Understand that I'm not talking about trying to create equality among ponies, I still believe in that as strongly as I ever did. No, the things I must pay penance for are the results of my messing up so badly.

I'd love to share the blame with Luna (though she seems to have taken enough for herself already) but the spells she cast, the rituals she crafted were flawless, but based off what were clearly flawed designs. My designs. The iceberg was my idea too. If I can make her see that, maybe she'll stop blaming herself. She may well end up hating me, but I'd far rather that than her hating herself.

So tomorrow we will go out into the world, and I will face my doom, whatever it may be. I have eternity in front of me, maybe, just maybe that will be long enough for me to make restitution for my mistakes, though I doubt it.

Ancestors, who I can now never join, I will take whatever punishment you deem fit, endure whatever doom you set me too, but please, let Luna be alright, let her one day be happy again. Please.

Chapter 9

Rising Sun 25th 3473 EE

It appears that the Ancestors took me at my word when I said I would endure any punishment to atone for my mistakes. The last two days have been enlightening, both figuratively and literally. Though it appears I am the one doing the enlightening.

We should have been prepared for the situation. It was a clear consequence of the Third Corollary to the Law of Sympathy, namely that any action upon a subject affects the actor as well as the subject. In the case of our personal ley-lines to the sun and moon, that means that we affect them as much as they affect us, and unfortunately the same relationship exists for Atlas.

The areas of new knowledge this relationship opens up would be fascinating, if the consequences weren't so serious. The correspondence is properly to our most basic life processes. Theoretically, if someone did find a way to destroy me without unbinding me, the sun would simply vanish. It seems ludicrous that an entity as insignificant as a single creature could have that effect, but the arithmantic calculations bear me out.

Actually, if you turn the proposition around, it suddenly becomes so clear why the two or rather three of us are so nearly indestructible. To destroy me, you would not only have to destroy this physical form, but the sun as well. The same holds for Luna and the moon, and Atlas and our own world. Since that is beyond the scope of any magic our present knowledge can conceive, I don't believe it is a major worry.

However, the arithmantic formulation also allows for the results of one of us being unconscious, or simply asleep. Both of these slow the life processes, and this echoes onto our anchor entities. In my case the sun would not be destroyed, but it would dim and eventually go out, and our world and the other planets would simply float away into the void, as it would no longer attract them and keep them in their orbits.

It is not so much that the sun needs magic to run, I can sense the processes within it, and they are entirely physical, but that my magic suppresses those natural processes in the same way that a body slows its physical processes when it sleeps.

Side note: While its normal processes are not magic, the sun is an immense source of magic. How is this possible? Well it was believed since the very beginnings of magical theory that life generates magic, and intelligent life, sentient force generates it most intensely. Of course, in recent times, that aspect of magical theory has been ignored as it gives ammunition against the unicorns are the only true 'magical' race.

It had also been hypothesised that that any form of change produces magic, but the simpler physical or non-living processes like a running river, or a volcano create it at a much lower intensity. Too low for our present detection spells to properly sense, which is why the hypothesis has remained unproved until now.

In the case of the sun, vast processes of change, non-magical transmutations have run for uncounted ages. At that level even a non-living process can build up an incredible pool of manna, and I am the first to be able to tap it. It's also running on a large enough scale that I can feel it being generated.

Side side note: Yes transmutation, like the standard lead into gold process, only without magic! This in itself opens vast new fields of research. Philostogen is put under immense pressure and heat, and transmutes into a new gas that has no name, but makes my light headed when I sense it. I'm thinking of calling it Celestigen, when I have chance to publish my findings.

The process also produces incredible amounts of heat and light, and indeed that is why the sun shines. It might be possible to capitalise on that, reverse the standard lighting spell that every unicorn foal knows and capture the light energy of such a transmutation, turning it into manna. We may have need of that, in the near future.

Focus, Celly, we were talking about what happens when I sleep, that the sun starts to 'go to sleep' too. As above, so below and vice versa. Fortunately thaumic hysteresis comes into play. The decay in natural

processes is very slow at first, decreasing exponentially as the effect continues to run.

By my calculations we would have over a century before the sun guttered out completely, and no significant change in solar output or the orbits of the planets for the first few weeks. So I can get a good night of sleep without everything falling to pieces, thank the ancestors! For smaller objects, such as our own world, and the moon, the decay happens more rapidly. Indeed, the evidence of this was what led me to discover this whole idea.

After my last entry, we went to sleep, with some artificial assistance, but when we awoke, it was still night. This seemed odd, as the draught we'd taken should have put us on the shelf until mid-morning. At first we assumed that it was an part of our being resistant to the potions, that even though we'd let them affect us, they wore off more quickly.

Then I went to the balcony, and noticed the stars seemed to confirm the time was towards the end of the night. Back when we were helping Atlas investigate the paths of the planets we plotted the positions of many of the brighter stars ourselves, working from older star maps, so I know what I'm talking about.

Then Luna looked shocked. Her moon was out of position, floating further away than it should be, and behind in its path across the stars, and its position in relation to being viewed from the world's surface. We immediately set to investigate.

Between our newly expanded senses and powers, our skills, and the rather complete magical laboratory we had available, it didn't take long to determine the empirical facts. The earth had slowed down, and was continuing to slow down. Its gravitational force was decreasing in proportion (that took some ingenuity to test, as every scale relied on gravity to work). Also the moon had shown the same effects, more rapidly while Luna was asleep.

It didn't take long for me to determine that the same changes had happened to the sun, to a much smaller extent. The slowed rotation of the world explained the night and the stars, and the changes in mutual attraction explained the moon being out of position. Fortunately, the sun is the overwhelming component in keeping the world orbiting, so there were no significant changes in that orbit.

It was only then that we realised that others might have noticed, and spread our senses abroad. Well, at least Luna did, as her moon was in the sky, but she let me follow her thoughts. It was chaos. All of Equestria was in a panic. There were fires, and riots, and general insanity. Not that they didn't have good reason to, even if they didn't know why.

The changes in our anchored entities suggested an obvious hypothesis. As soon as Atlas was bound into the earth, the natural processes of the world started to decay. Since he wouldn't be waking up, they would continue to decay until they came to a stop. This would pretty much be the end of the world, or at least the living parts of it.

Fortunately, there was a way to fix it. All three of us were together in the original spell, and all three of us shared our powers. That link still existed, though it was quiescent. That meant we might, to an extent affect each other's domains, though normally that would be impossible, as the existence of the primary entity linkage would suppress the others. But if the primary was unconscious, it was possible.

So it was with my cousin. Since he was not in control, together, Luna and I could draw on our own power sources and haul the world back into alignment. We also needed to make it clear that things were going to be okay to everyone, so no-pony else would get hurt. We flew once again to Ponyville, and landed in the middle of the square.

Ponies of all types begging us to stop punishing them, to help them, immediately besieged us. We had wrung some coherence out of the terror, and it had started with Blue Mane, though she hadn't intended it. Obviously, she'd been the go-to pony after we left for information on what was happening, as everybody had seen us visit her.

I don't think either of us would have blamed her if she'd placed the blame for the mess squarely on us, but instead, she'd told the story in a way that placed it on the unicorn supremacists among the nobility. The accident had been as side effect of an attempt to destroy our family that had almost succeeded, except for the two of us.

The news had spread on pegasus wings, and our own vengeful rampage had cemented the story in every-pony's minds. A number of panic-stricken and vengeful mobs had laid siege to castles of the worst offenders, even though they were quite thoroughly dead. And there were a lot of incidents

where bad things had happened to ponies, unicorns that'd shared their beliefs.

It took a considerable display of power to restore order, but eventually we managed to get ponies to listen to us. First we made it clear that all the guilty had been punished, and the remaining families were innocent, and that we would be unhappy if anyone innocent was harmed. Second, the unreasonable night was another effect of the disaster, and most importantly, we could make it better

We ordered pegasi to spread the word, to prevent any more panic, and then we set to. Since that day, it's been a few minutes effort twice a day to realign things, as we never let it go out of synchronisation that far, but this first time it took hours. Luna pushed the moon back into its correct orbit, and then joined me in spinning up the world.

The sign of the moon visibly moving calmed people, which shows just how out of control things were, but they still stood vigil with us as we worked. Not too close, handling that kind of power created massive auras around us, but at least it showed them we were doing something. There was relief as the sky lightened in the east, and when the first rays of sunlight appeared above the mountains, there was wild cheering.

There was an equally wild celebration when we'd finished, the sun was almost at noon and the moon had set. I felt like I'd gone hoof to claw with a whole flock of dragons, and Luna looked worse. I swear the poor girl's horn was visibly drooping at the end. I packed her off to bed for a well-earned rest, but I couldn't join her. My solar sight (solar sight, I like that, much better than sun based clairvoyance) showed me that some ponies were still being idiots, or hadn't gotten the message.

Besides, I had to get away from Ponyville. Ponies were acting like I was an avatar of the first cause, or an ancestor reborn. I'm not a deity, I'm just a very silly pony who made some dreadful mistakes, and receiving worship for fixing them made me feel unclean.

I did later arrange with those members of the Citizen's Council who were in Ponyville to set up a ceremony for the oath of fealty, where Luna and I could take the titles we were entitled and comfortable with, Duchess of Maresia. As the eldest surviving member of the direct line, I was theoretically the one the duty fell too, but I was not going to go it alone, or

shut out Luna. Hopefully, if they saw us as Duchesses, they wouldn't go around acting like we were anything else. Plus, we needed to formalise our status before we tackled Canterlot.

