I still can't believe Celestia didn't take me seriously! I mean, yes, making sure the Summer Sun Celebration goes perfectly is important, but the possible return of Nightmare Moon is dramatically more-so! But no, rather than having the time to do critical research that could affect all of Equestria, Spike and I are being sent to *Ponyville*. Hopefully I can finish my checklist quickly, and do research in the local library.

And now Spike is reading out the letter. Again. I turned away, focusing on the landscape, tuning his voice out. I mean, I already knew what it said by heart.

"My dear Twilight, there is more to a young pony's life than studying, so I'm sending you to supervise the preparations for the Summer Sun Celebration in this year's location: Ponyville"

And of course, the worst part.

"And, I have an even more essential task for you to complete: make some friends!"

I don't need friends. I am a student of Princess Celestia, a powerful unicorn, and *friends* aren't going to help me defeat Nightmare Moon; Research, and finding the Elements of Harmony will.

That was when I felt something, power building up in my horn. I wasn't channeling a spell either. A massive flash of light, slamming my eyes closed, and a stab of pain. And then... then I couldn't move... My body just locked up.

I was still breathing, but aside from that, nothing worked. I couldn't open my eyes, move my legs, or tail (though it was still waving in the wind) and trying magic didn't help either. Was I paralyzed, attacked? I tried to say something, but nothing came out. I had to get help. Paralysis was not a minor ailment. I was pretty sure that *General Medicine's General Medical Knowledge* said that while it could be treated if a pony got to a hospital quickly, long-term it could cause permanent damage! Still, I would probably fall over any second now, Spike and the guards would notice, and....

And then my eyes opened, blinked, and my head turned back to the front of the carriage. Without me doing so. I.... What? How? I was under attack! Somepony had hit me with some kind of spell. I hadn't done much research on dark magic, but this was obvious some kind of mind control. I tried to cast a general dispel, but it didn't work. My horn didn't respond.

Spike was still reading the letter. The royal guards were still flying. They hadn't noticed anything wrong. That wasn't good. Somepony had just seized control of my body, disabling my magic and everything else, and nopony had noticed. If Celestia was here, she would have noticed, but....

My head turned back, and my legs draped over the side of the carriage. I panicked, thinking I was going to fall, but my head just lay down and sighed. Then I/they stopped, looking at my forelegs. And hooves. And then turned around, looking at my side, and mane, and barrel, and Cutie Mark. You never notice how much your eyes move when just looking around until they just start doing that without you controlling them. I just stared at my Cutie Mark for a few seconds, before turning back and having my head just dropped onto the railing. Ow....

This was really not good. They had fine control, meaning there wouldn't be any obvious tells, unless they got my behavior wrong, and again, I couldn't do anything.

I looked at Spike. He was finishing up the letter. "Make some Friends!" He grinned at me, obviously excited that Celestia wanted me to socialize more, but this really, really wasn't the time.

"Uh... I guess I'd better get started on that." My voice said, sounding rather uncertain. It felt as weird as the rest, and just felt wrong. I wasn't speaking, but my mouth and tongue and teeth moved to make the words anyway.

Unfortunately, Spike was happy with the response. "That's the spirit, Twilight!" I just stared blankly at him, or rather my head and eyes and body and.... Well, I stared at him, but I wasn't doing it, anyway.

----

Ponyville might have be interesting normally. To study, not to visit anyway. A rural town, mostly earth ponies and pegasi, traditional, and overall not exactly unusual. But, since Celestia chose it this year, it would have deserved a close look. But right now there were bigger problems. Namely that some unicorn had seized control of my body.

My attacker had looked around quite a bit, and I hadn't seen any other chariots, a pegasi couldn't have cast spells, and a unicorn probably couldn't have kept up with the royal guards. Plus I would have almost certainly been out of sight.

Between panicking, and trying to take back control, use magic, or do anything at all, I tried to figure out what was going on and why. I was a powerful unicorn, Celestia's student, and hence an important pony. I knew this, and I knew that in the past important ponies were the targets of foalnapping, or... assassination. I hadn't heard of any case of mind control, but it was possible. I mean, Equestria was peaceful these days, so I never even considered the possibility. And mind control would be so practical too. Just have me land, wander off alone after sending Spike to do something, and I would just be carried away, or killed. Nopony would realize until tomorrow!

