

# SVTFOE: Season 4 Rewrite

*Annotated Edition*

Eclair de XII

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# Scene 1

## The Night Begins

The shadow of a horrible scream echoed in Star's ears. Meteora was vanquished. Her unwilling murderer knelt before the crater where she had stood seconds ago. Eclipsa seemed unable to get up. The last look in her daughter's eyes was one she could not forget. Star approached her from behind.

"Eclipsa. You saved us."

She did not answer. She was still kneeling on the ground, just as she was after her daughter's death.

"Eclipsa...?"

A gust of ash began swirling around the former queen. A stream of shadowy winds converged onto Eclipsa. Stormclouds began to gather in the sky, and thunder rumbled the air. Ribbons of darkness circled the ancient queen, lifting her into the air, and wrapping her in a shadowy cocoon.

Marco watched Star back away. "Scissors," she muttered to him.

An arc of lightning struck the ground. "Scissors, Marco!"

Marco gasped, then snapped out of his reverie. "Right!"

Lightning bolts bombarded the ground as he went through his pockets. He patted his clothes. "They're not here!"

A bolt of lightning struck the ground in front of them. Marco seized Star's arm, and pulled her away. He put himself between Star and the unraveling cocoon of shadows.

The spades on her cheeks were glowing with an eerie violet color, ensnared by dark veins running from the ruff of her petticoat. Her eyes were pitch-black and pupil-less, as if nothing lived behind them anymore.

For a moment, Eclipsa simply floated and stared blankly ahead, unaware of Star and Marco cowering before her. Then her eyes suddenly fixed upon Star, who gripped Marco's arm tighter. She was shaking with

fear. She was far beyond exhausted from her battle from Meteora, and what's more, she did not have her wand with her.

"Marco..." groaned Star before her eyes closed.

He caught Star before she fell to the ground.

"No!" he cried. "Star. Wake up!"

He felt Eclipsa's bloodthirsty eyes on him. He dragged Star towards a chunk of debris. But it was blasted apart before they could take shelter behind it. The shadowy wisps of the magical blast lingered in the air, as Eclipsa took aim at them once more. Marco shut his eyes, and held Star tight in his arms —

But the death he was expecting did not come. He opened his eyes.

A column of stone had sprouted in front of him like a gigantic shield. But that too crumbled to dust. "Hurry!" Tom said into his ear. Marco got up, and helped him drag Star towards a green portal. Then Marco saw something out of the corner of his eye.

"Tom!" He inclined his head towards Eclipsa, flying straight at them.

"On it!" Tom left Marco to tend to Star. He hurled fireballs at Eclipsa, who swatted them aside with ease; she pirouetted gracefully around stone pillars bursting out of the ground. She was closing in on them.

"Here!" said Tom, tossing Marco his scissors. An unholy axe manifested into the demon's hands. "I'll find my own way back. Just hurry up and get Star to safety!"

"But Eclipsa — "

"Never mind that!" roared Tom, his demonic rage briefly resurfacing. "Just go!"

Marco looked uncertainly at him for a moment, then hoisted Star onto his back. Tom reared back and struck the ground. A column of pillars erupted from all around them, encasing the three in a stone tent of sorts.

But not a second later, it exploded. The portal shook and changed hue. It collapsed in on itself once Marco was hurled over the other side.

Though his vision began to blur, he could already tell that he was not on Mewni anymore; it certainly was not Earth, either. A soft moan nearby told him that Star was safe. And so Marco finally allowed himself to relax. He felt his exhaustion catching up with him. It seemed amazing that he had only regained consciousness less than an hour ago.



Tom plunged his axe into the ground. The force from Eclipsa's magical blast pushed him away like gusts from a strong wind. The columns

of stone were reduced to ash, now flying at him. He shielded his eyes and held his ground, until the air finally calmed.

He swung his axe out of the ground, and followed the gash marks it made on the floor. Eclipsa was holding a hand out to where the portal had been. Her fist closed upon thin air; then it began trembling with a palpable fury.

A string of whispers filled the dusty air; a window appeared before her. Tom squinted through the dust and gasped. The window was showing Eclipsa a desert in which Star and Marco had collapsed. They looked as tired and battered as they were when they escaped just moments earlier. Eclipsa was reaching towards them...

"No. Stay away from my friends!" he bellowed, as he sprinted towards the queen, who was withdrawing her hand from the window. The blade of the demonic axe collided with the tip of her velvet umbrella. Eclipsa leered at her enemy with something like pity; there was desperation in his eyes, as he struggled to force her back.

He closed his eyes and began chanting. A fiery aura engulfed the blade of his axe; he began pushing Eclipsa away, inch by inch. Beads of sweat were budding on his brow, and tears were leaking from his tightly shut eyes.

Suddenly, the umbrella glowed black, and with a single swipe, Eclipsa flung Tom into a wall.

She studied the demonic axe she seized with her levitation magic. It was trembling, eager to return to its master; she tapped it with the tip of her umbrella. It went up in midnight-black flames as she floated towards the All-Seeing Eye.

Eclipsa reached again for the window she'd torn. Her blackened hand was an inch from it, ready to pass through.

But it did not.

Her palm was spread flat against the window, like an obstinate door that refused to open.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Tom forced himself off the ground and vaulted over a crumbling wall of the castle. Moments later, the sound of exploding glass shook his eardrums.

Eclipsa had shattered her scrying spell. Darkness began leaking from her hands; it slithered onto the ground, like shadows made solid. Then she raised her umbrella upwards. From its darkening tip burst a stream of shadows. They swirled around the sky, over and over again like a whirlpool of smoke, until all traces of light were snuffed from the realm.

Tom fell face-first onto the grass. He looked behind him: a shadowy hand protruding from the ground had seized his ankle. Blasting fire at

the smoke-like tendrils, he wrenched his foot away and stood up to find himself trapped in a moat of darkness. From that darkness, rose fearsome horned steeds, each as black and misty as the sky above. He readied a fireball in one hand, and waited.

Finally, a Millhorse broke ranks and charged at him, only to be blown backwards by a fiery blast. Its fellows charged at the demon, who conjured a wall of fire around himself. The horses evaporated into smoke upon contact. Their spots in the enclosure were quickly filled by their companions. Some brushed the ground impatiently with their hooves.

Just then, something landed gingerly behind Tom, and in that instant, the Millhorses charged. He backed away and bumped into —

“Hekapoo?” He looked over his shoulder at a fiery woman with scissor-knives poised for combat.

“No time to talk. Let’s just fight and get out of here!”

Tom nodded, and summoned a wall of stone to topple the charging steeds. He shot flame blasts at the foes on his side, while Hekapoo slashed and kicked the foes on hers. She danced around their hooves and horns, and nimbly swiped at them with the aim of a skilled assassin. It became harder for them to see their foes through the thickening smog as the fight went on.

“Watch out!” cried Hekapoo. She pulled Tom away from a Millhorse charging at his side, and kicked it towards its companions. They tripped and fell over each other like dominoes, leaving a gap in the circle.

“This way,” said Hekapoo, before vaulting over the toppled horses.

Tom shot a stream of fire from the palm of his hand, which he brandished like a whip. He lashed it all around him, forcing the Millhorses to scatter. He boosted the ferocity of his flames until his whip became a rigid, roaring jet. He jumped, fired a pair of jets from his heels, and twirled into the air.

He spotted Hekapoo leaping to and fro on the backs of Millhorses, dodging the occasional steed trying to bite or impale her. He hovered his way over to her, and extended his hand.

“Grab on!”

They took each other by the wrist, and Tom sped off with her in tow. Hekapoo looked over her shoulder at the Millhorses, whinnying angrily at her. She stuck her forefinger and thumb in her fanged teeth, and gave a sharp whistle.

Seconds later, a dragon-cycle skidded to a halt below them. Hekapoo let go of Tom, and landed on the seat of her dragon-cycle. Tom slowly extinguished his jets, and descended onto the backseat.

“Hang on,” said Hekapoo, revving her dragon-cycle. Tom lurched

and clung onto her waist, as the dragon roared and zoomed off into the clouds.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **Eclipsa:** “, unable to get up.” But I concede that the apposition here is necessary.
- <sup>2</sup> **∴** Merge with previous
- <sup>3</sup> **began:** gathered
- <sup>4</sup> **gaspd:** Why is Marco doing nothing? Have these lot be more active.
- <sup>5</sup> **lightning:** They’re indoors, mate.
- <sup>6</sup> **her:** This is vague, but it is clear that Eclipsa is the antecedent.
- <sup>7</sup> **She:** Star or Eclipsa
- <sup>8</sup> **before:** You should indicate that she says this and loses consciousness at roughly the same time
- <sup>9</sup> **ground:** She just fell. Also, this does not line up with Marco catching her.
- <sup>10</sup> **demon:** Stop using pseudonyms for non-human beings, and in general
- <sup>11</sup> **resurfacing:** Resurface? Show his demonic rage. But make no explicit indication of it.
- <sup>12</sup> **It:** Merge with previous sentence. Rule of thumb: Generally keep one set of closely related ideas in one sentence.
- <sup>13</sup> **began:** “chanted”. There is no need to belabor the reader with extra words that add nothing to the meaning of the sentence. Generally, avoid the use of the “started to/began to” patterns.
- <sup>14</sup> **tears:** Your characters need not cry so often. There is nothing emotional about trying to stop a formidable sorceress of unimaginable power.
- <sup>15</sup> **flung:** I know Dark Eclipsa is written to be overpowered. But the brevity of the fight just makes Tom look pathetically weak.
- <sup>16</sup> **went:** Need to express these events in an active voice rather in a passive one.
- <sup>17</sup> **inch:** More active, less passive.
- <sup>18</sup> **like:** What are we comparing to a resolutely shut door?
- <sup>19</sup> **vaulted:** Please make it clear that he is trying to sneak away.
- <sup>20</sup> **eardrums:** Enough with the passive. “He felt his eardrums shake...”
- <sup>21</sup> **began:** No more of this “began” or “started to”
- <sup>22</sup> **she:** There is a shift in subject. At first, Eclipsa is the object. Then her dark magic is the object. The reader might be confused as to what “her” refers to: the magic or its wielder.
- <sup>23</sup> **swirled:** Each piece of the scenery should not be scattered across different sentences. They should each have their own sentences.
- <sup>24</sup> **rose:** “arose”

- <sup>25</sup> **sky:** Do not make comparisons to an object that has barely even been described yet.
- <sup>26</sup> **readied:** There is far too much focus-shifting taking place. The reader reads about Tom, then the dark magic, then Tom again. It would be better if you split these into two paragraphs: one with Tom as the subject, and the other with the dark magic. Also, use a less generic verb than “readied”, please.
- <sup>27</sup> **Finally:** It is imperative that the passage of time is shown rather than told by lazy phrases like “finally” or “after a moment”. They are vague. In this scene, describe what happens in the interlude before the skirmish.
- <sup>28</sup> **Just:** Show passage of time; do not tell it. Avoid lazy phrases like this one.
- <sup>29</sup> **with:** It would work better if the words were more action-oriented. “who brandished”, for example, might be better here.
- <sup>30</sup> **and:** Research the use of “and” vs. “then” to show the transition from one event to another. Or just read up more about it somewhere (you know). Also use a less generic verb than “summoning”, which does not really give the reader a clearer mental picture of the scene.
- <sup>31</sup> **thickening:** This is telling the audience about what’s going on, when it should really be shown.
- <sup>32</sup> **dominoes:** This action scene is just awful. Virtually none of the combat is even described.



## Scene 2

# Ponyhead Castle

A dragon-cycle soared in front of Ponyhead Castle. It touched down, and shook the rain off its head. Tom hopped off, slipped, and trod on one of its talons.

“Oops! Sorry about that,” said Tom with a nervous laugh. The beast growled at him while Hekapoo dismounted. While she was stroking its head, Tom noticed that the flame atop her tiara was extinguished.

“So what’s going on, Hekapoo?” he said, once the dragon-cycle closed its eyes to rest.

“I’ll explain once the others arrive.”

“Others?” he asked, before the dragon-cycle opened an eye to leer at him.

Tom backed away, while Hekapoo stared off in another direction. They heard the roaring of another dragon-cycle. Its rider landed on the clouds, and did a wheelie before skidding to a halt in front of them. He dismounted and pulled off his sunglasses.

“All here, boss,” said Talon Raventalon. He gestured to Mina Loveberry, hopping off the dragon-cycle, then crossed his bulky arms. “I’d better get paid extra for this.”

“You’ll get your money when this is all over. Get your butt inside in the meantime,” she said jerkily, jabbing her thumb at the gates of Ponyhead Castle.

Talon wiped the water off his sunglasses and redonned them. “Whatever,” he scoffed, before stalking off with his dragon-cycle.

There was a screech of a dozen eagles from overhead; Tom looked up.

“King River?” he muttered, as the eagles landed onto the puffy clouds. A short balding man, and a band of armored soldiers dismounted. Some of them slipped and fell.

River was petting an eagle whose forehead was set with a gemstone.

“You take care now,” he said softly, kissing her on the forehead. “Be safe.”

The queen eagle let out a screech, and took flight alongside its subjects. River looked around at his soldiers, who were helping each other off the ground. “Come!” he boomed imperiously.

“Yes sir!” the knights chorused. They followed their king into the castle gates.

“You’d better come, too,” Hekapoo said as she passed Tom; he followed her inside.

A flash of lightning briefly illuminated a figure standing at the edge of the clouds. Tom tilted his head as he crossed the threshold. The Ponyhead twins cranked a shaft, and the monumental double-doors of oak closed in on each other.

The courtyard of Ponyhead Castle was covered and dry; two dragon-cycles were chained to a stake near the entrance. One of them recognized Tom and growled. Tom scurried into the inner entrance of the castle without looking back.