But at that moment, I did a flying tour, solar flare tour? The thing where I go all flamey and go really really fast, I'm going to have to come up with a better name than that, of the hot spots, which were temporarily hotter when I got there. Thankfully I didn't have to hurt anyone to get my point across.

However, making a line of lava out of a cobbled path as a way to prevent ponies assaulting a unicorn who's only fault was that he'd mouthed off about being superior, or other similar tricks usually got their attention. One particularly truculent mob I simply lofted into the air en masse and dunked in the nearest lake to cool off.

Finally the commotion had dropped to a dull roar, and I could wend my own way back to Ponyville. Of course, there had already been hundreds of casualties before we woke up, and hundreds more while we were pinned down in Ponyville, pushing the planet. More lives for me to atone for, but I acted as fast as I could! At least this responsibility I can keep off Luna's shoulders, the sun, or lack of it is my fault.

When I got back, I roused Luna, who had recovered enough to help, to give the sun and moon a little additional course correction as they rose and set respectively, and then I crashed for the night.

Since then the days have been insane. Between getting fealty oaths from the towns that remain along the edges of the blast area, further research at the Keep, and spinning up the planet twice daily, we've been rushed off our hooves. And things are going to get worse before they get better.

While the most obvious process affected is the world's rotation and gravitation, but if the relationships are as the arithmancy says, even the seasons, creatures' natural instincts and the hydrological may be affected. We will have to work out substitutes, or ways to counter the suppressing force of Atlas's unconsciousness.

And we'll require help, lots of it. While our power sources are as near infinite as makes no difference, our power handling ability is vast but finite, and our wills and consciousnesses even more so, or rather less so, or is it more so? Our sentient force is the bottleneck, there that's clear enough.

Anyhow, we'll have to work out ways to substitute for the natural processes. The only way I can see is getting ponies to manually drive some of them. Their will, or sentient force as they do it can counter the magical suppression. Pegasi moving clouds around to make weather, Earth ponies waking up hibernating animals and shaking the leaves off of trees during Leaf Fall. It sounds like something out of a filly tale, but it's our best hope.

The only good news is, if we can get them running for Equestria, we may be able to leverage that to drive the rest of the world without having to micro-manage it. This is a consequence of the Law of Sympathy working for us for a change. But it will require a great deal of experimentation and development to get the best return for the least effort.

Note to self: Cloud creation, this is priority one! A way must be found to manufacture cloud if natural processes will not. Pegasi cloud manipulation powers? Make time to experiment! Could reifying the potential rainbowishness implicit in the thaumic matrix cause the cloud to form as the manna shifts to an equipotential state?

Additional Note to self: Review my notes on dye creation from rainbows. In the mean time I guess I can fly out to sea and blast areas of seawater with concentrated solar energy to provide some cloud cover. It would be better if we could create weather manufactories in central locations and create permanent 'wink-bridges' to draw purified seawater to them. Normally it would require too much power to maintain, but if we can create a siphon effect, we could get thaumic hysteresis doing most of our work for us.

Of course, substituting for natural processes is only a palliative; our ultimate goal must be to recover Atlas, not just for the good of our own souls, but the good of the world. Only then will things return to normal. But we will need some source of power far greater than the combined power of two alicorns.

I have some vague notions, converting solar energy directly to manna, or duplicating the solar transmutation process on a small scale here and capturing energy from that. Some more powerful hetro-thaumic triune or even a pentagram, possibly even a hexagram (two overlapping triunes, something no-pony's ever managed to make work for more than a few heartbeats).

But research into that will have to wait. I suspect it will take years, decades to develop the elements of something to do the job, and we must first make sure that Equestria survives. Still, we have as long as we need. Our bodies are ready, they can stay the course, but the question is, can our minds, and souls? They will have to, for it is this world's only hope. So no pressure.

Chapter 10

High Sun 3rd 3473 EE

Up early, I couldn't sleep, or didn't want to sleep any more than I have to. This is probably the only time I'm going to have to update this journal, so let's get updating.

We finally have the remnants of Maresia squared away into something resembling a working entity again. In truth, our once great Fife has little more land than a large county, mostly along the near side of the magically irradiated zone. Ponyville, our farming centre, Trottingham, with it's trading links along the Great South road, and Shirefield in the Emerald hills, one of the towns we'd encouraged to become an haven for artisans because of it's mines.

If only Mareseyside and Manechester had survived, so much of our new flying chariot manufacturing was on the banks of the Maresey. Unfortunately they were both too near to Maresia Keep and the epicentre. Well at least we have at least something to work with. Both Luna and myself have visited the remaining towns, and held memorial services for the rest of the Fife before swearing our remaining subjects. We have our select-ponies for the Citizen's Council, communication routes set up, and mayors to handle each town's internal affairs.

Reading those last few paragraphs makes me sound dreadfully cold-blooded, I know. Talking about economics and resources and ponies as if they were tools. The truth is I want nothing more than to go somewhere and lay down and cry for a couple of decades, and scream for several more, but I can't. I still have responsibilities for the ponies that are still alive, and the best way I can discharge them is to do my job, and the science necessary to keep them alive. Part of that requires me to find ways to keep our people fed and our economy running. We are too few to be independant of the rest of Equestria, especially now.

Luna, after her initial depression seems to be doing a better job of handling things than I do. But she's always been better at holding onto her emotions; I'm the one who wears my heart on a stocking. She's helped me so much,

comforting me in those moments when I couldn't hold it in and coming into my dreams to guard against the nightmares. My guilt over my part in the event makes me see all the ones I couldn't save. It's one of the reasons I always wake early. So many thousands of eyes, all looking at me accusingly. My own family_

Had a bad moment there, a case of the shakes. Luna somehow knew, she winked in and brought me out of it. I have to stop relying on her, it's not fair that she has to help me on top of what she's dealing with, but I can't, not just yet. When did she become so strong? She's also been doing the dragon's share of the research for our stabilisation plan, while I took on the administrative duties for the Fife. Maybe now I have things up and running I can help her for a change.

I threw a whole lot of ideas at her to start with, but she's the one who's experimenting with them, figuring out what will be most effective, and all the nitty-gritty details. It's work for a researcher and spell crafter, and Luna is both. She's far better at pure research than I am in all truth. I tend to bull ahead, once I have something that works, whereas she is a perfectionist, though we're both as stubborn as bricks... I mean determined and focussed, always a useful talent in a researcher.

There has been one positive thing happening in the last few days. Ponies have been staggering out of the irradiated zone, with a higher than normal background magic level, but otherwise relatively healthy. It seems that along the border, the power level was not high enough to create permanent transformations, and ponies are now reverting, whole families in some cases.

Organising a relief effort, and setting up a search and rescue unit of pegasi chariots to recover ponies deeper in was an additional task to add to the huge list, but one I went to gladly. We have teams with flight converted farm carts and healers on board circling the irradiated zone, picking up survivors and dropping off supplies when the cart is full.

It may be possible to do more, recover ponies from further in if we can figure out a thaumic signature to use in a detection spell. I say we, but it's likely to be Luna again. There should be ponies that will not change back from plants or rocks or whatever they've turned into naturally, but could be

reverted by a small magical push. Of course the refugees bring their own problems.

Thankfully food isn't an issue just yet. While much of the food plants in the fringe were warped by the transmutation, a lot of them are still edible, even tasty, and other stuff is reverting to normal. Likewise the stored food, which was already dead, was practically unaffected. For now we're just retrieving that, but only things that have records. We won't attempt to harvest the live food until we can check there aren't transformed ponies mixed in with it.

Of course, we haven't tried to contact Canterlot yet, and no envoys have arrived from there. My solar sight, when I've had a chance to use it, shows they're still in turmoil themselves not to mention terrified of the two of us. Not that I blame them, Nightmare Moon and the Pitiless Sun went through everything they could buck at them like poorly made thatch. However, once we have worked out the plan to stabilise the ecology, we will have to get the whole country behind it. If only Atlas or Ponydra or Gladstone were here, they could sell the plan with soft words and sweet reason. Of course if Atlas were here, none of this would be needed.

In our case, we're going to have to be rather more muscular. 'Do it our way or the entire world will die.' That would be accurate, but a bit hard to prove. The theory behind it is new, brand new and somewhat esoteric. We could probably prove it to another mage, but it would mean revealing more of the theory that lead up to it and our research into hetero-thaumic triunes than I'm comfortable with.

We may have no choice, but it means that theoretically someone else could start messing with them. Of course they couldn't use our anchors, our link would warn us of any such interference, but they could try something similar. I've had some vague thoughts about using something non-physical for a double triune or pentagram. Intangibles like concepts have reality, and our tied into the collective consciousness of pony-kind. Life, especially intelligent life produces magic far more intense than any natural process, so it might be able to provide more powerful anchors and a higher order energy amplification effect. The trick would be linking it to us, and finding other powerful ponies to take the free corners.

Darn, I drifted off into theory again. Focus Celly. Back to our short term plan. I suspect 'Do it our way or else!' will be our method. Breaking off a

mountaintop and waving it about should get their attention. King Goldmane is not strong, and the current crisis has all but incapacitated him. Part of this is because he has lost some of his closest advisers. Up until recently, the King accounted a certain group of unicorn supremacist nobles as his closest friends, which explains why they'd been given such free rein over the kingdom as they kindly took one duty after another from his shoulders, doing them instead. How self-sacrificing of them.