I was close to Princess Celestia. I was outside of Canterlot for the first time in quite some time, and the furthest away from Celestia in years. No doubt Celestia would have detected the attack, so they waited until I left. It was an ideal plan. But for which reason would they do so? Ransom? Blackmail? Just having the magic of a powerful unicorn? I really hoped they weren't going to just kill me out of sight, or worse, sacrifice me in some evil ritual. Such rituals were illegal, sure, but so was foalnapping, and doing that to Celestia's student was not something she would forgive.

Was I going to be bait for Celestia? Was... Wait, Alicorn. Nightmare Moon was an Alicorn! Alicorns could fly as well as, if not better than a pegasus, as Cadence had shown me. They could cast spells further, stronger, faster, easier than a unicorn, though that might be the unknown thousands of years Celestia has been around. It was so obvious! Nightmare Moon was already here, a day early… And she completely crippled me without me even getting a chance to fight back. And Celestia was going to be in Ponyville tomorrow morning! And she was going to be ambushed! And Celestia didn't take my letter seriously. And Nightmare Moon was already here. And she was going to use me somehow to defeat Celestia and then bring Eternal Night and and and and...

My train of thought was derailed as we landed, and Nightmare Moon puppeted my body out of the carriage. I don't think I had ever been this scared. I mean, I was scared of snakes after... well... But I hadn't been helpless since I became Celestia's student, and knowing that somepony who might well be as powerful as Celestia had taken control of my body, and was likely to use me as a hostage and/or to attack Celestia was on a whole new level of horror.

Spike was just being enthusiastic, like always, none the wiser. "Come on, Twilight! Let's get going!"

"Uh, yeah, sure. Let's go." my mouth said, and then I promptly faceplanted. <Ow, my muzzle!>

"Oh my gosh, Twilight! Are you okay?" Spike asked, clearly concerned. Maybe my thought about her having fine control was wrong? Well, Celestia had longer legs, and I remember being really clumsy when my legs started growing, so maybe it’s like having your legs shrink?

She had me stand up "Yeah!" She exclaimed "I just have jet-lag, that's all." What is ‘jet-lag’? I mean, jet is the stream of high pressure gas escaping a container through a small hole, and lagging (behind) is having trouble keeping up, soo.. Wait, does that mean having trouble with... No, jet doesn't really make sense for mind control, and there is no way anypony would make it that obvious.

Spike glanced at the crater I left (Ow, my aching muzzle) and gave me a confused expression, echoing my thought "What's jet-lag?"

My hoof waved dismissively. "Don't worry about it, it goes away after a while." Well, so much for learning the answer to that mystery...

Spike unrolled the Sun Celebration Preparation checklist. "So, we should get started on the preparations. The Summer Sun Celebration is tonight, after all."

My head tilted. "Wait, I thought I was supposed to be making friends?" Wait, What? Didn't she know what was going on?

Spike looked suspicious. That was a good sign. "Now you want to make friends? But I thought you were more worried about Nightmare Moon." <Please figure it out...>

She froze, smiling nervously "Well... yeah, I'm still worried. I mean, I like sleeping, so why would I want any nightmares around?"

That was when the *pink* mare showed up. With a fluffy pink mane, more pink everywhere else, and a Cutie Mark of three balloons. She gasped, jumped into the air, and dashed away.

Me/She and Spike glanced at each other. "I'm not that scary, am I?" She asked.

"I don't think so." Spike said, putting a claw to his lip. "Hey, what were we talking about, again?" <Oh no.>

"I can't remember, either. So, where are we supposed to go?" <Nooo. Come on Spike, you can't have forgotten already! Please, I need your help here.>

But he just glanced at the checklist. "Let's see. ‘Banquet Preparations: Sweet Apple Acres.' It's the first thing on the list, so let's go there first." She nodded at that, and started walking.

-----

She was having serious problems walking properly, falling over at least a dozen times, shouting out "JET-LAG!" each time Spike tried to help. Eventually, she slowed down and was more or less stable. I still wonder what Jet-Lag actually means...

Anyway, we got to the apple farm. It looked rather impressive, likely producing several towns’ worth of apples on its own. An earth pony mare galloped past, shouting "Yeehaw!” spun, and bucked a tree, dropping all the apples neatly into several buckets below. I had read about that, but never actually seen it...

Spike elbowed me, motioning me to speak. So she walked me up, smiled, and greeted "Hello, how are you today?"