A boom resounded throughout the castle as he walked through the halls into the throne room. Hekapoo was standing at the head of the chamber, with King Ponyhead on her left and Rhombulus on her right. Anxious mutterings filled the room.

The Ponyhead sisters floated near the front of the room, chattering animatedly. They were joined by the twins shortly before the doors to the throne room were shut.

Silence immediately fell. Everyone’s eyes were on Hekapoo, whose tiara, Tom noticed, was relit. “Now that you’re all here,” she began, “it’s time to fill you in on what’s going on.

“First, I’d like to thank King Ponyhead for allowing us to take shelter in his castle for the time being,” she said, gesturing to her left. “Unfortunately, as he is not used to accommodating this many guests at once, some of you will have to sleep in the courtyard tonight.

“Now, as some of you probably know, Mewni has been overrun by creatures of darkness. The source of this darkness is none other than the ancient Queen Eclipsa. A long time ago, we crystallized her for crimes against Mewmanity. But now she’s returned, and is going to destroy Mewni. She fooled around with dark magic often in the past. We suspect that it has possessed her.

“Now we must pay the price for her mistakes,” said Hekapoo, her voice becoming bitter, “just as she has paid hers.” She crossed her arms and paused.

“Unfortunately,” she continued, “she has been deemed too dangerous

to not just Mewni, but to the entire multiverse. As such, I have had to close all portals to and from Mewni. No one can get in, and no one can get out.”

“Except for you,” mumbled Talon.

“Also,” she continued more loudly, “I have had to close the portals that are linked within Mewni. We cannot run the risk that Eclipsa can open dimensional portals to ambush us, or anyone else in Mewni. If Star can open portals without dimensional scissors, then it is safe to assume that Eclipsa can, as well.”

River’s soldiers began muttering amongst themselves. “Princess Star can open portals?” “That’s a total lie.” “She’s making it up.”

“Anyway,” Hekapoo continued in an annoyed tone, “we do not know where Eclipsa is right now. We suspect that she is hiding at the ancient Monster Temple. Tomorrow, me and Rhombulus will scout the area to be sure. Then we will plan our assault. It is likely that we will need to crystallize her again, with Rhombulus’ help.”

“Yeah!” Rhombulus shouted, throwing his arms into the air; Hekapoo rolled her eyes.

“I gladly volunteer my soldiers for the task!” piped River, raising a finger into the air. “The royal knights of Mewni fear nothing!”

“Thank you, King River,” said Hekapoo. “But Eclipsa is just too dangerous, and so are her minions. No ordinary Mewman could survive within a minute of landing on Mewni as it is now. It is just too dangerous.”

“But I insist!” said the king.

“Your Majesty, I must refuse,” she said curtly. “If Ponyhead Castle comes under attack, you will need the extra manpower.”

“You can’t tell me what to do!” said River. “I’m your king.”

“Exactly,” said Hekapoo, as though the matter were settled. “You’re the last Butterfly remaining. If anything were to happen to you, the kingdom would be without a king.”

River frowned, and hung his head.

“Please station them here at this castle, my king,” she said gently. River looked at her with a strained expression on his face. Then he gave her a stiff nod.

“Now,” she resumed in a business-like manner, “before I adjourn this meeting, does anyone have any questions?”

“Yeah!” shouted Ponyhead. “Where’s Star?”

Hekapoo sighed. “We don’t know. The last time I saw her, she sent me away from her council. Then Meteora attacked. We were trying to stop — ”

“Yeah, yeah, I know about that,” interrupted Ponyhead, rolling her eyes. “I was there, too. Don’t you remember? Huh? Huh?” Her tone became more aggressive with each syllable.

Hekapoo leered at Ponyhead, who leered back.

“I know what happened to Star,” said a voice.

Everyone faced Tom, who had spoken up. “I was with her when she disappeared. She was fighting Meteora, but she lost.

“Then Queen Eclipsa stepped in,” he continued over a chorus of gasps. “She finished the battle, and won. But then, some weird stuff started happening to her. It’s like she wasn’t even her anymore. When I saw that she was going to attack Star, I opened a portal for her to escape.”

Tom paused, wondering what to say next. “Now, she and Marco are safe on Earth. He zipped the portal shut before Queen Eclipsa had her chance.”

King River heaved a sigh of relief. Ponyhead was leering suspiciously at Tom, who felt the eyes of the whole room on him.

“Well, there you have it,” said Hekapoo, before the crowd turned to face her again. “Star’s safe on Earth and far away from Eclipsa. Now, are there any other questions?”

The room was completely silent for almost a minute before Hekapoo said, “Then meeting adjourned. Please see King Ponyhead to find out where you will be sleeping tonight.”



The double-doors to Ponyhead Castle were still shut. Tom cursed. A pair of whistling noises made him look up: the Ponyhead twins were staring at him. They flicked their eyeballs towards a small gap between the doors.

He sped through it, and did not stop until he was behind the western wing of the castle. Leaning against the wall, he stared off into the distance at the silhouette with pigtails again.

“Liar!” Ponyhead shouted. “I want to know what happened to Star right now! I know you were lying, Tom. Okay? You aren’t very good at it. Like, I could already tell.”

Tom crossed his arms, and turned away from Ponyhead.

“So you aren’t even going to look at me? She’s my bestie, Tom. I have a right to know where she is, what she’s doing, and why you have to keep ignoring me!” Her voice was shaking.

“I don’t know what happened to Star, Ponyhead,” Tom sighed, refusing to look at the tears budding in her eyes.

“Wha — ?” she stammered.

“I did open a portal for Star and Marco to get through,” he said, his back still turned. “But then it sort of got messed-up. Eclipsa blasted them through and the portal somehow closed on its own. Then she opened this weird window thing. I saw them lying on some desert. I’m not even sure if they’re — ”

“DON’T SAY IT!” bellowed Ponyhead. “DON’T EVEN THINK IT!” Her lips were trembling.

“I don’t want to, either,” said Tom heavily.

“I can’t deal with this right now. I just can’t. I don’t even know why I come to you for help.”

“Well, what do you WANT me to say!?” Tom roared, punching the wall. He turned to glare at Ponyhead, his eyes alight with a demonic glow. “If you want me to say that Star’s okay, then just ask me to say it! If you want to hear that she’s just going to come back and magically save Mewni by tomorrow, then just ask me to say it!”

“W-w-why do you have to be so mean?” sobbed Ponyhead.

Tom took a deep breath and his demonic rage faded.

“I am not being mean,” he said steadily. “I’m just telling you what I saw, alright? You don’t have a problem lying to others. Why can’t you do the same for yourself? Why do you have to ask me to do it for you?”

Ponyhead pulled herself together and pouted. “You’d better see someone about your anger issues, Tom. You’re yelling at me again, and I don’t like it.” She snorted and floated away.

He scoffed and stalked off towards the gates. He slipped through unnoticed by the Mewmans camping outside. Most of them were immersed in nervous conversation. It did not seem like anyone would be sleeping that night.

Tom volunteered to camp outside, in spite of King Ponyhead’s insistences that he stay in the royal guest room. He politely turned him down. Slipping through the gap again, Tom found a wall opposite the one that Ponyhead had found him at.

After stripping off his combat armor, he collapsed onto the ground. He hid his face in his palms, and heaved a shuddering sigh. His hands found the cloudy ground. It was soft and fluffy; the demon wouldn’t imagine any difficulty just falling asleep on here. His eyes drooped.

“Huh?” Tom tugged at the sleeve of a jean-jacket draped over his shoulders.

“You looked cold.” Kelly was standing over him.

An expression of something like gratitude appeared on Tom’s face. He sat up. “Thanks.”

She smiled warmly at him. “Can I join you?”

The demon shifted aside to make room for her. She stripped off her combat armor and cast it aside. Now dressed in a simple silk tunic and magenta capris, she sat down by Tom.

"King Ponyhead asked me to bring you this, by the way," she said, taking a sleeping bag out of her hair. "I heard about that fight with Ponyhead. We're all upset right now. Don't take her too seriously. She isn't mad at you."

"I know," replied Tom. "She's just upset that Star is gone."

"We all are. Why are you camping out here, by the way? I don't know about you, but it's freezing."

"Why are you here?" countered Tom.

"I... I thought you could use some company," she said defensively.

The demon shifted guiltily. "I'm sorry. It's been a long day."

"Well," said Kelly, "do you want to talk about it?"

"I don't even know where to begin," said Tom, his eyes lost in the starless sky. "Star's missing, Marco's missing. I can't forget the image of them just lying unconscious in that desert."

"I don't even know if my mom or dad are alright. There are other pathways that lead to the Underworld, besides the dimensional gates. There's nothing stopping Eclipsa from getting inside. But I know that she won't. The only one she wants is Star. It's my fault that she and Marco are gone. I-I couldn't do anything, Kelly."

Tom took a deep, shuddering breath. Then he broke down into tears. Kelly quickly embraced him, and patted his back.

"It's not your fault, Tom. If Eclipsa was powerful enough to take down Meteora, then I can't even imagine that anyone could take her down."

Breaking out of the hug, Tom said, "Thanks, again."

"Aww, don't mention it. You're making me blush," said Kelly, carelessly waving a hand at him.

She stared out into the darkness with Tom for a while. Then she started tapping the cloudy ground. "So... are you coming inside? It's warmer inside the castle walls."

"No, I think I'll stay out here."

"In that case," said Kelly, taking a second sleeping bag out of her hair, "I'll stay here, too. I was hoping you'd come with me. Tad's afraid of you. He'll start bugging me again if I go back inside."

Kelly sunk into her sleeping bag. "Good night, Tom."

"Good night, Kelly."

She turned the other way, took a pillow out of her hair, and rested her bushy head on it.

Tom was looking out at the stormclouds that had left Mewni in a thoroughly impenetrable darkness. He thought about Mina Loveberry, who had been staring at the eastern skies ever since she got here.

A gentle snore indicated that Kelly was asleep beside him. He glanced at her before tucking himself into the sleeping bag that she gave him.

He was cold.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **dragon:** There is no reason to be non-specific here when the end of the previous chapter discusses a vehicle of this nature ascending into the clouds, where this castle is.
- <sup>2</sup> **Ponyhead:** It is better to leave the location name out. Ease the reader into the setting, then establish where they are. It is redundant also, considering the title of the chapter, which you should probably change, anyway.
- <sup>3</sup> **noticed:** You want to refrain from dedicating sentences to thoughts and observations, as it seriously kills the pace of the narrative.
- <sup>4</sup> **dragon:** This subject went to sleep like two sentences ago. Now you are telling the reader that it has awoken.
- <sup>5</sup> **They:** The two subjects are doing two different things before this. You will want to dedicate individual sentences for each of the characters involved. Do not lump them into one “They” sentence. That’s just lazy.
- <sup>6</sup> **dismounted:** It might not hurt to be more descriptive.
- <sup>7</sup> **looked:** There are too many instances of characters looking at scenes that follow. This is a byproduct of trying to write a narrative from one character’s PoV. It sounds forced; it is best to refrain from doing it at all. Consider segregating the narrative from any given character.
- <sup>8</sup> **dismounted:** Be more descriptive. You are leaning too much on this single word to describe the scene. It will sound more like a story and less like a list of events if you took the time and words to help your reader visualize the scenes.
- <sup>9</sup> **They:** “before following...”
- <sup>10</sup> **tilted:** Poorly phrased. State more explicitly that Lucitor notices Loveberry staring over the edge of the clouds.
- <sup>11</sup> **Tom:** Merge with previous sentence.
- <sup>12</sup> **through:** It would be nice to describe the interior of the castle here.
- <sup>13</sup> **Hekapoo:** This briefing scene is awful. Nothing happens except for an expo-dump. Hekapoo is being too formal. Like any other expo-dump, this one bogs down the narrative.
- <sup>14</sup> **anyone:** Everyone or just them?
- <sup>15</sup> **politely:** This is repeating what has already been implied.
- <sup>16</sup> **stripping:** Describe it.
- <sup>17</sup> **drooped:** This could easily be omitted. The previous sentence is already a strong indicator that he will fall asleep.
- <sup>18</sup> **stripped:** Describe it, do not state it. It is little things like this that make the story read like a list of events rather than an actual story.



<sup>19</sup> **eastern:** Make it clear at some point that she is looking in the direction of the Monster Temple. Otherwise, it is not one of Chekhov's guns. Also, it's not established in canon where Monster Temple is. It's better to just say that she was looking in the direction of Monster Temple.

## Scene 3

### Marco's Decision

It was mid-morning on Earth.

Marco was drenched in sweat, as though he had just run a marathon. He was trying to cling onto the last remnants of the dream he had had. His heart was beating with an excitement that he was barely able to understand. It took a while for him to realize he was awake.

He sat up and looked around, confused. The memories of the previous night were coming back to him. He had been lying on a wasteland, alongside Star. He knew it was no mere dream. Yet by some miracle, here he was, in his room at home on Earth.

He raced downstairs and ran straight into his father.

"Ow... Marco. My pizza bagels," said Mr. Diaz, gesturing sadly to the red mess on the stairs.

"Oops," he said. He got to his feet and helped his father up. "Listen. Where's Star?"

Mr. Diaz looked stern. "Help me mop up this mess and I'll explain," he said stiffly.

Half an hour later, he and Marco were sitting on the couch, waiting for the stairs to dry.

"You and Star were just laying there in the backyard," Mr. Diaz was saying. "I don't know how you got there, but you two were very hurt. What happened?"

"No time to explain," said Marco urgently. "Where's Star?"

Mr. Diaz frowned. "Whatever is going on, I want to know. I am your father, Marco."

"It's too complicated to explain," said Marco with an impatient wave of his hand. "You wouldn't understand if I told you. I barely understand it myself."