His father was a far wiser and more capable pony, which is why that same clique of nobles had him assassinated. Solar sight, (and Lunar sight) is very useful for finding out where the bodies are buried, and how they got to be there. If we can prove that to him, we may be able to shake him out of his current funk. One thing I'm going to do before we go there is write up a big black scroll of all the corruption and double dealing I can find with my sight, so we can clean up the court. At the moment, the factions are still forming, no-pony has the ear of the King yet, but we will have to act soon, before some new clique has a chance to entrench itself.

Well back to work. I have crop estimates to calculate, a cloud city to design, and a planet to spin up for day-break. I'm not just swamped, I'm underwater! Fortunately, I'm also an excellent swimmer. The workload also helps to keeps me from unquiet thoughts.

Chapter 11

High Sun 15th 3473 EE

Well that went about as well as I expected. I've never actually bullied a kingdom before. Still, there's a first time for everything.

In comparison to our visit as Nightmare Moon and Pitiless Sun, we pulled out all the stops. We flew into Canterlot on the most fancy flying chariot we had, newly built to our specifications in Shirefield, a four-pegasi chariot with gold trim and fancy detailing. Our four pegasi were from the cadre of Fife guards we started building up, as was our escort.

Armour and weapons we could recover from Maresia Keep, so they were outfitted with the best we could find. It covered up the fact that most of them were only a few weeks trained, but it didn't show, they wheeled and flew like veterans. We had unicorns and earth ponies with us, riding in other chariots, and an escort of a half dozen pegasi flying cover.

In fact, it was over half of our entire army, though less than a platoon in strength. Traditional tactics has the three races spilt up, separate units doing separate jobs, pegasi scouting and suppressing an enemy, earth ponies actually fighting face to face, while unicorns provide signalling and magical support. Oh, and run the whole show, as only in Maresia would an earth pony be able to become an officer no matter how competent.

Not that some would ever want to be. Sergeant Apony survived by a miracle it seems. His eldest daughter was having a naming ceremony for her newborn foal, so he was in Trottingham when the event happened. His experience and unlimited common sense is exactly what we needed, so Sergeant Major Apony has managed to provide us with an effective if small force. As a matter of fact, it is too small for the traditional divisions to exist.

I'm wondering if we can actually turn this to our advantage, combined units using flying chariots could have far greater flexibility and speed of response. It could counter-balance our much smaller force size. We could even carry light artillery, flying chariots with built in onagers or light ballista.

Note to self: Come up with some designs. Power to weight ratio is key, they need to be as light as possible to keep up with flying infantry. Enchant for greater strength? See if it's possible to adapt the pegasus power transfer runes for chariots to earth pony magic to allow them to increase a weapon's structural integrity while they use it. Could flying clouds and use of the Cloud Hoof spell substitute for large flying carts or coaches to carry infantry units? Figure out mass loading and cohesion limits.

I don't think that any of the other Fifes would try and invade us after what happened at the Canterlot palace, but it would also be a way of breaking down the barriers between the races. And there are other threats out there, the wild griffin tribes, or burrowing dogs, which might think or taking advantage of the current turmoil, not to mention dragons and other monsters that lair in the mountains. What's left of Maresia is particularly vulnerable, a long, narrow strip of territory that's hard to defend.

How did I get into a discussion of military theory? In this case we weren't going there to start a war, but to prevent a disaster. We landed on the outskirts of Canterlot and made a parade of it through the streets, leaving a rear guard to watch over the troop carriers, while we rode in the fancy chariot.

We didn't meet any resistance until we reached the palace gates. Two full companies of Royal guards were lined up in front of them. Of course we knew this, as I'd used my solar sight to watch it forming up. Our honour guard was hopelessly outnumbered but they acted like veterans, while Royal Guard morale was cracking like river ice in a thaw. Most of them had been there when our insane alter egos had paid a visit, and know if we wanted in, they wouldn't even be able to slow us down.

The king's seneschal Periwig came up ask us our business. I have to grant that stallion had guts, or at least a poker face that wouldn't quit. I gave him the truth, that we were there to speak with the king on no less than the safety of the entire kingdom, and that it was a matter of the utmost urgency.

I'm pleased to say the not quite threat had the right effect; it got us an audience within a few minutes. We saw our honour guard put up with food and drink, and went directly to the throne room. We had made sure we'd be introduced as the Duchesses of Maresia, but didn't make the customary

knee to the king, who I have to admit was showing more backbone than I'd given him credit for.

When Periwig called us on it, I made it quite clear that we considered our family's original oath of fealty to him to be well and truly broken when King Goldmane allowed his cronies to try and assassinate us. When he said he'd known nothing of the plot, we agreed. As far as I'm concerned, he lost the plot years ago and wouldn't currently be able to find it with a map and a dedicated magic spell.

The point was that he'd known nothing and done nothing to stop any of their excesses, leaving them to believe they could do as they pleased with no consequences. An oath of fealty goes both ways, and usually includes a clause about how in return for their loyalty; the one swearing is under the protection of their liege. Having our entire family and nine tenths of our realm destroyed was a pretty big breach of that agreement.

Which brought us to the point of why we were there. We laid it out, not everything about our brother, but the concept that the magical disaster that the unicorn supremacists had turned our experiment into had a wider effect than just destroying Maresia, it was also affecting the whole world, and would need more fixing than us keeping the sun and moon on schedule.

We got his tame mages in to study the notes Luna had so carefully compiled. After they'd gotten over the initial shock, and freaked out when some of their own diagnostic spells confirmed our built-in manna links, they were forced to agree Luna's analysis was correct. Canterlot breeds a lot of white unicorns, but I never saw a paler bunch than when they realised that the only thing between the world, and the end of all life was us.

Then we fed him the bolus, the plans Luna had worked out from my ideas. Creating cloud cities as weather manufacturing plants, co-ordinating and caring for the wildlife, the whole nine pony-lengths. The whole of Equestria would have to help manually turn the seasons and run the weather and ecology, but combined with our power it could keep things running.

The King refused, of course. Getting the nobility to co-operate with such a plan would be impossible, not to mention the vast costs involved. Was there no other way, some spell to put things back to normal. He might be a unicorn, but his magical theory wasn't up to much. He wasn't happy when

we told him there might be, but it would take decades of research and we didn't have that long.

He was still stubborn, so we gave him the horn. Since the issue was nothing less than the survival of everyone, if he couldn't manage it, we'd have to depose him and run things ourselves. That knocked him back on his hindquarters. However, with the horn firmly poking his back, we gave the carrot.

We didn't want to run all of Equestria, which was after all the simple truth. Our current domain was more than enough. So instead, if he remained King and helped to organise our reforms, we'd agree to swear to him as vassals. In return he backed us to the brow in what needed to be done, and gave us a free hand in running what was left of Maresia (not that the last part would be much of a change from how he'd run things before).

That had him interested. No matter how poor he was at leadership, he understood the power we were offering him. Then I sweetened the pot. While what money and personal effects that were owned by ponies with living relatives in the safe zone would be returned to them, there was still a lot of loose gold and other treasure in the irradiated zone. That would be put towards setting up the needed projects.

Then we handed him the big black scroll. There were soon a number of Royal Guard units rushing around, and they weren't after us. With the demonstration of how corrupt his court had become, and that we could also provide him with a way to stop it happening again, we hit him with the final part.

Luna's illusions showing him exactly what had happened to his father, and who'd been responsible, along with our oath that we'd reported only what had actually happened more or less sealed the deal. By the time we left, we were officially a part of Equestrian nobility again, with a full pardon for any and all past actions, and Royal backing for our plans.

And here was I thinking diplomacy was difficult. I guess it only goes to show. You can get more with a kind word and a huge glowing horn than just a kind word. Now we can get on with the work of saving the world. And while we're at it, making it a better world for every-pony.

We will find a way to recover Atlas and restore things one day, and when we do, I want him to come back to a world we can be proud of. I don't care if it takes a thousand years there will be an Equestria where unicorns and pegasi and earth pony foals can play together and no-one will think wrong of it. This I swear!

Chapter 12

Harvest 12th 3473 EE

Busy busy busy! It's just as well we have a civil government set up and taking care of day to day matters within what's left of Maresia, as our time is fully taken up with stabilising the ecology. In future years it should be easier, we'll have the tools and processes in place to make things work without our personal intervention, but right now we're still setting them up, and using Alicorn awesomeness to make up the shortfall.

I'm rushed off my hooves... wings... flashy fiery transporty effect... well whatever means of personal movement you care to name, I'm still rushed off it, or them as the case may be. I'm continually having to dash all over Equestria, solving problems that didn't even _exist_ until now, teaching, persuading and downright browbeating ponies to do things the right way, which is to say, my way.

I've never had so much fun in my life!

I've been taking time out from the run-around, evaporating whole acres of seawater with my solar powers to form clouds and shunting them in the right direction to supplement the sparse natural cloud cover. We've mapped the natural high level cloud streams that are less affected by the suppressant effect, and I've been shamelessly using them to get clouds to where they're needed. However, it still requires me to flash to the destination and organise pegasi teams to bring the clouds down.

Luna has focussed more on training our subjects in what to do with the fields and animals, starting in Maresia and working outwards. At one point, despite the food we could recover from the irradiated zone, I was worried how we would feed and house all the detransformed refugees we were recovering.