"Mighty fine, how are ya?" she responded, with an odd accent I don't recall ever hearing before. Maybe a local accent?

"Good." I/She said, raising her hoof for a hoofshake "I'm Twilight." Then she looked down at my hoof, though I don't know why.

The mare took my hoof and shook it rather excessively. "Ahm Applejack! Welcome to Sweet Apple Acres! What can ah do for ya?"

Nightmare Moon stretched my hoof, trying to get rid of the resulting soreness. "I'm here because of that Celebration we're having. I'm just making sure that everything is good to go."

"Ah, you mean the Summer Sun Celebration! Yup, we were in charge of caterin' this year!" She grinned at the thought, though it faded somewhat. "We're all set, here! Would you like to sample some?"

"Are you sure that's a good idea? This is the food for the Celebration, after all."

Applejack waved her hoof dismissively. "Aw, don't fret. We've got plenty!"

Nightmare Nodded. "Okay, sure. I'd like to see what's going to be there, anyways."

Applejack gave me a big smile, and rang a triangle, yelling out "Soup's on, everypony!"

This resulted in a sudden stampede, revealed after my head turned towards the rumbling. I half expected to get trampled, but I ended up thrown upwards and got carried along. Spike and I got set down at a picnic table, trying to catch our breaths. Applejack spent the next minute or so introducing her family, though I only caught a few near the end. A large red stallion Big Macintosh, a young yellow filly Apple Bloom, and elderly green Granny Smith.

The whole time, each pony had placed some kind of apple-based food on the table. "Well, what are ya waitin' for? Dig in!" Added Applejack.

Nightmare glanced around, seeing everypony digging in, seeming hesitant. "Uh, Applejack? Are we really eating dessert items for lunch?"

Applejack laughed at that. "We sure as sugar are!"

My mouth seemed to grin mischievously. "I think I love you, already." That made me kind of uncomfortable.

Applejack laughed at that, and went back to eating. Nightmare started with a cupcake, oddly not using my magic to levitate it. It was actually extremely good.

"So, where're ya from?" Applejack asked.

Nightmare seemed hesitant, glancing at Spike for help, though he was busy talking to Apple Bloom. "Fillydelphia." <Wait, does she really not know?>

"Fillydelphia, ya say? Ah hear that's a nice city. What's it like?"

She started talking about it, although I was pretty sure the majority of it was inaccurate, or made up on the spot. The discussion moved to learning about Ponyville, which was probably more accurate, given it was by Applejack.

-----

We left Sweet Apple Acres after saying goodbye. I honestly felt a bit bloated from how much I was forced to eat, but it wasn't like I could have done anything about it.

Spike consulted the list again. "Okay, next is the weather. A pegasus pony named Rainbow Dash is supposed to be clearing the sky."

Nightmare glanced upwards, and I noted that either Ponyville had the worst weather management I've ever seen, or Rainbow Dash wasn't doing her job.

Then she stepped into a mud puddle. Shaking a hoof clear, Spike pointed this out. "Uh, Twilight? You have mud on your hooves."

Nightmare gave him an unfriendly look "Oh really? And here I thought I stepped in chocolate."

Spike looked about to respond, when something splatted next to mean, resulting in a wave of mud to cover my entire side. "Are you okay?" Nightmare asked the rainbow maned, cyan pegasus.

The Pegasus jumped up, shook off the mud, thankfully missing me "I meant to do that." Right... And the rainbow mane means this is probably Rainbow Dash.

"Uh huh. Anyway, you must be Rainbow Dash."

This seemed to cheer her up. "Yep, that's right! Why, you heard of me?"

"There's a pegasus named Rainbow Dash that's supposed to be keeping the sky clear, and you have a rainbow mane. I just put two and two together."

Yea, it wasn't exactly a stretch of logic there.

Rainbow seemed disappointed. "Yeah, well, you'll hear about me someday. I'll be in the Wonderbolts, you'll see!" What, with that kind of attitude and failure to meet her responsibilities?

"Cool. Anyway, the sky is supposed to be clear for tonight."

Rainbow gestured dismissively. "No problem. I can clear the sky in a jiffy." But she just sat there.

"No you can't." Nightmare moon taunted.

Rainbow did not appreciate that, glaring at me. "What did you say?"