For a while, Mr. Diaz did not say anything. He seemed lost in

thought, a detail that his son barely registered. “Your mother took Star to the hospital about two hours ago. She was badly hurt. She looked like she needed medical attention. Come on, I’ll drive you.”

Mrs. Diaz stood obstinately between Marco and the door to an inpatient room. Her lips were pursed and her eyes reflected her worry and anger. Her son was pleading with her.

“No, Marco. I don’t know what happened on Mewni and I don’t care,” Mrs. Diaz said flatly. “But if I let you two talk on your own, you will make plans that will get you hurt again. Or even worse,” she added, her lips trembling.

“It’s okay, Mom — ”

“No, it is NOT okay, Marco,” roared Mrs. Diaz hoarsely. “You two nearly got yourselves killed doing whatever it is you were doing. I won’t let you put yourself or Star in danger again.”

She wiped her eyes and broke down. Tears streamed down her face.

Marco hugged her and patted her back. “Mom,” he said, “this isn’t your decision to make. Star’s homeworld is in danger.”

“So you’re just going to launch yourselves into danger again?” sobbed Mrs. Diaz.

Marco sighed. “We won’t have a choice. Star’s family is still there. Her friends are still there. Her entire kingdom is in danger. She won’t stand by and let them get hurt. And neither will I,” he added defiantly.

Withdrawing from the hug, Mrs. Diaz watched her son with regretful eyes, then walked past him without another word. Her son stared after her with an expression of shock and guilt. After she turned the corner, Marco opened the door.



Star was sitting up in bed, dressed in a hospital gown imprinted with ducklings. She looked concerned at Marco, as he walked in and shut the door behind him.

“Are you alright, Marco?”

“I’ve been better,” he replied with a shrug. “But I think I should be the one asking you that. My dad said you needed to go to the hospital. How badly were you hurt, anyway?”

“It hurts in a few places,” said Star. “But it’s not that bad. See?”

She got up off the bed to demonstrate. But not a second had passed before she lost her balance. Marco caught her by the back. He was holding her by the waist, his other hand ensconced within hers. They locked eyes, uncomfortably thinking of the last time they danced together.

Star turned her reddening face away from Marco as he helped her back into bed. She was rubbing her forearms nervously, while Marco pretended to be interested in the ceiling.

"I'm ready to return to Mewni, Marco," she said, after the moment passed. "Come on. Just use your scissors and let's go save the kingdom."

Marco looked Star in the eye. "No," he said firmly. "You're going to have to rest for now. You can't even stand, let alone fight."

"But my kingdom needs me. My family needs me. My friends need me. I can't believe this. After all you said to your mom just now, you're telling me to not go?"

Marco nodded, avoiding Star's eyes. She pouted, crossed her arms, and looked off to the side. An uncomfortable silence filled the air, punctuated by beeps and muffled banter from the corridor.

Then, Marco put his hands in his hoodie pouches and leaned against the wall. "I've never seen Eclipsa like that before."

"She was acting strange," she conceded. "It's like she wasn't even herself."

"What do you think made her that way?"

"Don't you have any sensitivity to other people's emotions, Marco?" snapped Star. "Meteora. She had to put down her own child. Who wouldn't break down after something like that?"

Marco waited a moment before speaking again. "Are you sure that you can defeat her, Star? She was incredibly strong."

"I'm not sure if anyone can," she said gravely. "But that's not the problem, here. Eclipsa's possessed, Marco. We have to find a way to wake her up."

"But how?" said Marco.

"Can't you think of anything on your own?" Star snapped again.

Marco pondered. "What would Glossaryck do?"

Star rolled her eyes. She grabbed a pillow, and stuffed her face into it.

"He'd probably tell me to look in the Book of Spells," she said, her voice muffled. "But Ludo burned it up ages ago."

"Wait, so that's it, then?" said Marco, astonished. "We don't have a plan?"

"No, Marco," said Star, taking her face off the pillow and glaring at him. "We don't. Now go away. I don't want to see you right now."

Marco gasped. He looked into Star's watering eyes. Hurt and frustration were etched onto her face. He was stunned; he could hardly breathe. All he could do was turn around, and wordlessly close the door behind him.

He bumped into someone. The doctor looked up from his clipboard. “Something wrong, champ?”

Marco shook his head. He did not trust himself to speak.

“Well,” said the doctor, “your friend should make a full recovery in about three days. She will be ready to leave by then.”

Marco muttered his thanks, before slumping past him. Star was worried about what was going on on Mewni, and so was he. He could only imagine what could happen on Mewni in just three days.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **It:** Please come up with a better title.
- <sup>2</sup> **Earth:** Try not to announce the name of the setting to open a chapter. Try not to do it in general, either. Using a location as the subject places it into the mental foreground where it does not belong. Also, ease the reader into the scene rather than outright telling him about it.
- <sup>3</sup> **trying:** This should be shown through action, rather than through explicit statement. Or perhaps it can be shown by action, followed by a colon preceding an explicit statement. “He wrestled the covers: trying to cling to the last remnants of the dream” or something.
- <sup>4</sup> **dream:** Add in metaphor about it slipping through his fingers like water or something.
- <sup>5</sup> **ran:** I am no fan of how these two actions are grouped together. They should be separated to reflect the fact that the second action unexpectedly follows the first.
- <sup>6</sup> **Diaz:** Positioning of the dialogue tag is a bit late.
- <sup>7</sup> **He:** Marco or Rafael?
- <sup>8</sup> **looked:** If you must include this, at least say that “his face hardened” or something. Use a phrase that indicates action rather than one that indicates observation.
- <sup>9</sup> **he:** Switching focus too often
- <sup>10</sup> **Mr.:** Stale phrasing. Start a sentence without the subject as the first word every so often.
- <sup>11</sup> **For:** This sentence does not indicate action or lack thereof. It bogs down the pace and doubly so, because of “for a while”, which tells, rather than shows the passage of time.
- <sup>12</sup> **registered:** Describe the behavior that indicates this inattention.
- <sup>13</sup> **Diaz:** Why are you shifting focus to the parents? Who is the main character, here? Or rather, who is not?
- <sup>14</sup> **Mrs.:** Okay to replace with “she”, since she is the only female conversant.
- <sup>15</sup> **hoarsely:** This is invisible. Or rather, you’re trying to describe anger and sadness at the same time. It just does not work.
- <sup>16</sup> **streamed:** This idea is the same as the one in the previous sentence.
- <sup>17</sup> **sighed:** Refashion as a dialogue tag.
- <sup>18</sup> **looked:** This word is heavily overused and for varying purposes.
- <sup>19</sup> **as:** “who walked in and shut the door behind him.”
- <sup>20</sup> **Marco:** The scene would work much better if you opened with this.
- <sup>21</sup> **Star:** I question the necessity of a dialogue tag here.

- <sup>22</sup> **demonstrate:** Demonstrate how? This verb is very generic. Paint a scene for the reader. This verb is not made of ink. It is made of colorless water, which is utterly useless for the metaphorical mental image of the scene to be communicated to the reader.
- <sup>23</sup> **lost:** Lost it how? Be specific. Paint the scene...
- <sup>24</sup> **Marco:** This scene should be linked with the one before it. The events happen in quick succession.
- <sup>25</sup> **uncomfortably:** Not a reprimand, but why are they uncomfortable? Was the BMB not fun for them both? Or did *Starcrushed* and *Booth Buddies* mess that up? I hope it didn't; it was such a beautiful scene and moment in the show. One of the best, I daresay. In any case, the reasons for the awkwardness must be made clear to the reader if it is not assumed he does not know already. Personally, I'd nix the awkwardness altogether for the biases stated.
- <sup>26</sup> **rubbing:** "She rubbed ..."
- <sup>27</sup> **No:** This would have a greater impact if it opened the sentence.
- <sup>28</sup> **fight:** Have Marco gesture to Star and her physical condition.
- <sup>29</sup> **filled:** Do not phrase it like this. Feel free to ignore this comment if you cannot find any good rephrases, though.
- <sup>30</sup> **waited:** Why is this necessary?
- <sup>31</sup> **gravely:** Not quite the right word; she is supposed to sound worried.
- <sup>32</sup> **astonished:** Incredulous, morelike.
- <sup>33</sup> **Star:** Not a reprimand. Just keep in mind that she is exasperated right now.
- <sup>34</sup> **stunned:** Rephrase this whole thing.
- <sup>35</sup> **himself:** It is condescending to the reader when the author explains why things are happening. Trust the reader to figure things out without this unnecessary spoon-feeding.
- <sup>36</sup> **Mewni:** Repetitive. You said the name of this place twice in the same paragraph. But if it cannot be helped, then leave it. Do not find any awkward workarounds if you can help it (looking at you, aliases).

## Scene 4

# The Monster Temple's Secret

A girl in pigtails sat sideways on the backseat of a dragon-cycle being driven by Talon Raventalon. The girl stared resolutely ahead, her eyes not possessed of her usual dementedness, but of a sort of manic determination.

Rhombulus sat in a crystal side-car attached to Hekapoo's dragon-cycle, which was shivering madly. Hekapoo had to steer it back in the right direction more than once. She did not approve of the addition when Rhombulus had proudly presented it to her, but as he was the key component of the operation, she had had no choice but to allow it.

They landed in a clearing in the woods, some miles away from the Monster Temple. Rhombulus hopped off his crystal seat and started forward.

"Rhombulus!"

He turned around. Hekapoo gestured to the side-car, looking angry. The dragon-cycle to which it was attached was shivering and whimpering softly. Rhombulus darted back and vanished his addition.

"Sorry, little guy," he said to the trembling creature. It slunk away from Rhombulus, and into a thicket of trees.

Hekapoo made to comfort it. "Shh," she whispered. "It's going to be alright. It's going to be alright. Shh..."

After a few minutes of being soothed by its master, the dragon-cycle regained calm. It snorted at Rhombulus, who crossed his arms and looked away like a stubborn child. Hekapoo glared at him, then slapped the seat of the dragon-cycle and pointed in the direction of Ponyhead Castle.

"Get going!"

The dragon-cycle took flight, scraping dirt at Rhombulus as it lifted itself off the ground.

"Hey!" he shouted, waving his snake-arm angrily.



“Come on,” said Hekapoo, after her dragon-cycle stuck its forked tongue out. “We don’t have a minute to waste.”

She motioned towards the woods. Rhombulus glared after the retreating dragon before entering the darkness between the trees. She noticed that the other dragon-cycle was still here.

“You’re dismissed, Talon. It’s way too dangerous for you to follow. Hurry up and go, before those dark mares come.”

Talon removed his sunglasses. “Hey. I just wanted to say... good luck out there, boss. Try not to die.”

Hekapoo’s eyes widened and her mouth was agape. She blinked and pursed her lips. “Thanks, Talon.”

The roaring of a second dragon-cycle echoed throughout the night, as Hekapoo caught up to Mina and Rhombulus. They were marching through the dense woods. Rhombulus asked why the group could not simply use a dimensional portal to infiltrate the Monster Temple. Hekapoo ducked an overhead branch before answering.

“I already told you. We can’t risk Eclipsa escaping into other dimensions. And besides, a portal directly into her lair would be far too risky. We don’t know what’s waiting for us there. We could be walking straight into an ambush. No, we have to proceed on foot.”

“I don’t like any of this stealth stuff,” said Rhombulus uncertainly. He bent back a branch that blocked his way.

Hekapoo ducked to avoid the branch ricocheting back at her. “Hey, watch it!”

Rhombulus marched without breaking pace, ignoring her.

“I told you before,” she said. “None of us stand a chance against Eclipsa. Our only option is to crystallize her.”

“Reminds me of old times. But why is she here?” he added grumpily, pointing a snake-arm at Mina.

“Just in case we’re caught and we do have to fight.”

“Uh, so why couldn’t we take Omni along?” asked Rhombulus.

“He was in the Dimension of Time when Eclipsa got corrupted. I didn’t have the time to fetch him. And I don’t even want to think about what would happen if Eclipsa seized control of his dimension.”

She ducked another tree branch that Rhombulus had flung back.

“It’s better that he stays put there,” she said firmly. “Now enough with the stupid questions. Let’s just hurry.”

The group wended their way through the dense woods for almost an hour. The foot of the mountain was in sight when they realized something. “Wait,” said Hekapoo. “Where’s Mina?”

Rhombulus crossed his arms, and closed his eye. “I thought we weren’t asking stupid questions,” he jeered.

Several seconds passed. Then he realized that Hekapoo wasn’t there anymore. “Huh? Hey, wait up!”

Hekapoo sidled against a wall near the front entrance. She was listening in on someone when Rhombulus arrived, saying, “Hey, what’s the big — ”

“Shh!” She pointed at Mina, who was gloating at somebody they could not see.

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t Eclipsa, the monster-smoocher.”

Hekapoo and Rhombulus edged closer to the corner of the wall. There, they saw the ancient queen blocking the front gates, her eyes closed. Her face was solemn; it was almost like she was meditating.

“Mina,” hissed Hekapoo. “What are you doing? This was not part of the plan!”

Mina shrugged. “Yeah, well. It’s part of MINE!” she roared, unleashing her Solarian powers. She zoomed like a bullet towards Eclipsa, a fist reared back.

“I have you now, monster-smoocher!” she shouted, before a massive shockwave rent the air. Hekapoo and Rhombulus clung onto the wall for support.

“Huh?”

Mina’s fist was held at bay by a violet, ethereal cocoon. Within it, Eclipsa still had not stirred. The Solarian warrior reared back, and unleashed a barrage of strikes.

“Why. Isn’t. This. Working?” she bellowed, punctuating each word with a blow to the magical barrier. Bits of the mountain crumbled from the shockwaves emanating from Mina’s rebounded strikes.

“Mina! Stop it!” cried Hekapoo, struggling to maintain her grip on the wall.

“What do we do now?” asked Rhombulus. “I don’t think I can freeze her with that bubble around her.”

