

# The Stars Above Know

By Denim Blue



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# Chapter 1

## Black Hole Sun

*"The dark and light can only exist because of each other. With one taken out of the picture, the other consumes itself and no longer bears the value it once had."*

- from a foreword by Princess Celestia from *'The Legend of the Mare in the Moon: A Tale of Love, Jealousy, and Hope'* by J. L. Whisperwood

Nightmare Moon sighed as she watched the planet she circled around from her lunar vantage point above. According to the internal time clock that was embedded within her very soul, she had been here for only a week. Despite this, it felt like months had gone by for her.

*"I'm sorry this had to happen, Nightmare. I didn't think we'd end up here, of all places."*

Nightmare gave a soft chuckle. "It's fine, Luna. We've only got a millennium until we're free. I just hope we were right about *your* sister. The last thing we need is a second *Queen of the Sun...*"

*"Celly's...not a bad pony, Nightmare."* echoed the younger, gentler voice of Luna within the midnight black pony's mind. *"With how things went in our fight...and the fact she used the Elements of Harmony...I'm positive she'll turn out better. She seemed sad when she used them on us, after all. That's a sign right there, isn't it?"*

The black alicorn's frown morphed into a small smile. "I suppose it is. I only wish *my* Celestia was as...patient and merciful as yours. Hopefully your sister will continue to improve."

*"Don't worry too much. We'll just watch from here, and see how things go in Equestria. We've got all the time in the world, after all."*

Nightmare nodded in response. "That's true."

*"Hey, Luna-er, Nightmare...?"*

Nightmare Moon chuckled. "You can call me Luna if you want. I know it's a little weird, but we *are* the same pony. Well, in most cases, anyway." She looked up to the stars twinkling in space. "What do you want to ask, Luna?"

*"Can you...tell me again about how you ended up saving your Equestria?"*

Nightmare chuckled loudly this time. "You *are* a filly at heart, aren't you?"

*"N-no! I...I just like to hear your story, that's all...I wish I could be as brave and strong as you are."* She paused, and Nightmare could picture her counterpart hesitating with her words. *"I...I'm not sure I can ever be as great as you are."*

"You already are as brave as me, Luna, if not more so. You gave up your freedom to change the course of Equestria's future. You imprisoned yourself for eons to protect a kingdom that will probably never know the truth behind your actions. That makes you a true hero."

There was a moment of silence that followed those words, followed by a combination of crying and giggling that Nightmare Moon could easily picture coming from the younger alicorn. *"Thank you, Luna."*

"No, thank you, Luna." Nightmare replied. "Now then, the story. I had decided that Celestia's rule over the kingdom, and the...crimes she had committed had gone unanswered for too long, and being the co-ruler, I placed the responsibility of punishing her upon my own two shoulders..."

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*In a land very similar to the Equestria we know of...*

*3050 E. B.*

Luna slowly walked down the hall leading to the throne room where her sister was currently waiting for her. As she made her way to the giant doors of polished oak, the two guard ponies on either side of the entrance saluted before opening the doors for her.

A middle aged stallion looked to her before nodding and speaking over the background noise of the throne room. "Her Royal Highness and Overseer of the Night Sky, Princess Luna!"

All the ponies within the hall looked to the entrance before bowing. All but one pony, who was currently seated in the larger of the two thrones.

"Sister, I was hoping you'd be here soon." Celestia spoke with a smile. "I'm sorry for this sudden visit, but I need to discuss something with you."

"Of course, Celestia." Luna gave her elder sister a gentle nuzzle in greeting while the servants and guards returned to their respective duties. "What did you wish to discuss?"

Celestia looked to the low-lying sun in the sky and spoke. "I wish to extend the daytime during summer."

Luna quirked an eyebrow. "Whatever for? I thought we agreed to twelve equal hours of day and night throughout the year, didn't we?"

Celestia sighed. "Yes, but Luna, let's be honest with ourselves. No one is interested in being awake during the night, and farmers can't grow crops when the sun isn't out." She placed a gentle wing over Luna. "They *need* my sun, dearest sister. Summer is a time of warmth and an abundance of life. The country needs longer daylight in order to do farm work."

"I...guess that's understandable. What about my moon then? My night? Too much sun is a bad thing, after all. We both know that."

Celestia laughed, as though Luna were a child who didn't yet know what she was talking about. "I suppose there's some truth to that, but only a little. The average pony only needs nine hours of sleep at most. I'd honestly say let's just have a ten hour period of no sun, but I guess your moon can be there as well. It does brighten up the otherwise dreary night sky."

"I *made* that 'dreary' night sky, sister. If you took the time to look at it, you'd see how beautiful it is."

"Yes, yes, the stars, comets, and whatnot, but I can't see it, since I sleep during that time period." Celestia cleared her throat. "I suppose we should cut to the chase, Luna. In return for my extended period of day during the summer, you get an extended period of night during the winter."

"...during...the winter? Celestia, I...no one is going to bother watching the night sky during the winter when it's too cold to-"

"Luna, please don't make this more difficult than it is." Celestia began. "We can't have everything go your way, can we? Besides, if it's dark longer, than it will be colder longer, and thus keep the snow from melting immediately until spring thaw."

Luna paused for several moments before forcing a smile onto her face. "I...guess that's true. You were right about my idea of having solar eclipses being a bad idea...I suppose this is for the best too."

Celestia nuzzled her younger sister and smiled. "I'm glad you understand, dear sister." She, along with her escort of guards, made their way to the doors. "Take care, dear sister. I am off to my chambers for the evening."

Luna's head drooped as soon as Celestia's back was turned. "...yes...take care."

One of Luna's servants came to the downtrodden alicorn's side. "Milady...is something wrong?"

The midnight alicorn gave a soft smile to the unicorn hoofmaid who was looking worriedly towards her. "No, I'm fine Candle Glow. Thank you."

The mare gave a bow before returning her attention to her previous work, leaving Luna to her thoughts.

*"Celestia...I don't want to think that you're trying to give yourself more power over Equestria...but...you've changed so much."* Luna forced her face to remain neutral as she looked to the emblem of the sun etched into the stone over the entrance way. *"These ponies are not just our servants."*

*They're our responsibility...our family, and our life. Don't you realize that, sister?"*

The night dragged by slowly for the younger alicorn princess. She continued to monitor the moon as it made its way across the blue-black sky, and maybe add a bit more shine to the occasional star if she felt the desire to do so. For the most part, it was like any other night to her: uneventful, and lonely. Most of the ponies in the castle had retired for the night, and only the occasional guard would walk by, giving her a bow before checking the throne room and leaving once more.

Luna wouldn't lie and say she didn't mind the lack of company. Sure, she was good at keeping herself entertained, but ponies were social creatures by nature. She wished that more of the kingdom's subjects would enjoy her night, but Equestria was a slowly growing kingdom, and the land required farming to be done. Farming required hard work, and hard work required well-rested bodies. Therefore, sleep was a must for the vast majority of Equestria.

"I'm sure once things become more stable, we'll be able to have less need for heavy labor."

Among many things, Luna was an advocate for progress. She marveled at the capacity of the pony mind, and always found herself enthralled by the latest advancement in pony life. Why, no more than a year ago an Earth pony in the growing town of Manesthia had patented the first grain mill. Now they were popping up all over the kingdom, and bread was becoming a more common source of food. No more hand-ground oats and wheat, and there was more production to boot!

Literature was becoming more accessible too. Some educational institutes, universities, if she recalled correctly, were making printed texts of various classic stories and documents. The university was situated in the town of Fillydelphia, and it was the first of its kind. Philosophy, mathematics, poetry and literature, as well as magical studies, were among the major subjects taught.

Despite all these wonderful advancements, Luna couldn't help but feel that it was being held back. She didn't like to point hooves, but she felt Celestia had a say in this. Celestia, while a rather kind mare for the most part, had a habit of getting what she wanted. The majority of the time, these

demands were usually beneficial to the kingdom. Farming, for instance, while an idea from an Earth pony that was ages old, had been supported by the Princess of the Sun. She persuaded wandering herds of ponies to find a place to settle down and begin farming. Families grew, ponies lived longer, and stable settlements began to form in more areas.

One not-so-good idea was Celestia's idea to keep governmental power in the hooves of her and Luna. Ponies had asked at first for a say in things, and eventually demanded (politely, of course) that they have a voice in politics. Luna had favored it from the start, but Celestia...

The ponies were allowed to have a given number of representatives, depending on the size of their community, who would speak on their behalf. Celestia and Luna, while still the major voices in government, were limited in lawmaking by these ponies. The representatives could also request funds, resources, or other forms of aid from the two sisters. It was less than Luna would have wanted, but it was progress.

*3078 E.B.*

"...and so, your Majesty, I feel that with the points I've made, New Hayfield deserves to be given full representation and recognition as a town, or our citizens will have to discontinue alfalfa trade with the rest of the country."

Celestia looked to the middle-aged pegasus mare who was the sole representative of the decade-old settlement of New Hayfield. A community that was founded on the fertile lands surrounding it, it was the newest and biggest producer of alfalfa. With alfalfa being such a key source of food in the kingdom, the citizens believed they deserved to have equal say in the House of Equestrians. One representative wasn't enough for such an important town that was rapidly growing.

"Ms. Lacey Wing, are you aware of what I must deal with on a day-to-day basis?" Celestia inquired.

"Well...I realize you are incredibly busy, your Highness, but--"

"If New Hayfield feels that it deserves special treatment, then perhaps the kingdom needs to look into reforming the town to better fit the needs of



the many.” She shook her head. “If I made an exception for your case, then the other representatives would ask the same for their towns.”

Lacey Wing took a step back. “N-no, your Highness, we aren’t requesting any kind of special treatment, just equality! We have no real school system set up, and food is running low. We only wish to be given rights so that we can run ourselves more efficiently as a true town within Eques-”

“I’ve lived far too long to not see what you are trying to pull, Ms. Lacey Wing.” Celestia turned to her guards. “Escort her out of here, and see to it that she is not allowed entry back into the castle grounds.”

“Your Highness, *please!* There are ponies starving! We’re on the brink of the kingdom’s borders, we face continuous attacks from raiding parties and-”

“Wait.” Celestia spoke, and her guards halted, keeping a firm grip on the distraught pegasus. “Raiding parties, you say?”

Lacey Wing blinked before nodding. “Y-yes, Diamond Dogs, to be exact. We have no real policing force or militia to stave them off. We’re just lucky that they only take what they want and leave us unharmed for the most part.”

The Princess of the Sun frowned while gazing into the pegasus’s eyes. “This changes things. You should have told me this from the start.” She turned to one of the captains of her Royal Guard. “Captain Thundermane, how many new recruits do we have as of now?”

The Pegasus gave a bow before speaking. “Milady, we currently have a little more than one hundred recruits that have about two months-worth of proper training. They’re ready to serve if you need them.”

Celestia nodded. “Good. Gather these new soldiers and form teams that can take care of these raiding parties in New Hayfield.”

Lacey Wing chanced to speak. “What of the community’s ponies?”

“For now, nothing shall change. This is a greater concern. You shall return to your settlement and inform them of what I told you about the situation regarding New Hayfield being given full rights.”

"I..." Lacey Wing's head drooped. "As you wish, your Majesty."

As the guards escorted the crestfallen pegasus out of the throne room, Luna waited at the exit. As soon as the oak doors closed, she spoke. "Guards, stop for a moment."

The two guards did as they were asked, and smiled knowingly. They had hoped Luna would be listening.

"P-Princess Luna!" The pegasus bowed. "It's an honor to-"

"That's enough." Luna approached the mare and continued. "I overheard your request to my sister. If you want...I shall sign the proper documents and make New Hayfield into a proper town. It's still too small for many representatives, but I can bump up the number to three for now."

Lacey Wing began to tear up before bowing graciously. "Th-thank you, your Highness. I cannot express how thankful the ponies of-"

"Think nothing of it. In fact, don't speak a word of this until I make it official." Luna looked to the two guards. "I trust you two gentleponies will do likewise?"

"Of course, Princess Luna." replied one of the stallions, the other guard giving a nod of agreement.

"Wonderful." Luna smiled to the joyful pegasus. "Please have a safe trip back to New Hayfield."

"Yes, and thank you once again, your Highness."

Luna watched as the three ponies made their way towards the main entrance of the castle, her smile slowly turning into a frown. "Celestia..."

The past two decades had been...hard. Luna had more or less taken a step back into Celestia's shadow while her sister went about radical reforms. She still was countered by the House of Equestrians, but she also had greater power than they did. Luna was the only one who could truly balance out her sister's sway in the kingdom's government, and that was only because she had lived long enough to know how to be sneaky about it. Truth be told, Celestia didn't really pay much attention to her subjects outside of how they directly affected the kingdom as a whole. Manesthia usually got most of her attention, along with Weathens and Fillydelphia.

Coltstings was still a young town, but it was steadily growing and its harbor had become a chief area of importing and exporting for the kingdom. Celestia was planning on getting more ships built in the next five years for that small city.

When Luna asked why Celestia wasn't placing more concern on her subjects' interests, the answer she was given shocked her.

*"Luna, my dear sister...they're just ponies. Simple, mortal, ponies. At best, they live for several decades, but in the end they all die. Eventually they'll just see that our way is the right way, and live with it. I'm helping them, not mistreating them."*

Luna's image of her sister had been a bit cracked around the edges for the past half a century, but now...

Now she didn't know what to think. Celestia used to be so cheerful, loving, and caring. A little vain at times, but nopony was perfect.

So, Luna took it upon herself to try and counteract Celestia's less admirable actions. She was pretty sure her elder sister knew of this, but she had yet to do anything. Celestia wasn't stupid, she knew that much. She was likely letting it go for now, waiting to see how far Luna would take things.

If only she knew how far the Princess of the Moon would go.

3080 E.B.

The stairway leading into the dungeon of the Royal Sisters' Castle was lit by flickering torches that lined either side of the wall. Surprisingly enough, the dungeon itself was rarely used for long term cases.

Most time the prisoners never lived longer than a year down here.

Luna banished the dark thoughts from her mind and continued down the stairs until she reached an old wooden door. She pressed against it, causing it to slowly open. Before entering, she looked behind her.

No one had followed. Good.

She walked into the darkness and closed the door behind her. With nothing but pitch black around her, she opted to summoning forth a ball of light that manifested itself from the tip of her horn. The soft, white light filled the empty hall of prison cells.

Luna herself had excellent night vision, but this light wasn't for her. No, it was for the three dozen ponies that stood before her, covered in cloaks of a dark gray and purple bearing the sun and crescent moon on the back of them. They all bowed to Luna as she returned the gesture in kind.

"Are we missing anyone?" Luna asked curiously.

"Yes, Milady. Flare Mane was unfortunately unable to make the trip here tonight. He sends his regards and will be informed by Hawthorn within the week."

These ponies were a group that Luna had come to know over the years, and they came from all corners of the kingdom. They were her connection to the outside world, and the executors of the plans she herself couldn't carry out.

Some were farmers, politicians, and even musicians. Others were guards who served directly under Luna, some were even fugitives who had escaped from prison, though Luna learned that all these cases were related to various degrees of protesting against Celestia's reign.

Despite the range of occupations and lifestyles, these ponies had one thing in common. They wished to change Equestria, for the better.

Each of the three dozen or so were given aliases. They were known collectively as the Night Watch. They worked in the dark, among the light, and kept their business hush-hush to those outside of their circle.

An Earth pony mare cleared her throat. "Milady, I believe it imperative to tell you that Princess Celestia has asked the Royal Treasury about the kingdom's funds as of late. We've had to lie and not mention the four-hundred bits that were taken last week."

Luna gave a nod. "Thank you, Wheat. I understand the risk you and Fair Meadows are taking with this cover up. I assure you that the bits are going towards a good cause though. The orphans of Manesthia will be able to eat well for several months now with the funds anonymously we gave."

The mare gave a low bow before standing back at attention. Luna looked over the others and waited to see if any others had anything to share. After several moments passed, she began.

“As I’m sure most of you know, my sister has...crossed lines that I believe should not have been crossed. The buffalo tribes of western Equestria have sent formal complaints to us of our continued expansion of farmland without consulting them first. She replied to the complaint by sending military forces to quell the tribes. From what I understand, the situation has worsened, and fighting has begun.” She sighed. “Are there any among you that have loved ones serving in the military out in western Equestria at this time?”

“Milady, my wife and two eldest nephews are both in the Pegasus Cavalry.”