"Oh, nothing. It's just that there are so many clouds!" she wailed "You won't be able to clear them before the Summer Fun Celebration tonight!" That was overdramatic. And how did she not know it was the Summer SUN Celebration?

Spike pointed this out "Uh, Twilight? It's the Summer Sun Celebration, not the Summer Fun Celebration."

She waved my hoof dismissively. "Semantics." No it isn't. Semantics involves the meaning of words and the logical basis for Equish. Fun and Sun are not synonyms.

Spike clearly felt the same way, but Rainbow spoke first. "Hey, I'll have you know that I can clear these clouds in ten seconds flat!"

Nightmare smirked at her. "I hear a lot of talk, but I'm a man of action." Man? I know that Man is a species neutral term for Stallion, but I thought Nightmare Moon was an Alicorn Mare. I mean, she was sister to the older Sister in that old ponytale... Who now that I think about it might well have been Celestia. Is Nightmare moon Celestia's Sister? Was the legend recorded wrong, and Nightmare moon was actually an Alicorn Stallion?

Rainbow raised an Eyebrow. "Man of action? But aren't you a mare?"

Nightmare let out a grunt of irritation. "Look, the point is, you can't do it."

Rainbow glared at me, then promptly vanished. I half thought that she teleported, despite being a Pegasus, but no, she was just that fast. Nightmare tilted my head up to try and follow her motion, but All I could recognize was every single cloud be destroyed in what I thought was an impossibly short amount of time. Then she landed, and gave me a smug look.

"See? Ten. Seconds. Flat. I told you I could do it."

Nightmare, Spike, and even I was entirely speechless. Rainbow promptly burst out laughing. "You're pretty cool. We should hang out sometime."

And then she flew away, relaxing in midair like she was lying on a sofa.

"Whoa, she's amazing!" Spike praised.

"Yea, I guess she is."

Spike got the list out, and read it out. "Next is decorations. A unicorn named Rarity should be in charge of those." Maybe a unicorn can tell something is wrong...

----

The town hall was easy enough to find, as it was the largest building around, save the mansions in the distance. Inside, blue fabrics were draped around the room. Blue banners were flanking the central balcony, one with a sun and one with a moon. White flowers were hung over every doorway. Decorations looked to be nearly complete.

"Beautiful." Spike admired.

"Eh, I could do without the flowers. Otherwise, it looks nice."

"Not the decor! Her." He pointed at the lone unicorn, standing in the center of the room. She was a royal white, with a curly purple mane. Clearly focused on finishing the decorations, given the ribbons. This was probably Rarity. My eyes focused on her horn for a moment.

"How are my spines? Are they straight?" Asked Spike, fussing over his appearance. <This isn't the time!>

I patted him on the shoulder. "Dude, relax." Spike gave me another funny look, but was ignored, as I approached the unicorn. "Excuse me-"

"Just a moment, please!" She interrupted. "I'm in the zone, as it were." She went back to her ribbons, finally deciding to use a vibrant red one. The unicorn turned to speak to me. "Now, then, how can I- Waaahh!" Her sudden yell startled me. "Whatever happened to you?" <Yes! She noticed something!>

Nightmare looked over my/herself to see what the unicorn was talking about, and I realized that I was still covered in mud. "Oh, right. Do you know Rainbow Dash?"

"Ah." The unicorn nodded, indicating that she knew what I meant. "I understand." <Argh... That wasn't what I was hoping for>

"Yeah. So, anyway, I just needed to check on the decorations." I took an exaggerated look around. "And it seems it’s all okay. I guess I'm done here."

"Don't you want to clean up?" She asked.

"There's a river just down the street, I think I'll just use that." <That... That is not how you get clean in a civilized society!>

Rarity was justifiably offended by that idea. "Oh, goodness, no! You really must take a proper bath!" She trotted by me, and levitated me after her. That is kind of relieving, if still undignified.

She carried me all the way to her house, which would normally be rather embarrassing, but was somewhat comforting right now. After all, it was a normal reason to have no control over you actions, and reminded me of when I was younger.

She takes me upstairs and draws a bath, putting me down and saying "I'll be downstairs when you're finished. If you need anything, just let me know!" She then left along with Spike. Nightmare let out a sigh after the door closed.

Nightmare climbed into the bath, and soaked in the hot water, which was admittedly relaxing. She spent several minutes cleaning the mud off my everything, and then emptied out the water.