“I don’t know,” said Hekapoo in a worried voice.

Then there was a distinct cracking sound. “Ha! Got you now!” chimed Mina, like a child would in a game of tag. Hekapoo and Rhombulus peered around the corner again.

Their eyes widened: The shield had cracked like the shell of an egg.

Mina launched a final punch at it. A moment of utter silence passed, during which nothing seemed to have happened. Mina’s fist still connected with the barrier; Hekapoo and Rhombulus were watching; and Eclipsa was still in her state of hibernation.

Then, the coccoon shattered in a flash of light.



The impact unbalanced Hekapoo; she was caught by Rhombulus. They shielded their eyes from the shockwaves of the explosion. When the air stilled, Hekapoo looked up at Rhombulus. They nodded at each other and leapt to the front entrance, which was still thick with lingering dust.

Rhombulus was charging his crystal-head when it happened. Behind the curtain of dust, a pair of glowing spades shone bright, followed by a pair of malevolently gleaming eyes.

“Get down!” shouted Hekapoo, pulling Rhombulus to the ground with her. Violet bullets zoomed over their heads in all directions.

Then suddenly, the firing stopped. Hekapoo looked up.

“Ha!” Mina was gripping the tip of Eclipsa’s umbrella, and had closed her fist on it. “You’re going to have to try a lot harder than that to beat me, monster-smoocher.” Her teeth were bared in a bloodthirsty smile. She wrenched Eclipsa’s umbrella out of her hands, threw it aside, and kicked her through the front doors of the Monster Temple.

Mina flung the punctured entrance wide open, and strolled inside. Hekapoo and Rhombulus sprinted after her.

Eclipsa was sitting at the base of a wall. Her eyes and cheeks were still glowing, but she was completely motionless, like a puppet whose strings were cut. Mina was standing over the queen, crossing her arms triumphantly.

“Any last words?” she said.

Then suddenly, a horrifying gasp escaped her lungs.

Hekapoo stopped mid-step and held her arm out in front of Rhombulus. They watched Mina revert from her Solarian form. She floated to the ceiling, her eyes blank, as Eclipsa ascended gracefully into the air.

Her umbrella was floating, its tip still glowing from the blast of darkness it had fired at Mina’s back. The wand rejoined its master, who then redirected it at the two intruders fleeing into another room.

Rhombulus froze the doorway and caught up with Hekapoo.

“Now would be a great time to re-open some portals!” he yelled.

“No! We can’t risk Eclipsa escaping Mewni,” Hekapoo yelled back.

The sound of shattering crystal echoed throughout the halls. She yanked Rhombulus down against the cold stone floor, shortly before the wall in front of them exploded.

“That didn’t stop you from sending what’s-his-face’s dragon-cycle back to your place!”

“That’s... that’s different,” she stammered, looking away.

They got up and sprinted. Rhombulus erected a wall of ice behind him, as Hekapoo slipped into a doorway. She pulled him inside.

Rhombulus wasn’t halfway done freezing the doorway, when a wall exploded elsewhere in the dust-filled room. He was charging another ice barrier when Hekapoo seized his arm. “Stop! I have a plan.”

Eclipsa floated through a hole in the wall. She seemed to be sensing her surroundings for her prey.

Then out of nowhere, Hekapoo lunged at her, scissor-knives drawn. Eclipsa reared her umbrella back to swat her away like a bothersome fly. But Hekapoo fazed straight through her. Eclipsa turned to see her floating in mid-air. The phantom was giving her a mocking smile, waving the queen goodbye before fazing apart.

Eclipsa looked down. A legion of Hekapoo phantoms was waiting on the ground. They lunged at her, one after another. She waved her umbrella around erratically, shooting dark bullets wherever a phantom appeared.

Then suddenly, Eclipsa was swallowed by a crystal the size of a small glacier. Behind the small of her back, a minute-sized portal had materialized, from which Rhombulus had fired an ice beam. Eclipsa’s umbrella fell into an orange, glowing hole in the ground.

“Now, Rhombulus!” shouted Hekapoo.

“On it!” He aimed his ice ray at the umbrella falling from above him. It fell to the ground, encased in a rugged block of ice.

The Hekapoo phantoms vanished, and their conjurer stepped out into the open. Rhombulus joined her. They walked side-by-side towards Eclipsa’s frozen body, and gazed down at her. Her eyes were blank. Her cheekmarks were still streaked with the same veins they had once seen on her hands.

“It’s over,” breathed Hekapoo.

She looked around at the destruction that happened in the span of just a few minutes. The walls were littered with holes, and the columns supporting the ceiling were falling apart.

“It’s lucky this place didn’t fall apart with us still inside, eh?” said Rhombulus, hoisting Eclipsa’s crystal onto his back.

“Yeah...” Hekapoo replied vaguely, looking around at the crumbling foundations. “It’s still standing even after all the magic that Eclipsa fired at it.” Then she got to thinking. “Wait, what if it wasn’t luck at all, Rhombulus?”

“Huh? What do you — Hey!”

A thud echoed throughout the chamber. The ground began to rumble. Hekapoo turned around.

“It can’t be,” she murmured, watching Rhombulus back away from the crystal rattling on the ground. Then it exploded.

Hekapoo was thrown back against the wall. The room swam beneath her eyes. Her head lolled off to the side, and then she moved no more.

The crystal encasing Eclipsa’s wand raced eagerly to the head of the room. The wand glowed black, and then the crystal shook violently. With a screech, the umbrella broke free of its bonds. Its master took hold of it once more, opened it, and aimed it straight at —

“Hekapoo!” shouted Rhombulus.

An icy wall appeared between the energy blast and Hekapoo, who was still unconscious. The sound of shattering ice awakened her; she opened her eyes drunkenly. Rhombulus stood between her and Eclipsa, who was readying another attack.

“I’ll buy you some time,” Rhombulus said over his shoulder, charging his crystal head. “Just get out of here!”

Hekapoo shook her head, and came out of her stupor. “But Rhombulus, what about — ”

Then Eclipsa fired.

The beams of ice and darkness collided in mid-air. Rhombulus was focusing with all his concentration to push against Eclipsa’s magic. The queen gave a lazy shake of her wrist, and her ray of darkness sheared through the ice beam.

“Rhombulus, no!” screamed Hekapoo, her voice breaking.

A flash of violet nearly blinded her. She did not open her eyes straight-away, afraid of what she might see. But her fear betrayed her. She fell to her knees. Rhombulus was trapped in ice, his eye blank. A single tear splashed onto the crystal.

“No...” She knelt at the crystal, mourning her lost friend. She vaguely registered Eclipsa in the reflection, approaching her.

Then Hekapoo ran. She ran and ran, until she could run no more.

She was not aware of how long she had been running. Somehow, she found herself panting heavily in a voluminous chamber. All was quiet, all was still. The tranquility was torture for her grieving heart. She ached to scream, to cry. But somehow, she could not even muster the strength.

It took her a few minutes to notice the icy color that filled the room. She got off the ground, wiped her eyes with her forearms, and gasped.

She was overcome with a strong surge of emotion. The memories came flooding back to her: memories of an audience with King Shas-tacan, memories of freezing Eclipsa, memories of retrieving Festivia off

the streets of Pie Island, and memories of imprisoning Globgor in the chamber in which she now stood.

Then, an umbrella flung open behind her.

“Eclipsa,” breathed Hekapoo.

She turned around to face the queen she had wronged. She held her arms out, ready to accept her punishment for her past misdeeds, ready to join her lost comrades.

“No.” The hoarse whisper broke the silence of the room. Hekapoo opened her eyes.

Eclipsa was lowering her umbrella. She seemed to be struggling with herself. Her eyes were shut tight, and she was shaking her head. It looked like she was having a horrific nightmare.

Her wand rolled off to the side.

“I won’t!” she screamed, falling on her knees. Tears were cascading down her cheeks, as she held the sides of her head.

Hekapoo’s eyes darted to Eclipsa, then to Globgor’s crystal. Then Hekapoo finally understood. She quickly ripped a portal behind her and fell in. The dimensional rift was zipped tight with a pop that was drowned out by the echos of Eclipsa’s last screams.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **in pigtails:** Absurd imagery.
- <sup>2</sup> **Talon:** This needs more action. It could not hurt also to exclude this one's name; it detracts focus from Mina Loveberry in this scene.
- <sup>3</sup> **attached:** Sort of wish there were a better way to describe this. If there isn't, I will not blame you.
- <sup>4</sup> **Rhombulus:** Mention Mina here also.
- <sup>5</sup> **Rhombulus:** It is unclear who is shouting.
- <sup>6</sup> **and:** Too many actions here, I think. Perhaps add the pointing bit when Hekapoo shouts at her dragon to get going?
- <sup>7</sup> **She:** Awkward placement of action. Might want to relocate it to the previous sentence.
- <sup>8</sup> **sunglasses:** Have him say this with a thick voice.
- <sup>9</sup> **mouth:** You are making this lot look silly. Do not do this. You disrespect them and the story whence they hailed.
- <sup>10</sup> **They:** Please describe the journey to Monster Temple.
- <sup>11</sup> **way:** "which Hekapoo had to duck after it ricocheted back at her..." or something to that effect. Anyway, merge these sentences, as the events described by them happen almost simultaneously.
- <sup>12</sup> **she:** Hekapoo seems like the victim, here. It is a bit out of character. She would be furious at Rhombulus for being so careless about how he flings these tree branches back. She would not be calmly explaining these where she left off after being angered so. Writing her like this saps her of her personality and makes her dry. Again, a disservice to Hekapoo.
- <sup>13</sup> **snake:** This is hardly any need to point this out. Any fan knows what his arms are made of. This is just an effort to sound fancy. In any case, it is likely your reader will skip over them. Keep this in only if you intend to have the snake hiss at Mina or something. In general, keep it in if the snake does something; Chekhov's gun principle, and all that.
- <sup>14</sup> **had:** Limit use of past-perfect and present-perfect. Or rather, use them only when appropriate; I'm not saying the usage here is inappropriate. This is just something to bear in mind.
- <sup>15</sup> **almost:** Describe the journey. Do not simply tell it.
- <sup>16</sup> **they:** "when Hekapoo realized something".
- <sup>17</sup> **Then:** "before"
- <sup>18</sup> **sidled:** "was sidling ... when Rhombulus arrived..." Also, a transition scene really would not hurt, you know. You're just jumping from one scene to the next. This is why you think stuff happens too fast in this story.

- <sup>19</sup> **somebody:** Why the vagueness? The reader already knows it is Eclipsa. You insult the reader's intelligence by teasing this.
- <sup>20</sup> **before:** Merge with next sentence because it is more closely related.
- <sup>21</sup> **Solarian:** Possible antecedent confusion. You mention Eclipsa in the last part of the previous sentence. She is no Solarian warrior, but by placing these two bits together, the author sort of implies it. Also, you should stick to the one-subject-per-paragraph rule
- <sup>22</sup> **Then:** Place this in its own paragraph.
- <sup>23</sup> **Hekapoo:** Merge with next sentence.
- <sup>24</sup> **state:** Wording is too fancy. "sound asleep" meshes better.
- <sup>25</sup> **shattered:** It would be far more chilling if Eclipsa just woke up.
- <sup>26</sup> **unbalanced:** Wording is too fancy; say she fell or that her grip on the wall slipped.
- <sup>27</sup> **she:** Too plain a description.
- <sup>28</sup> **leapt:** Can this really be grouped into the predicate? This really should belong in its own sentence or something, I think.
- <sup>29</sup> **curtain:** Sort of wish this would be established before you reference it.
- <sup>30</sup> **malevolently:** You use very similar phrasing in the final battle against Eclipsa, right before she casts Black Velvet Inferno. You may not want this, of all phrases, to grow stale by the time you need to use it.
- <sup>31</sup> **ground:** If you are trying to sound less repetitive, it will not solve the problem of actually being too repetitive. The original note said something about the words making this bit redundant.
- <sup>32</sup> **directions:** If the bullets went over their heads, the bullets would not be going in so many directions as claimed.
- <sup>33</sup> **suddenly:** Stop using time-related words like this one. Or rather, stop abusing them.
- <sup>34</sup> **and:** "; she". The current phrasing suggests that it happened after, while also using a past perfect tense. This makes no sense.
- <sup>35</sup> **smoocher:** I know Mina hates monsters and is crazy. But this phrasing is discomforting.
- <sup>36</sup> **punctured:** Please utilize this when Star and Marco infiltrate the Temple.
- <sup>37</sup> **crossing:** Who is crossing whose arms? Subject-predicate ambiguity. Fix now. Also, this belongs in the next paragraph.
- <sup>38</sup> **suddenly:** I would not mind if she were interrupted mid-sentence here. The voice of this is passive. And it does not narrate the event so much as it states it. Recall what sort of writing you are doing. Also, people do stuff "suddenly" too often in this story.