Luna gave a nod to a pegasus that she recalled went under the name Withersdale. “I hope that we can end this conflict and the problems with my sister before things become worse for our friends and family.” She stood a bit taller. “This leads me to my summoning of all you tonight. In one year’s time, I will begin the plan we made two years ago. I...I will use the Elements of Harmony if necessary, though I hope against all hopes it doesn’t come to that, and can peacefully persuade my sister to step down from the throne and allow Equestria’s citizens to run their own land. If things don’t work out as such...well, we discussed what plans I have in mind.

One of the cloaked ponies raised a hoof. “Your Majesty...begging your pardon, but...I wasn’t informed of your back-up plan.”

The alicorn quirked an eyebrow. “Dafodilia, correct?”

“Yes, your Highness.”

Luna looked up to the vast darkness of the shadowed ceiling as she spoke. “Well, I am convinced that Celestia is suspecting me of something, though how much suspicion she has over me, I do not know. She may have safeguarded the Elements of Harmony, or worse, is keeping them close to her in case she decides to use them on me, or the growing number of dissenters throughout the kingdom.” She looked down to the stone floor as she continued. “If it comes to that...if I am forced to fight against her with such powerful magic at her command...then I will have to counter it the only way I can think of.”

Silence hung in the dark as Luna sighed deeply. "I will have to call forth the power of the stars and moon, and allow them to give me the strength to fight back. Such a magic is dangerous, even when casted properly. I could be destroyed from the inside out, I could explode...the outcomes are endless. I'm hoping that my power as the Princess of the Moon will *allow* me to use such powerful magic, but I'm not entirely sure. Worse case scenario, I die while taking Celestia with me."

The young mare's jaw dropped a little. "D-die, your Highness...but...I thought you and your sister were immortal!"

"Ageless, Dafodilia. Not immortal. We can be killed...although, for the record, my sister and I have endured things normal ponies would not be able to handle. I can live without aging a single day, but I can be killed. I don't know what it would take to kill me, and I don't wish to find out any time soon."

"What...what would happen in the event that you and your sister perished?"

Luna smiled. "The world will notice the imbalance, and correct itself. Celestia and I may control the sun and moon respectively, but they *are* capable of doing things themselves. It would only require...a great loss of magic in our world, which would transfer over to the two celestial bodies. I can imagine that unicorn magic would be the first thing lost, followed by pegasi and their ability to stand on clouds. Again, this would be a worse case scenario, and most likely not happen."

Seeing that her group was still listening to her, she continued. "Right, well, when the day comes for this plan to take place, I ask that you be prepared to fulfill your designated roles, as we discussed. You'll be informed on the exact date through mail, the letters will be delivered through 'Shady Skies', a fake name I've given myself. I'll state that the grand opening of Canterlot's newest library will take place on a given date. That date will be the time you are to be ready to enact our plan. Understood?"

"Yes, your Highness." the ponies replied in unison.

Satisfied with the response, Luna dimmed her magical orb of light before snuffing it out. The dark had returned once more, yet her eyes could still see every single one of them clearly. "Very well. All of you, please be

careful on your way back. I trust you all have ways of getting back to your respective homes?"

Several smaller orbs of light formed on the horns of the unicorns that were present among the ponies. She smiled. "Good. Be safe, Night Watch."

After heading back up the stairs and leaving the Night Watch to their own means of getting out of the castle (the prison itself had numerous catwalks and hidden passages they knew of), she retired to her study. It was going onto two in the morning, and she was already feeling drained. She still had another two or so hours before she'd have to go about lowering the moon, and Celestia would likely be awake by then.

Luna began to think more on the reason behind this secret organization she had helped create. Aside from the tragedy the buffalo were facing, Celestia had personally seen to the dragons that were causing problems in the southeastern regions. From what Luna knew of dragons, they had very loose ties within their race, most of them being isolated from each other. There was a council of elders, but that was it. Celestia should have spoken to this council first, but instead she had told the dragons to disperse. Dragons, being a proud race, replied by refusing her demands.

Their caverns were now charred, glassed over ruins. Luna got a good look at the charred skeletons of the once mighty creatures when she visited the region personally. The ground was still smoking when she arrived.

Now the dragons had declared Celestia to be a monster and tyrant. What surprised Luna was that she had received a letter from the dragon elders themselves, pleading for her to do something about Celestia's actions. She responded by stating she would do what she could.

She hadn't received any further letters from them, and that had been about a year ago.

Luna turned to an old tome written in what was known by scholars as Runic Equestrian. Luna knew the language simply as the Equestrian, but the language had changed so much since she first spoke it. The symbols were written around a picture of the crescent moon and four stars surrounding it.

Turning the page revealed another passage about the night sky, and included another illustration with a caption underneath it. The caption

simply read 'Armor of the Night'. The drawing was rather detailed, Luna thought. The armor consisted of a helm, a plate of armor that draped over the neck while covering the chest, and four armored shoes. All pieces were said to be of a blue hue, and symbolized the power of the cosmos that the bearer was entrusted with.

*'Whoever wears this armor shall know and respect the power of the stars and moon above. Even so, to use this enchanted armor carelessly could easily lead to a pony's undoing. Only those whom the stars and moon recognize as a being with intentions true and righteous can yield their power. Then, and only then, can that being be a true avatar of the night. They will be one with the night sky, and the night sky shall become one with them.'*

Luna closed the tome before magicking it back to its proper place in the highest shelf of her personal library.

There was no turning back from this, she realized. If Celestia fought back...she would have no choice but take down her sister by force. For the sake of Equestria, and all of the world.



# Chapter 2

## Papermoon

*“Do I feel guilt over my actions? Yes, I do. Would I go back and change what I did? No. Looking back on the past and wishing to change it is not how one should view life. Instead, one should learn from the past, apply it to the present, and look forward to the future.”*

*- Princess Luna, two months after returning from her millennium-long imprisonment in the moon*

Nightmare Moon closed her eyes, taking a short break from gazing off into space. The sun had set from her point of view, the colossal ball of light and gas having moved behind the planet. Looking down at the blue and green sphere, she could make out the various mountain ranges, lakes, and oceans.

*“Luna?”*

Nightmare smiled. “Yes?”

*“Do you...well, what will happen when we get out of here in another one thousand years? We more or less told Celly that we will escape, and I’m sure she hasn’t forgotten...but...what do we do?”*

Nightmare nodded. “Well, we have two options. We can tell Celestia, along with whomever else stands up against us, the truth.”

*“What’s the other option?”*

“We continue the charade of being a twisted alicorn, hellbent on revenge and consuming the world in night for all eternity.”

*“O-oh...um...I think we should go with the first option.”*

Nightmare laughed quietly. “I think that’s a good choice, too. Actually, there is a third option, now that I think about it.”

*“What is it?”*

“First the charade. Then when it’s all said and done and you ‘return’ to normal, the truth.”

Luna’s hummed in thought, her voice echoing in Nightmare’s subconscious. *“I like that one. I don’t want to keep Celestia in the dark. She’s not perfect, and she’s made a few bad decisions, but she has never intentionally hurt anyone. She deserves to know about you and me, and our connection.”*

“I agree. At least she hasn’t driven the dragons to near extinction.”

Luna sighed deeply. *“I really am sorry to hear about what you had to deal with. If it means anything...you’re more than welcome to stay here.”*

Nightmare could feel Luna’s eagerness for a response.

A place to call home again? What about her old home? Was it still around? She shook her head, and continued to gaze at the stars.

“I’ll think about it.”

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3081 E.B.

Luna stared at herself in the mirror, unblinking.

“This is it. We either stop her...or...” She went silent and looked out to the low-lying sun in the sky. “No...we’ll end this, and Equestria will be fine.”

The Night Watch was set up throughout the castle. Some would be disguised as guards, others would be simple servants or hoofmaidens. A few of them were even dressed as representatives. They would be the support that would keep her attention from being diverted from Celestia if things got bad. The last thing she needed was to get incinerated by a blast of solar energy because a random guard pony.

She looked to the crown on her head, and frowned before removing it with her magic. No, she wouldn't be approaching Celestia as a princess today. She would meet Celestia as her sister, and as an alicorn who wanted to make things right.

Taking a final look at herself in the mirror, she nodded, then walked out the door leading to the halls of the Royal Sisters' castle throne room. The guards stood at attention as she passed, a few giving curt greetings to her or bowing even.

Soon enough she was standing in front of the giant oak doors once more. She pushed them open, and exhaled deeply.

"Here goes nothing..."

She walked with purpose down the red carpeting leading to the grand throne of Celestia, which was almost twice as large as Luna's and much more decorative in appearance. Looking ahead, Luna was relieved to see that Celestia was not giving an audience to any ponies at the moment. This would make confronting her much easier.

Celestia noticed Luna and smiled fondly. "Luna, good evening. I was afraid I'd have to send someone to wake you up. You only have about another hour before sunset."

For a moment, Luna wanted to smile and just enjoy the moment with her older sister. However, she was reminded of what had to be done as she glanced at the guards, then towards the window where the sun could still be seen. She sighed before speaking. "Guards, I ask that you leave us."

The ponies all looked to Luna, then to Celestia. A few gave bows before slowly making their way towards the doors, and most of the others followed suit, though they seemed hesitant to leave the two alone. Luna forced herself to not make eye contact with any of them, her eyes remaining glued to Celestia's. As soon as the throne room was empty aside from the two, Luna continued. "Sister, we must talk."

Celestia, to her credit, managed to hide her confusion behind a mask of calm. "Of course, Luna. What is it you wished to speak to me about?"

*"I had better just get to the point."* Luna closed her eyes and spoke. "I believe it's time for you and I to step down from our thrones, and allow Equestria to run it's own affairs without us. We can continue to control the cycles of day and night, but we should leave the kingdom in the hands of the many capable ponies."

Celestia's eyebrows rose, and she slowly smiled before laughing. "Haha, oh, Luna, my dear sister...I..." She stomped a hoof against the tiled floor while nodding. "...haah...I needed a good laugh, thank you. You wouldn't believe how dull it gets, listening to pony after pony complaining about this and that. Starvation, health concerns, disease...honestly, if they only worked a little harder, they would be world's better. Now, what is it you wished to really speak to me about?"

Luna simply frowned.

Celestia's expression slowly morphed from happiness to confusion, and then to shock. "Y-you're serious...? You...honestly..." Celestia frowned. "Luna, what is the meaning of this outlandish behavior? You know as well as I that if we left these weak mortals to their own devices they'd all but perish!"

"That, Celestia, is where you are wrong." Luna spoke with a firm tone. "We were meant to lead them, yes, but only through benevolence and understanding. We do not age only so that we can retain our wisdom for generations and help other ponies learn from our experiences! We knew this since the day we could talk!" She stomped a hoof on the ground. "You've crossed that line so many times now I'm positive that you've forgotten about our role in Equestria! You're an alicorn, *not* a deity! We are not meant to be feared, but loved, and we must love in return!"

"That's *enough*, Luna. Stop this now and I'll forget about this tantrum you're throwing."

"Tantrum?" Luna repeated. "Tantrum? No, this isn't a tantrum, this is me speaking on behalf of the burdened, starving, impoverished ponies who can't scrape up enough bits to by a bag of hay! This is me speaking on behalf of the soldiers who are fighting the Diamond Dogs in a fruitless war that could be resolved easily through peaceful means! This me speaking for the dragons, griffons, and numerous other races that you've wronged through actions that are nothing short of slaughter!"

Celestia rose from her throne at this point. "How dare you accuse me of such things! I am only doing what any true monarch would do! I have yet to see *you* do anything for our citizens aside from dedicating the occasional monument, park, or artwork to some town or another. I have been carrying the weight we should both be burdened with, sister!"

"I have been doing more than that, Celestia, far more than that. You simply won't allow me to do anything that I believe would benefit the kingdom! I say we should give money to the orphanages, you say to not bother with spoiling little foals who are too young to do anything for the community. I say we should open more shelters up for the homeless and poor, you say they need to work harder instead!"

"That's because such acts are merely pampering those ponies, not motivating them to do something with their short and meaningless lives!"

Luna took a step back. "Celly...you...don't honestly mean that."

"I've said it before, Luna! They're mortals! Their lives are but a sliver of a fraction compared to ours, and if we simply concern ourselves with every single one of their problems, we'd never accomplish anything! I work for the kingdom as a whole, not for a few individuals!"

"You're working for yourself, Celly!" Luna shot back. "Don't deny it! I already know that you're planning on expanding Equestria's borders past the former den grounds of those dragons that you killed!"

The tapestries on either side of the grand hall began to blow as though a hurricane wind had found its way into the castle. Celestia stood at her full height while glaring down at her sister. "Do not question me, *little sister*! My power was given to me by the cosmos themselves, and I was destined since birth to rule these lands! The same can be said for you, but you instead wish to sit idly and allow these mortals do things themselves!" She stomped her hoof, which echoed throughout the throne room. "The Divine are to rule the weak, that is the way things are! It is the natural order of-

"There is no natural order with the way you run things!" Luna screamed, matching Celestia's overbearing power with her own. "We were never supposed to oppress the 'weak', as you call them! We were placed upon the planet to help guide them until they were ready to run things

themselves!” She felt her heart hammering in her chest as years upon years of frustration and anger were lifted off of her. “We. Are. Not. Deities!!”

*“Silence!!”*

A sudden weight crashed down upon the throne room, and Luna felt her breath hitch. She strained to stay standing as Celestia’s palpable magic threatened to crush her.

“Luna, as of now you are to step down from your place as the Princess of the Moon until I see fit. I highly recommend that you do so, unless you wish for me to force you to do so.”

The midnight alicorn grit her teeth before speaking. “No. I cannot fail my subjects...or my kingdom.”

A wave of telekinetic energy smashed into her, sending her careening into a stone wall. Luna got to her feet and forced magic to tend to her injuries as she looked upon her sister.

“You are acting like a spoiled little foal, Luna. Don’t make me repeat myself.”

Luna made her way towards Celestia once more. “I refuse. If you force me to, sister...I will have no choice but to act on my own accord.”

The oppressive force of Celestia’s magic was suddenly met with one of similar intensity. The Princess of the Sun showed minor shock as her sister managed to resist her powers. “Luna...you are making a grave mistake.”

Luna shook her head. “No, I am simply performing my final duties as the co-monarch of Equestria. Removing a tyrant from throne.”

Celestia’s glare intensified while the temperature of the air increased dramatically. Luna’s horn began to glow as she concentrated on a spell she had prepared for this moment.

“Very well, Luna. I have no choice but to use the Elements on you.”

Luna’s eyes widened as a chill ran down her spine. “No...” Her horn’s glow faded.

The older alicorn smirked. "You think I wasn't prepared for a situation like this, Luna? I suspected you of plotting something, though I didn't think it would be *this foolish*. The Elements of Harmony are under my control as we speak." A glow of light from Celestia's horn brought forth five jeweled artifacts, while a sixth one floated within the center of them. "I shall strip you of your powers, and become the sole ruler of Equestria. I shall be the Queen of the Sun, the Bringer of the Day *and* the Night!"

The Elements of Harmony glowed as Celestia channeled magic into them. They began to spin wildly around her as she flapped her powerful wings and lifted off the ground and hovered over her sister.

*"The...the Elements are responding to her? How? They should only resonate with a being who has good intentions and has no anger in their heart."* Luna crouched low, preparing to move at a moment's notice.

The Elements of Harmony halted suddenly and began to emit a soft hum before Celestia absorbed them into her body. The white equine's eyes shined with primal energies as bolts of magic crackled around her. "Yes...I will usher in a new era! All will know my power, and all will bow before the might that is Equestria! I shall make an example of you, Luna! Then we'll see how many dissenters will continue to reject me!"

Luna leaped to the side as a rainbow colored bolt of energy shot out at her, followed by another. The midnight alicorn was forced to evade as her sister began to assault her with the ancient magical artifacts. So far everything that could have gone wrong for her was happening. She couldn't summon the Elements of Harmony, Celestia had managed to harness them *and* apply them to her own vast magical energy.

The younger sister skidded and ducked as a bolt flew over her head while a few of her blue mane hairs were burnt in the process.

*"I have to stop her..."* Luna thought as she looked to Celestia, who was now surrounded in an aura of volatile magic. *"Before she destroys herself and everyone in the castle as well."*

Heavy Hoof was currently standing outside the door next to his partner and fellow guard, Withersdale. He tried to ignore the explosions just beyond the doors, but the powerful energy he felt was hard to dismiss. Princess Luna was in danger, and he knew it.