She went downstairs, and interrupted Spike's conversation with Rarity "Thanks for letting me use your bath, Rarity, but we should be going soon."

She looked over and smiled at me. "It's no problem, darling. May I know your name?"

Nightmare nodded. "Twilight."

"It's good to meet you, Twilight. I hope we can talk again soon, hopefully under better circumstances." <Yea... like me actually being able to talk...>

She nudged Spike and left the building, giving Rarity a friendly wave.

----

"Wasn't she wonderful?" Asked the daydreaming Spike. At this point, he had taken to riding on my back like normal.

"I suppose." Nightmare reluctantly agreed. "What's next on the list? We still have a job to do."

Spike refocused on his job, and read from the list. "Oh, uh, music! It's the last one."

Nightmare smiled at that. That was probably not a good sign. Soon she would be able to do whatever her plan was freely without suspicion.

She stopped on hearing a melodic series of bird whistling. Spike hopped off my back as Nightmare walked over to the sound, crawling through some bushes to find a bunch of birds in a tree, whistling along with the directions of a yellow coated, pink maned pegasus. I listened to the bird choir, and was rather impressed. Animal affinity was usually an earth pony trait after all.

I noticed pretty quickly that the blue jay wasn't doing a particularly good job, being out of sync, out of tune, and even facing the wrong way! The pegasus had to stop the practice to help him out. I couldn't hear what she was saying between my distance and her apparently low volume.

Nightmare stepped out of the bushes, which caught me by surprise. Not knowing when my body would start moving was still really uncomfortable.

"Hello!" Nightmare called out, startling the pegasus into releasing a gasp, scaring the birds away! Honestly, it wasn't even that loud, although she obviously hadn't seen me beforehoof. She looked at me, trying to regain composure.

"Sorry about the birds. I was just checking on the music, and I heard their whistling." <Right. Like you are actually sorry.>

The pegasus landed in front of me, pawing at the ground, avoiding eye-contact with me. I stood there awkwardly, and even if I had control, I wouldn't have had any idea what to do. The silence was getting awkward, fast. I looked around, not sure why. Judging by the slight rustling in the bushes, I guessed Spike was probably hiding in there. Maybe looking for him?

My eyes rolled, and I turned back to the pegasus, who could only look at me from the corner of her eyes. She still avoided eye-contact. I sighed. "I'm Twilight. What's your name?"

"Um... I'm Flutter..." Flutter? Seems a bit short. I think she might have trailed off. I would ask, but, well...

Nightmare sighed again. "Well, you must be pretty talented to train those birds to sing like that. It was pretty good."

Flutter(?) just shrunk behind her mane, squeaking something in response.

Nightmare closed my eyes, rendering me blind. This was probably something I would have to get used to.

"Well, I'd better get going." I noticed her birds coming back, landing on the tree again. "Oh, and your birds came back. So, I'll just leave you to it."

Another squeak was her response.

Nightmare glared above me. "Okay, see ya around." She walked back to the bushes, finding Spike leaving the bushes at my approach.

I heard a loud gasp behind me, followed by a low voice yelling loudly. "A baby dragon!" <Wait what?>

Before Nightmare could react, Flutter slammed into me, flinging me away and onto my face again.<Ow!> I recovered to see Flutter and Spike talking for a bit.

"Oh, I've never seen a baby dragon before! And he's so cute!" Flutter squee'd at the lizard. <Oh, so you can talk to dragons but not ponies?>

My eyes opened wide in shock, again for no reason I could determine. I wish I could know what she was thinking. What was so unexpected there?

Nightmare clearly forced a smile "Well, we'd better get going." walking by Spike who started to follow.

"Wait!" Flutter trailed behind me, though she had her eyes on Spike. "What's his name?"

Nightmare froze at the simple question. My eyes darted back and forth. She didn't know, hadn't had the chance to do research. She would have to guess, giving herself away, as long as Spike didn't... "I'm Spike!" <Oh come on!>

Flutter gasped. "Oh my, he talks! I didn't know dragons could talk! I just don't know what to say!"

"Maybe you two could find something to talk about?" Nightmare suggested.

"Good idea, Twilight! What do you want to talk about?" The question was directed at Flutter.

"Well, I want to know more about you." Flutter said.

Spike nodded. "Okay, what do you wanna know?"