- 39 **another:** Why are they not fleeing outside? I mean, they have a mission to fulfill. Would it be safer out in the open? This is not a rhetorical question.
- 40 **yelled:** “as he caught up to Hekapoo.” This way, there will be no subject-predicate ambiguity.
- 41 **Mewni:** Delete the dialogue tag.
- 42 **shortly:** Put this into its own sentence.
- 43 **that:** Saying she “stammered” makes the stammering in the quoted text superfluous.
- 44 **She:** This whole piece sounds like a list of events rather than a story.
- 45 **seemed:** Show through action. And have her cast that scrying spell, only to be interrupted by a Hekapoo phantom.
- 46 **her:** You should work on fixing the subject-antecedent ambiguity here. It is unclear who is doing what.
- 47 **waved:** Write an actual action scene, not this trite summary of action. Make the reader feel more immersed in the scene.
- 48 **suddenly:** Stop saying this.
- 49 **small:** Is she just floating frozen in mid-air?
- 50 **Rhombulus:** No mention of him is needed. It is clear that he is the one who froze her. He is not even in the scene. This is another instance of telling versus showing.
- 51 **him:** This can be omitted without any change in meaning.
- 52 **vanished:** Telling again?
- 53 **her:** Sort of feels awkward to have an antecedent refer to the bearer of a role, or rather the alias of somebody. In general, stop using these aliases.
- 54 **They:** State what these lot did individually.
- 55 **luck:** Usual interpretation is that Eclipsa did not want to destroy the Temple with Globgor still inside. But the place has sentimental value to her. She raised a kid here for a brief spell before getting frozen. So while destroying the Temple would not kill Globgor, Eclipsa is still attached to the place.
- 56 **What:** “Wait. You’re not saying...? What — hey!” Remember that Rhombulus knows who else is here. He of all people would not forget this sort of thing so easily.
- 57 **it:** The ground or the crystal?
- 58 **the:** Mention Eclipsa charging her attack.
- 59 **her:** Antecedent may be ambiguous until the reader finishes the line.
- 60 **trapped:** It is unclear if he can break free of his own crystals. I would like to minimize inventions and base events off canon as much as possible.

- <sup>61</sup> **mourning:** Seems overdramatic. The well in the Queen's Sanctuary exists, and it is likely she knows about it. Somebody had to tell Festivia about it, and she woke up there shortly before Toffee was defeated. Also, how can Hekapoo suddenly outrun Dark Eclipsa?
- <sup>62</sup> **held:** This is too overdramatic.
- <sup>63</sup> **Globgor:** Try not to condescend by spoonfeeding the reader Hekapoo's plan.

## Scene 5

# Broken Bonds

The sun was shining high in the sky. The cool spring wind was slapping the grass and the trees. The birds were chirping, and there was not a cloud to be seen.

Marco enjoyed none of it. His fight with Star still lingered in his mind the morning after seeing her in the hospital. He wondered how things had gotten so complicated between them.

On the eve of her return to Mewni, she had confessed her feelings to him. Ever since she returned home, her life had only gotten much more difficult: discovering the truth of her lineage, her mom going missing, and Meteora destroying her kingdom and her people.

Marco thought about how he had changed ever since meeting Star.

He sighed and stared wistfully at the backyard, thinking about the days when it was just them against Ludo and his minions. He thought about Ludo; he pitied the creature, even though he terrorized Star on many an occasion. He thought about how Ludo wore only a chip bag and sandals the last time he saw him, before being tossed into parts unknown of his own volition.

Marco froze. He had remembered being stranded in a desert shortly after escaping Mewni. After a while, he had decided that the desert was just a dream.

A pair of burnished scissors was gripped in his fist as he rushed downstairs. His mom called after him as he slid the door to the backyard open. He turned around. "Not now, Mom. This is important."

A minute-sized whorl of colors was floating in mid-air, kept ajar by a single tiny sandal. There was sand on the bottom of it, and so Marco knew. He used his scissors to widen the dimensional rift.

"Marco!" called Mrs. Diaz. Marco turned around again. His mom was standing alongside his dad.

“What?” Marco said irritably. “This is — ”

“We know,” replied Mrs. Diaz curtly. “Just be careful.”

There was a little sad smile on her face; his father was trying not to cry.

A look of guilt dawned on Marco’s face, as he waved them goodbye.

After zipping the portal shut, he tucked his scissors away, and looked around him.

He found himself standing outside a house made of garbage. A car-sized spider was tethered to a caravan, eating from a dog-food tray. It looked up, considered him for a second, then resumed its meal.

Marco walked to the front-door, holding the sandal by the tip of his thumb and forefinger, and knocked.

The door opened. Dressed in a pink bathrobe with his beard tied around his head in a knot, Ludo said, “Yes? How can I — ” He froze mid-sentence, his mouth agape at the sight of his visitor.

“You, uhh, dropped this,” said Marco blankly, waving the sandal at him. A look of mild surprise dawned on the river demon’s face.

“Oh. How thoughtful of you,” Ludo tonelessly replied. He tossed the sandal somewhere behind him. “Well, thank you for returning that to me. Have a wonderful day. Goodbye.”

“Hang on,” said Marco, wedging his foot between the door and the doorway. “You saved me and Star, didn’t you?”

Ludo’s eyes darted from side to side. He opened his mouth and closed it again. He glanced at Marco’s shoe and sighed. “Why don’t you come in for some tea?”

Marco walked inside. The house smelled as bad as it looked. He remained standing until Ludo scurried back into the living room minutes later, carrying a plate with two steaming cups. Marco reluctantly accepted the teacup, handling it with as much care as he did Ludo’s sandal.

Ludo hopped onto a vomit-stained armchair. “Come, sit,” he said. “Make yourself comfortable.”

“I’m good,” said Marco, eyeing the discolored couch apprehensively.

“Very well. So, then,” began Ludo, taking a sip from his cup, “how can I help you?”

“Well, I was asking earlier,” he said, with a tone of rising impatience, “did you save me and Star?”

“No, I didn’t,” Ludo said quickly.

He took another sip from his cup and crossed his tiny legs. Marco noted the mismatched sandals; his eyes darted to the sandal Ludo had tossed aside. Then, the river demon looked into his teacup.

“I don’t know why I did it,” he said finally. “Legends told of an ancient civilization that held a very powerful magical relic. I traced it to that scorching wasteland. I’d been searching for hours and hours. I was beginning to run out of food and water. Then I came across you two.”

He shrugged. “It just seemed like the easier thing to do.”

Marco sat quietly, watching Ludo sip from a cup of what was likely not tea, nor any sort of beverage.

“How’s Star Butterfly?” Ludo asked suddenly.

Marco’s eyes widened. “Who? Oh.” Ludo drunk out of his cup while waiting for an answer. “She’s... recovering.”

Ludo smacked his lips. “By the way, how did you come to be in that desert in the first place? Did Star lose her wand again?”

Marco shrugged. “Well, sort of. But that’s not why she was there. It’s complicated. There’s some bad stuff going on on Mewni right now. You don’t want to know about it.”

“Dennis,” Ludo muttered into his teacup.

“Huh?”

“It’s nothing, it’s nothing,” Ludo said, waving his hand dismissively. “How long will it be before she’s ready to save Butterfly Kingdom again?”

“It will be about two days,” answered Marco.

“Mewni doesn’t have two days,” said a voice. “It’ll be ash by then.”

Ludo started and looked around with panic in his eyes; he recognized that voice. Marco recognized the voice, too. An orange hole was ripped through the ceiling, and a woman landed gingerly onto the living room carpet.

“Hekapoo!?” Marco yelped. “What are you doing here? And what happened to you?”

There were bruises and cuts decorating her arms and her face. She was resealing the portal she had opened. She split her scissors, and tucked them into her hair like regular ornaments.

“Took me forever to find this place,” she muttered. Her expression was grave and serious. She glared at Ludo, who whimpered and hid behind the armchair, then faced Marco. “Am I glad to see that you’re still alive.”

Marco blinked. “Alive?” he said, non-plussed.

“Tom said he saw you and Star collapsed in some desert. We all thought — well, it doesn’t matter, anymore,” she said quickly. “He said there was some window thing that Eclipsa made.”

“The All-Seeing Eye,” murmured Marco.

“Things are bad, Marco. The whole continent’s been overrun. The only safe havens left on Mewni are Ponyhead Castle and the Underworld.

I've managed to evacuate everyone to Ponyhead Castle for the time being. But the main problem is that we cannot neutralize Eclipsa as it is."

"What about Rhombulus?" suggested Marco. "Star said that Rhombulus was the one who originally froze her. Maybe he can freeze her again."

"That's not an option," she said shortly. Her hands suddenly balled into fists.

"What? Why not?"

Hekapoo sighed. "It's a long story."



Marco listened to Hekapoo recount her failed raid on the Monster Temple; as did Ludo, who was still hiding on the ground.

Her nails dug deep into the fabric of the couch. She was biting her upper lip, and her hands were shaking.

Then Marco hugged her. Hekapoo's eyes widened in surprise. "Marco? What... what is this?"

"You look like you really needed a hug," he answered quietly.

Tears welled up in the demon woman's eyes. She buried her face in Marco's chest.

He felt fiery tears singe holes in his shirt. They seeped through and stung his chest, but he did not care. He gently patted her on the back, knowing that words alone could not describe the pain she had been holding back.

After a few minutes, Hekapoo pushed Marco back. She wiped her eyes on her forearm.

Marco waited until her sniffles were stemmed. "So Hekapoo, what can I do to help?"

"I came to ask how well Star followed the Book of Spells during her training on Earth."

"Her training?" Marco thought back on the handful of sessions he had witnessed. Only one of them culminated in her learning a spell written by one of her ancestors. "Sorry. I can't say Star really followed the Book when she was training on Earth. Why do you ask?"

"A long time ago, Queen Solaria used a spell to shatter one of Rhombulus' crystals. She might have left a record of it somewhere."

"And you need it to shatter the crystal around that monster guy."

"Precisely."

"I'll ask Star if she saw anything like that, once she's done recovering."

Hekapoo sighed. She conjured a crystal orb in her palm, and held it over the flame on her tiara. The orb was imbibed with a bright-blue

flame when she handed it to Marco. “Take this.”

“What is it?”

“Ever since this crisis with Eclipsa started, I’ve had to close all the portals to Mewni. You can’t get into Mewni with dimensional scissors anymore. I doubt Star can, either,” she added.

“This orb will let you open a portal to Mewni. I added an extra charge just for you, in case you need to escape. We need your help, Marco. We need both you and Star.

“I know it’ll be a few days until she recovers,” she continued. “But Mewni might not even be around for that long. I’m going back to check up on the situation.”

Tearing open a portal above her, Hekapoo waved Marco goodbye. Then a glob of worms fell over her head. She snarled, and brushed the slimy creatures off her. Picking the last worm out of her hair, she looked Marco in the eye.

“By the way, Nachos is safe at my place. Take care. We’re counting on you.”

The portal closed with a pop. Ludo crept out from behind the couch. He looked around. “Is she gone?”

“Yeah, she just left. Listen, I’m going to take off, too,” he said, jabbing a thumb at the front door.

But Ludo wasn’t paying attention to him. His eyes were transfixed on a spot on the ground. “Ooh!” he cooed. He crouched down, and pet the worms that fell from the portal Hekapoo had opened. “What delightful little creatures! Can I keep them?”

He was looking up at Marco, who was inexorably reminded of a kid asking his mom for a new toy. Marco shifted awkwardly. “Um, sure...”

Ludo squealed with an inappropriate amount of giddiness. “Now wait right just there. I have the perfect home for you, my pretties.” He hurried up the stairs.

The second he was out of sight, Marco tore a hole with his scissors, put one leg into the dimensional rift, and stepped through.

The golden afternoon was beginning to fade. The sky was blushing as the sun descended into the horizon. The crows squacked, as they flew through the twilit clouds.

At his front door, Marco dug through his pockets. Then he slapped his face, remembering that he had left his keys inside the house. He slapped his face even harder. “What am I doing?” he muttered.

He dug in the pockets of his hoodie for his dimensional scissors. Then not a second later, the door opened.

“Marco?”

“Star?”

Marco looked surprised at her, standing in the doorway without even a shadow of a limp. Aside from a few scratches on her face, she seemed to be in perfect health. It was like she hadn't been mauled by Meteora just a few days prior.

They looked awkwardly at each other, an uncomfortable silence expanding quickly between them. It seemed to last forever, until Marco said, “Listen. I've just seen Hekapoo...”

“No wonder my Sparkle Glitter Bomb Expand isn't working.” It was disconcerting for Marco to hear Star say the name of her spell with a tone of worry, rather than her usual enthusiasm.

They were sitting on the living room couch.

“Wait,” he said slowly. “You've tried?”

Star lowered her eyelids. “Uh-huh,” she replied tonelessly.

“Without a wand?” Marco added incredulously.

In response, Star raised a hand at him; it glittered with a strange aura, before she cried, “Narwhal Blast!”

A narwhal body-slammed him to the ground. Marco saw Star step outside. He pushed the narwhal off him and hurried after her. “Wait, Star!”



She stood in the backyard facing away from him. The hems of her ruined dress fluttered in the breeze between them.

“Hekapoo asked — ”

“No, Marco. I don't know any spells like that.”

Star still had her back turned to him.

“Maybe the Book — ”

“The Book of Spells is gone, Marco,” she said flatly. “Ludo burned it up ages ago, remember? The only piece of it left is in my room at home. And I seriously don't think that the spell you're looking for is on there.”

He felt a stinging sensation in his chest hearing the words, ‘my room at home’.

“Star,” he said, extending a hand to her, “it's going to be alright.”

Star turned around, her mane of blond hair fluttering in the breeze for a brief moment, before Marco saw the tears in her eyes, glistening in the fading light. “No, Marco. It's not alright. Why do you have to be so overprotective of me? Why can't you ever trust things to do things on my own? I thought you were my friend.”

“Is... Is this about me telling you not to go to Mewni yesterday?” Marco said slowly.



“No,” she said quietly. “You’ve been doing this ever since we met. The Blood Moon Ball, that time I went downtown, when Toffee took over the kingdom, and when I was learning to use my new powers. I’m not sure if I can even be friends with you, anymore.”

Marco recoiled. Then a familiar feeling erupted in his torn heart. His voice was trembling as he shouted, “Don’t you know why I did all those things?”

In response, Star looked away from him. She passed Marco and slammed the door. He stood alone there in the dark. He felt his insides go numb and cold. He was trembling madly, and not because of the frigid night air.

He made to go back inside. He looked at his reflection in the backyard door. His eyes were baggy; he doubted he would be able to sleep that night. He wondered if he would ever sleep again. Then Marco blinked and saw something in the glass.