He felt a sudden tug on his mind, and a voice echoed in his mind.  
*"Heavy Hoof, Withersdale, I need you to begin the evacuation at once. I'm afraid we're proceeding with the back-up plan."*

Heavy Hoof and Withersdale each sent her a mental affirmative before the connection was abruptly cut off. They looked to each other before abandoning their posts and galloping down the hall. They turned down several corridors before heading up a flight of stairs and reaching a small tower where a bell hung. Heavy Hoof grabbed the rope tied to the bell and tugged. The massive bell let out a loud tone which echoed throughout the castle and surrounding area. Ponies all around stopped what they were doing and proceeded towards the edge of the woods. Moments later smoke could be seen on the opposite end of the castle.

*"Good, looks like Trotter and Shine Point got the fire going in the kitchen already."* He continued to tug the bell as Withersdale watched the evacuating ponies below.

"Alright, that's enough. We need to make sure the guards are distracted with the fire before the weather ponies arrive." Withersdale spoke as he looked to the growing plumes of smoke. "I just hope the princess can handle this."

"Well..." Heavy Hoof began. "If she fails...Equestria will be in for some difficult times."

The two stallions stared at the rising column of smoke for a few more seconds before galloping down the stairs to begin the second phase of their plan.

Luna's horn glowed as she deflected a bolt of solar energy launched by her sister with a wave of magic.

Right now, Luna was at a severe disadvantage. The two sisters' powers were directly linked to their charges, and the sun was still hanging in the sky. Luna, while capable of defending herself without the moon or night sky, was fighting in enemy territory with Celestia's sun giving her energy constantly.

Chancing a glance out one of the massive windows, she let out a gasp.



The sun was rising back into the sky...it was going from west to east!

Celestia was trying to keep the night from coming!

"That's right, Luna! You're finished." Celestia landed gracefully on the stone floor, which began to turn bright red upon making contact with her hooves before melting. "I won't allow you to throw the kingdom into chaos with your whims and radical ideas."

"Sister, stop this now! You're going to throw our world into disarray if you continue to do this!" Luna pleaded.

Celestia merely called forth a ball of flaming magic that was white as her own fur coat before hurling it at Luna. Raising forth a barrier of magic, Luna skidded several feet before falling to the ground, shaken, but unharmed. She coughed a bit as she got back to her feet, forcing herself to move as flames spewed forth and scorched the spot she had been moments ago.

"You have some nerve, Luna! Scolding *me* on throwing the world into disarray when you're ideas will only bring forth the same thing!" Celestia slowly walked towards her sister while flames of solar energy danced around her. "Know this, Luna: those who stand against the natural order of things will only be burned in the end. Whether it be a mortal pony, or a foolish alicorn who believes she has the answers to everything without listening to her elders."

Luna took a tentative step back while her horn began to glow a deep purple. "Celestia...please don't make me fight you."

"There will be no need for you to, Luna. I'll simply bring you down before you have a chance to fight back."

A second ball of solar energy formed at the tip of Celestia's horn, but Luna was ready this time. The ground around the two alicorns began to shake while Luna let out a primal scream, something akin to a war cry of sorts.

Celestia's gaze drifted up towards the sky above where much to her dismay, the sun was beginning to once again sink over the horizon. She halted its movement across the sky just as it was reaching sunset, but she unfortunately was unable to stop the sky from darkening in the east. She

watched as the moon managed to poke over the horizon, and several stars began to dot the slowly dimming sky.

“No! I won’t allow it!” Celestia shouted, and the moon stopped shortly as it passed over the horizon. The sky was now painted a deep pink with orange dotting the portion of the sky where sunset occurred, and a dark purple on the side where the moon had risen. Despite the situation, the sight was quite beautiful.

Celestia’s attention turned towards her sister, who now stood in a battle stance of sorts while her horn continued to glow. Six blue lights appeared in front of her before expanding. The Princess of the Sun could sense powerful magic behind whatever spell Luna was casting, and didn’t like it one bit.

“This...wasn’t supposed to happen.” Luna spoke, her voice shaking a bit from the strain of using such powerful magic. “Forgive me, Celly.”

The six lights took on solid shapes, four of them becoming blue, armored shoes of sorts while the other became a helm and breastplate of sorts.

“What...what are you doing? What magic is this?” Celestia questioned, taking a step back as Luna’s magical power began to increase at an alarming rate. “What are you doing??!”

The magical armor floated around Luna for several moments before she became enveloped in a gentle blue light and levitated into the air. She closed her eyes while the various pieces of armor placed themselves onto her body. Luna’s eyes opened, her pupils glowing with an ethereal light.

Celestia was knocked back as a powerful shockwave rocked the castle. Lowering the hoof covering her face, she felt her jaw go slack as she beheld her sister.

Luna’s dark coat was now pitch black like that of the night. Her mane had changed from light blue to a deep violet, sparkling with the intensity of the stars in the night sky. She stood around the same height as her sister now, and her overall body frame was more lithe and powerful in appearance.

“Sister...” Luna’s voice had changed, taking on a deeper tone fitting for a mare of her appearance. “...prepare yourself.”

The ground around Luna cracked as she launched herself at Celestia with a single flap of her midnight wings. Celestia found herself flying back as one of Luna’s hooves caught her in the jaw and sending her crashing into the two thrones before smashing into the stone walls behind her. She got to her feet and raised a barrier of her own as a flash of blue light crashed into it.

“That armor...” Celestia glared at her transformed sister. “...where did you get it?”

Luna stood at the top elevated platform where the destroyed thrones had been, looking down at Celestia with an unreadable expression on her face. “This armor is a gift from the stars and moon themselves. It something I am entitled to, as the Princess of the Moon. In times of danger and peril, I may call upon its power if the heavens above deem me worthy.” She frowned sadly. “I had hoped that I would not have to use it against you, sister.”

The Princess of the Sun scoffed. “So, you’ve gained a boost in your magic, hm?” Her horn ignited as the solar winds enveloped her once more. “It changes nothing, sister, for the difference in our powers is like the distance between the sun and the moon themselves.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that.”

The crescent moon cutie mark on Luna’s flank began to glow. A thin layer of sweat was soon covering her body as she gathered more energy. Lightning crackled while she began to growl, her muscles becoming taut as she crouched.

Celestia simply smirked. “You really should give up, Luna. It’s pointless to-”

“Yaah!”

Luna burst forward, her body a blur of black and blue as her front right hoof collided with Celestia’s stomach. The white alicorn recovered in midair before pushing off with a flap of her wings. Luna pursued her and shortened the distance between them within seconds. Aiming her horn at

Celestia, she blasted her with a barrage of what appeared to be shooting stars. They exploded upon impacting with the Princess of the Sun.

By now the throne room had been reduced to ruins, windows were broken and walls were crumbling around them. Dust filled the air, and the smell of smoke hung around the two warring sisters.

Luna panted and heaved as she waited for the dust to clear. As the dust clouds parted, her eyes narrowed. Celestia was gone.

“Where...?”

“Right here, Luna.”

The younger alicorn turned around, only for a ball of flames to smash into her. She spiraled downward, but managed to land on her feet at the last second before dashing forward and leaping into the air once more. She jetted around Celestia and kicked her in the back with her hindlegs. Celestia flew back several yards before flaring her wings out and halting her descent. She spun around in time to duck as Luna’s hindlegs reared up in an attempt to kick her in the head.

“I must say, Luna...you’ve surprised me so far.” Celestia wiped a hoof over her bottom lip, red staining her golden shoes. “Despite being the gentle pony you are, it looks like you know how to put up a fight.”

Luna simply launched another barrage of light at her sister, which Celestia avoided once more. She flew high into the air before changing her direction by a whole one hundred-eight degrees, diving straight for her sister. Luna pushed off the ground and the two collided in an explosion of light which shook the foundations of the castle.

By now, the few ponies that had decided to remain in the forest surrounding the castle were aware that there was no fire and that the true reason behind the evacuation of the castle had been due to the quarreling alicorn sisters. They had taken to the air now, combating each other with magic and enhanced strength fit for ponies of their position in Equestria.

“It looks like Princess Luna has her armor on...” one of the Night Watch ponies stated. “She’s...different.”

Another one of the Night Watch spoke. "Do you think she can defeat Celestia?"

Silence hung between the two for several moments as they watched Luna deflect a blast of blazing winds with the flapping of her wings.

"I hope so..."

Celestia slammed her shoulder into Luna's chest, causing the younger alicorn to cough as the wind was knocked out of her. The midnight alicorn pushed herself away from her elder sister and grimaced. "Celestia, we can't keep fighting like this! We'll end up pulling the rest of Equestria and our subjects into it!"

"At this point I'm more concerned with eliminating you, Luna. A few lives lost can easily be replaced within a few years' time."

Luna had long lost the ability feel shock towards her sister's cruel words. She flared her wings out to their full length and spoke. "Celestia...is this what you truly want? To rule Equestria with an iron hoof?"

The elder sister said nothing in reply. Instead, she flew higher into the air, flaring her wings and raising her front legs up above her head. Luna's attention was then drawn to the horizon as it began to brighten.

"Oh no..."

The sun was beginning to rise higher into the sky. Luna attempted to halt the glowing celestial body from moving further, but her powers seemed to no longer have any affect. It appeared Celestia was investing all her strength into raising the blazing star into the sky.

"Your insolence has cost you, Luna!!" Celestia shouted from high above. "I'll destroy you, and all of the dissenters with this attack! My guards have not risen up to help me, and all the ponies have run off, leaving me to take care of things myself! None of them are worth sparing if that's the case!!!"

Luna's eyes widened. "No...Celestia, you wouldn't!!!"

The Princess of the Sun's body began to shine, and Luna had to cover her eyes to prevent herself from being blinded. The air was saturated

with heat, and plants and trees around her began to wilt and wither under the intense sunlight being emitted from the princess.

“Sister, stop this! This is going too far!”

“Too far?!” Celestia laughed. “You stupid foal, I alone decide what is too far! I am the Queen of the Sun, the sole ruler of Equestria! None surpass my authority, none come even close! You are nothing but a pale imitation of my power, a fragile creature! The likes of you serve me best by groveling before my feet!” The sun was now at its apex, and Luna was no longer able to gaze anywhere close to her sister due to the intense light. “No, not grovelling. You would better serve this kingdom by being crushed beneath the hoof of your Queen!!!”

A solar wind, one that dwarfed any of her previous assaults, roared towards the planet below. Luna found her feet shaking, but forced herself to summon forth magic. *“Please...not like this...!”*

*“Luna...Luna of Equestria...”*

A voice? No...several voices, speaking in unison, echoed in her mind.

*“W-what...?”*

*“Do you wish to save this land, Luna?”*

Luna blinked, and realized that everything around her seemed to be frozen in time. The retreating ponies, the blowing grass, even Celestia herself. *“Who are you?”*

*“We are the Elements of Harmony, Luna. We wish to end this conflict as much as you do. Your sister has used our power in ways that go against what we symbolize. Therefore, we have decided to aid you in stopping her.”*

Luna frowned at the implications. “Will...she live?”

*“She has caused too much pain and suffering in this world, Luna. Even if it is not in your heart to end her, we must erase her from this plane of existence. She has brought forth too much imbalance, and there is no way to purge one that has become so corrupted without ending their life. We can heal injuries of the heart and mind, but when one become so tainted by their own desire for power...especially a power like that of the sun, it’s hard to repair the wounds.”*

Luna bowed her head, looking to the unmoving blades of grass.  
*"There is no other way?"*

*"We are sorry, Luna. This is the only way. The preservation of this land, or the destruction of you and all of Equestria."*

Luna felt tears sting her eyes, and she forced back the sobs that tried to escape. *"I...understand."*

Slowly, the world came back to life. Luna looked up, her body feeling rejuvenated. She took in a deep breath and exhaled. "Goodbye, Celly." Luna focused all her power and aimed her horn towards Celestia. The lump in her throat made her throat feel tight as she felt moisture run down her cheeks. "I love you."

A high pitched hum could be heard seconds before a mighty blast of magic erupted from the tip of Luna's horn. The alicorn felt herself slide back a few feet as she strained to keep her feet on the ground. The wave of midnight blue colored energy collided with Celestia's solar wind and caused the ground to tremble upon impact. The blue wave of energy increased in power as a spectrum of colors began to appear around it.

Then it broke through, heading straight for Celestia.

"W-what??" Celestia's eyes widened as her vision became flooded in a bright, iridescent blue light. "H-how did she-?!"

Luna was knocked to the ground as the sky lit up, an explosion of red and yellow flooding either side of the horizon. The panicked screams of ponies could be heard in the distance as Luna got up on shaky legs. She looked to the sky, watching as the massive explosion of magic dwindled down before vanishing.

Celestia was nowhere to be seen, nor could Luna sense her presence, not even a whisper of it.

For several moments the only sound heard was the echoing roar from the no longer existent explosion. Luna bowed her head, and felt grief fill her heart.

"Celly..." Luna whispered. "I'm so sorry..."

Her mourning was cut short, though. The air around her began to heat up once more. She looked up to the sky and gasped as she watched the sun above her. It was...growing!

"Oh no!" Luna lifted off into the air and tried to sense what the problem was with the glowing ball of gas and flame. Was this because of Celestia's absence?

*"The Sun is trying to compensate for the loss of it's caretaker."* spoke the voices of the Elements of Harmony.

Luna bit her lower lip while studying the growing sphere of heat. "What do I do?"

Silence was her only answer.

"Elements, what must I do?!" She was at a loss, unsure of what could stop this calamity from getting worse. "Please, tell me! What must I do?!"

Several more seconds passed, but no response came from the six elements. She cursed loudly before flying higher up. "Perhaps...I can try and reverse it? It can't be too hard, I understand the Sun enough because of what Celestia taught me..." She closed her eyes and reached out with an invisible force, trying to get a hold of the Sun.

She let out a scream as she felt an intense heat wash over her. She forced an eye open, and grimaced as the sun seemed to grow brighter.

And brighter...and brighter...

"No..." Luna whispered hoarsely. "I...will not fail them." She bit her lower lip until it bled as she forced her magic to continue its work on taming the celestial giant. She screamed as her body was being burned by the magical connection she was trying to create between the Sun and herself, but she wouldn't give up. Not when Equestria was relying on her to...

The burning stopped suddenly. She opened her eyes, and looked to see the Sun was still shining as bright as before, but it was shrinking now.

"What...did it work?"

Her question was met by the Sun erupting in a blinding display of light. Luna felt herself being pulled towards the glowing orb in the sky.



Closer, closer...faster and faster. The sky vanished, and blue gave way to black, and stars and space.

Luna's vision became a narrow tunnel as light stretched out before her. Looking ahead, she could see into infinity. The universe itself seemed to be moving slowly compared to her. The stars around her began to slow down, and then...

They began to move backwards, moving *away* from her. A powerful tug on her body that seemed to come from somewhere behind her caused the alicorn to scream in pain as her vision went white.

Then, Luna vanished with a flicker of magic.

# Chapter 3

## Here Comes the Moon

*"I will be the first to admit that I am not perfect. Far from it, in fact. My sister and I had disagreements, and like most siblings, we didn't always get along. However, the day I imprisoned Luna in the moon was the day I realized just how much she truly meant to me. Even with the thousands of ponies who lived in Equestria at the time, without Luna, I felt alone. I missed my little sister...simple as that."*

- an excerpt from the autobiography *'Ages Passed, But I Stood Still'* by Princess Celestia

Nightmare Moon opened her eyes—at least she was pretty sure she opened them, she wasn't sure anymore seeing as she was one with the moon—and gazed calmly at the planet.

How long had it been now? Seven centuries? Eight?

*"I'm just as unsure on how long it's been. The four stars are getting closer though..."* Luna chimed in, catching onto her thoughts. *"I want to say it's been about eight hundred years, but I wouldn't place any bits on that guess."*

"It's alright. We've waited this long. Another two or three centuries won't be a problem."