"Absolutely everything." <Ugh... Wait; that would give Nightmare more information about me and how I behave. That is not good. Spike, please don't.... I know you can't hear me, but...>

----

I would have groaned if I could. Seriously, Spike was a great assistant and all, but he wasn't exactly a storyteller. Regardless, Flutter clearly was fascinated with dragons and was entirely captivated by the story.

Nightmare walked around town, possibly aimlessly, until she interjected a request for directions from Spike.

Eventually, we arrived at the library, an enchanted tree-structure. Nothing compared to my parents’ home, the palace, or even my tower, but it had books which.... <Wait, I can't read, can I? Unless Nightmare gets a book out, I won't be able to read anything.>

"...and that's the story of my whole entire life! Well, up until today. Do you wanna hear about today?"

"Oh, yes, please!"

Nightmare was kind enough to groan loudly in displeasure, but neither of them seemed to notice. She opened the door with my hooves <I guess she can't use my magic?> Spike followed me inside, but once we went inside the completely darkened room, Flutter seemingly disappeared.

"Hey, why's it so dark in here?" I heard Spike ask. <Also, did Flutter close the door behind us?>

"Okay, please tell me we have some way of lighting this room." Nightmare was irritated.

I think Spike was going to point out I had a horn, but he was cut off when the room exploded with light, followed shortly by "SURPRISE!" being yelled by no less than fifty ponies. I jumped at the sudden noise (Or rather Nightmare did exactly what I tried to do involuntarily, which almost felt like I had control for a moment), looking about at all the ponies that surrounded me. Why were all these ponies here? What was going on?

A poofy pink pony pronked up to me. "Surprise!" She shouted, which didn't help, seeing as this being a surprise was pretty obvious. "I'm Pinkie Pie, and I threw this party just for you! Were you surprised? Were ya? Were ya? Huh huh huh?" She asked, bouncing around me the whole way.

Nightmare glared suspiciously at her. "How did you get in here? Did you break in?" <I am pretty sure this is a public building>

I couldn't tell if she giggled, or if she was just shaking with excitement and ignoring the question. "Remember me? I saw you earlier today while you were talking to that dragon, and I went up to you and I realized-" She stopped mid-sentence to mimic her large gasp from the first time we met. "See, that's because I didn't recognize you, and if I didn't recognize you, that must mean you're new, because I know everypony in Ponyville!" <Wat>

Nightmare sat down, probably overwhelmed trying to keep up. "And if you're new, that means you haven't met anyone yet, and if you haven't met anyone yet, you must not have any friends, and if you don't have any friends then you must be lonely, and that made me so sad, then I had an idea, and that's why I went-" She gasped again. "I must throw a great big ginormous super-duper spectacular welcome party and invite everyone in Ponyville! See? And now you have lots and lots of friends!" She stepped aside slightly so that I could see everyone that I met so far: Applejack, Rainbow Dash, Rarity, and Flutter, all of who were giving me welcoming smiles.

Nightmare blinked, took a breath, and looked back at Pinkie, who was smiling expectantly, as if awaiting for approval. "So you threw a surprise party for me so I could make some friends?"

Pinkie nodded vigorously. <Wait, Nightmare kept up with that, and got it right?>

Nightmare smirked, glancing at Spike next to me. "And you were worried about me making friends." Spike glared light-heartedly at me, while I turned to Pinkie. "Well, alright, let's get some drinks out here and let's party!"

Pinkie giggled approvingly at my answer, and we all set out for the table with a large bowl of punch on it, complete with a ladle and a set of cups next to it. Though, what got my attention was an unlabeled brown bottle on another table, completely unopened. I grinned at the bottle. So it was that kind of party, huh? I figured this would be pretty juvenile with all the streamers and confetti, but I guess I was wrong if they were serving alcohol.

"I call dibs on that beer." Nightmare stated. <What is beer?>

"What's beer?" Pinkie echoed.

I/She uncorked the bottle and drank from it. Setting the bottle down, it was pretty obviously the kind of thing I would never want to drink, seeing as my mouth and throat were now on fire. I think it was hot sauce. Naturally, my mane caught fire, as my magic tried to purge the substance.

The next second, nightmare tried to scream, but couldn't, rushed over to the punch bowl, and drunk straight from the ladle. It took five drinks before the burning subsided enough for me to recover, and Nightmare gasped for breath with my head on the table.