However, I solved that one with a twofer. They are being trained up as well, and being sent out to other Fifes and towns to train the ponies of those areas. However, their expeditions still need a lot of personal attention from both of us. It's just as well we can be anywhere in Equestria within a few

heartbeats. It may also be helpful in the future that there are groups of ponies all over Equestria who are sworn to us.

It's just as well, we've been racing desperately to get things organised before the harvest starts in earnest. Of course, the really major efforts won't be needed until we have to shift the season to fall. Pegasus teams will have to lead the migratory birds south, and the rest of us dig winter burrows for creatures and shake the leaves off the trees. I'm hoping to make it a sort of competition, a race to make it easier to sell to the populous.

Part of the problem is that different areas require different solutions. For example, a farming community like Ponyville has more earth ponies and different requirements than a unicorn heavy city like Canterlot. Adapting the procedures to manual labour or magic and optimising it for the location is what's taking up the time.

Speaking of time, timing becomes critical, which led us to the requirement for calendar reform... Alicorn style! We've let the world slow down by a third of an hour per day, and Luna has let the moon out into a slightly wider orbit. By my calculations, this should result in a year of three hundred and sixty days, and a month of thirty days.

Ponies will be able to tell what day it is, or the time of month by observing the phase of the moon, and key dates will coincide with full, half or new moons. No more odd days added to the end of months to make things work, and since the majority of ponies are illiterate, no need for written calendars! Not that I intend to let that stand, but fostering universal literacy is a long-term project.

There's been resistance of course, mostly in the Fifes that were controlled by the conspirators. While they're with the ancestors, many of their families and heirs are following their policies, and hate the two of us personally for killing them. The King has been as good as his word, but many of the worst ones are in border Fifes, far from Canterlot, with the largest forces of private guardsmen.

We've had very little resistance from the common ponies, despite the efforts at propaganda that some of the nobility have made. Firstly, our pegasus-borne message got there first, secondly, the very Fifes that have the most conservative nobility are the very ones that are hardest on the

common pony, and finally, those same common ponies seem to have had most of the gumption knocked out of them by that same effort.

They're habituated to obey orders, no matter how crazy, because if they didn't they suffered. Is it any wonder that given a choice between taking orders of the very nobles who brutalised them, and the ones who stormed in and removed their worst tormentors, they choose us? I'm not proud of the fact that we're using what we did as a motivator, but the survival of more than Equestria is at stake, and if something has to suffer, I'd rather it was our feelings than a whole lot of ponies.

Luna is even less happy than I am about it, but she's been steadfast in actually doing the work. Have I mentioned how much I love my little sister? I've just checked my past entries, and it seems I haven't in so many words. So I will now. I love my sister, I always have, and no more so than now, when she's backing my every effort, filling in the gaps, working her horn off to make my ideas a reality while dealing with her own grief. I do my best to reciprocate, but I'm not really good at it.

Peeking again? Stop blushing Luna, you know I mean every word of it. Yes, you're the only one who'd ever be able to find this diary, or open it, so I put this in for you. I just wish I were better at saying it out loud.

Back to the keeps in the borderlands. Some of the geniuses in those Fifes are crazy enough to do more than just grumble. Some have tried countermanding our orders, interfering with the work that's being done, and the teams of ponies we've sent to help. A couple have even used force, obviously thinking that as in days of yore the king will just sit back and let them have their heads.

Instead they've been handed their heads. My ideas about combining flying chariots with soldiers to improve mobility have started to bear fruit. When I first raised them with Sergeant Major Apony, he seemed about ready to tell me to stick to raising the sun, but by the time I'd finished, he was willing to admit, grudgingly, that I might have something, maybe.

One of the things that really stuck in his craw was opening the guard to mares. But it's the only way to get enough pegasi to provide the air component of the new force structure. For that matter, while our projected army strength is pitiful compared to some of the larger Fifes, it's still a significant chunk of our population.

I made things slightly less annoying by adding a refinement. I worked out a minor enchantment, and yes, I can do that now, I studied theory back when I was a pegasus and now I have the horn to do the practical part of it. Luna's still far better at spell crafting, but I'm not going to add more work to her over-full nosebag.

As I said, I worked out a minor enchantment based on one of Luna's illusion spells to add to armour. The guard armour is good quality, hardened leather-bark and canvas brigandine, complete with metal reinforced helms, stained blue and usually worn with a saddle-coat with the Maresian coat of arms.

While wearing the armour, all pegasi look like white males with blue manes, all unicorns and earth ponies look like grey males with white manes. If you're wondering why an Equality Crusader made the pegasi different, it's because if we ever need forward scouting, having a colour scheme that blends with the sky might be useful.

I also added a little refinement that's a minor variation of the levitation spell used for flying chariots on the armour. If someone falls out, they will fall at normal rate but land softly. I added it purely as a safety feature, but the Sergeant Major is starting to incorporate deliberate jumps into the training.

I can see the advantage, rather than having to land the chariot to disembark, ponies just drop out of the sky. A useful tweak to my idea of rapid deployment. Rapid deployment was needed to deal with the worst of our problem Fifes. It was also an assassination attempt on Luna, one of the more flamboyant ones, so we let it run out so we could stop it very publicly.

Oh yes, with everything else, I haven't mentioned the assassination attempts. It stems from the same basic fact, that a lot of the people who are most annoyed with us are also the ones with more marks than brains. It's just as well that our bodies seem pretty much invulnerable, and that our foes still haven't pegged that our clairvoyance is dependant on sunlight or moonlight.

It's one of the reasons we let some of the plots come almost to fruition, the ones that won't harm bystanders. Subtle poisons, projectiles, blades, spells, it's all vegetable soup to our manna-enhanced constitutions. I'm actually getting quite fond of the taste of arsenic, it's tangy...

Obviously the next strategy to try would be containment, but I've spent a few moments trying to figure out one that works, and I can't. Physical containment, we can bull through or blast through almost anything or wink away. Magical containment, you need more power than one of us to make it work.

Even those containment wards that charge themselves from the energy contained have limits, especially in charge and discharge rate. We could simply overload them by pouring in power more quickly than they could adapt to. Then of course, our linked ley-line is like a secret passage that could bypass it entirely.

About the only possibilities I can see is to de-stabilise our ley-lines and use it to draw us into our linked astronomical body. However, that would also require more power than either of us could handle, let alone a regular unicorn or even a gestalt. The other would be if we could be disconnected from our ley-lines we'd suddenly get a lot easier to kill. But once again, you need more power than either of us have, a lot more.

So back to the plot in question. We'd been watching the whole thing take shape, so when Luna went to check up on the Shire, our old not-even-slightly friend Alfalfa's domain, we already had our counter-strategy in place.

Alfalfa himself took over the family when his father had the bad planning to be part of the conspiracy against us, despite his 'unique' status, and without a single hint of remorse as far as we can tell. Maybe because his father barely tolerated him after he had the 'accident' with the rebounding red-hot poker and his private body parts.

So Luna came around on her regular visit, unaccompanied, as is our regular practice (no-pony can keep up with us, after all unless we tow them). She was talking to Applebuck, the leader of the Maresia ponies we'd sent to help, getting a progress report. Then, from over the hills several miles away, and from what they must have fondly considered to be a concealed trench, Shire guards launched a dozen magically guided trebuchet stones, massive things weighing at least 50 pony-weights apiece.

They were enchanted to home in on the most powerful magical signature there, in other words Luna. Alfalfa has some feeble idea that if he could destroy one of us, and prove we could be killed, he could raise a popular

rebellion among the border Fifes. Insane, but I think he was more than slightly unhinged to begin with, considering his tastes. He failed to account for the fact that in the event of success, I would then proceed to melt his castle into a pool of lava.

Of course, the actual ponies operating the catapults weren't insane, just well paid and unaware of what the target was. The trebuchets were targeted on a particular area, and they'd been told to fire them off when they got a particular signal. They didn't know Alfalfa's plan, or that he'd planned to have them poisoned as soon as they'd done the deed to cover his flanks.

So there they were, my sister and an innocent bunch of ponies about to be smashed under enough rock to build a fair sized castle, and she just looked up and shrugged, mainly for the benefit of the ponies from Maresia, and the locals. Then she cranked up her horn and started flicking those rocks away like baseballs, reversing their direction in mid-air.

Just to drive the point home, she let the one that had successfully targeted on her come crashing in, spun on her fore hooves and bucked it back the way it came. I was up on a cloud, using my solar sight to provide targeting knowledge, but until then I hadn't interfered.

I did with the return flight, providing some terminal guidance so that not only did each of those rocks hit the trebuchet that launched them, utterly wrecking it, but also so that flying pieces of debris knocked every member of the teams that served them unconscious.

Then I called in the Maresian guard. I flashed back and called for a full scramble, and if I'd mentioned to Sergeant Major Apony that I'd be doing an inspection later that day and to be ready, that was just a co-incidence. They were suited, booted, and up in the air inside three hundred heartbeats. Most impressive!

I gave him a set of targets, impressed an image of my over-flight on a piece of parchment to provide him with a map, and stepped back and let him get on with it. Well I did tow the army group with me when I flashed back, but that was my entire contribution. He dropped teams on the trebuchet site and inside Alfalfa's castle before his guards were able to react.

Most keeps have open sided wood roofed pavilions inside their baileys to give their defenders protection from pegasus attacks, but that would be mainly light projectiles dropped from above. No one else had considered dropping a force of fighters, especially with magical support, instead. A single company or eighty earth ponies and twenty unicorns against a defending force six times their number.