“Marco? What has happened between you and Star? I just saw her. She looked quite upset.”

It took a moment for him to tear his gaze from the sky. Mr. Diaz was standing in the doorway, looking down at him solicitously.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” answered Marco, pushing past his father and marching up the stairs.

He slammed his bedroom door shut, and buried his face in his pillow. The echoes of the fight echoed in his ears. He was trying to forget the look in Star’s eyes. He saw her in his mind’s eye watching her heart break, over again.

His pillow was still damp when he woke up the next morning. He looked out the window: the air was thick with mist, and the sky was utterly colorless. There was a knock at his door.

“Marco?” said Mrs. Diaz. “Star says to get ready. She wants to go home to Mewni.”

Marco made to gather his things. He noted his dimensional scissors, tucked in the inside pocket of his hoodie. He opened his closet, and dug in the back for the sword he had won from the depths of the Neverzone.

He searched his room for the glass orb Hekapoo handed to him the previous day. Marco wondered, as he crouched beneath his bed, how he and Star had gotten to this point. He searched aimlessly for a few minutes, until he realized that the orb wasn’t even in his room.

“Oh, Marco. You left something here,” said Ludo, presenting him with the fiery orb.

He turned on his heel to leave, when Ludo said, “Come. I wish to show you something.”

The last thing he wanted to do was to keep Star waiting. But he was also not in a big hurry to return to her, as broken as things were between them. He shrugged and followed Ludo.

“It was the funniest thing,” Ludo was saying, “I was feeding my worms some scraps. I’d accidentally dropped something in there, and — ”

The river demon pointed at a double-A battery in the glass tank, being reconstructed by his silkworms. Marco’s eyes widened. “Say, Ludo. Can I ask you for a favor?”

A dimensional portal opened into the living room of the Diaz household. “Marco, what are you going? We’re supposed to be going to Mewni, remember?” Star gave Marco a cross look. He was setting down a tank of worms he had gotten from Ludo.

“Star, I have a plan.”

“No, Marco. I’m done listening to you.”

“Just hear me out for a second,” pleaded Marco, a beseeching look in his eyes.

Star glared at Marco, as if to remind him of the previous day’s argument. Her upper lip trembled, then her look softened. Plopping onto the couch, Star crossed her arms. Marco hesitated, then explained what had happened at Ludo’s hovel.

“We should regroup with the others at Ponyhead Castle when it’s done,” said Star. She still looked upset with him, but he was grateful that she had at least listened.

He noticed that she had washed up and had changed into her sea-green dress. Evidently, his parents had been washing her clothes before she went home to Mewni many months prior.

Marco tucked a handful of silkworms into a plastic bag, then strapped it to his waist. “Okay. But let’s go get Nachos from Hekapoo’s, first.”

A lone workshop stood in the midsts of the Neverzone, from which countless tools to traverse the multiverse had emerged. Only those whom the forge’s master had deemed worthy were bestowed the fruits of her work. Marco had once seen the forger at work, after sixteen years of assiduous pursuit, before receiving his hard-earned prize.

A large man in his thirties entered the forge and looked around, lost in his nostalgia. “Come on, Marco,” said Star impatiently.

“Oh, uh. Right.”

He found his dragon-cycle chained to a stake in the ground. Nachos was licking out of a tray of food when it sensed its bonds being undone. It began licking its master’s face.

“It’s good to see you too, old buddy,” he said, ruffling the dragon’s ears. Star was leaning against the doorway with her arms crossed. She

cleared her throat, and exited the workshop.

Marco tied the bag of worms to the dragon-cycle. “Let’s go, buddy,” he said, leading Nachos outside.

He was holding the glass orb in one hand, and his dimensional scissors in the other. He stood there confounded for some time, until Star came over and snatched the objects out of his hands.

She ran the blades through the orb, and they passed through it like it was water. The scissors burned hot with the light-blue glow of Mewni’s dimension.

Marco grinned. “Alright. Let’s ride.”

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **cloud:** Descriptions of the sky really belong in the first sentence.
- <sup>2</sup> **still:** “was still lingering”. “still” is invisible here.
- <sup>3</sup> **seeing:** “visiting”
- <sup>4</sup> **Star:** This is an opportunity to reference the time they became friends.
- <sup>5</sup> **him:** Possible antecedent confusion. Did Ludo see Marco or vice versa?
- <sup>6</sup> **shortly:** This word adds nothing.
- <sup>7</sup> **whorl:** Perhaps have Mr. Diaz explain how he and his wife found Marco and Star. Have him mention Ludo leaving before being seen. His sandal got lodged as he fled. He closed the rift clumsily and he did not check if it was gone. He assume the sandal was still on Earth. And his feet are so tiny, the portal would not have been noticed, anyway. But he is tiny himself; relative size and all. It would be more noticeable to him than to most others. It is still an easy thing to miss. Perhaps he shuts himself in after the ordeal. Figure something out.
- <sup>8</sup> **rift:** Mention Marco picking up the sandal... or just not have him pick it up. Why would he?
- <sup>9</sup> **His:** “turned around to see”
- <sup>10</sup> **curtly:** Keeping is simple could help here. Nix the dialogue tags.
- <sup>11</sup> **dog:** The tray would not be of this size. It’s for a giant spider. Maybe it just looks like a dog food tray.
- <sup>12</sup> **considered:** Use action to show this.
- <sup>13</sup> **holding:** Should have begun the sentence with this.
- <sup>14</sup> **knot:** Too much description. Trust the reader to know what Ludo looks like. Provide description only when outfits change, and maybe when it is significant. If it changes, then it is significant. It is an important part of scene-setting. You must help the reader form the scene in his mind.
- <sup>15</sup> **mouth:** “His jaw dropped”. would suffice provided it is in a separate paragraph.
- <sup>16</sup> **river:** Again with the aliases! Do not use them. I hate reading them. Why do you think to use them in your writing? The prose can get stale, but my point stands. There are other ways to add variety to your sentences. This is just a cheap method. Do not use it.
- <sup>17</sup> **He:** “tossing”. The events happen in quick succession, so you should place them in the same sentence.
- <sup>18</sup> **wedging:** Add in a passage about Ludo trying to close the door and Marco preventing him. Also, the new reason for this visit is so that

- Marco can get his sword back. He gives Ludo his sandal back when he returns again to get his sword, after having forgotten it in light of Hekapoo's unexpected arrival. This may sound confusing now, but figure it out when you're rewriting the scenario from scratch.
- 19 **tea:** This whole scene makes me uncomfortable. I refuse to comment on it. Replace this scene.
- 20 **whimpered:** Does this belong in a parenthetical remark?
- 21 **plussed:** Why the dialogue tags?
- 22 **Star:** She does know this, or rather can infer this much. Refer to *Stranger Danger*. Perhaps have Marco say this with a non-absolute degree of certainty. Maybe she mentioned it in passing.
- 23 **Then:** Show don't tell. Stale phrasing.
- 24 **demon:** Bury these aliases.
- 25 **few:** Stop dedicating clauses to indicate the passage of time. It diverts focus from the characters.
- 26 **followed:** Have her ask about Star's training in general. Then have her delve into the subject of how attentively she read the Book.
- 27 **Only:** Perhaps merge this with the previous sentence via (semi)colon.
- 28 **ancestors:** Star would recount the truth of her family to Marco. It would be appropriate to replace "ancestors" here with "predecessors".
- 29 **when:** Why reiterate this part? "that well" could work as a replacement.
- 30 **might:** It is likely she suspects the contents of the Book even though she is not allowed to look in it herself. In any case, the uncertainty is unneeded. Or is it? Decide on whether or not the MHC knows what's in the Book. They probably shouldn't. It's usually for Butterflies only. And Glossaryck might be mad at his kids for violating the rules.
- 31 **added:** It is odd to split a dialogue passage like this.
- 32 **continued:** It isn't necessary to break up this passage.
- 33 **waved:** It is hard to imagine her doing these things at the same time.
- 34 **Ludo:** Please stop writing these uncomfortable scenes with Ludo.
- 35 **golden:** Expand the scenery. Also, save this description for that dream chapter, when it is needed most. In general, try not to reuse phrases, descriptions, and the like throughout the novel.
- 36 **house:** "before going to investigate the portal"
- 37 **Then:** "But not a second later,"
- 38 **Marco:** Maybe have the duo reprise their last lines from the show. It might contrast with the moment when they use the lines in the epilogue. Maybe not. It's your call.
- 39 **even:** This word is not needed. The "shadow of a limp" business is too flowery. It is something you'd tack on *after* establishing that she is

- in perfect health.
- 40 **few:** It's been three days. Being vague when your reader can already calculate the number of days it's been insults him.
- 41 **wonder:** Transition into this rather than letting the reader think it is a response to the previous dialogue.
- 42 **eyelids:** "She lowered her eyes"
- 43 **tonelessly:** Reminder that she is acting cold to Marco, as she was during *Lint Catcher*
- 44 **him:** Nix this and avoid pronoun-antecedent ambiguity.
- 45 **off:** Should add that it poofed into thin air as Marco left.
- 46 **him:** This scene would benefit from a transition. For example, Marco might rush through the door to find Star with her back turned to him.
- 47 **turned:** Implied until stated otherwise. Nix.
- 48 **He:** Consider replacing with "Marco".
- 49 **brief:** As opposed to a long moment?
- 50 **slowly:** Consider placing action before dialogue.
- 51 **powers:** This is debateable. Have them argue about it. It is only appropriate.
- 52 **erupted:** Show this. Telling the reader how these lot feel bogs down the narrative. Also, mention something about the reunion scene in the *Battle for Mewni* arc. Have these two have an actual fight, not this tame announcement that they are no longer friends.
- 53 **torn:** It would be better if this were the main point presented. Why is it placed aside as a fact the reader is assumed to know?
- 54 **response:** Stop saying this.
- 55 **slammed:** New idea: She flies off into parts unknown. Atop some building, she looks up at the Blood Moon, while Marco does the same from his bedroom window. You will need to rewrite the rest of the scenario up until their departure to Mewni. Also, maybe have the scene reflect/contrast the finale of *Starcrushed*. Just some ideas.
- 56 **alone:** Make a new paragraph whenever the focus/subject changes. Ideally it should change between scenes and chapters. But I am being lenient. At least shift it between paragraphs.
- 57 **frigid:** If you must use a synonym to avoid repetition, then you are not solving the main problem: You are repeating yourself. Correct the problem instead of using the cheap band-aid "solution".
- 58 **blinked:** Make the BMC reference clearer or at least better-phrased. It is supposed to be vague, even as a background piece, but its presence should be more explicitly communicated.
- 59 **him:** For Marco or Rafael?
- 60 **looking:** This word is overused.

- <sup>61</sup> **marching:** These do not seem like events that would take place in quick succession. I suggest you place the second bit in a separate paragraph or sentence.
- <sup>62</sup> **next:** It would be better if you did not dedicate the time to explain and announce every single detail of each scene before it begins. Ease the reader into the setting instead of info-dumping him at every possible opportunity.
- <sup>63</sup> **utterly:** This word adds nothing. It also modifies an absolute adjective. Nix at once!
- <sup>64</sup> **tucked:** “still tucked”, to reference the fact that he’d done so the previous day after investigating the portal in the backyard.
- <sup>65</sup> **sword:** The last time he had this was in *Divide*. How did it get from Mewni to Marco’s bedroom closet?
- <sup>66</sup> **few:** “a few” serves no purpose. Nix.
- <sup>67</sup> **even:** This word should be used sparingly. Nix.
- <sup>68</sup> **He:** Who did? Ludo or Marco?
- <sup>69</sup> **Can:** These Ludo scenes are seriously weird.
- <sup>70</sup> **He:** You might want to break this paragraph. Is Star surprised at how Marco entered the living room? Also, maybe have her act surprised at Marco’s mention of Ludo. It’s unnatural for her to not even acknowledge how her best friend is interacting with a former nemesis, who is supposed to be missing. While you’re at it, write out the actual conversation instead of summarizing it.
- <sup>71</sup> **beseeking:** Implied already by the decorated “said” verb.
- <sup>72</sup> **he:** Place in different paragraph.
- <sup>73</sup> **whom:** Do not use this word, even if you are doing so correctly. Nowadays, it is commonplace to use “who” regardless of grammatical correctness. Grammarians will take the time to think about the usage, rather than about the story. The less scrutinizing reader will tilt his head at the word. Just don’t use it.
- <sup>74</sup> **entered:** This sentence looks odd by itself. Add more context or delete it. The previous passage could imply it. Better yet, merge it with the passage in question. Also, don’t say that Marco’s thirty. It’s a dead giveaway to his identity. Also, why the intentional vagueness?
- <sup>75</sup> **impatiently:** This belongs in another paragraph. Another subject, another paragraph. Maybe show this also; “Star is tapping her foot while crossing her arms” or something.
- <sup>76</sup> **Right:** Should add a remark about his deeper voice.
- <sup>77</sup> **ground:** Surely you mean the floor?
- <sup>78</sup> **began:** Add in a transition. The narrative jumps around like this too often, to the point that it confuses the reader and makes him lose

interest and immersion in the story. Also, just say that Nachos licked Marco's face. None of this "began to lick" nonsense.

<sup>79</sup> **throat:** Belongs in another paragraph. This bit should probably open it.

<sup>80</sup> **holding:** Stop jumping.

<sup>81</sup> **confounded:** Do not write Marco like this. It is embarrassing and painful. But as he is unfamiliar with magical artifacts, it is to be expected. Maybe have Star do this from the get-go. Or maybe she has already gone through it.

<sup>82</sup> **burned:** "burnt". Be consistent with British/American spellings. It might be essential to show this so that the reader knows what Star is trying to do in the climax of the next chapter.

<sup>83</sup> **grinned:** Marco wouldn't be grinning after his friendship with Star ended just a day ago.