"Are you alright, darling?" I heard Rarity ask.

Nightmare looked over to find the others looking at me with a small amount of worry. Steadying her breath. "You know what? I've had quite the day, and I'm getting tired." The exasperation was obvious "I think I'm just going to pick up a book, and read myself to sleep upstairs."

Nightmare browsed the shelves, and after being wished a good night, had help finding a copy of "Myths and Prophecies", before heading upstairs.

----

Why where they playing such loud music in a *library*? I can't focus on trying to read along with Nightmare like this.

Seriously, I couldn't turn the pages, couldn't move my eyes, so I had to keep focus on the words as Nightmare turned the pages, so it went slowly and required focus. I couldn't focus on words after she moved on, but she read slower than me. It was *really* frustrating.

She went downstairs to retrieve more books, presumably because she was looking for something. Her excuse of needing "Something more boring to read" was accepted by everypony, but Spike looked confused and somewhat suspicious. <Yes, please figure it out Spike.>

It soon became clear that Nightmare was researching the legends about him/herself. She even made the same calculations I did. This actually made it less likely to be Nightmare and more likely to be either one of the stars (That would aid in her escape\_, or else something to make me one of the stars. My Cutie Mark was a Starburst after all, and thinking on it, might well be related.

Either way, she glanced at the clock, 4:02, and glanced at the stars surrounding the moon. The Mare in the Moon was still there.

She got up and started to head downstairs again, but the door swung open first. Spike was wearing a lampshade on his head for some reason "Hey Twilight, it's almost time to watch the sunrise." <This is it. What is going to happen? I wish I could have stayed in Canterlot. I hope Celestia will be able to fix this, but I'm scared.>

We headed to the Town Hall, along with what was likely the entire town. The mayor was giving a speech, though it was hard to focus on it given my ears were twitching in all directions. My gaze drifted upwards towards the moon, and the stars started moving rapidly. <Wait what? No! Is she doing this?>

My breath stopped, and eyes widened, as I saw the image of the Mare in the Moon flash and disappear.

I started breathing raggedly, and focused back on the mayor, who was introducing the princess. "...the good, the wise, the bringer of harmony to all of Equestria... Princess Celestia!" Finishing her introduction, the curtains were pulled. Celestia was missing. I had half expected her to be there, and to be forced to attack her, but she was already missing!

My eyes locked on a blue cloud of magic where the Princess should have been. The cloud surged, then receded behind a black alicorn with war barding. Her mane looked like the night sky come to life, much like Celestia's aurora style mane. Her blue eyes were narrowed into dragon-like slits, which bore into everyone they saw. If there was a pony that could strike fear into the hearts of others, this was her. This was the real Nightmare Moon.

Spike passed out next to me. He couldn't handle this, and to be honest, if I had control, I don't know if I would have done better.

Nightmare glanced around the crowd. "Oh, my beloved subjects." She began, her voice dripping with malice. "It's been so long since I've seen your precious, little sun-loving faces."

"What did you do to our Princess!?" Rainbow demanded. She flew forward to charge at Nightmare Moon, but Applejack caught her by the tail.

"Why, am I not royal enough for you? Don't you know who I am?" Nightmare asked accusingly.

My body stood taller, as though trying to look confidant. . "I know who you are." Nightmare Moon turned to regard me with a look of slight interest. "You're Nightmare Moon, the Mare in the Moon."

The ponies around me gasped, but Nightmare looked impressed at my knowledge. "So, somepony remembers me. Then you know why I'm here?"

I nodded, a slight glare on my face. "Yeah, I know exactly what you're going to do. But it won't work, for I alone know your secret weakness!" <Wait what?>

Nightmare Moon didn't look very convinced. That didn't stop everyone else from gasping in surprise. "My secret weakness? Pray tell, what could that be?"

My face started to relax, and forced a crooked smile. "No, I don't really know your secret weakness. I'm just distracting you while an ambush party sneaks up on you right..." I looked just past her, as if I was looking at something behind her. Nothing was there "Now." <Wat>

Nightmare Moon spun around to face her phantom foes, while my controlled spun around, picked up Spike onto my back, and galloped out of the building. I left behind a room filled with confused ponies and a bewildered goddess, who I could hear laughing at me from halfway to the library. She wasn't following me, which may have been good.

<What the buck? Who is controlling me then, and what is their goal?>