It was a walk over, Luna and I just stayed in the air and watched. There were signals, light flash sequences that the unicorns could use to call in our support, but they never got used. We had a few injuries and no casualties, even on their side. Alfalfa was hardly the type to inspire personal loyalty, so when they realised how thoroughly they'd been owned, most of his units dropped their blades and surrendered.

I did bring our artillery unit, ten of the new flying chariot mounted ballistae and crews, but like the pegasi, who dropped their chariots and flew back in less than a hundred heartbeats, and they just provided cover against escapes or salients from the castle.

Alfalfa was dragged off, kicking and screaming to the King, who stripped him of his titles and lands. He was within his rights to execute the oath-breaker, but I suggested that instead he was put to work on one of the work gangs in Maresia. Trust me, we could look back through his past life and a clean execution was way too good for him.

It was also an object lesson that made sure any other nobles with bright ideas kept them as just that. So with ponies finally working to stabilise things, we've finally got things stabilised enough that I can start building the cloud cities we need. There will be three, to take advantage of the natural airflows.

Cloudsdale will serve Canterlot and its surrounding Fifes. The eastern Fifes will have Stratosford, and in the south, nearest Horseshoe bay, we will have Bessington. All three cities will portal in fresh water mass, filtered from the sea, and generate clouds via the reification process Luna and I developed.

Liquid rainbow will be produced as a side effect, and subsidiary processes such as snowflake prototyping and charging thunderclouds with lightning will have their own process lines. The system will require more power than ambient magic can supply, but we managed to get the photo-thaumic

conversion effect I described in an earlier entry working, and the entire system is powered by it.

As long as I make sure each city gets plenty of sunlight, the whole system should work indefinitely. In fact, as the conversion systems intercept it well above the city, I will be making sure they get several times the normal amount of sunlight otherwise at cloud level the city would be a dull and dreary place due to the loss of some light to the power system. I'd better make sure that no-pony spends long periods of time high over the city, the increased intensity will be worse than mid-day in a desert.

Which reminds me, there was a problem with the long-term stability of the foundations. Even when reified into a pseudo-solid by pegasus magic, cloud will slowly leak magic, and evaporate. Not the best idea for a city's foundations. Obviously, a rune-set could reinforce and stabilise the reification effect, but the problem would be where to carve it.

Cloud, even reified, doesn't take fine carving, and inscribing huge scale runes on the underside of the city would leave it too vulnerable to a single point failure. Damage any part of the rune set and it starts coming to pieces. Once again, not exactly safe.

My solution was rather subtler. I wrote of discovering that ice crystals could act as storage crystals for pegasus magic. I designed and embedded an array of thousands of them in the foundation clouds, each engraved with the necessary rune-set to stabilise the surrounding cloud, and a cooling spell so keep them frozen.

Because they were frozen water, and formed out of the same stuff as the clouds, they stayed embedded, part of the stabilisation effect. Once again I had the problem of powering it, ambient magic alone wouldn't do the job, and being deep inside the clouds, neither could sunlight.

This required even more ingenuity, but I figured out a tweak. I applied our photo-thaumic conversion research to a warming spell, and got a thermo-thaumic effect. When I was a foal I always wondered why hot things got cooler and cool things hotter. How did they know?

I figured out, and the currents I feel in the sun confirm it, that they don't. Instead they are trying to balance their temperature with their surroundings, like water in a glass finding it's own level. So how does this help? Well, the

ice crystals are cooler than their surroundings, so heat from the surrounding cloud flows into them.

However, the surface is under the thermo-thaumic effect. Adding a third set of runes required some clever layout design, but I managed it. It converts the heat flow into magic, which powers everything else. Ultimately, it's powered from my sun, just a little more indirectly.

Permit me a small amount of smug at having come up with that, and a happy sqeeing noise. Inventing is so much fun!

And on that note, I'll sign off. I have ten thousand of the things to reify into the sub-structure of Cloudsdale before I lower the sun today. Oh well, an alicorn's work is never done, I guess.

Chapter 13

Bare Tree 16th 3473 EE

Not feeling too good today. Last night was the Night of Ancestors, the traditional festival to remember those ponies that have joined the ancestors. While it's meant to be a celebration of their lives, with what happened, I can't but help remember how they died, and my part in it.

Looking back, I can see I was using the work to avoid thinking too deeply about it. I was even feeling pride in some of my works, because I needed to feel good about _something_. Though I am proud, proud of all my little ponies, both in Maresia and beyond. They've all worked so hard, accomplished so much.

Our latest magical scans prove it, the situation is stabilised. The sentient force of the ponies of Equestria is countering the suppressive effect of Atlas' slumber. The Running of the Leaves, the late harvests and fruit gathering, the pegasi even now building homes upon the three great cloud cities, they deserve the full credit for ensuring that life all over the world will continue.

At least as the season turned, the earth ponies could feel the difference in the earth, the animals and plants, just as the pegasi could feel the wrongness in the sky. Suddenly all our explanations were no longer academic, but real to them, and they worked like Trojan ponies to use the rituals we'd devised to fix things.

Sergeant Major Apony and the guard also deserve all the credit I can give them, they've shaken down into a first class force in an amazingly short time. I may have contributed the ideas, but he made them work. They've managed to keep a lid on a dozen minor flare-ups where idiot nobles have decided to divert resources to their own projects or line their own saddlebags.

Note to self: Work on some sort of uniform code of law, something that can be applied to all ponies, noble and common. Rather than having individual nobles sit in justice based on their own ideas, we need a way to make all

ponies accountable, and protect all ponies equally. Sometimes there is very little justice in the current system. If I'm stuck with administrative work, at least I can get something useful done.

However, the ecological work is over, at least until Winter Wrap Up. While we have plenty of prototype patterns, problems with the snowflake multiplexers mean we'll have relatively little snow delivered, but there will be enough to trigger the changes and fruiting in the various plants that need it. But all that is work for the ponies we've trained, not the two of us.

These last few days before Ancestor's Night we've no longer had to run around, or work frantically on things, and that hasn't necessarily been a good thing. I've had far too much time to remember everyone we lost that day. Fixing Equestria's ecology isn't even a down payment on the debt I owe, nothing more than my duty.

We both made an official appearance at the ceremonies held in Ponyville, Trottingham and Shirefield, and the ones in Canterlot. So many candles lit, so many ponies lost, even with our best efforts at search and de-transformation. It may not be a general tradition for the Duke or Duchess of a Fife to travel around various towns to lead the ceremonies, but I felt we had to do something to show we felt the loss as deeply as any-pony.

Luna and I finally went back to the Keep, to mourn our own family and the servants who were closer to being friends than anything else. We walked around each room of the castle, remembering all the good things that had happened in each (and trust me there's few places an inquisitive pegasus won't go if sufficiently motivated, or even a far more sensible unicorn and earth pony, mostly to try and keep me out of trouble, which they did with limited success.)

I even used my solar sight to replay some of our more ludicrous escapades and some of our more tender moments, with Luna riding along using her mind-spells. It hurt, hurt badly, but at least we ended up remembering the good things as well as what we'd seen happen on that day.

It took us all night, and at the end of it, we crafted hundreds of small balloons from the materials left over from our experiments, and enchanted them with heating charms and light charms. Then we took them to the top of the highest tower and released them, one for each of the ponies we were remembering.

You may be wondering why we didn't just use a regular heat source; cotton wadding dipped in any number of igniferous oils would have worked. The reason is that law about non-magical heat sources for balloons is still on the books, even if it's pretty much dead. I just don't want to get into the habit of disregarding laws when it suits me. That code of justice, the two of us will need to be bound by it too, or the thing won't work.

I refuse to become a tyrant, even if I have the power to do so, even to enact the changes this society so desperately needs. I will work within the system to push things along. I have to, or I'm just the Pitiless Sun with better PR. It's one of the reasons for the Guard, being brought to justice by a group of regular ponies, even if it ends with a date with the headsman, is less arbitrary than an angry Alicorn smashing her way in and dragging you off, or just vaporising you on the spot.

I will work wherever possible through other ponies, provide them with the best support I can, but not use my powers except in an absolute emergency. I'm sure Luna will see the necessity for it, and for restraining her power too. Let us 'raise the sun and the moon', and allow our other powers be forgotten.

Enough moralising. I still feel absolutely awful, but reliving those memories of the happier times, however much they hurt, has started to make a little difference, but it's left the two of us utterly crashed. After I raise the sun, I think Luna and I are going to take a day off, and eat honeyed oatcakes and tell each other silly stories. Maybe, just maybe at the end of it we'll have started to heal. Though just getting functional again would be enough to be going on with.

Chapter 14

Long Night 14th 3473 EE

Today Blue Mane delivered the best possible reminder that life goes on, even in the bleakest of times. Tomorrow, or rather the middle of tonight, is the Winter Solstice, and our nephew Blue Blood is just in time for it. The mid-wife may have dealt with expectant fathers before, but I don't think she ever had to deal with two panicking alicorns.

Yes, Luna and I were stomping around outside, sneaking peeks via my Solar sight, and swearing blind that neither of us would ever be in such a messy and painful position. Fortunately, the birth was relatively easy and quick, and soon Margrave Blueblood of Maresia was breathing Equestrian air for the first time.

He was absolutely adorable! He's a white unicorn like his mother, but with Atlas's blond mane and tail, though it was barely stubble when we first saw him. It redoubled our intention to one day return his father to him. Blue Mane was in the blissed out state that new mothers seem to attain, and Blue Blood was quiet.