*"Mm. I only hope the Elements of Harmony were right when they said they'll be able to take care of things when we get back. I'm pretty sure Celestia's been working herself to the bone trying to figure out what to do to help 'us'."* She sighed, and Nightmare Moon could feel the guilt and worry being channeled into her from the 'younger' Luna. *"I miss her, Luna. I really do."*

"I do too...well..." the midnight alicorn paused. "I...don't know if I can really consider her my sis-"

*“No, she’s our sister, Luna. I told you that. She’s not like the sister you may have known, but that doesn’t mean that the Celestia down there is any less of a sister to you. You felt something for her when we confronted her, right?”*

A small fluttering feeling built up in her chest, just like it always did when Luna spoke of ‘her’ Celestia. *“I’m sure when we explain things to her, she’ll take you in with open wings. You and I have both seen how much she’s changed. She’s taken a more subdued role in the day-to-day governing of Equestria, and has allowed representatives, governors, and mayors do the majority of the work now. She’s more patient with problems, and she’s built up strong relations with the griffons and dragons. Not to mention she’s helped create and fund the public schools and the numerous universities throughout the kingdom, created numerous charities and...”*

Nightmare felt warmth spread throughout her as she listened to Luna speaking so highly of her...no...of *their* sister. Yes, Nightmare would do everything she could to make sure her sister would not repeat the same mistakes that had been made before.

If that happened...no, it wouldn’t happen again.

“Celestia...” Nightmare whispered. “We’ll see you again soon...”

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*Everfree Forest*

*2978 E.B.*

The thick canopy of the Everfree Forest was well known for the darkness it created. Light from the sun rarely penetrated through the leaves, and whenever a tree fell for one reason or another, the space it left was quickly sought after by the competing foliage.

Yes, the Everfree Forest was an oddity within the land of Equestria. Plants competed for soil, sun, and water. Animals fed on each other. The

enigmatic forest, according to Celestia herself, was a place that had been in existence for as long as she could remember. It held within it a magic, but it was a more primal, instinctive magic. No unicorn could bend the forest to their will, for it followed its own laws.

Due to this, few ponies ventured here aside from those that stayed on the path leading to the Royal Sisters' Castle. Guards patrolled the road every so often, but preferred to never stray too far from the castle itself.

So, when a loud bang and flash of magic erupted within the heart of the forest, it was no surprise when not a single pony was there to investigate. A single, dark violet colored pony with wings and a horn lay on the ground, taking in huge gulps of air while beads of sweat ran down her body.

"Cel...estia..." Luna whispered hoarsely. She cracked open an eye, and found herself surrounded by greenery.

Did she crash into the forest somewhere after trying to stop the Sun? No...no, she had been in space, she remembered that. She had been pulled by some unseen force at speeds no pony could think of reaching. She had felt her body being tossed around in what could have only been described as pure chaos. Lightning had crackled around her, her vision saw nothing and everything at the same time, and she felt like she had traveled eons within the blink of an eye.

Sniffing the air, Luna found that she was indeed in the Everfree Forest. The familiar scent of wildflowers that bloomed in the thick forest confirmed that much. She sat up, and groaned as she felt sore muscles and joints protest against the movement. Eventually she managed to stand up on shaky knees and take in her surroundings. She heard running water, and followed the sound to its source. Walking over to the edge of a small stream, Luna took in large gulps of water before coughing from inhaling so much at once. After quenching her thirst, she took in her blurry reflection.

Her armor was still on, and her overall appearance was still the same as it had been when she had fought Celestia.

Celestia...

Luna felt pain in her chest, and bowed her head.

“Celly...” Luna began to sniffle. She had killed her. Oh, stars above, she had killed her own sister!

Like a dam breaking open, Luna began to sob. Hot tears ran down her cheeks as she felt her throat tighten. She slumped to the ground and began to cry openly, her body shaking as she slammed her hooves against the soil.

Why? Why had she done that? How could she have done something so...so *monstrous*? Surely she could have talked Celestia into listening, right?

*“You did try, Luna...”*

Luna’s eyes, red and puffy, snapped open as she looked around. “W-who’s there? Where are you?! I, Luna, Princess of Equestria, I demand you show yourself!”

*“Luna, there is nothing to be afraid of. We are still with you.”*

Luna’s eyes widened as she began to remember. “Th-the Elements of Harmony?”

*“Yes, Luna. We’re still here with you.”*

Luna sniffled before speaking, a little more clear this time. “I see. Where exactly is *here*? I realize we’re in the Everfree Forest, but...it feels off somehow.”

*“That would be due to the fact that you went back more than one hundred years into the past. You are currently standing on a meadow that will later become part of the road leading to what you currently know as Trottingham.”*

“One...one hundred years?” While that wasn’t a very long period of time for an alicorn like herself, it was still decent number of years for any other pony. Luna shook her head. “What...what of the Sun? What about all the ponies still near the castle when-”

*“We do not know for certain, Luna, but we could still sense life before we were separated from that time.”*

“Separated?”

*“Correct. We are mere fragments of a whole that stayed within you when you left your original time. Right now, you house a small portion of the Elements within you.”*

Luna forced her breathing to slow down as she processed this information. If she was in the past, then that meant the events that had transpired with her and Celestia had yet to happen. Right?

“Does this mean that I can prevent the fight between my sister and I from happening?” Much to her chagrin, there was no reply. She should have expected as much. “Elements, please give me an answer! Why won’t you give me an answer?!”

*“Luna...you must find out what must be done yourself. We are unable to discern what will become of the future. We are not all-knowing. The knowledge we have never has any true rhyme or reason to it, it simply makes itself known when it feels it is most appropriate.”* After a moment of silence, they spoke, a little softer this time. *“We truly wish we could help more.”*

Luna hung her head while looking to her reflection once more. “No, I understand...” Turning her head upward, she was surprised to see how bright the moon hovering above was. “Hm, I don’t recall making the moon so bright since before...wait...”

The alicorn shot up to her feet. “Wait, no, this perfect!” She looked up to the moon and smiled. “The last time the moon had been this bright was before Celestia had started investing the kingdom’s funds on expansion! Oh, this is terrific! I can still change things!”

Yes, she could change things...but how?

She went silent, ideas running through her head. She could talk directly to Celestia. That...may lead to some problems though. While Celestia had been a rather patient pony earlier in Equestria’s history, she would likely be suspicious of high-caliber magic, and Luna was surrounded in it constantly now. Not to mention the fact she’s an alicorn. Alicorns were a far cry from natural. Would she be able to convince Celestia of her story?

“Perhaps...I can find my past-self and speak to her?”

Luna watched as the stars above twinkled with a gentle light while the occasional shooting star flickered across the clear night sky.

“Yes, that will have to do. I’ll just...have to figure out a way to speak to her...”

Luna’s eyes began to droop as she watched the horizon to the east begin to brighten. It had been a long night, at least for her anyway. Celestia was awake already, seeing as she had gotten the sun to begin rising. Soon ponies across Equestria would wake up, and go about their lives, hopefully enjoying the fair spring day.

Daytime...

Luna frowned a little. While she wasn’t one to seek attention from others that often, she still liked to know she was appreciated from time to time. Few ponies were ever awake at night. She knew this for a fact, seeing as she had flown across the kingdom on more than a dozen occasions, much to the annoyance of the Royal Guard. She knew that night wasn’t a natural time for ponies to be awake, but still...

“Luna, dearest, are you ready to lower the moon?”

The midnight alicorn looked over her shoulder to see her elder sister looking at her warmly. The stray rays of dawn shining off her pink mane really brought out the beauty in her. She was indeed the Princess of the Sun.

“Yes, Celly.”

Celestia gave a nod before walking over and placing a wing over her younger sister. “I saw Filly’s Comet going over the castle last night, by the way. Truly beautiful in my opinion.”

“Oh...thank you. I’m glad at least *somepony* saw it.”

Celestia’s smile slipped a little. “Luna...I know you wish more ponies could see your night. Try to understand that most of them work very, very hard during the day, and rest is needed.”

Of course Luna understood that. She was the one who had helped farming ponies begin with setting out plots of land after Celestia convinced the wandering herds to settle down somewhere. While Luna wasn’t what

one would call an agriculturalist, she did know how to give basic care to plants. After showing the ponies (more than one thousand years ago, mind you) how to grow crops and save the seeds, the population of the yet-to-be kingdom grew exponentially.

Still, a little part of her wished she could have someone other than her big sister to talk to when it came to the night. Ponies mostly spoke to Celestia about issues involving Equestria's well-being, since the elder alicorn was more of a public figure and more sociable than Luna. The Princess of the Night was more inclined towards quiet activities, such as painting, reading, and other fine arts. Celestia, while more of a philosopher and thinker, not to mention politician, was also artistic in her own right. The sunrise and sunset that occurred every day were proof of that. Still, Luna was the one who had created the night sky, and the moon. The stars, while they had been there since before she could remember, responded to her magic in their own way. The moon was her masterpiece, a work of art she had spent ages upon ages crafting from stone, pouring her heart and soul into every bit of its surface.

Perhaps, if she convinced Celestia, she could have the sun set earlier for a season or two, and in return there would be longer days for the other two seasons. Summer seemed like a logical time for long days, what with the warm weather and such...

"Luna?"

The smaller alicorn blinked, her mind snapping out of her daydreaming. "Hm? Oh, sorry, Celly. What did you want to tell me?"

Celestia gave Luna a smile while rolling her eyes. "I was wondering if you wanted to join me for an hour in the court. I know you had something to eat earlier, and I had an early breakfast, so court's opening early today."

Luna looked down. "...I don't know..."

"I know for a fact that an sculptor wished to speak today about a statue that would be placed in the eastern garden. I'd rather have you look into it, personally. You have better aesthetic tastes than me, after all."

"Well...I guess I could join you for a little while."



“Wonderful.” Celestia beamed. “I just hope the ponies don’t start complaining about taxes again.”

“Celly...we *could* probably lower the taxes a bit, don’t you think? I mean, it’s not like we’re experiencing an economic crisis right now so...”

Celestia gave Luna a gentle nuzzle. “Don’t concern yourself with such things, Luna. I know you’re not much for governing as it is, so I’ll take care of it. I assure you that we’re taxing the kingdom just fine.”

“...if you say so...”

The two ponies left the balcony as the Sun had begun to peak over the horizon. As soon as they had disappeared within the stone walls of the castle, a blue mist rose up from the shadows underneath the balcony. Luna’s deep violet form took shape, and the mist formed into her star-covered mane.

“Looks like things are still the same as they had been for me.” Luna thought aloud. “Perhaps I can be more subtle about this, at least for now.”

She had an idea in mind, but it would require a light degree of manipulation on her past-self. Nothing too serious, though.

With a plan forming in her mind, Luna faded once more into a blue, sparkling mist and trailed into the castle, hugging the walls and hiding in the shadows when possible.

Luna sighed as she made her way to her chambers, blowing a stray portion of her mane out of her face. Her mood had soured a little in the hour she had been with Celestia. The sculptor, as it turned out, had been intent on making a statue of Celestia herself. Then Luna had tried to speak up when Celestia declined an increase in funds from the castle when a pony from the small settlement of Fillydelphia had requested it. The two sisters argued, Luna claiming that a few hundred bits was hardly anything to worry about for the kingdom, especially when the very thing it needed right now was growth in towns.

Celestia eventually relented and allowed the funds for Fillydelphia, but had suggested in a very stern tone that Luna get some sleep after that. It would probably be a day or two before Celestia got over the whole ordeal, but she could deal.

*"She does like to have total control of things most of the time, though..."*

Luna blinked, where that thought had come from. She shook her head and opened the door to her personal chambers. The curtains were open, and rays of sunshine flooded the room. After closing them she began removing her crown and breastplate with her magic. "I just hope she will be alright with my idea to extend night a little during the year..."

*"I'm sure she'll put up a fit about it at first and claim it'd be too much of a problem to change things. She can be a bit of a spoiled filly when she wants to."*

Again the dark colored alicorn paused. Celestia, a spoiled filly? Well, yes, Celestia would likely complain about her idea, but it was a good one for the most part.

*"Not if it shortens the day for her. Then it's annoying."*

Now Luna was spooked. Celestia was a good sister, she would probably agree-

*"Agree that I should stop with the silly ideas and just focus on maintaining the cycle of day and night like we always have."*

"Stop that!!!" Luna eventually shouted before blushing. Arguing with herself. Great, she was going insane. She may as well turn over her crown and warn Celestia to stop drinking the water until they got new pipes installed for-

*"I'm sure Celestia's already going insane as well."*

"No she's not! How do you know?"

*"Just a hunch?"*

"Who do you think you are, talking so badly about my sister? Celestia is a wonderful pony, and a wonderful sister."

Her thoughts continued to betray her. *"You sure about that, Luna? She does tend to ignore you. Not to mention she's always against increasing the amount of personal freedoms of ponies. Remember how much of a tantrum she put up when you managed to convince her to allow the freedom to distribute printable text?"*

"W-well...yes, but.." Luna shook her head. "No, I'm not going to do this. I'm just tired, I need rest. That's all."

The Princess of the Moon slumped into her bed, groaning as she buried herself under her sheets.

*"...not to mention she was against carving crescent moons in hallways to match her emblem of the Sun."*

"Shut up."

*"I'm only being truthful, Luna."*

"I'm done talking to you."

*"Really? I thought you were talking to yourself? Does that mean you're done thinking in general. That must be quite difficult for-"*

"UGH!" Luna sat up and stared a hole into the wall across from her bed. "Alright, am I under some kind of curse? Who's doing this?"

*"No, you're perfectly fine. If you want...I can reveal myself..."*

Luna snorted. "I would highly recommend that before I have my guards seize you and place you under arrest."

A chuckle escaped the disembodied voice. *"If only you knew how ironic of a statement that is..."*

Luna jumped back as an odd mist of sorts rose up from beneath her bed before swirling around the ceiling of her room. She watched as the mist condensed before falling to the floor and taking a solid shape of sorts. Her eyes widened as a pony with a fur coat as black as the night sky itself stood before her, dressed in an armor not unlike her own. She studied the pony, and gasped as she saw a pair of wings unfold, along with a horn on the top of her head.

"Y-you're an...alicorn!"

"Yes...also..." The alicorn standing before her turned to reveal her side, and the cutie mark on her flank.

Luna felt a chill run down her spine. “H-how...?” She looked to meet the eyes of the alicorn. “Th-that’s impossible! Cutie marks are unique to each and every pony.” She looked at her own. Exactly the same, down to the blotchy shapes of night sky surrounding the crescent moon.

“Yes...the crescent moon and night sky cutie mark is unique to the alicorn princess known by the name of Luna of Equestria. No one else.”

Luna’s eyes widened, her sight went blurry, and then she fell back onto her bed, having passed out.

“Hm...” Luna thought aloud as she gazed upon her unconscious past-self. “I suppose that could have gone much worse.”

Eyes slowly opened as Luna let out a moan. What time was it? Her eyes looked across the dark room to see the clock, which read seven in the morning.

“Ugh, what a horrid dream that was.”

“I’m hurt. You think I’m horrid?”

Luna let out a scream as she fell off her bed. Looking up, she met the eyes of the very pony she had seen in her dream. Well, at least what she had thought to be a dream.

“S-stay back!” Luna warned, her horn glowing. “I know how to defend myself! I-I’ll warn the guard, and my sister won’t tolerate this when she finds out you’ve been sneaking-”

The ‘older’ alicorn rolled her eyes before her own horn glowed. She cast a spell across the room, which the smaller alicorn recognized as an enchantment which made the walls soundproof.

“What do you want?” Luna whispered fearfully.

“To talk.” replied the elder Luna.

“Talk?”

“Yes. The verbal exchange between two ponies when-”

"I know what you meant!" The younger alicorn grumbled. "I...well..." She glanced at the cutie mark on her intruder's flank once more. "Who *are* you?"

Luna looked down and frowned before gazing sadly at her past-self. "I'll explain everything to you, on one condition."

"...alright..."

"Promise you won't try to cut me off, and save your questions for when I finish."

The younger Luna frowned. She didn't trust this pony, but if it bought her time so that she could figure out a way to escape and warn the guard, then that was fine with her.

"Very well, I can agree to that."

The dark violet alicorn nodded. "Actually, I have a faster way of explaining myself."

Within a minute's time she produced a ball of light from the tip of her horn before floating it over to her younger self. The ball of light emitted a dull hum before making contact with the younger Luna's horn. Her eyes went wide as her face went through a myriad of emotions within the span of a minute.

Celestia imprisoning ponies for the smallest of misdeeds...wars with other races...starvation across the land...the Sun...Celestia attacking her...the Elements of Harmony...the Armor of the Night...the final struggle...Celestia being erased from existence...

Luna had a far away look in her eyes as the memory faded, tears running down her cheeks. Eventually she collapsed to the ground, sobbing weakly. "O-oh...Celly...n-no! No!!!"