## Scene 6

# The Lost Book

Star stumbled onto a hillside cast in pitch-black darkness. There was not a single star or moon to be seen in the sky. Her surroundings were barely visible. It was difficult for Star to make out the castle she had grown up in. With a heavy heart, she knew she was home.

As Star made to seal the dimensional rift, something fast and fiery zoomed straight out of it. She stepped aside and crossed her arms. “Marco! I can handle this on my own.”

Having reverted to his sixteen-year-old body again, Marco leaped nimbly off Nachos and marched over to Star. He eyed the bag of silkworms she had snatched off his dragon-cycle.

“How were you planning on getting to Ponyhead Kingdom?” demanded Marco.

Rolling her eyes, Star transformed into her Butterfly Form then reverted back a second later.

“Well, I’m still going to need my scissors to get home, you know.”

“Fine,” pouted Star, placing Marco’s scissors into his outstretched palm. “Get going, then.”

As Star expected, he refused to leave.

“Listen,” he said, “Mewni’s way too dangerous to be roaming about in right now. I mean, Eclipsa’s still running around. What if she comes after you again? Let me come with you. Let me help.”

“No,” she said flatly. “Go home, Marco. I can save Mewni on my own.”

Then Marco gasped, and pointed over her shoulder. “What was that?”

“You’re not going to distract me, Marco. Just go home.”

“No, Star,” he said, sounding slightly paranoid. “There was something there.”

Star opened her mouth to retort, when she heard a neighing in the distance. She and Marco flattened themselves against the ground. They watched a dark Millhorse emerging out of the moat of Butterfly Kingdom. The fell beast sniffed around in their direction.

“What is that?” whispered Marco.

Star lowered her eyes at him. “It’s a horse, Marco,” she said in a flat tone. She squinted through the darkness, and looked more closely. “Wait. I think it came from the Realm of Magic. But it seems... different.”

The pitch-black unicorn sunk back into the inky waters. Then, Star morphed.

Minutes later, she landed on the sill of the window in her bedroom. It was the same one that Marco had clung onto when he first arrived on Mewni, announcing his decision to become a knight. She shook her head to dismiss the memory, then reverted.

Star conjured a light in the palm of her hand, and gasped. Her room was in greater disarray than normal, owing to Meteora’s prior attack on the castle. She went to searching under her upturned, crooked bed.

She heard a low rumbling noise from outside minutes later. “Marco! I told you I can do this on my own,” she said, without looking up.

Marco clambered into the room, saying, “Star, there’s something I’ve got to tell you. We’re being watched.”

“Don’t worry,” she said shortly. “Those horse-things didn’t see me on the way here.” She continued to scrummage through the bottom of her cracking, unstable bed.

Then there was a popping noise above her. She got off the floor, and turned around.

A window bordered by darkness had just disappeared, because Marco was inches away from making contact with it, in the same way he had done shortly before Star mastered her new powers.

“Star, hurry! She’s coming!”

Panic seized her, and she scrambled towards the other hiding places in her room.

There was a chorus of neighing outside the window. A group of Millhorses thumped up the stairs. Marco pushed Star’s ripped bed against the door. He looked around for other heavy objects he could find, as Star searched through her disheveled room.

Her heart was beating fast. She didn’t know how long it was going to take until Eclipsa found her.

The door slammed repeatedly on the other side.

“Star!”

“I know. I know. I’m trying!”

Her heart was thumping fast. But try as she had, Star was unable to locate the box. Her room had simply become too scrambled after Meteora attacked the castle.

“Marco. It’s no use. We have to go back. Now!”

“On it!” said Marco, withdrawing his scissors. “Star, the orb!”

Several horns pierced the splintering door. He jumped away from it. Star had just taken Hekapoo’s bright-blue orb out, when the dark steeds suddenly stopped their rampage.

A figure descended in front of the window. It was carrying an umbrella, which was pointing directly at Star.

“No!” Marco shoved Star to the ground, and the orb rolled out of her palm.

Then something hit Eclipsa’s arm. Her blast veered away from the bedroom. “Nachos!” The dragon-cycle was tackling Eclipsa and blowing fire at her, trying to draw her away from Marco.

“Marco, look!” said Star. The crystal orb was banging repeatedly against a cardboard box. “Grab the box!”

“On it!” said Marco, before launching into a sprint. He snatched the box and orb off the floor, and placed the latter inside the former. He was taking his scissors out, when a terrible roar came from outside. “No...”

Star looked uncertainly at Marco, who stood frozen, his eyes wide with shock. She got up and dashed to his side. She snatched the scissors from his hand, and took the orb out of the box.

“Come on, come on...” Star looked frantically from the windowsill to the scissors half-submerged in the glass orb in her trembling hands.

Then there was a flash of lightning. A dark figure descended into the room. Star tugged Marco’s arm and backed away towards a wall.

A bright-blue glow filled the space between them.

The queen’s hollowed eyes were visible for a brief moment, as she shot a dark bullet at the duo. In one fluid motion, Star tackled Marco against a wall and threw the emptied orb at Eclipsa, swiping the air with the glowing blades of the scissors as she did so. In the second Eclipsa tilted her head to dodge, Star yanked Marco into the rift.

A dark bullet sunk deep into the sandy ground on the other side, a split-second before Star sealed the portal shut. She felt her heart pounding like a drum as she collapsed onto the sand.

She closed her eyes, and panted rapidly.

“Long time no see, kiddo,” said a familiar voice.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **had:** “grew up in”. She has not been brought up in any other castles.
- <sup>2</sup> **Star:** “she”. There is no one else on this hillside. Also, switch the order of this sentence. “Something fast and fiery zoomed out the portal as she made to close it.”
- <sup>3</sup> **crossed:** She is doing this quite often. Should she not just be “stepping aside here”?
- <sup>4</sup> **again:** Nix.
- <sup>5</sup> **snatched:** You should just state that she has them. This sort of thing need not be explained. It is implied. Maybe Star hides the bag behind her back or something.
- <sup>6</sup> **back:** Redundant. Should show that she poofs into Butterfly Mode one second and reverts the next, while pouting and crossing her arms.
- <sup>7</sup> **pouted:** This bit would work better without the dialogue tags.
- <sup>8</sup> **refused:** Show this. There is no way for the reader to infer this conclusion, since you’ve given no evidence that might imply it.
- <sup>9</sup> **gaped:** Enough of this. Pronoun-antecedent ambiguity with “her shoulder”.
- <sup>10</sup> **sounding:** How? Show don’t tell.
- <sup>11</sup> **themselves:** Unsure of pronoun-antecedent agreement. You use a plural pronoun to refer to a group, that you refer to by the names of its constituents. You will want to check if this is legal. If yes, it’s still awkward.
- <sup>12</sup> **out:** “from”. Show don’t tell.
- <sup>13</sup> **fell:** A semicolon is preferable here, since the sentences have the same subject.
- <sup>14</sup> **She:** “But then, (participial phrase) ...”
- <sup>15</sup> **inky:** This happens just as Star finishes speaking. Rephrase it so that prose reflects this.
- <sup>16</sup> **Minutes:** Insert transition here. You could describe the chaos in Mewni during that transition. State how the land is pitch-black, now; she could fly into the castle without even realizing it. Or maybe she approached it (...)
- <sup>17</sup> **conjured:** Describe how.
- <sup>18</sup> **disarray:** Describe this disarray, rather than telling the reader about it.
- <sup>19</sup> **normal:** Not grammatically sound. “...it normally was” would probably be better.
- <sup>20</sup> **minutes:** These time-passers really must go.

- <sup>21</sup> **something:** “Star. We’re being watched.” Also, Star is being watched, not Marco.
- <sup>22</sup> **Marco:** Eclipsa tries to reach through the All-Seeing Eye to seize Star. Marco slashes Eclipsa’s forearm to prevent her. Eclipsa recoils and makes her way to Butterfly Castle. Might need to show blood here. Dark blood? Dark magic?
- <sup>23</sup> **shortly:** Do not fret over the lost reference. Everyone in this story is being far too passive anyway.
- <sup>24</sup> **Millhorses:** Have Marco fight these things.
- <sup>25</sup> **She:** Join via semicolon.
- <sup>26</sup> **Her:** Join via semicolon.
- <sup>27</sup> **On:** Just have him pull out the scissors. Not everything needs to be stated. And he doesn’t have time to talk. An unstoppable sorceress is on her way to kill Star.
- <sup>28</sup> **stopped:** Anti-climactic. What was the point of the Millhorses trying to break in? They just fled after Eclipsa showed up. The tension is killed here.
- <sup>29</sup> **which:** “aimed directly at Star” (’s heart. [maybe?])
- <sup>30</sup> **ground:** Mention Eclipsa’s missed magic blast.
- <sup>31</sup> **trying:** Show this, do not tell the reader this. It insults his intelligence.
- <sup>32</sup> **frozen:** He is being overdramatic. Then again, he does not know about the Queen’s Sanctuary. He does know, though, that Meteora’s victims regained consciousness after her defeat. Can the same be said of Eclipsa’s victims? Maybe, but there should be some uncertainty as to whether or not they’ll return. Otherwise, there just isn’t any tension. Maybe they were hit by dark magic and look different somehow. Maybe Eclipsa’s meteor shower will dissolve into healing magic at the end and restore everyone.
- <sup>33</sup> **fluid:** Unrealistic escape scenario. Two teenagers escape one of the most powerful magic-users on Mewni just because one of them threw a snowglobe at the magic-user? I do not care how cool you think the scene sounds. It is still unrealistic.

## Scene 7

### Glossaryck's Lessons

"Glossaryck?"

Star opened her eyes. Her mentor was floating sideways in mid-air, his eyes on his protégé. She sat up and he floated aside. "Don't do that. That's just weird."

"Hey. You know what else is weird?" grinned Glossaryck, raising an eyebrow. "How you ended up back here, again."

Star looked around at the wastelands, then tilted her head. "Again?"

"Oh? Never mind that, never mind that," Glossaryck said quickly. "Say, how about we talk someplace else? This place is frankly quite dreary."

"Sure. Let's talk at home," said Star. She cut open a portal using Marco's scissors. "Come on, Marco. Marco?"

He had not gotten off the ground.

Star dashed to his side. "Marco. Are you okay?"

"What?" he said vaguely. "Yeah. Let's... Let's go home."

He and Star stepped into the dimensional portal. Glossaryck followed them inside, an old cardboard box trailing behind him.

The box was set on the table, as was the tank of silkworms that Marco brought from Ludo's. Star and Marco were sitting on the couch, explaining their plan to Glossaryck.

"Well, let's not waste any time, then." Glossaryck's forehead gem glowed. The lid of the box and that of the tank levitated off their respective containers.

Star extracted the piece from the box, and Marco took a handful of silkworms out of the tank. They set them together on the table, and watched the creatures get to work on their reconstruction job.

Star withdrew the bag of silkworms she had been holding onto. But it was torn; its occupants had fled in the skirmish.

"It'll be a few hours before it's good and ready," Glossaryck said. He floated away, humming cheerfully.

Star touched Marco's shoulder. "Hey. Sorry about Nachos."

"What? It's no big deal. I'll get over it. Besides, he'll go back to normal when you defeat Eclipsa."

They were silent for a moment. Then Star spoke again. "Thanks for having my back there. But that still doesn't mean I want you protecting me all the time."

"I know. So what does this mean for us? Are we still friends?"

She paused before deciding how to answer. "I... I don't know. Just give me some time, okay?" Without looking at Marco, she got up and walked out the front door.

Marco went upstairs to lie in bed.

A few hours later, he came to check up on Glossaryck.

"It's almost finished," he said with unmistakeable enthusiasm. He beamed proudly at the silkworms, which were putting their final touches on the Book of Spells. Marco had forgotten how big it was; Glossaryck had had to relocate the reconstruction project to the living room floor.

"Say, where's Star?" asked Glossaryck.

Marco shrugged his shoulders in response.

Concern dawned upon the sage's face. "Hm? Why the long face, champ? Did something happen?"

Then the front door opened.

The afternoon light spilled in with Star as she strolled inside. Her eyes widened as they found the Book of Spells, from which the silkworms had been scattering. She knelt, and felt the spine of the completed Book, marveling at how well Marco's plan had worked.

"So why go through all the trouble of bringing the Book back, Star?" Glossaryck asked, once he levitated the Book into the backyard. "What spell did you need to learn? I can help you learn it, like old times."

"Glossaryck," said Star, "Hekapoo says there's a spell in here that can unfreeze Rhombulus' crystals. Is that true?"

"It is," he said, flipping to the page containing the spell in question. He floated aside to allow her to read it.

"'The Crystal-Pulverizing Spell.' This... This looks complicated," said Star, her eyes roving over the pages.

"And it looks like I need to pierce my ears," she added, tugging apprehensively at her earlobe. "Glossaryck, help me. I'm not sure if I can master this, even with a wand."

"Don't worry, kiddo," Glossaryck said airily. "I have full confidence in you. And don't sweat the ear-piercing thing; I know a workaround. It

might take a few weeks, but I know you can do it.”

“Glossaryck, we don’t have a few weeks. I need to master this by tomorrow,” she said urgently, jabbing her forefinger at the page.

“Tomorrow!?” Marco said incredulously; Star ignored him.

“Glossaryck,” she pleaded.

He pondered for a bit before answering. “Okay. But you’ll have to begin training immediately. And you’ll have to follow my every command. Alright, Star?”

“Fine,” she said stiffly.

“Good,” he said, rubbing his hands vigorously together. “Now let’s bring in our test subject.”

Glossaryck opened a portal with his toenail and disappeared. He re-emerged seconds later with a gigantic crystal floating by his side. A vicious-looking monster was frozen inside.

“I found this little guy,” he said, knocking on the monster’s frozen cage, “in Rhombulus’ dimension.”