It occurs to me that I haven't really mentioned the Dowager-Duchess in my previous entries. Theoretically she should have been living at the Keep, but without a staff of servants to maintain it, and with us all over Equestria most of the time, it was simpler for her to stay with her father.

I'd intended to provide something grander, but Blue Mane, though sweetly spoken, is one of the most relentlessly practical ponies in existence. At least we got her to accept a maid, even if she had to take lodgings next door. She still works at her father's store; ancestors preserve us, despite the fact that she never has to work again. However, I'd be the last pony to rail at a noble doing honest work, and I can understand the impulse. She's been keeping busy for the same reasons we were.

It occurs to me that we messed up; we should have spent some time with her on Ancestor's Night. Another demonstration, as if it was needed, that just because you're an immortal Alicorn, it doesn't mean you'll always get it

right. Well, at least she had the rest of her birth family to support her, and if we weren't there then, we can be there now.

I think Luna has something special planned for the Winter Solstice celebration, which in Maresia at least is also going to be a celebration of the new member of our family. There's a full moon, bigger and brighter than usual, and I thought I felt her doing some tinkering with some nearby smaller hunks of rock that are drifting around. I suspect we are in for the most spectacular meteor shower in living memory.

While I'm going to be out there with the others, drinking hot mead, eating roasted chestnuts and cheering wildly, it does highlight a problem. I did mention in my last entry about the need for us to be less obvious in using our powers. While it was vital this past year, in future I hope to reduce the amount of direct intervention.

There we agree, Luna doesn't believe we should or can solve everything ourselves, but where we differ is in the degree of remaining intervention. It came up first in the law codex I'm compiling. Fascinating work, but makes designing a cloud reifier system look simple. The problem was specifically in the subject of evidence. With our Solar and Lunar Sight (Luna likes the name too) we can be aware of any crime that occurred under the sun. In seconds we can determine the guilt or innocence of a criminal.

Simple enough, but it is, by it's very nature subjective evidence. We're basically saying, this pony is guilty or not. Also, the scope of the problem is problematic. If we have to view thousands of crimes, it will take hours even if we're just sitting there going, 'guilty', 'innocent', and so on. Showing the events, which only Luna can do, would take even longer. For all our powers, even we can't make more hours in the day... well technically we could, but it would spoil everyone's sleep patterns and make everyone grouchy.

This is why when I was writing that part of the codex, I required other forms of evidence or proof. There must be ways to apply the same processes we use to find new discoveries in the laboratory to finding facts about a crime, and we will need guards who are dedicated investigators, rather than just doing it as a part of their job.

I will not have a pony condemned on some-pony's say so, even our own, at least, never again. That clique of nobles was as guilty as sin, and under the

conditions then obtaining there would have been no other way to call them to account for their crimes. Even so, I feel guilty as what I did as the Pitiless Sun. The Equestria I want to build, that these laws are trying to build, has no more place for private justice than privilege, private law.

Luna disagrees. I can understand her feelings, more crimes happen under the moon than the sun, and she desperately wants to bring those responsible to justice. I know she's occasionally gone after particularly bad offenders herself in recent months. She believes we can build in checks, some sort of truth spell to verify our sight, but our very power level makes that a difficult proposition. Like all other spells, they will tend to bounce off, or be absorbed without effect.

Over the last month, this has turned into a more general disagreement. I believe we should make no use of our special abilities beyond those of any other pony except in case of dire emergency, or a specific request of the legal or administrative parts of the government. Luna believes we should use our powers to help where we can. If we see a problem, we should try and fix it.

I already talked in my previous entry about the feelings of other ponies. As I said before, the other part of this equation is that if we use our powers too freely, too arbitrarily, they would fear us. That would lead them to feel anger for making them live in fear, and eventually they would come to hate us. Enough ponies do that already, and I don't wish to add to that number.

If it was the only way to deal with the problems that face us, I'd accept it as part of my penance, but it isn't, and I never want to have Luna suffer like that again. Enduring ridicule from her peers back when we were foals because of Atlas and I was bad enough. I saw how much it hurt her, and this would be worse. I just don't want to have her desire to do good turn it's horn against her.

Though in truth, I fear less for Luna acting inappropriately than myself. She's the sensible one, methodical and precise. These last few months I've hauled my soul out for a good old inspection, and I'm not sure I like what I see. Luna's the sensible one, whereas I have a tendency to go off on my sudden enthusiasms, without working things through.

If I'd spent more time working on contingencies for the power-sharing ritual, more time thinking about how things could go wrong, the destruction it

wrought might have been averted. One of the parts of me I don't like very much wants to blame Luna for not catching my mistake, but _I'm_ the ideas mare. She was working to my plans, and she trusted me to get it right.

For now it's a moot point. Our powers will be needed over the next few years to make sure things remain stable in the stable, and compiling this Codex will take as long. Not to mention it will take decades for the implementation. It will remove one of the basic rights of the nobility, the low and high justice and they will fight it hoof and tail.

Maybe we can compromise between the two of us. I think this is the deeper meaning behind the display tonight. She's showing me that we can use our powers beyond spinning up the planet and maintaining gravity without it being a disaster, or causing every-pony to fear our presence.

With Luna as my conscience, a limited amount of power use may be acceptable. We shall have to see. Maybe we should make it a regular event, a way to use our powers that harms no-pony, and which every-pony can enjoy. A 'Winter Moon Celebration', that has a nice sound to it. I'll have to start thinking of something similar for the Summer Solstice.

Chapter 15

Winterwane 1st 3474 EE

Well, the second critical point of the year has come and gone. Frostsnap 30th, the last day of 3473, was also the day when the combined ponies of Equestria changed the season from winter to spring for the first time. Indeed, despite the fact that the date is utterly arbitrary, a creation of our culture, the fact that the year was ending makes it the single most critical transition point, and the most vital to get right.

The reasons behind this are a bit esoteric, but ultimately tie in to some deep, but fairly fundamental magical theory. Whether you call it the Observer Effect, or the Nootic Hierarchy model, consciousness is considered the highest and most powerful force acting upon the universe. Indeed, the strong model postulates that the universe only exists because consciousness observes it.

While I have reservations about the strong model, the basic arithmantic framework of the general Nootic model is our best description of how magical energies are manipulated through the actions of conscious beings, sentient force. All weaker non-living interactions ultimately derive from the fact that at some point in space-time, some-pony, or one of the other sentient races, will know of them.

So the framework we impose on our understanding of the world, despite the fact that it is arbitrary, has real effect, and Atlas, having grown up in the same culture, shares that framework. So the end of a year is a tipping point, magically speaking, and it requires particular effort to make sure it tips the right way.

It also meant the two of us were racing around Equestria like something very fast, shoring up things and helping out. Of course, we made sure to spend some time working alongside our own people. I must admit I enjoyed pushing that snow plough over the fields of Ponyville, smashing down the snow clouds over Trottingham, and unfreezing the great Maresey where it flows down into Shirefield.

I know I must come off as an egghead sometimes, all theories and plans, but I do take equal pleasure in the doing, some good honest physical work. Fortunately I'm equipped for it too, I was strong for a pegasus, and with the addition of earth-pony powers, I can lift and shift with the best of them.

Luna was doing the more gentle side, helping with the plants and animals. Without a wake-up call, half of them would have continued to hibernate until they were too weak to wake up. Some-ponies when we were arranging this asked why we were bothering to wake up some of the pest species. The answer is that though they may be pests to us, they're vital to other species that aren't.

Ultimately, removing something as annoying as gophers would be as unwise as knocking out a key stone in an arch because you don't like the colour. If I start relating how all of them work together, the rest of this entry would take up the rest of this book, and a dozen others. Suffice it to say, with my Sight and observations using it, I have some idea of just how complex it all is, and I'm not going to mess with some thing that works.

Well, it's done now, and as far as I can tell, it seems to have worked. I can feel the changes in the earth, and so can all the earth-ponies. I suggested to the king that we made the day after a day of celebration, above and beyond the New Year festival, another thing I hope to make an annual event.

Though I still need a good name for what we're doing. Since we're wrapping up winter and starting spring, Luna thought we might call it 'Changing over of winter into spring day'. I suggested we instead call it 'Winter Wrap-up'. I admit Luna's name is more descriptive, but I think mine is more catchy.

We eventually played a round of Hoof Horse-shoe Stone for it. Though since we both had magic, we materialised an actual stone and horse-shoe, rather than using the tip of a hoof to represent a horse-shoe crescent, and a raised hoof for stone. Obviously I chose the stone, which beat Luna's horse-shoe.

With this out of the way, and my Codex of Law progressing nicely, I've had chance to revisit my earlier notions of how we fix this mess once and for all. A double hetro-thaumic triune is the obvious solution, I think I mentioned it before. It would require six ponies, two of each sub-race, but it has two

problems, finding six ponies who's power level approximates our own from before the accident, and that the two triunes forming a hexagram would repel each other, as it's not a continuous line.

A pentacle or a septagram, but those would be utterly unsuited to a hetro-thaumic form anyway, even if you could build a septagram that wouldn't overload. There's no way you could balance the energies of an odd number of different ponies. A homo-thaumic ritual, even a septagram using only unicorns wouldn't need balancing, but also wouldn't generate the power. A nonogram with three of each would be possible, except that such a form would be almost impossible to stabilise, and even more difficult to design and find ponies for.