Memory transfer. A fast and fairly effective way to share thoughts with another pony, though it did have a side-effect: whoever was subjected to the memories also experienced the emotions like they themselves had been at the events involved. Luna, despite being an alicorn, was no exception.

Luna slowly walked over to the crying alicorn and nuzzled her gently. "I'm sorry...I wanted to explain as quickly as possible..."

The younger Luna shuddered while looking up to her future-self with an expression filled with pity and sadness. "I'm...I'm so sorry for what has happened to you..."

The taller simply nodded. "Thank you, but I'm still trying to get over the fact I did it as well."

For a long while the two sat in silence. Luna was surprised by how silent her younger self was being despite the things she had witnessed via memory transfer. She was beginning to wonder if perhaps she should erase the past ten minutes from her mind when the young alicorn spoke. "If we don't stop Celestia soon, the same events will happen again."

The armored alicorn bowed her head. "I'd rather not kill my sister a second time."

"We won't!" Luna spoke with a hopeful tune to her voice. "We'll open her heart up to the world around her once more. She's still a good pony right now...she has been ignoring some of the problems Equestria's facing, and she is getting a bit pushy with the expansion of the kingdom...but she *does* care about the land and its inhabitants."

"Just watch how quickly that will change in another thirty years." the elder stated somberly. "She changed so quickly after the first skirmishes with the Diamond Dogs took place in my time."

"There has to be a way..." Luna mused. "I don't want to fight her either, but...wait...wait!" Luna bounced up to her feet. "What if we use the Elements of Harmony on her?"

The younger pony's suggestion was met with a harsh gaze. "I refuse to use such powerful magic, especially a magic intended for good purposes, for combat."

"You were going to use them before, weren't you?"

Luna paused, realizing that her past-self was right. "Well...yes, but I hadn't planned on trying to harm Celestia with them..."

“Neither do I.” her younger self began. “I think we should go through with your plan...help Celestia before she even begins to go down that dark road.”

Luna looked down at her younger self and couldn't help but smile proudly. Despite the fact it was her, she was beginning to understand a little of what Celestia had probably felt with being an older sister.

“I think that's a great idea.”

The younger Luna beamed happily. “The Elements of Harmony were made for the intents of peace. If that's what we wish to accomplish, then I'm sure we can't go wrong.”

Had she been this smart one hundred years ago? Had she really been capable of being optimistic about such a bleak situation? “I'm glad you're able to stay positive about this, Luna.”

“Oh, well...I'd rather believe there's a chance we can make things right than not. You've had a hard past as well, but I'm certain we can fix things for the better...um...” Luna paused before laughing. “It feels weird referring to someone else by my name, even if you *are* me.”

“Ah, yes...” Luna chuckled a bit before kneeling down to face her younger self at eye level. “I suppose I should give myself an alias, shouldn't I? Just in case someone sees me, and inquires about my identity.”

“How about...Moonbeam? No...too simplistic...Night Light?” She hummed to herself while beginning to pace. “How about...no...Moonlight...Crescent Moon...Dreamy Skies?”

“How about...Nightmare Moon?”

The younger pony's eyes widened a bit while she frowned. “That sounds a bit menacing, don't you think?”

“Well...considering what I've done and seen is close enough to an actual nightmare, it's only fitting.”

Luna frowned before letting a sigh escape her. “Very well, *Nightmare* Moon. I guess I'll refer to you as such for now. I still think it's a bit scary for someone like you, though.”

“Well...” Nightmare began while her lips quirked into a sly smirk. “I guess we’ll just have to come up with a plan to make my name all the more convincing, won’t we?”



# Chapter 4

## Bad Moon Rising

*“There is one thing I’ve learned from ruling Equestria alongside my sister, and that is the fact that one is never too old to learn something new.”*

-quote from an exclusive interview with Princess Luna from the magazine ‘Equestrian Times Monthly’, published one month after her return from the moon

Nightmare Moon found that no matter how often she saw it, the planet she orbited was something she couldn’t grow tired of. Its vast oceans, ever-changing landscape, its expansive and diverse wildlife...everything about it made her love it more and more with each passing expanse of time she spent gazing at it.

*“Celestia told me once that the planet used to be a very different place. Before ponies, there were creatures that looked like us, but were smaller.”*

“Yes, I recall that being told to me, too.” Nightmare replied. “Celly said it was part of the ‘innate’ knowledge we have. Sort of how I know where every star in the night sky is, even if I can’t always see them.”

*“Do you think Celly has any idea of what we were really trying to do before she sent us to the moon?”*

Luna’s question caused Nightmare to smirk. “Oh, I’m sure she has a few guesses. She’s smart, incredibly smart. She’s older than us, after all. By the time I was old enough to raise the moon, she had already made the first calender that Equestria would follow for the next five hundred years.” She gazed down at the spot where she knew Canterlot to be. “In fact, I wouldn’t be half surprised if she’s watching us right now and making plans for our return.”

*“Hm...” Luna hummed in thought. “I’m still wondering how much of that dream we had was a premonition. Those six ponies we saw...I feel like I’ve seen them before, don’t you?”*

Nightmare Moon gave a hum of agreement. Not too long ago (possibly a few decades at most, but the flow of time felt different for them compared to other ponies) the two mares had experienced a dream, one which was surreal. They stood before six ponies, whose features were blurred, though they were bright pastels of sorts, just like many of the ponies in Equestria. They were all fillies, possibly young mares who had just reached adulthood, and they were confronting the two about something. While the six seemed threatened by the two, Luna and Nightmare themselves felt nothing but joy and relief. Nightmare felt something else though, but she couldn’t peg it. A part of her felt guilt, too, and she wasn’t sure why that was.

“I’m sure we’ll learn more as the time for our return approaches. The Elements are counting on us to return them to their natural state, after all.” Nightmare answered after some time, her gaze shifting to four orbs of light that were only a couple dozen lightyears away, slowly making their final stretch of travel towards the orbiting celestial body. “Just give it time, Luna. We’ve only got less than a century to go.”

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*2979 E.B.*

*Castle of the Royal Sisters*

Luna stared at her reflection, all the while feeling a strange sense of déjà vu.

*“Ah, I remember doing the exact same thing right before confronting Celestia in my own time...although it was more than one hundred years in the future.”*

Luna smiled as the sound of the voice of 'Nightmare Moon' echoing in her mind. Initially it had been a strange having another pony residing within her mind, but after a year of adjusting to it while forming a plan with her future-self, the midnight alicorn was used to it. Nightmare Moon had suggested that she transfer herself into Luna's mind after a week of hiding within her shadow, claiming it would be easier to mask her presence within a life force similar to her own. Luna was amazed by the amount of advanced magic her future-self knew, and when she inquired about the spells, Nightmare had simply replied with a declination to teach her, stating she wasn't ready to learn them yet.

*"I developed most of the more complicated spells I use on my own with no assistance or prior sources to look up for reference."* Nightmare had explained. *"While you are quite adept at magic, Luna, you're not quite ready to use these spells. I had to put in several centuries' worth of training within only a short span of time when I began to fear my sister's reign was going to far. It nearly destroyed me on more than a few occasions."*

Luna decided to let it be at that point. If her future-self didn't feel she was ready to learn the more powerful magic spells she had at her disposal, than she would trust her judgement.

She adjusted the dark blue crown on her head before nodding to herself. This time, she would confront Celestia by herself. No outside help from other ponies, no diversions, nothing but her. She wouldn't drag others into this mess. With any luck, she wouldn't need any help from other ponies and simply resolve the issue with the Elements of Harmony.

If that plan didn't go through though, then she would go with plan B: the Armor of the Night.

*"Now, just remember, Luna, state what you feel. She's likely to listen to you, seeing as she's still a rather peaceful individual."* Nightmare began. *"We want to lessen the control we have over Equestria, and want to allow a greater range of variance with night and day. Longer nights in winter will keep the snow from melting so fast, and longer days in summer will allow more sunlight for crops. That's one of the main arguments we have for that proposition, but the ponies of Equestria come first."*

"Right." Luna let out a breath. "I'm ready."

She walked out of her room, and with grace fit for a princess like herself, made her way towards the throne room. That familiar sense of déjà vu washed over her once again as the guards bowed to her before opening the doors while the servant near the entrance spoke out her name. All the ponies in the throne paused before bowing to her, while one pony gave her a nod and a gentle smile.

“Luna, good to see you...although, shouldn't you be getting some rest? You still have...” She looked out the window towards the sun before continuing. “...about seven hours before sunset.”

Luna's attention, however, was drawn to the objects laid out before her sister. Six of them, to be exact.

The Elements of Harmony.

The younger sister forced herself to remain composed, though the task was proving to be quite difficult as Celestia continued to smile while walking down from her throne. “Sister, could I speak to you...in private?”

Celestia's smile dropped slightly as she heard the tone in Luna's voice. “Luna, dear...are you alright?” She was now beside the Princess of the Night. “You sound upset...”

Luna looked up to her sister before gazing at the ponies within the throne room. Celestia got the hint and cleared her throat. “My dear ponies, if you would, my sister and I would like to have a moment to ourselves. Please leave us.”

The ponies, guards included, all bowed to the two before exiting the throne room in an orderly fashion. As soon as they were alone, Luna spoke. “Celly...I want to talk about the solstices again...that and a few possible changes in the liberties our citizens have-”

“Oh, Luna, *this* topic again?” Celestia's voice carried both an air of annoyance as well as worry. “Luna, dear, I know you care deeply for them, as do I, but we are ageless for a reason. We are meant to rule. As for the solstices, I don't think we should be tampering with the way things are.”

“Celly, if you would only listen-”

Celestia placed a gentle hoof over Luna's shoulders. "Sister, trust me on this one. I know what I'm talking about."

"No! You're just afraid!" Luna shouted, taking Celestia by surprise by the outburst.

"I...what do...afraid? Luna, what do you mean by that?" The Princess of the Sun was looking at Luna with a mixture of confusion and anger now. "Why would I be afraid of our subjects?"

Luna took in a deep breath to calm herself. She could feel Nightmare Moon poking at her conscious, asking for permission to speak through her. Luna closed her eyes, and when she opened them, they were brighter and seemed to glow with concealed power. "Sister...our time to rule Equestria with absolute authority is drawing to a close. Ponykind is progressing faster and faster every year, and I believe it's time that we allow them to begin running things themselves."

Luna closed her eyes again before opening them, revealing the same gentle ones that were her own. She bowed her head and glanced over to the Elements once more. Why had Celestia brought them out? Did she suspect Luna of trying to dethrone her?

"Luna, I understand where you're coming from, believe me, I do. Still...we stand above the unicorns, pegasi, and earth ponies. We have been given the right to rule by the cosmos themselves. Why should we allow ponies who only live for a mere moment in our own lives rule?"

"Perhaps you should seek an answer from the Elements of Harmony." Luna replied. "I'm sure *they* can find an answer. They exist for the sole purpose of peace, after all."

"Ah..." Celestia looked to the six magical jewels and frowned. "Unfortunately, that would be impossible. It appears that the Elements are not reacting to my magic. I've tried to make contact with them, but they do not resonate to my power. It's worrisome, to say the least."

Luna slowly made her way towards the Elements of Harmony, all the while feeling Nightmare Moon looking at them through her eyes.

*"This...is bad. If the Elements of Harmony are inactive, then there's no way for us to use them on Celestia and open her eyes up to what she's*

*doing...clearly speaking to her and reason alone aren't enough. We've tried before, and she's always brushed our suggestions aside."*

Touching the Element of Loyalty, Luna could feel the slightest ebb of magic from it. Her eyes widened, but she quickly hid the expression beneath a look of indifference. "Celly...will you not reconsider your stance on my proposals?"

The white alicorn shook her head slowly. "I'm sorry, Luna. Changing the Solar cycle-"

"See, that's what I'm talking about!" Luna grumbled. "It's always about *you* and *your kingdom*! Everypony loves you, a few respect me, sure, but has anypony ever approached *me* about issues involving the kingdom?" She didn't wait for a response. "No! Not once can I recall a major decision being brought before me first! It's you, always, always *you*!"

Celestia took a step back as she felt a powerful force being summoned from her sister. "Luna...come now, there's no reason-"

Luna stomped a hoof on the ground, silencing her sister. "No, you listen to me! I will not be treated like a foal, not any more! You've coddled me and kept me away from the politics long enough!" She looked to the daytime sky and frowned.

*"Luna...I have an idea...you may not like it, but it may bring our sister to her senses, and help the Elements reawaken."*

Luna's mind was suddenly flooded with thoughts belonging to her counterpart. Her eyes widened before she smiled sadly. "...I understand..."

"What was that, Luna?" Celestia asked, unable to make out what Luna had whispered.

Luna looked up to face Celestia fully. "Celly...do the ponies out there mean anything to you?"

"Well...I suppose. They're only mortal, though, so not especially-"

"Then I suppose you won't mind if I take out my frustrations on a few of them, will you?"

Celestia's expression became one of fear. "Luna...what are you planning to do?"

Luna just smiled deviously. "Since none of them truly appreciate my night thanks to your enforced curfew, I think it's about time they see my night for all the beauty it holds." She let Nightmare Moon's voice intermingle with her own. "Yes...an eternal, beautiful night for the ponies whose lives are but meaningless moments compared to our own, dearest Celestia!!"

A dark blue mist enveloped Luna, and Celestia's heart began to pound with terror. What...what was happening to her sister?

Nightmare Moon forced herself to continue laughing as the mist of starlight faded from her. The once small and dark colored Luna was now pitch black and shrouded in a mane of stars and moonlight. She did her best to appear menacing, trying to recall how Celestia herself had acted in her timeline.

Facing her elder sister, Nightmare spoke. "Well, Celestia? Do you oppose this idea of mine? After all, you admire my night, why shouldn't they do the same? It will give some purpose to their lives."

Celestia shook her head. "Luna, what...what did you do to yourself?"

"Oh, this?" Nightmare inquired with what she hoped was a smug grin while a hoof ran over her blue breastplate. "Lovely, is it not? It is known as the Armor of the Night. It's a gift from the heavens above, used when I see it appropriate. In truth, I had been planning on taking on this form for quite some time now. Those ponies don't show me the respect I deserve, after all. What with that Sun of yours being all they ever care to gaze at in the sky."

"Luna..." Celestia spoke calmly. "If this is about your desire to have more recognition, please reconsider what-"

"Enough, *sister*." Nightmare growled. "I am Luna no more. I am Nightmare Moon! This is my wish, and if you try to stop me, I'll see to it that you are punished for interfering!"

Celestia frowned. "Luna, you are acting out of line. I am the one who makes the rules, we have spoken about this before! The natural order of

things cannot be changed, and a few ponies' complaints about the way things are run are not-"

Nightmare Moon burst out into a fit of laughter. "You vain, self-centered alicorn! You think this is about those foals? I could care less about them!"

"You..." Celestia's eyes narrowed. "You are *not* Luna. My sister...she was too gentle to say such things. Explain who you are, now."

Oh, this was working too well. For a spur of the moment plan, that is. "Well...you're more perceptive than I thought." Nightmare Moon looked out one of the windows towards the Sun while making the best sneer possible to show what she hoped was disdain towards the warm sunlight. "I am the manifestation of Luna's darkest wishes...of her jealousy and...her anger. I am the means for her to execute her wishes without the weaknesses she has."

Celestia began to piece it together (or so she believed). "The Armor of the Night...you...are you a curse of sorts, given physical form?"

Yet again Celestia was making this easier for Nightmare. "Bravo, my dear Celestia!" Nightmare began to walk slowly around her sister. "Yes, I *am* a curse...a curse that gives one strength. Magic in pony form. Though...I wouldn't call myself a curse personally. No, that has a bad ring to it. I am an *enchantment*. I bring forth the true pony that dwells within." She smirked as Celestia glared at her. "What? Are you angered that you were unable to achieve this power yourself?"

Celestia took a step forward. "Release my sister at once. I could care less about the ponies below, but Luna is my only family. If you do not free her..." Waves of heat began to roll off of the royal sister. "I will ensure that you pay in as painful of a manner that I can imagine."

Just as a flare of magic began to encompass Nightmare's form, the ebony alicorn spoke. "Not so fast, Celestia. Unless you wish to harm poor little Luna as well."

The white alicorn halted her spell, and the flames died down. She cursed under her breath, her pink mane blowing ever so slightly from the restrained power being held within her. "You coward...only a truly despicable pony would use such lowly tactics."



“Oh, such harsh words, Celestia.” Nightmare chuckled. “Do you hate being put in such a vulnerable position?” She took several steps towards Celestia. “Do you hate knowing that anything you do to me will directly affect your *darling* little sister as well?”

The ebony alicorn continued laughing as Celestia watched with a look of defeat. “Sister...please don’t do this...”

“Enough!” Nightmare Moon opened her wings fully, buffeting the Princess of the Sun with a cold breeze. “Your reign ends here, Celestia of Equestria! I am the one with the power now! Behold!!”

Celestia watched in a mixture of awe and fear as the sun’s descent across the sky sped up before it sunk below horizon while the moon rose from the east. The elder sister tried to call forth the Sun once more, but her magic worked most effectively when the two sisters cooperated.

“Luna, you can’t do this! You’ll throw the world into chaos! Life will wither away, the land *needs* the Sun!”

“Yet the very same life-giving orb can cause so many problems. Dehydration, sunburn, heatstroke, the list goes on! The moon, on the other hoof, does none of those things!”

“Yes, but the moon can’t give light to the world like the Sun!”

“Do not belittle me, Celestia!!” Nightmare shouted while inwardly wincing at the look of hurt and fear on her elder sister’s face. “I am the ruler of the night, and I will make the rest of the world as such! The night shall last forever!!”

A cyclone of blue, starlit mist stretched forth from Nightmare’s mane before encompassing the entirety of the throne room. The Royal Guard burst into the room while the captain shouted. “Princess Celestia!! The Sun has suddenly set, is something-?” The guards halted their galloping upon seeing the cyclone. Several brave ponies charged forth only to be knocked back by the powerful winds.

Celestia turned to face the guards. “Stay back, it’s too dangerous!”

“Milady, we have sworn ourselves to defend you with-”

“She is right, my poor, pathetic little ponies!” Nightmare shouted, her

voice becoming amplified by the storm of stars and night. “I, Nightmare Moon, formerly known as Princess Luna, have already seized the sky and made it mine alone! Stand down and I’ll spare you from being punished for your impudence!”

Truth be told, Nightmare was straining to keep Celestia’s Sun from rising. Even with the glowing orb of light no longer in the sky, Celestia was still a powerful pony, and even with one hundred years more experience than this timeline’s Luna had, Celestia was still more advanced in most magics. It was only through being able to take her by surprise that Luna and her had been able to pull this off.

She had to act fast. Her winds could hold the guards off, but only for so long before she either seriously injured someone or Celestia found a way to destroy the magical cyclone surrounding the two. Turning her attention to the Elements of Harmony, she grinned. “Ah...and I shall start by using *these* to further assert my-”

Nightmare Moon’s words were cut off as the six jeweled objects were whisked out of her telekinetic grasp. She looked to Celestia, who now had them floating around her.

“No...*not again!!*” Nightmare felt her heart skip a beat.

“S-so...you think you can stop me with the Elements, Celestia? Do you truly have the courage to harm your sister?”

Celestia bowed her head before looking up with grim determination. “I do what I must, Nightmare. Luna...I am sorry...” Her eyes began to glow as the Elements resonated with her magic. “Honesty.”

One jewel began to hum while an orange aura shined from it.

“Kindness.”

A pink jewel followed suit, adding to the glow surrounding Celestia.

“Laughter.”

A soft blue light mixed with the first two colors as the fourth Element began to shine.

“Generosity.”

Nightmare watched with uncertainty as a deep violet light shrouded Celestia. The fifth Element, Loyalty from what she could tell, began to give off a red light.

"Loyalty..." Celestia was now surrounded by a rainbow of color as she stepped forward. Her eyes softened as the Elements intermingled with her own power. "Luna...if you can hear me...know that I am sorry...I should have saw that this would happen much sooner, and done something to prevent it. My...my desire to make our kingdom stronger at the expense of our ponies blinded me..." She shed several tears. "The jealousy in your heart...I can sense it, however small it is, was enough to cause this change in you. For not being a more responsible sister...I can only apologize and ask that you forgive me some day."

The Element hanging over her head that was surrounded by the other five began to emit a bright purple glow.

Nightmare's eyes widened as she felt a spark ignite within her magical reserves, deep within her soul. "Celestia-!"

"Magic!"

A bright light exploded from Celestia as her eyes became pure white. "Nightmare Moon, I banish you to the very object you hold so dear. The moon. Until the day comes when either the Elements see you fit to return to Equestria, or when this spell's power dies, I do not know which comes first, but only then will you be released."

Nightmare Moon could hear Luna crying in the back of her mind to do something, but the ebony pony was not sure of what could be done. A streak of rainbow burst forth from the horn on Celestia's head before crashing down into the Princess of the Night, trapping her in the multicolored tornado.

*"Luna...hear us...we are the Elements of Harmony, and we have communicated with the shards of Harmony within your own soul. We understand your plight, but we cannot undo what has already happened. Celestia, while aware of her faults, is still at risk of going down the same dark path you have seen."*

Nightmare felt an icy grip clench around her chest. *"What? No, she's using your powers right now, correctly at that. I sense no ill intentions behind her magic!"*

*"That is simply because you are her sister, Luna. Even if she has little concern for the ponies of Equestria, she still cares dearly for you. This pains her."*

Luna spoke up from the back of Nightmare's consciousness. *"What must we do to make things right, then?!"*

*"Nothing."*

"What???" Nightmare shouted aloud.

*"We will slowly work our way into her heart, and bring back the Celestia that she once was long before she became driven by power and dominance over the lands. However, we can only work effectively if she wishes to change her ways as well..."*

Luna, once again, spoke first. *"What if she doesn't want to change??"*

The Elements paused momentarily before speaking. *"We believe that to be highly unlikely. While we are not omnipotent...we see a great potential for good in her, and she's already starting to see her mistakes as we speak."* More silence followed before they went on. *"This spell Celestia is casting will make us go into a dormant state of sorts. The last of our magic will be used to create a spark that will slowly heal your sister's heart, as we explained before."*

Well, this was good news, but still... *"How long will we be banished?"*

*"One millennium."*

Nightmare Moon frowned. *"What? That...that's far too long for-"*

Her words were cut off as a warmth flowed through her. Her mind, as well as Luna's was flooded by emotions...namely love and sadness. She looked to see Celestia, whose eyes were flooded with tears.

Celestia forced a smile onto her lips. "Goodbye, my dearest sister. When the time is right...when we can learn to forgive each other and right the wrongs we've both made...we will see each other again."

Nightmare and Luna both let out a scream that filled the throne room before vanishing in a burst of light. Celestia felt the power of the Elements fade before a violent backlash racked through her body. She screamed in

pain as the Elements delivered a punishing jolt of magic through her for using them in such a manner. Despite using their power for keeping peace, the end result was not a harmonious or gentle one. Banishment was still banishment, and in the end somepony was hurt in one way or another.

“G-gahh....!!!” Celestia fell to the ground, tears streaking her cheeks. “I-I’m sorry...”

“Milady!” called out the captain of the Royal Guard. The guards quickly worked on helping the princess to her feet.

Celestia looked up and smiled weakly. “My...my dear ponies...thank you...” She steadied herself after being helped up and forced herself to stop shaking. “Hah, it seems...that the Elements were none too thrilled by my manner of using them...” She took a few deep breaths before speaking softly. “Are any of you injured...?”

“Um...” The captain seemed taken back by the uncharacteristic concern in Celestia’s voice. “N-not really. Swift Heart thinks she may have sprained an ankle, but she can still fly.”

Celestia looked to see a young pegasus mare decked in Royal Guard armor bow slightly. “It will heal with time, your Highness.”

Celestia gave a nod. “I...I ask that none of you speak of what you witnessed until I make an announcement to the public. No doubt they’re all scared due to the radical changes in the sky...” She looked out the window and frowned sadly before bringing the Sun back up from the western sky. Its light brought warmth back into the throne room, and she basked in it for several long moments. “Captain, please take your team to the medical wing and have them look over you. There is always the possibility of magical injuries that could be hidden to the senses.”

“Y-yes, your Highness.” He gave a bow, as did the rest of the guard, and left with his team in tow.

Alone now, Celestia finally let out a painful hiss and her muscles spasmed. She gritted her teeth as her magic twisted and turned within her. The Elements of Harmony, while used for the intentions of peace, were not the kind of magical items that forgave usage that went outside of such boundaries.

“Perhaps...there was some truth to your words, Luna.” Celestia whispered as she looked to the moon, which was still hanging in the middle of the sky with the impression of a pony’s face on it. For now it would stay there until she could figure out a way to move it. “I...am also at blame for what happened.”

It had all happened so quickly. She never would have imagined his to occur an hour prior. She had never suspected Luna to have such...bitterness within her.

No...that was a lie. Deep down, Celestia knew her sister was hurting. She just didn’t want to confront the problem though, because she knew that it would bring inconvenient truths to the surface. Her ponies were not suffering, not yet anyway, but she knew they deserved better.

“Luna...” Celestia spoke softly as she gazed at the moon, which hung peacefully in the early afternoon sky. “...I...I will try to become a better pony, and make Equestria into a place that you would be proud of.” She felt her eyes water. “I’m not perfect, but I will try to follow the principals behind the magic I used to imprison you. I only hope that you will be able to do the same.”

Celestia hung her head and began to sob quietly. For now, she was not a princess, or a being of great magical power. For now, she was simply Celestia, a pony like any other who was capable of making mistakes, being selfish, and feeling pain and sorrow.

“Luna...” Celestia breathed.

It would be one thousand years before she managed to finally be free of the pain from the loss of her sister...

*The Moon*

*3979 E.B. (present day Equestria)*

Luna, or Nightmare Moon rather, felt a tingling sensation run through her body.

“Looks like it’s almost time.”

*“Yes, I can almost feel the Elements of Harmony even from this far away from Equestria.”*

The past millennium had been one the two Princesses of the Night spent thinking, reflecting, and most of all, getting to know one another. By now they virtually knew every minute detail about their counterpart. From their favorite food (hawthorn apples dipped in caramel for Luna, and honey-pickled daffodil flowers for Nightmare), to their favorite types of spells (Luna had a preference for magic influenced by music while Nightmare had a passion for magic that fell into illusions and image-manipulation), they had covered almost every topic possible.

They would get the briefest glimpses of what life in Equestria was like, thanks in part to Celestia borrowing their magical strength to move the moon. It had taken about a week or two after she had imprisoned them, but eventually Celestia learned how to create a connection between them. Every so often, about every fifty to one hundred days or so, she would tap into their magic and take what was needed to move the moon for that given amount of time. During that brief moment Luna and Nightmare would feel an echo Celestia's thoughts, of how she wished they were with her, how she missed them, and how much progress Equestria has made.

Luna and Nightmare had been elated when Celestia first showed them the new government she had created. While still the Princess of Equestria, she had created a branch known simply as the Branch of Representatives. It was based off the idea Luna had written in her journal (which Celestia had read some time after she banished them to the moon), and holding such an office in the government was open to anypony who was a citizen of Equestria. They held the power to counterbalance Celestia's authority as well as bring forth issues and possible legislation to her. She could approve the law or disapprove, and then the Representatives would either try to override her vote or drop it. The former option of the two rarely happened, as Celestia usually only disapproved of laws that were either badly drawn up from the start or simply went against the basic foundations of Equestria. That isn't to say she had never been overridden before. The law allowing unrestrained rock farming seemed a bit extreme for the environment as well as the farmers themselves, but she was happy to see ponies making their own decisions nonetheless.

Aside from that, there were several levels of court in Equestria, from local town halls up to Celestia herself. In the one thousand years as sole

Princess of Equestria, she had only ruled as a judge of a courtroom around ten to twelve times. Most were issues of national level interest, such as border disputes or trade between major cities.

Yes, both Nightmare and Luna were happy with their sister. She had become more patient and benevolent with the ponies, just like they had both remembered her to be ages ago before Equestria was founded.

*“Look, Luna, the stars!”*

Nightmare gazed up to see the four “stars” now only several hundred yards away from the moon. It was currently night in Equestria. If the Elements of Harmony had been correct in their predictions that they told the two through dreams, Nightmare and Luna would be able to leave the moon on the eve of the longest day after the one thousandth year had come.

Today was that day...or night, rather.

What could they expect from their sister when they finally returned? From what the duo knew, she had nothing but love for them, and more often than not her messages to them were of how deeply she wanted to see them again.

Another hour had passed, and the four glowing orbs of light were now touching down on the surface of the moon. Nightmare Moon felt energy that had long been drained from her return, and strength she had long forgotten that she possessed could be felt in her body. She looked around to see herself once again in her lithe, ebony colored form.

“It looks like I’m still in control of us right now, Luna.” Nightmare stated as she stretched her wings.

*“That’s fine, Luna. We both know what to do to awaken the Elements of Harmony from their slumber. I’ll be with you every step of the way.”*

Her past-self’s words gave Nightmare the assurance she needed to begin the task at hand. The moon began to glow brightly, and the final restraints on Nightmare and Luna’s magic vanished. Closing her eyes, Nightmare focused on the life force of her sister. Warmth, kindness, and patience. All these things could be felt by Nightmare, and for the briefest of



moments she basked in the wonderful feeling she was receiving from her sister's power.

“Celly...I’m coming home.” Nightmare and Luna said in tandem. Then, with a flicker of magic, they vanished, making their way towards a small town not too far from the capital of Equestria.

A small town known as Ponyville.

# Chapter 5

## A Place in the Sun

*“Time and tide wait for no pony. Even with ponies such as myself this still holds true. I may have raised the Sun and moon for a whole millennium, but this didn’t change the fact that I could not shorten the sentence of my sister’s imprisonment. Being an alicorn doesn’t mean the laws of the world don’t apply to you. In the end, I had to pay my dues for the actions I made.”*

- from a recovered document recording Princess Celestia’s personal thoughts found after the Canterlot fire of 3302 E.B. (year of documentation unknown)

3979 E.B.

*Outside of Ponyville City Hall*

Nightmare Moon opened her eyes and viewed her surroundings. Ponyville...yes, this was apparently the place she was supposed to be. The Elements had directed her to this spot, stating that Celestia would be here.

It was close to five in the morning, and Celestia would be raising up the sun soon. The streets of the quaint little town were empty, but she could see lights coming from the inside of the center building where the event known as the “Summer Sun Celebration” was to take place.

“Summer Sun Celebration...” Nightmare smiled. “I guess she took my advice on the solstices after all...”

Enveloping herself in shadows, she flew in through the back window of the city hall where Celestia’s life force was felt. Drifting into the room, she halted in place before reforming into her equine body.

She took in the sight of her sister, who stood at the far end of the room. Yes, Luna and her had seen the briefest of brief glimpses into the pony world, but not once had they gotten a clear image of Celestia's appearance. They had been able to feel the slight changes in her spirit through the ages while they were in the moon, but nothing more.

The once pure pink mane was now a soft rainbow of green, blue, pink. It seemed that using the powers of the night had affected her slightly, though she wasn't certain on what caused the change in her mane. She still had the same lustrous white coat that she had when they had last seen her, and she still carried herself with an air of dignity.

There was something else that was different though. She had a welcoming aura about her. Not just towards her, but it was an aura that seemed to be accepting of all life around her. It was almost overwhelming for Nightmare Moon.

Yes, Celestia had changed a great deal.

The white alicorn sensed the new presence in the room and slowly turned. Her eyes lit up for the briefest of moments with joy. "Luna..."

It took every bit of willpower for Nightmare (and Luna) to not run straight into their elder sister's embrace. Instead, Nightmare forced down the happiness and scowled. "Celestia...you've changed I see."

Celestia's elation vanished and she gave a nod, sensing the tone of voice. "Indeed I have. The same can be said for Equestria as a whole. I...trust you are aware of these changes?"

"Hmmp. Yes, you've become a ghost of your former self and let these ponies run their affairs, just like I had suggested foolishly so many-"

The white alicorn made her way towards Nightmare. "It *wasn't* foolish, Luna. No, it was far from that, in fact. Luna, please-"

"My name is *Nightmare Moon*, you foal!" Nightmare growled out as she took a step back while Celestia approached.