I haven't even touched on the same problem that we had, that of anchors. Re-using our plan would be impossible, our present links preclude anyone sharing them, and the anchors would need to be an order of magnitude more powerful anyway, and have some pre-existing link to the ponies in question. No physical object approximates that level of power... now there's a thought, or rather the realm of thought might be the answer.

The Nootic Hierarchy model, consciousness and the basic concepts or symbols it impresses on reality have a higher effect than any purely physical entity. It is in that area that we might find the anchors we seek. Ohh, this requires research! I must find Luna, and some feathers, a thaumic balance, a book of poetry and possibly an alligator. We'll see about the alligator, maybe I can substitute an apple and three small pieces of wood.

Enough writing! There is science to be done! Oh, and a party to attend, have to go to the Winter Wrap party. Maybe I can do some of my research there. If there's anywhere that will have multiple and unusual states of consciousness on display, it will be a place where the spiced mead has been flowing freely.

Chapter 16

Rising Sun 17rd 3474

One year. It was one year today that we three Equality Crusaders set up our final experiment. I was greatly tempted to speed up the sun to get through this day faster, but messing about with the day and night will not alter the time that has passed.

It crept up on me, I'd lost myself again in the researches I described, enthused by the possibilities I had considered. I even missed out on the spring equinox and the Day of Foals, usually one of my favourite holidays. As I've mentioned before, I'm something of a prankster, or was when I was younger at least, and the Day of Foals is all about celebrating new life, and of course playing pranks.

However, I'm not sure I'd have been able to get into the spirit of the thing this year, not with this other anniversary was coming up. Luna reminded me a few days beforehand, and we set aside our work and made sure a quiet final memorial service was arranged for those ponies who wished to attend, and some modest memorial stones.

Neither of us was feeling particularly happy about it, but we made sure to be at all of the services, then picked up Blue Mane, leaving Blue Blood with his nanny. The goat in question, Maaree, was originally our own nanny when we were foals. She is one of the best at her trade, always popping up when needed.

She was originally from the wool farming villages in the northern mountains above Canterlot, but she has spent most of her life here in Maresia, mostly Trottingham, and has the distinctive accent. I'm just glad she was there when the catastrophe happened.

The three of us ponies went off for a private wake, though we avoided mead or salt licks. I think in our state at the time it would have made us more maudlin than we already were. It was a reprise of what we did on Ancestor's day last year, only with additional stories about Atlas from Blue Mane. We added quite a few ourselves from Foal's days past.

It still hurts, I think it always will, and in a way I'm glad of that, for it would be worse to forget our families and all the others who died. But the grief is less, immediate, I suppose. I guess it's true that in time even the deepest wounds will start to heal, though they will still leave scars. Considering our regenerative ability, emotional scars are most likely the only ones we will ever carry.

Now that I've been roused from my brown study, Luna's is the blue one in the west tower, we will make our appearances at court and wherever else needful, and check in with the town mayors and the citizen's council to see there's nothing that needs my or Luna's attention.

Then it will be back to my research. I am on the track of several ideas, things I've speculated about before, but which might actually work out. Though I'm hitting a few additional snags in the process as well. I will also have to schedule more regular breaks.

I don't wish to become some kind of absentee landlord, the sort of noble I've always despised, who takes all the perks of her position and none of the responsibilities. It's just that in the laboratory, working on my research, I'm actually trying to do something to fix the problems I've created, not just moan about them.

A quick consultation of my Solar sight shows are no cases of high justice to be heard, for which I am grateful. While I can confirm absolutely the guilty in such cases, sentencing a pony to death is not something I'm looking forward to. However, as much as I dislike it, it's a part of those aforementioned duties, and I would rather do it myself than ask Luna to hoof print the orders.

Speaking of working out problems, and laying down the law, I have almost completed my first draft of the legal codex I've been compiling. I've asked Luna to work through it and add her own suggestions, and I'm sure her perfectionist attitude will be just what is needed to make sure it's useful. Maybe by summer we should have something we can work at deploying on a test basis around Maresia.

Note to self: While on my rounds, keep a look out for sensible ponies of good character to aid the mayors in implementing the laws. Ones who can read for a start. Also a few observant ponies who can help collect evidence. For them, reading is not required, but useful.

Authors Note: I was writing a much longer entry for later on in the in-universe year, then realised Celestia would never let this date pass without comment. So I had to put together an entry for it, but that's why it's so soon, and so short. Some more world building coming up next so expect a rather more substantial post next time.

I've worked out a calendar in self defence, but it refers to events that haven't happened yet. I will point out one thing, the Day of Foals is the spring equinox, and the Day of Ancestors the autumn equinox. One celebrates new life, the other the lives of ponies that have passed on. A sort of balance, if you will. And yes, the Day of Ancestors will eventually become Nightmare Night.

Goldamon X – I don't often do this, but I have to ask, and your lack of signing in forces me to use the story to do so. How is my work non-canon? I've tried hard to keep it consistent.

Chapter 17

High Sun 13th 3474

I feel better now than I did last month. Summer is well and truly underway, and both the early flowering plants and my own researches have proven fruitful. The power of emotions and states of consciousness has proved a fascinating field of research. I was right, the alligator was superfluous, but that's not the important thing.

The important thing was, it should indeed be possible to tie our ritual framework to non-physical objects, and doing so would grant a level of anchorage to make our original triune appear unstable indeed. The optimal grounding for such a design would be what might be termed personality traits, rather than pure emotion, though pure emotions as a source of power are more effective.

It has to do with linking the pony to their anchor. Whereas our thaumic resonances with the planetary bodies were fixed, it is a rare pony that stays in one emotional state all the time. Personality traits are however a more permanent part of the make-up of a pony, making it easier to match the pony to their respective anchor. There is also a secondary benefit. If we choose positive personality traits, it might limit the possibility of misuse.

I am still developing my ideas, as I have an intuition that there is more to be found in this field, and I shall not leave it until I have eaten every last morsel from it. However, it is not all good news. I still have no idea how to resolve the geometry problem for the ritual diagram; I have instead found an additional one with its implementation.

While the gems that will act as power transfer nodes can be reinforced by enchantments powered off the very magical energies flowing through them, the material of the diagram itself cannot. At least not beyond a certain power level, dependent on the material. Chalk is useful only for student spells, even if enhanced with powdered dragon's tooth.

No, I have never gone out and beaten up a dragon; purely for the sake of removing it's teeth. However, back when I was a pegasus, I may have

wandered through juvenile dragon territories looking delicious, and let events happen as they might. Though Luna always said wearing a sprig of parsley in my mane was overplaying my role. It was aversion therapy, they learn not to eat ponies, and I might just have picked up a few teeth in the process. They do grow back after all.

Anyway, for the highest level rituals, an inlay of cold laminated electrum-orihalcon alloy is best, and was what we used for our original triune. But my latest arithmantic calculations show that even that would flow and melt under the manna flows it will be required to handle. I must find a better magical conductor to lay out the diagram whose geometry I cannot yet work out. However, I'm confident we'll overcome these problems eventually.

Chapter 18

High Sun 20th 3474

It would help me to greatly in my research work if wars didn't get in the way. That sounds flippant, but it's simply the truth. I have my duties as a Duchess to consider, though part of the problem is deciding exactly what those duties require me to do, or rather how much I should do. Equestria is about to be invaded, and we must decide how to respond.

It appears that both our neighbours to the north got wind of the trouble last year, and thought that while we were weakened by internal strife, they might do some border raids for fun and profit. I speak, of course of the griffons of the northern mountains, and the Taurun nomads of the steppes.

It was easy enough to say that I wouldn't interfere with overwhelming power when it was all nice and theoretical. It's different now, when I could resolve the situation without any-pony getting hurt, whereas if Luna and I do restrain ourselves, ponies that trust us will almost certainly die, following orders we give.

Sounds an easy enough choice, except that in one case we could only safeguard our ponies by exterminating the opponents. It would be easy, with my Solar sight I know exactly where they are, and could Flame Flash right into the middle of them. From there I could introduce each of them to a personal pocket of super-heated plasma, hot enough to vaporise iron. End of invasion.

The Taurun should not need that level of force; they can be handled conventionally, now that Luna's and my own Sight can tell our forces where to position themselves to intercept their invasion route. They and their western cousins the Buffalo are nomads, travelling around in tribes and grazing the land. Actually, some scholars say we ponies were not too different before we discovered agriculture and magic. But whereas the Buffalo are content to travel around their own lands, the Taurun are of a more truculent character.

While in normal times there is some trading going on, rare herbs and cows milk for tools and cloth, occasionally some tribal chief gets the brilliant idea that they can just come down and take what they want. Then they form into a great barbarian herd, with helmeted horns, and storm down into Equestria, looting and pillaging. Ultimately they get driven off, the cost depending on how long it takes to marshal the professional guardsmen of the Fifes to oppose them.

However, their leaders are not stupid, and if we show that we are ready for them, not divided and intercept them just beyond the borders with a sufficient force, it may come to a short battle, or maybe just a string of formal challenges and duels, but they will turn around and leave. They're bigger and tougher, with horns they can use as weapons, but they can't match us in technology, magic or organisation.

Rereading what I just wrote, I wonder if some non-pony upon coming into possession of this notebook would decide I'm a hypocrite, or should that be hippo-crite? For all of my very gung ho attitude about equality between ponies, I sound rather dismissive of other races. Actually, looking back at past entries, I see I've used the word pony in cases where the word people might have been better, covering all the intelligent races, as if ponies were the only race that mattered.