The elder sister stopped in mid-stride and frowned sadly upon seeing her sister's tense posture. "...Nightmare Moon...please don't fear me. I know what I did was less than kind, but...I was scared for myself, and...for you. I regret doing what I did, and every night when I looked up to your beautiful moon I-"

"Enough of your pointless rambling, Celestia." Nightmare cut her off, forcing the grim look to remain on her face as her sister bowed her head in shame. "You know why I am here, and this time you cannot stop me! I sensed the change in the land's magic, and the Elements are no longer active. The only thing standing in my way is gone!"

Celestia bit her lip and spoke, barely above a whisper this time. "Nightmare Mo- I mean...*Luna*...please, understand that despite our past, I forgive you. I love you, and I only wish for us to be-"

Nightmare grit her teeth as Luna and her own emotions began to overwhelm her mind. She turned her head away and shouted, her voice nearly breaking. "S-silence! I won't fall for petty words and apologies, sister! I severed my ties with you long ago!"

"That's not true, Nightmare Moon. I can feel it within you..."

Nightmare Moon flinched as she felt a warmth trying to reach her heart. She blocked off her sister's telepathic connection and raised up her defenses.

Celestia gasped and took a step back, surprised by Nightmare's quick defense. "Luna, I know you're still there...please, let me back into your heart!" The proud princess's own voice began to crack. "I-I'm sorry! Let me help you! I *want* to help, just please let me-"

"*Luna...*"

Nightmare gave a mental nod to her past-self and blinked away a few stray tears before turning to face Celestia once more. "Celestia, for

imprisoning me for a whole millennium, I shall return the favor. Yes...I shall do the same as you did to me, but your prison shall be your *own* creation!"

Celestia's head drooped as she shed a few tears. "I will not fight against you, then."

Nightmare frowned, a bit surprised by her sister's submissive behavior. "So be it. If you wish to surrender to my will so easily, then that will only make my goals all the more easy to accomplish." Nightmare's eyes glowed. "Now, be gone, Celestia!"

The dark blue mist of Nightmare's starry mane whirled around Celestia several times before swallowing her up. Before vanishing, Celestia cast her gaze up towards the ebony pony and smiled sadly. "I won't be gone long, Luna. Wait for me..."

The whirlwind of starlight vanished, having done its job in sending her to the Sun. She would be unharmed, of course, being a being of both pony and celestial origin. Her first task complete, Nightmare looked to the entrance where she could hear the ponies cheering as the name of her sister was spoken.

"Well...let's go, Luna."

Celestia found herself on—or perhaps in, she wasn't sure—the Sun. Her eyes adjusted quickly to the intense light as she stretched out her senses as far as they could go. She looked to see Equestria, as well as the rest of the planet, shrouded in a dark haze several millions of kilocantors away.

"Oh, Luna..." Celestia sighed while her worries began to surface. The planet wouldn't be able to endure an endless night for long. A day or two, possibly three at best. That, however, was the reason why she had placed all her faith into her student, Twilight Sparkle.

The young unicorn, ever the scholar, had dug up the old book that had spoken of the 'myth' of the Mare in the Moon. Celestia had placed it in

one of the libraries Twilight frequented in the hopes she would find it, and low and behold she had done just that. Not too long after that, Twilight had sent her a letter via Spike, her baby dragon assistant, warning her of the danger approaching Equestria.

Celestia had of course made it sound like Twilight was overreacting and told her to oversee the festivity preparations for this year's Summer Sun Celebration in Ponyville, and encouraged her to make friends. This suggestion was made partly because Celestia honestly believed Twilight could stand to get out and socialize more, and also because the fate of the kingdom, as well as the rest of the world, depended on it.

Despite all the preparations Celestia had made, she honestly hoped things wouldn't end with her sister doing such a thing like creating endless night. She had prepared for it, but wanted to end such an event before it happened. The Elements of Harmony may be inactive for now, but the white alicorn knew one sure-fire way to reawaken them and use them to bring Luna back.

If the visions she had received were correct, Twilight Sparkle held within her the spirit of Magic, one of the six Elements. Twilight would naturally run into the other five holders, who just happened to be in Ponyville.

It amazed her how well things would play out from time to time.

With the spirits of the Elements together, they would create a spark and activate the Elements once more. Luna would be brought back and she could once again be with her dear sister.

There was one oddity that didn't add up with Celestia, though.

Celestia had gone through some of Luna's books during the first century of her absence, and stumbled upon a book that spoke on the 'Armor of the Night'. Curious as to whether she could summon it, and perhaps remove it from Nightmare Moon and weaken her, she studied the spell. After several attempts, she managed to call forth the enchanted

armor, and was surprised by two things. First of all, the armor had no malignant feel to it. No, far from it, in fact. It was a magical power that exuded feelings of calm. Not at all like Nightmare Moon. She stored away the armor in a vault within Canterlot Castle's deepest depths shortly after calling it forth. Secondly, during her following connection with Luna, she still managed to feel the armor's presence. Celestia had quickly went to investigate this, and found the Armor of the Night to be exactly where she had left it.

It didn't add up. How could the armor be in two places at once?

She had the inkling that there was more to Nightmare Moon than the dark coated mare was letting on. Nightmare Moon...or rather, Luna, had a spark of jealousy in her, and that was understandable. Celestia had always been the center of Equestria's attention, while her younger sister had been in the background, respected by ponies, but not always acknowledged. Perhaps if Celestia had given her more attention, or tried to make her sister more known to the populace...

She let out a breath she didn't know she had been holding, and looked off to the far distance of space where her sister and the rest of Equestria currently was.

*"Twilight Sparkle...I'm counting on you. Please, bring my sister back. Please do this one favor for this old foolish mare..."*

"Seize her, only she knows where the Princess is!"

The Pegasus guards bravely lifted off the ground and flew towards Nightmare Moon. She focused her powers and made sure to dampen the spell to a fraction of it potency. "Stand back, you foals!"

Lightning surged forth from the maelstrom of magic surrounding and knocked the pegasi guards out of the air. She laughed before melting into vapor and rushing past the other ponies and out the door. She could hear the faint cries of a rather upstart cyan pegasus with the most colorful of manes, but paid her no mind...for now, anyway.

So far, so good. She had made a rather loud and attention-drawing return, ponies were in a mild panic, and she had played her part as a villain perfectly.

“Now I just need to see to it that the holders of the Elements get their hooves moving before the night stars affecting the land...” She thought aloud as she landed on a clearing outside of Ponyville. She took a deep breath and exhaled while rolling her neck. A few loud cracks could be heard as she loosened her stiff body.

The sound of hoofbeats on dirt caught her attention, and she quickly vanished into the shadows of a nearby tree. A purple unicorn with an equally purple baby dragon on her back rushed towards a hollowed out tree. The light flickered on in a window of the tree and she could hear the young mare say a few comforting words to the dragonling before putting him to bed. No sooner did the unicorn leave the room before trotting down the steps and begin looking through the various books that lined the lower floor of the tree.

*“Well...looks like Celly went with the idea of public access to literature, too...”* spoke Luna. Nightmare listened as the frantic unicorn was suddenly bombarded with an impromptu interrogation from the same cyan pegasus that had tried chasing after her.

“...just what *are* the Elements of Harmony? And how did *you* know about Nightmare Moon, huh? Are you a *spy*?”

Nightmare chuckled to herself, amused by the pegasus mare’s brash behavior. “Foals these days...”

Soon enough the library’s lower floor had filled up as four other ponies walked in, inquiring on the situation with Nightmare Moon and the ‘Elements of Harmony’. She was quite surprised with how well-informed this Twilight Sparkle was on the whole ordeal.

Eventually she heard Twilight mention about the last known location of the Elements. The ‘Ancient Castle of the Royal Pony Sisters’. Nightmare



Moon wasted no time, and flew off in a hazy mist towards the Everfree Forest.

“On to phase two, I guess...”

About an hour or two had passed since Nightmare had begun her ‘trials’ on the young ponies. As far as she understood, the Elements already knew who their carriers were, but the young mares themselves had to discover their powers. Especially whichever one among them that held Magic. That was the most essential element for the time being. So, she had placed the ponies in situations to test their meddle (all the while ready to intervene in some way, shape, or form if they actually got seriously injured). The manticore had been a risky decision in hindsight. She had decided to use a thorn to implant a little magical control over the beast. What normally would have been a dangerous animal for the ponies to handle had confronted them with less than lethal force. Yes, it had knocked the one known as ‘Rainbow Dash’ pretty hard, but she was relieved to see that the young pegasus had been for the most part unharmed. What truly surprised her though was how well the quiet pegasus mare had calmed the raging beast after she removed the thorn. The manticore had gone from dangerous creature to purring mess of fur and affection in seconds.

She was definitely the Element of Kindness.

After watching the actions of Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, and Rarity, she was pretty sure she knew where the six stood in terms of what Elements they held. Only one test remained...and she was almost certain on which pony would take on the test.

After untying one of the ropes that held up a bridge, she waited. Sure enough, Rainbow Dash was the one to grab hold of the rope and begin tying it to the rocks once more.

“Rainbow...”

“Huh? Who’s there?”

“Raiiinbow...”

“*Honestly, Luna, you’re having too much fun with this.*” Luna sighed while Nightmare chuckled to herself.

“I ain’t scared of you! Show yourself!” the young mare got on her hind legs and began to punch at the air with her hooves. It was almost adorable, the bravery of the younger pony.

“We’ve been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the best flier in Equestria.”

“Who?”

“Why you, of course!” Nightmare replied to the pegasus, her body shrouded by the natural fog of the forest. Nightmare quickly molded three bodies of vapor from her mane and created illusions of pegasi, borrowing the images of the ‘Wonderbolts’ from the mind of Rainbow Dash. She normally couldn’t access the mind of a pony so easily, but with the mare distracted by her voice, Nightmare was able to get an idea of who these ‘Wonderbolts’ were.

“Really? I mean, oh yeah, me! Hey, uh, you wouldn’t mind telling the Wonderbolts that, would you? Because I have been trying to get into that group for, like, ever!”

“*Here goes nothing...*” Nightmare thought as she sent her “pegasi” forward through the fog. “No, Rainbow Dash. We want you to join us...the Shadowbolts!”

“...”

“*What?*”

Nightmare heard Luna sigh. “*Shadowbolts, Luna? That’s almost as bad as your ‘Nightmare Moon’ alias.*”

Nightmare ignored the verbal jab for now. “We’re the greatest aerial team in the Everfree Forest, and soon we will be the greatest in all of Equestria!”

Rainbow was obviously entranced by the pegasi and their uniforms. They were a bit...menacing, yes, but Nightmare Moon was never one to shirk on looks. The three had sleek bodies, flight suits of a dark purple, and yellow-tinted goggles.

She tempted Rainbow with promises of fame and glory, but told her there was no time to help her friends with the bridge. Just like she had hoped, though, Rainbow declined the offer and chose her friends over the flight team.

*"Well, that's loyalty if I ever saw it."* Luna thought to herself, and Nightmare couldn't agree more. As soon as the pegasus made her way back to the others, the illusions melted back to their starlit clouds and slithered towards Nightmare Moon before joining her mane once more. "I just hope they're ready for the last test..."

Nightmare stood on the decrepit platform that had once been the royal throne room that Celestia and her past-self had used to speak to their subjects ages ago. She had been given quite a scare when the Elements had not reacted to Twilight's magic at first. Thankfully though, after a tense moments they began to crackle with power. They had awakened, but were not fully activated yet. They needed one final touch.

The spark.

Nightmare gave a mental sigh of relief before continuing with her charade. The rest was simply a show to put on now. She raised her front hooves and smashed them onto the stone floor, which in turn cracked the spheres which held the sleeping Elements within them. It was time to finish what she and Luna had started one thousand years ago. She continued with the 'evil pony' act, ridiculing Twilight for thinking she could possibly stop her and bring back Celestia and the Sun.

Twilight Sparkle watched in shock as the crystalline shards that held the magic of the Elements fell to the floor. While they seemed to be destroyed, in truth, they had been freed from their stone casing. Now she merely had to wait until-

“Twilight, don’t worry, we’re coming!”

“Twilight!!! Hurry, she’s this way!!”

Nightmare looked up. *“Wonderful, just as I had hoped.”*

Twilight turned towards the staircase behind her where the echoes of her friends could be heard. Her eyes widened with a mixture of surprise, relief, and...dare she say it, hope?

The young unicorn turned back to Nightmare Moon and smiled confidently. Nightmare and Luna both felt a sudden power surging from the crystals at her feet.

*“That’s it, she’s put it together! She understands their power!”* Luna spoke while Nightmare Moon kept the grimace on lips. Twilight had found the spark.

The Magic of friendship.

“You think you can destroy the Elements of Harmony, just like that?” Twilight inquired while pointing to the shards. “Well you’re wrong! Because the Spirits of Harmony are right *here!*!”

Twilight’s friends all stood beside her, none of them looking the least bit scared anymore.

The crystals began to glow while Nightmare took a step back. Twilight began to explain how each of her friends carried the power of their respective Element.

“You still don’t have the Sixth Element! The spark didn’t work!” Nightmare spoke, more to coax the unicorn into continuing than anything else. She could already feel another presence building up within the stone walls that had not been noticed earlier.

“But it *did!* A different kind of spark!” Twilight turned to her friends while tears welled up in her eyes. “I felt it the very moment I realized how

happy I was to hear you, to see, how much I cared about you. The spark ignited inside me when I realized you all are my friends!"

A bright orb of light appeared above the heads of the young mares while Nightmare felt a powerful wave wash over her. Her eyes widened a little as the echoing voice of the Element of Magic within her mind began to blend with Twilight's own. *"You see, Nightmare Moon, when those elements-"*

The Elements...the voices of the Elements...

*"-are ignited by the...the spark that resides in the hearts of us all, it creates the Sixth Element...the Element of Magic!!!"*

The young mares before her soon were wearing necklaces of sorts decorated with an image of their respective Cutie Mark. The Elements had changed and taken new forms fitting of their new holders.

*"Luna..."*

Nightmare felt a powerful, yet comforting force building within her. *"Elements...is that...?"*

The voice of Magic that sounded so much like Twilight's replied. *"Yes, Luna...or rather...Nightmare Moon and Luna, we should say..."* There was a pause, and Magic's voice was soon accompanied by the other five voices, all which sounded like their holders. *"We have communed once more with the essences of Harmony that reside in your soul. We thank you for reawakening us, and helping bring peace to the heart of Celestia."*

*"Of course, anything to bring Equestria peace and a bright future."* answered Luna.

*"There is one thing that we noticed, though. Something within the two of you is darkening your own hearts, however slight it is. Nightmare, guilt and a sense of self-loathing, however faint, resides within you."*

*"That isn't..."* Nightmare looked down, her thoughts turning towards her own time.

Celestia, fighting her and using the Elements to *kill* her...the damage she had done, the lives she had endangered. Why didn't she try to do something else? Celestia could still be alive, and she-

*"Luna, I told you before...you did what you had to..."* spoke the younger midnight alicorn within her.

Nightmare said nothing as her eyes began to glisten. Time seemed to have slowed down, just like it had when she had used the Elements of Harmony against her sister.

*"Luna...you two hold a shadow over your heart. While you truly love your sister, you also envy her. You wish to be acknowledged like she is, and want your work on the night to be appreciated. Jealousy plagues you, though you've tried so hard to hide it from her and those around you."*

Luna had no retort for that statement, just silence as a sense of sadness welled up in her.

*"It seems that while you both hold the aspects of us within you, and hold true to them for the most part, you lack one thing of great importance in maintaining Harmony..."*

*"What would that be?"* inquired Nightmare.

Time began to return to normal as the Elements echoed in her mind. *"The ability to trust others with being able to help you. So, Nightmare...Luna...open up your hearts to us. Let us mend your pain."*

Nightmare bowed her head. "I don't believe I deserve that..."

*"Nightmare Moon...your anguish and regret over your actions in the past are evidence enough of the good within you. You do deserve it."*

The ebony pony closed her eyes as tears flooded her vision. "... She choked as she felt her mind as well as Luna's become overwhelmed by

comforting thoughts and warmth. The Elements of Harmony's true powers became known to her at that very moment.

Nightmare's eyes widened suddenly before she smiled and nodded.

"Thank you...Elements..."

Time was finally back to normal as a bright light erupted from a jeweled tiara resting on Twilight's head which held the Element of Magic. Before she knew what was happening, a streak of multiple colors encircled her.

Luna felt a tugging on her very being while the life-force of Nightmare began to fade. Her elation and warmth dissipated suddenly. *"L-Luna? Nightmare Moon?! Luna, what-?"*

*"It's alright, Luna."*

Luna suddenly became aware of her increased sense of touch and smell. What was once images she was seeing through Nightmare were now through her own eyes. Meanwhile, Nightmare's own presence was now almost nonexistent.