However, my own nanny was a goat, and one of the people who taught me better than that. Maresia's nobility has always tried to minimise discrimination against non-ponies within our borders, though as you can imagine, many other Fifes are less enlightened. Sheep, goats, donkeys, they all contribute to society, and shouldn't be looked down on simply because they're not equine.

Note to self: Go through that Law Codex and make sure it doesn't make the same mistake. If a creature can understand the concept of justice, they should have its protection.

While I want ponies, and the other intelligent inhabitants of Equestria as well to treat each other equally, I'm not going to make the mistake of thinking of them all as equal in ability. Pegasi fly, unicorns do magic, earth-ponies are strong and tough and understand the land, sheep grow wool, and goats can navigate mountains like no other, while donkeys are the best travellers over the lands.

My love and tolerance has limits. I can admire the griffons for their flying ability and toughness in battle; otherwise I wouldn't have sought them out as opponents when I was younger. The Taurun are also strong and tough and not only live, but also thrive in very harsh conditions.

However, if they attack my land, and my people, pony or otherwise, they will be met with whatever force needed to stop them, and I will be right there alongside my warriors, fighting them. I will also consider every advantage, every way we are better than they, and make my plans to use those strengths against their weaknesses.

Of course, just because I consider every advantage, doesn't mean I'm going to use it, which brings me back to the problem I referred to. Using our full powers could smash both invasions easily, but set up massive problems in the future. We have to be careful to avoid even the appearance of privilege, whether it's because we are noble, or because we are Alicorns.

It's going to be hard to maintain our popularity, or promulgate a code of law for everyone, if we keep reminding everyone that we are exception, and can incinerate them and smash their homes to dust if they do something we don't like. I don't care about the popularity, but the social changes we hope to start are important.

This led to our first big fight. Thankfully, Luna's powers are less well suited to blowing stuff up, illusions and transformations and dream magic, though I'm sure she could improvise. She argued that if we couldn't haul out our full powers at this time, when could we? Not so much with the Taurun, but the griffons, who are a much tougher proposition.

Naturally, she doesn't want whole-scale elimination, any more than I do, but she believes they can be scared straight, if we simply demonstrate the power they are up against, without the need or expense of mobilisation, or risk of casualties. By that, she means flying up, challenging them, and defeating them.

Maybe it would work for the Taurun, but I've fought griffons before, and they don't scare easily. I'd have to kill a good number of them, before they'd finally get the message. The worse part is part of me wants to, as there are certain griffons who deserve very little mercy, and Maresia has far more of a bad history with them. Our northern border is close to the southern border of Gryffindor, separated only by the narrow strip of barren ground known as

the Badlands. The villages north of Canterlot have suffered even worse depredations.

To understand why requires a geography lesson. The heart of Gryffindor is a wide bowl shaped valley in the mountains to the north, verdant, but with spires and mesas of rock scattered through it. Until I espied it with my Solar sight, it was pretty much a legend told by travellers, but the description does seem to be accurate.

The north-western corner of the northern range comes down into a salient, like a southwards pointed unicorn's horn, and at it's tip is the Canterhorn, the mountain where Canterlot is, hence it's alternate name as the Hornberg. Further up the salient are a number of mountain villages, mostly wool farming and mining based. They have a mix of ponies, goats and sheep, and are nominally part of the King's own demesnes.

Our problem is that the griffons claim the main range of mountains as their own, and have in the past tried to expand their borders, though there hadn't been a major incident in over a century. However, any-pony, anybody, going up into those mountains, even the part that is supposedly Equestria, is at hazard from their wide patrols. Their definition of 'border' seems to be 'anywhere we say it is'.

The villages are mostly safe, but there are still occasional disappearances, though no proof that they were responsible. There are plenty of other hazards, after all. So luckless explorers, prospectors and lost villagers have vanished and tales of what happen to them are a favourite subject of campfire horror stories. The nicest ones have then enslaved, the less kind ones involve the fact that griffons do eat meat.

My Solar sight, when I turned it that way, confirmed that the stories were true, though less common recently than those same stories would have you believe. I'd like to think I helped with that. Even before I became an Alicorn I was a match in the air for any griffon, and able to outrun any group big enough to swarm me. I occasionally went looking for trouble beyond the Badlands, mostly to blow off steam when I couldn't buck the horn off of some particularly moronic unicorn noble.

My interference led to a reduction in captures and people going 'missing', though I didn't realise it at the time. Maybe it's just as well it never occurred to me to check things with my Solar sight before the recent

unpleasantness. In my unstable emotional state after what happened last year, I might have done something... excessive. However, I can lay to rest one particularly wild rumour. Although not for lack of trying in past times on the part of some male griffons, there's no such thing as a hippogriff.

Why hasn't the King put together an expedition to deal with them? In short, politics. Considering most of our nobles were looking to their own Fifes first, and the worse hit areas have considerable populations of non-ponies, he could never have gotten enough fighting ponies to mount it.

Of course, there's also the problem that sending an old fashioned, primarily ground bound army with only a thin screen of pegasi as air cover and scouts through mountainous terrain to attack an enemy that is fully at home in the mountains and the air is probably less than strategically brilliant. I may be no general, but even I can see that that we'd have been the ones getting mounted, well and truly mounted.

Back to the present. One of the things we found out when we did our rounds was that there was an upsurge in the number of griffon sightings north of Canterlot, and bovine sightings on the borders of the northwestern Fifes. Naturally Luna and I cast our sight that way, and found out that several clans of griffons had formed an alliance and were intending a major raid, believing us divided.

Similarly, the Taurun had their own raiding plans, though thankfully they weren't coordinated with the griffons. This is unsurprising, as their mutual enmity is legendary. However, both were about to storm down into Equestria and take everything that wasn't nailed down, and in the case of the griffons, everyone. Not that the people would be nailed to the floor, that would be silly, unless you had specialised horseshoes that could lock into a raised hard point on the floor that _was_ nailed down, giving the same effect.

Note to self: Redesign the platforms of the ballista and troop chariots with such a system. It would allow a non-magical alternative to sticking charms.

I'm shying away from the uncomfortable bit here. Some of the griffons leading the invasion are also some of the most frequent leaders of the smaller raiding parties. I want to see them punished, and Luna does even more, as most of the worst events happened under her moon. While I

would wish to capture them, and gather evidence and have them answer for their crimes, that's going to be impossible.

My only evidence is Luna's Sight, and mine which as I've already said we can't use as legal proof. However, they have made themselves targets by taking part in this attack, targets I can legitimately harm. Part of me feels ashamed, that I am being a hypocrite not sticking to that principle of a rule of law I was speaking of. Another part of me wants to let loose on them with my full powers so badly it scares me.

Apart from the special privilege argument, there was another one I posed to Luna. If we take care of this all by ourselves, we set up a situation where all the ponies of Equestria will start to rely on us to do it in future. They already rely on us to manage the sun and moon for them, but that is genuinely a task no one else can do. But if we do everything, protect them from every hazard, we could end up harming them as much as if we do nothing, not physically, but in other, more subtle ways.

It comes down to our values. Both Luna and I believe in an equality of opportunity for all throughout Equestria. Unfortunately, that includes an equal chance to take risks, to fight for and defend what they believe in. This task is something all ponies, and others if I can convince Sergeant Major Apony, can take part in. If we take that away, aren't we saying they're not able, not worthy to determine their own futures?

It was that argument that finally convinced Luna. So we have come to a compromise. There are things we can do in preparation beforehand, new tools and weapons that should help and our Sight ability will give a massive advantage to our forces. Also there are things we can arrange outside the arena of combat to help minimise casualties, and make best use of the inevitable confrontations.

When it comes to the actual battles, we will each lead a force as part of the general mobilisation, but most of the actual commanding will be left to our own chosen captains. I am going to be with the force that goes after the griffons, while Luna takes the force that will face the Taurun. That was almost another argument, but I have more experience fighting them, and I've been a flyer all my life, so it makes sense that I'll understand the enemy better.

There's another reason I want Luna to take the Taurun attack force, I will be targeting the offenders we've identified when I go into battle. I will restrict myself to purely physical attacks, but I don't intend to pull my blows. Luna has a much lower chance of having to kill, even if she gets to battle, or duel a Taurun chief.

There is a valid military reason to focus on them; they are effectively the captains of the Griffon force. As well, if they can be killed (there, I admitted it) then it may be easier to convince the remaining griffons that going after Equestrians is a losing proposition. So future ponies and others won't have to worry about being some griffon's feast.

One thing I have agreed with Luna in the spirit of our non-interference pact if not the letter, is that if they surrender, I will treat them as any other prisoner even if it is one of those that ate or enslaved ponies. Of course, knowing griffons as I do, it is unlikely that any of my targets will consider it. In combat, I will strike them as hard and unrelentingly as possible, but I will not destroy them in cold blood, and I will not torture them, in or out of combat. I will not let their atrocities drive me to my own. That way leads to the Pitiless Sun.

I've rambled enough. I have designs to create, plans to develop, and ponies to warn. I will help to the utmost of my ability, but I will fight as a pony, not a siege weapon. The ideas I've had to minimise our losses, and maximise our effectiveness will rely as much on the courage and discipline of the Maresian Guards, and the skill of our artisans as on our own powers. It will be tough, but I don't think either will fail us.