"Luna! Oh no, what's happening?!"

*"Luna, I said it's alright...I'm still here."*

Luna did not seem convinced. "Luna, are you alright?"

Her reply was small chuckle. *"Yes. I've never been better."* There was several moments of silence, and Luna was about to speak again before the ebony pony's voice continued. *"Luna...I'm afraid this is the last time we'll speak to one another."*

"What? W-why??" Tears were now blurring her vision.

*"I...well, I guess the easiest way to put it is that I no longer exist. The Armor of the Night is still resting safely within Canterlot, Celestia's back to how she had been ages ago, and the Elements are now in the hooves of*

*six reliable ponies. My future is not only a thing of the past here, but something that never occurred."*

"No!!! You can't leave! It's...it's not fair, after all you've done for Equestria and me!"

*"I'm fine with that."*

Luna was sniffing now, not caring who saw her. "B-but...I don't *want* you to leave!" She let out a quiet sob before shouting. "I know it's selfish, but you're my most precious friend! I don't want to lose you! You still need to live and help look over Equestria, and raise the moon with me, and talk with Celly, and celebrate all the different festivals, and...a-and..." She collapsed to the ground, her eyes closed as tears ran freely. "You never got to have the life you wanted!"

*"Luna...a part of me will reside within the Elements of Harmony, your timeline's Armor of the Night, within you, Celly, and the night sky you weave."*

Luna felt a featherlight touch against her cheek. She opened her eyes to see an ethereal figure before her. Their entire body shimmered like the night sky, and their eyes glowed like the moon itself.

"Luna..."

The glowing pony nuzzled her cheek one last time before touching her horn to the smaller alicorn's. *"I have one last request. Give this to Celly for me."*

Luna nodded slowly as her horn glowed. The ethereal alicorn took a step back, her work complete, and gave a final nod to her past-self.

*"Goodbye, Luna, and thank you so much for being with me all this time...for being a true friend."*

With that, Nightmare Moon vanished in a sudden flash of white. Luna's eyes felt heavy as she closed them, her mind becoming weary from



the events she had been through. Soon she was slipping into unconsciousness.

“Princess Luna...”

Luna’s eyes snapped open as an all-too-familiar voice rang in her ears. She looked up to see none other than Celestia approaching her, and for a moment Luna feared that things had gone from bad to worse with her older sister.

“It has been a thousand years since I have seen you like this...” She closed her eyes, unsure of what to expect. She *had* banished Celestia, however brief it may have been, to the Sun, after all. Anypony had the right to be angry.

She could feel Celestia lying down on the stone floor beside her. “It’s time to put our differences behind us. We were meant to rule *together*, little sister.”

The sincerity behind her words struck Luna to the core. There was no anger in her words, no bitterness at all. All she could feel was sadness, joy, and hope in the elder princess’s words.

“Will you accept my friendship?”

Luna trembled. Should she? Could she trust Celestia? She had changed, she could feel it. The elder alicorn’s feelings were almost too much, but Luna felt the longing behind Celestia’s question.

*“Please, Luna...”*

Luna opened her eyes as she heard Celestia commune to her via telepathy.

*“Celly...do you really mean it? Do you...really want to start over?”*

Warmth filled Luna’s heart as Celestia’s gaze meet hers. *“I mean it with every fiber of my being, Luna.”*

Luna looked down to the stone floor. She had tricked Celestia in more ways than one, though in the end she supposed it had been for the best. A gnawing guilt in her chest told her that she would have to come clean about some things with her sister, but for now...

"I'm so sorry!" Luna jumped to her feet and was beside Celestia a second later, tears streaking her eyes. Nightmare...no, Luna would have wanted this. "I-I've missed you so much, big sister!"

Luna could faintly hear the words of Celestia saying she felt the same. Luna was just glad to be back, to have her sister, and to rule over a peaceful kingdom.

*"Luna...I'll never forget what you've done for me...for all of us..."* the midnight alicorn thought to herself. *"From this day forth, I'll live for the both of us."*

Luna has been shocked when a party of all things was held in honor of her return. Pinkie Pie, the Spirit of Laughter, had deemed the return of the younger royal pony sister a worthy reason, and Luna was never one to turn down such things. It was amazing how quickly the ponies had forgiven her. It wasn't a half-hearted forgiveness either, but honest, genuine forgiveness.

*"Sister...just how much have you changed Equestria since I was gone?"* Luna inquired telepathically as she gazed up at Celestia while wearing a wreath of roses with the thorns removed.

*"I don't even know where to begin with a question like that, dear sister. Just know that it was because of the things you told me all those years ago that places like Ponyville exist."* Celestia answered while smiling gently. She turned towards a certain lavender unicorn who looked a bit down, and chuckled. "Luna, excuse me for a moment. A certain student of mine seems to be bothered by something. I think I know what that thing may be, too."

Luna nodded while watching Celestia go and comfort Twilight Sparkle, and about a minute later she had decreed that Twilight Sparkle was to remain in her new home in Ponyville and 'report to Celestia of her findings on the magic of friendship'. Luna nearly rolled her eyes, but found herself beaming as she watched Twilight and the other Spirits of Harmony cheer happily.

Several minutes later Celestia returned to Luna's side, and raised an eyebrow at the amused smile on her younger sister's lips. "What?"

"That was *quite* a royal decree there, Princess. It's such an immense and taxing duty to be handled by only one pony, don't you think?"

Celestia smiled. "I'm not the same princess that I used to be, Luna. I've taken a more...relaxed role, if you would. I'm more of a teacher and guide for the ponies of Equestria. You know that, don't you? I have expressed that much during our brief connections throughout the ages."

The Princess of the Night gave a nod. "Yes, and I have to say I'm quite surprised by how much things have changed..."

"Things changed for the better, I believe." Celestia added. "Ponies are better off on the whole. Like I said, the amount of changes I've made in your absence are so great I don't know where to begin...though, I had a little inspiration from a certain pony's journal."

Luna blushed. "I...well, *you're* the one who actually did things. I only put them down on paper-"

A wing gently brushed against Luna's bangs. "Don't short yourself, Luna. Your visions of how the kingdom could run, how ponies could live for themselves and each other, and the freedom they deserve were all wonderful. I've applied those visions to our world as best as I could, and as I said, I think it was for the best."

"I guess I'll have to take your word for it." Luna agreed with a smile.

Later that evening when the two had returned to Canterlot, Luna approached Celestia, who had just finished setting the Sun and raising the moon. “Yes, Luna?”

Luna said nothing, but simply approached her sister and touched her horn to the white alicorn’s before summoning the magic that Nightmare had implanted in her mind. Celestia’s eyes contracted before she closed her eyes and suddenly fell asleep. Luna normally would have panicked, but she knew that it was only a part of the spell. It wasn’t uncommon for a mental recordings via magic to cause a pony to suddenly slip into unconsciousness. It was a common side-effect of sorts.

She just hoped Celestia wouldn’t be too upset when she awoke...

Celestia found herself in a mist-filled void. She looked around, unsure of how she got here. Luna had touched her horn to her own, and then she blacked out, only to awaken...

“Luna...” Celestia whispered. Had she cast some sort of spell on her? Oh no, was Luna still upset about the past? She had to find a way out so she could talk to her and-

“Celestia...”

The white alicorn froze as she heard a voice that sent a shiver down her spine. She looked over her shoulder to see a dark alicorn, decked in a blue armor while a crescent moon Cutie Mark could be seen on either side of her.

“Nightmare Moon??” Celestia took a step back, horn glowing. “I thought the Elements purified you! Are you still inside Luna? I won’t allow you to take control of her again!” She lowered her head while assuming a defensive stance. “Leave her now!!”

Nightmare was taken aback by Celestia’s sudden change in demeanor. She was no longer the graceful, serene alicorn, but a protective and powerful sister who was ready to fight for Luna’s safety.

"I'm glad to see the year's have been kind to you, Celly. I'm afraid Luna and I have been keeping some things secret from you, though."

Celestia's gaze narrowed slightly. "What do you mean?"

Sighing, the ebony pony met Celestia's gaze. "Luna and I...well...I'm not all that I appear to be, Celestia."

"What...what do you mean?" Celestia asked suspiciously.

Nightmare gave no verbal reply, and lifted her horn up while a light mist shrouded her body. She shrank in size until she stood a foot or so shorter than her elder sister.

"Wow, it's been ages since I've been like this..." Nightmare, or rather, Luna commented as she looked at her smaller body. Turning to face Celestia fully, she spoke. "This is my true form, Celly. I am Nightmare Moon, and Luna. We are one in the same, and different at the same time."

"I know that, you explained it to me already. You and her were connected to each other because of the Armor of the Night."

Luna shook her head. "No...that's...not what I mean. I am Luna, but I am not from your time. I am a Luna who came from a different timeline 900 years in the past."

Images flashed through Celestia's eyes. She watched as fires razed countrysides while dragons and ponies fought one another. A sudden blast of light penetrated the smoke before all the mighty reptiles were reduced to ashes, along with several of the nearby ponies who were unfortunate enough to get caught in the solar blast.

She watched as a pony resembling her when she was much younger stood atop of her old throne, pink mane glowing in the afternoon Sun. She glanced down at a much younger Luna, displeasure clearly on her. She couldn't make out all the words, but she knew that Luna and her younger self had disagreed on something, and harsh words were being exchanged.

A transformed Luna calling forth the Elements of Harmony's after Celestia's younger self had awakened them. Luna had been forced to kill her younger, power-hungry self or face the possible destruction of Equestria. The Elements of Harmony infused a portion of themselves into Luna's very soul. All of these images, among others, flashed before her in a matter of seconds.

Celestia's eyes refocused before she looked to the Luna before her. Those images...no...those weren't images. Those were memories. They were much too detailed to be something she had thought up on the spot.

"Luna...how...?"

"I somehow slipped into a rift between my time and your own...or perhaps me trying to control the Sun after suddenly killing my sister and using the Elements created a magical influx and sent me into the past. I don't know what happened to my time, but I know that I will never be able to return to it."

The white alicorn bowed her head and shook it slowly. "Luna, I don't...why...?"

"Why did I do all this?" Luna asked, finishing the Princess of the Sun's thought. "I thought about that, but then I noticed that you were behaving similarly to *my* time's sister. I could have made things worse by appearing before you without help from Luna."

"Still, you could have avoided banishing Luna and yourself to the moon! I would have listened to you!"

"Are you sure about that? Think back to how you were about a millennium ago. Would you have trusted the words an alicorn that claimed to be from the future and wished for you to step down from your throne?"

Celestia opened her mouth before closing it. She hung her head and closed her eyes. "No...I wouldn't have."

The smaller alicorn slowly approached Celestia, smiling ever so slightly she drew nearer. "Celestia, I don't have much time left, so I will have to make this brief." She drew in a breath and sighed. "While you may be a princess, you aren't alone in the world. You don't have to throw the burdens of running a kingdom on your shoulders alone. Luna wishes to help, as well as the rest of the ponies in Equestria. You've done so much good for the kingdom, and I know now that you are the epitome of what a monarch should be."

"How can you say that, after all that has happened to you, much of done by my own hooves?"

Luna just laughed. "I've been through darker times than this, Celly. I'm content in leaving this world in the capable hooves of you and Luna...and the rest of the ponies."

"What about *you*, though?"

Luna just smiled serenely before returning to her armored form, slitted eyes gazing serenely into her sister's own. "The Elements are calling to me, sister. While I am still Luna, I am from another time...another world that doesn't exist here."

Those words sparked worry in the ancient pony sister. "W-wait, you don't mean-?"

"I'm so sorry, Celly. I honestly wish I could have spent more time with you."

"Luna, but that..." Celestia felt warm tears flooding her eyes as she approached the pony. She wrapped her wings around the midnight mare and began to cry. "This...you shouldn't have to leave us like this!" She nuzzled the alicorn, wishing to stop the ancient magic from taking her sister from an alternate time away from her. "Y-you deserve better than this!!"

Celestia stared into the deep, teal eyes of Luna. While the Luna she had known carried a sense of wisdom with her age, there was always a hint

of mischief and youth in her eyes as well. This Luna, however, was very different. Her eyes held years of weariness within them, and reflected all the pain and hardships she had dealt with. There was still a glimmer of joy and laughter in them, but it was a mere ghost of the eyes Celestia was more familiar with.

The Princess of the Sun drew her sister close again, sobbing more. "I-I wish I could stop this, a-and make up for what my past-self has done to you." She held the younger alicorn tighter. "Please don't go, Luna. Y-you can stay, Luna and I will explain things to Equestria, and then you can help rule with-"

A gentle hoof touched Celestia's lips. "Celestia, my dear sister, I can't stay here. You and I are both aware of that."

This only caused the white alicorn to shed more tears. "I...I don't want to lose you again, Luna."

"You wont. A *part* of me will continue to live on, in some way, within Luna, Twilight Sparkle, Applejack, Rarity, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, Rainbow Dash..." she placed a hoof over Celestia's chest, right above her heart. "...and you." Her eyes softened while she smiled peacefully. "So, if you still wish to show me the love you *seem* to believe I never had from you, then you need only turn to the ponies you already have in your life. I will live on in them, in the Elements of Harmony, and in Equestria itself."

Celestia felt like a little foal with the way Luna was speaking so calmly to her. It was much like a mother speaking to a child. "Okay..."

With those final words, Luna faded away. Before completely vanishing within the void of misty white, she gently nuzzled Celestia. The Princess of the Sun was then standing alone in the white void, and bowed her head and let out several more cries before the world around her dissolved.

Celestia opened her eyes, only to be met with the concerned face of her younger sister once more. She moved forward without thinking,



wrapping her front legs around Luna while crying again for what seemed like the hundredth time that evening. "Luna! Oh, Luna, I..." She could feel her younger sister returning her embrace while shaking a little as well. "She told me everything, and..." She choked back a shuddering breath. "...she's gone now...and I just...I..."

Luna nodded slowly. "I know. She talked to me briefly as well after the Elements separated us."

"I wish she had told me, but...if it hadn't been for you and her, the Elements would never have helped me all those years ago."

"I think that deep down, she knew she was on borrowed time, Celly." Luna sighed. "She was so strong though, and...I don't think we'd be where we are now without her."

The elder nodded silently while continuing to hold her younger sister in her hooves. It must have been close to an hour before they finally broke their embrace, Luna stating she was feeling tired from today's events. The two sisters made their way to Celestia's bedchambers (Luna's room was still being furnished), and were soon both under the silky sheets of the extra large bed.

"Celly?"

"Yes, Luna?"

"Do you think that...that we'll ever see her again?"

Celestia rolled her head to the side to face her sister, whose green eyes gave the faintest glow. No doubt she could see Celestia's face clearly with her night-vision. "So as long as you and I are together, and so as long as Twilight Sparkle and her friends carry the Elements in their hearts, yes, we will. Every time we greet one another, smile to one another, and comfort one another in our time of need, she will be there."

Luna raised an eyebrow before grinning a little. "Celly, you're sounding like some kind of ancient guru pony with the way you say stuff like that."

Celestia blushed a bit before laughing. "Well, I will have you know that I am still in the prime of my youth right now, young filly."

"Filly?" Luna laughed. "I'd rather be a filly than an old gray mare!"

"Oh, that does it, young lady. You'll get nothing but alfalfa to eat for the next month. I'll make it a royal decree!"

"Ewww, the not alfalfa!" Luna giggled, causing Celestia to break into another fit of laughter as well. The two spent several more hours awake, their sleepiness disappearing temporarily. It was close to sunrise by the time they decided to get some actual rest. The Princess of the Sun quickly raised the sun up from the eastern horizon before promptly joining her now sleeping sister under the covers once more.

"Luna," Celestia whispered softly, smiling as she looked at the peaceful face of her only sister and family. "I promise that I'll be there for you from here on out. I won't make the same mistakes as my other self did."

Celestia scooted a little closer and draped a wing over Luna, who in turn mumbled in her sleep before rolling closer to her elder sister's side.

Celestia closed her own eyes after that and began to doze off. Just as her mind began to drift off into unconsciousness, she swore she heard a voice echo in the back of her mind. It was similar to Luna's, but...

*"I'll be there for you too, Celly. Thank you."*

It was the first truly peaceful bit of sleep she had in over one thousand years.

~~The End~~

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