“What if it gets loose?” Marco asked Glossaryck, who like Star, ignored him.

“It says I need a cockerel,” murmured Star, shortly before a crow echoed throughout the twilight sky.

“I guess you have your work cut out for you, then,” said Glossaryck. He conjured a miniature lawn chair in mid-air, and sat down. A bucket of popcorn appeared beside him. He grabbed a chunk of popcorn with one hand, and made a shooing gesture with the other. “Get to it.”



“Marco? Why aren’t you outside playing with Star?” asked Mrs. Diaz, while she was cutting roots.

“She’s not playing.” He looked out the kitchen window, and watched Star shoot a spell at the crystal. “She’s training. She’s going to be leaving for Mewni again tomorrow.”

“I’d better tell your father to tidy up the guest room, then.”

“I don’t think she’ll be needing it. She says she’ll be up all night training. After dinner, she’s going to another dimension to continue practicing. Star doesn’t want to bother the neighbors.”

“It’s amazing how she’s grown since going back, isn’t it?” She looked out the window, beaming at her with pride.

Marco remembered a time when she waved her wand carelessly about, shooting spells to and fro without a care in the world. Now, as he looked out the window, he noticed the focus and deliberation with which she



directed her spells. Her dedication shone through her eyes, as she shot blast after blast at the resolutely frozen monster.

“Yeah... It makes me wish she never had to leave,” he said wistfully.

Mrs. Diaz caught Marco’s eyes in the reflection of the window.

“Marco?” she said, setting her knife aside. “Do you like her?”

“It’s complicated.”

“What’s so complicated?” she said, leaning against the counter. “You like her. She likes you. What could be simpler?”

“She has a boyfriend, Mom,” Marco said pointedly.

“Oh.” She put her hand to her lips. “I’m so sorry, honey.”

Mrs. Diaz got to chopping the roots again. “Listen. Dinner is almost ready. Why don’t you wash up?”

Star was not at the dinner table when Marco arrived. Mrs. Diaz informed him that she had elected to take her meal outside. She was giving her son a solicitous look as she explained this.

“I’m fine,” he said irritably, digging his fork into a steaming root.



A large monster stood motionless in the desert. A teenage girl bombarded it with blasts of magic, struggling to make a dent in its icy prison. Her mentor floated nearby, watching the affair, his mouth full of sprinkled dough-nut. Then he swallowed it quickly.

“Star? Star!” There was a mixture of concern and alarm in Glossaryck’s voice.

But she wasn’t listening, too immersed in her spellwork to take notice. Finally, Glossaryck floated in front of the crystal, which was still unmarred in spite of the abuse it had been taking.

“Star. You need to rest,” he said firmly. “That’s an order.”

“No, Glossaryck,” she panted, “I don’t. Mewni needs me. Everyone’s counting on me to make things right. I have to keep going.”

She fired another sparkling ball of magic at the crystal when the cockerel crowed.

“Star. Your spellwork is getting clumsy. You promised to do whatever I asked of you. And now I’m asking you to get some rest.”

Glossaryck opened a portal behind Star. “Here,” he said, gesturing to it, “Marco will be glad to see you home. I’m sure he’s worried sick about you.”

Her hands stopped glowing. She faced Glossaryck.

“I know he is. That’s why I have to keep working. He thinks I’m so helpless.”

The cockerel crowed, and she fired at the crystal again.

“That’s why I have to keep on going.”

“Wearing yourself out like this won’t help you master the Crystal-Pulverizing Spell by tomorrow, Star.”

But she wasn’t listening. At the second crow of the rooster, Star shot another blast of magic.

“I’m stronger than he thinks. Like,” she continued, firing without waiting for the rooster, “why can’t he trust me?”

Another blast of magic zoomed towards the crystal.

“I’ve already saved Mewni once.”

The rooster watched the sparkling blast fly over its head; it had evidently given up on crowing.

“I didn’t need his help, then.”

Glossaryck watched Star’s magic blast fly off in another direction entirely.

“So why would I need it, now?” she finished, stamping her foot on the sand.

“You’ll never unfreeze Globgor at this rate, you know.”

Something rang in Star’s memory. “Wait a minute. Globgor?”

“Correct. I was trying to tell everyone about it last year. I’m not sure if anyone got the message, though,” he said, shrugging. Star pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes at Glossaryck. She recalled how he had acted for months after being revived by the Magic Sanctuary.

She silently dismissed his eccentricities, and resumed her mindless spellwork.

The rooster had fled behind a nearby cactus. Both of her hands were shining intensely, and from them emerged a ball of magical inferno, brighter and larger than all the others she’d unleashed so far.

This one, she thought, was sure to at least scratch the crystal. But her magic froze in midair, and dissipated into glittering dust. The completely undamaged crystal sank into a portal soon after.

“Get some rest,” Glossaryck said firmly. He grabbed Star by the shoulder, and pointed at the portal he conjured for her earlier. “I can assure you that you’ll be ready by tomorrow night, but only after you’ve gotten some sleep.”

Pouting, she strut through the portal and into the Diaz’s underdecorated guest room. She plopped herself on the bed. But she did not sleep that night.



The next day was hardly different from the previous. Glossaryck had given up on trying to coach Star, who had taken to blindly taking her

feelings out on her target. Marco was assured by Glossaryck that they would be ready to leave after sundown.

"I've been thinking, Glossaryck. How are you two going to get to Mewni if all the portals are closed?"

"'You two'? Aren't you coming?"

Marco shook his head.

"Well, the portals will remain closed as long as their guardian is alive."

"Wait. You don't mean?"

Glossaryck nodded gravely. He explained that it happened the night before. He insisted that Marco not tell Star about it. But as stressed as she was already, he wouldn't have bothered anyway.

Marco was watching from his bedroom window, his brow creased. Star did not seem to have made any progress since the previous day. Near sundown, there was a knock at his door.

"Star has not had anything to eat all day," said Mrs. Diaz. "Would you mind bringing this to her?" She dropped a steaming tray of food into Marco's hands. It was far heavier than it looked.

Star was hurling blasts of random magic at Rhombulus' crystal. The rooster cocked its head at Marco, who had entered the backyard.

"Star," he said. She did not respond.

"Star," he repeated.

"Star!"

She wheeled around. Her hands were glowing, ready to fire again. For a minute, they just looked at each other, wondering what was going to happen next.

"My mom," Marco finally said, "told me to bring this to you. Said you might be hungry."

"Also," he added, "I've decided not to go to Mewni with you."

The aura around Star's hands faded. "Huh?" she said, taken aback by his words.

"I mean, you've already saved Mewni once. You didn't even need my help, then. This is your fight. And as dangerous as it is right now, I know you'll be able to handle it on your own."

They were silent for a few moments. Star was staring at him, her mouth open. His eyes were on the ground, away from her. "Marco?"

"Hm?"

"Let's go to your room."

Minutes later, they sat together in silence on a flat surface of the rooftop. Star sat with the untouched tray of food beside her. Marco watched her stare off into the sunset.

A cool breeze ran across their faces. Marco had not appreciated how beautiful she was until that moment. The fading sun was sparkling like rubies in her sky-blue eyes, always brimming with joy and wonder; she sat there content, with a warm smile on her face; her mane of blond hair was fluttering in the wind. Marco's hand jerked involuntarily; Star glanced down at it, then looked into his eyes.

"Marco," she said. "Before I woke up in that hospital place, I had the weirdest dream. There was a sunset... and you were there."

"Hey, you two!" Glossaryck called from below. "We have to get going to Mewni soon."

Star gasped. "Mewni! I have to — "

"You have to eat," Marco said firmly, taking the spoon from the tray and scooping a generous portion of mashed potatoes.

Star took it without argument. She hadn't realized how hungry she had been until her plate was cleaned in less than five minutes. She let out a big yawn, and rested her head on Marco's lap. She began snoring softly seconds later.

There was a serene look on her face as she slept. The squawks from a band of crows made Marco look up. He did not budge from the spot until the sun was completely gone.

"Star. Star!" He gently nudged the sleeping princess.

"Just five more minutes, Mom..."

"Star, you have to go, now," he said, still trying to shake her awake.

Finally, she awakened. She sat up straight on the roof, rubbing her eyes.

"Star," repeated Marco for what felt like the fiftieth time. "It's time. It's time for you to get going to Mewni."

A few seconds passed before Star shook off her post-awakening stupor. "Marco. Come on. Let's go save Mewni."

It took Marco a moment to register her words. "Really? You mean it?"

"Why not? You are my squire, after all," she said, like the matter had been settled. "And as my squire, I order you to come with me."

He looked at his best friend, at a loss for words. "Please," she added.

Marco slid El Choppo into a sheath strapped to his back, hoping he would get to use it this time. With his signature red jacket zipped up, his dimensional scissors tucked in his inside pocket, he raced downstairs.

Mrs. Diaz stopped him on the way and gave him a pouch he could strap around his front. She said the rooster he'd been carrying around looked uncomfortable. "Good luck," she said, kissing him on the cheek.

Star and Glossaryck were talking beside a large whirlpool in the backyard. “Are you sure I’m ready to do the spell?” she was saying when Marco arrived. “I still haven’t managed to unfreeze that monster-thingy.”

Glossaryck pressed a long forefinger to his temple. He looked up and said, “Don’t worry about him. I’m positive you’ll do just fine when the time comes.” He gave his pupil a reassuring smile.

“Don’t worry, Star,” said Marco. “You got this.”

He and Star gazed into the portal. “Ready?” he said to her.

She hesitated, then looked into Marco’s eyes. “Ready.”

And together, they jumped in.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **Glossaryck:** This should not open the chapter. It will sound too repetitive. Change the title or move the quote elsewhere.
- <sup>2</sup> **raising:** He raises both. One eyebrow raised might indicate skepticism and what-not; two could indicate bemusement.
- <sup>3</sup> **here:** Add fourth-wall break with Glossaryck. Recall that Tom used the scissors to open a random portal — or rather, he will in the next draft.
- <sup>4</sup> **dreary:** Mention the harsh desert landscape, relative to Glossaryck.
- <sup>5</sup> **scissors:** Mention that they are still in her hand after escaping Butterfly Castle.
- <sup>6</sup> **brought:** “had gotten from Ludo”
- <sup>7</sup> **explaining:** Why?
- <sup>8</sup> **forehead:** He is not neutral in this scene or in this narrative as a whole. Bear in mind that he tends to stay out of conflicts unless they help his master learn a new spell. On the other hand, the one time he did use a conflict to his advantage, the stakes were not so dire. ...Or were they? Ludo would have killed Star, which would have turned the tides. Toffee would have corrupted magic completely, and magic would not have been restored. Of course, that’s not to say it could not come back in other ways.
- <sup>9</sup> **when:** Why does Marco seem like he is not worried? Is he so sure that the plan to defrost Globgor will work? If so, there is no tension to be had. This is a problem, ironically enough. The fact that the problem is regarded as a task rather than as an obstacle (read: problem) is problematic w.r.t. the narrative.
- <sup>10</sup> **spoke:** Have her mention Marco is not to come to Mewni with her. They could have a whole argument about it. Or they could be too tired to. Maybe they could reprise it. Just reference the fight here, somehow.
- <sup>11</sup> **he:** Glossaryck or Marco?
- <sup>12</sup> **front:** “he said as...”
- <sup>13</sup> **she:** Odd sentence structure. Antecedent used immediately before pronoun; consider nixing latter.
- <sup>14</sup> **widened:** Again with the passive voice. Avoid describing character actions like this, as it makes them seem silly.
- <sup>15</sup> **knelt:** Unintentional rhyme might detract focus.
- <sup>16</sup> **levitated:** Have Marco, and possibly Star do this. It isn’t like Glossaryck to get his hands dirty.
- <sup>17</sup> **Tomorrow:** Marco has been warned by Hekapoo about how Mewni is

- going to be destroyed in just a couple of days. Why must he drag his feet?
- <sup>18</sup> **stiffly:** It might be beneficial to look up adverbs when deciding to affix them to dialogue tags.
- <sup>19</sup> **inside:** Join this sentence with the previous.
- <sup>20</sup> **Star:** Add in a phrase indicating that she is reading the Book. Also, she never reads the Book, so have someone remark about it.
- <sup>21</sup> **bucket:** Rephrase this whole passage.
- <sup>22</sup> **asked:** This belongs in its own paragraph. It could set the scene after the out-of-context dialogue.
- <sup>23</sup> **spell:** It would help if you described how the modified CPS looks. Be imaginative.
- <sup>24</sup> **noticed:** How can Marco even tell?
- <sup>25</sup> **wistfully:** Heavily implied by the content of the dialogue. Also, move the tag to after the “Yeah...” bit.
- <sup>26</sup> **eyes:** This phrasing only works if we are speaking of eyes in the singular.
- <sup>27</sup> **counter:** Should add that she is facing Marco now.
- <sup>28</sup> **Marco:** Transition scenes. This is why everything in your story happens too suddenly, as you say.
- <sup>29</sup> **Then:** “which he then”. Avoid the use of adverbs like “quickly”.
- <sup>30</sup> **voice:** Make this apparent in the dialogue itself. Less is more. The fact that he is calling Star in exclamations should indicate as much.
- <sup>31</sup> **too:** “being too”
- <sup>32</sup> **Glossaryck:** “floated” is too soft a word. He is blocking the crystal to prevent Star making further attempts to pulverize it. He blocked the way or whatever.
- <sup>33</sup> **crystal:** Where is Glossaryck? Was he not blocking the crystal just now?
- <sup>34</sup> **opened:** How does he open it? Do not always expect the reader to fill in the gaps with what they know from the source material.
- <sup>35</sup> **blast:** Describe it... Maybe add in some mention of the magic blasts getting increasingly sloppy. Also, why is she firing “with deliberation” at the Diaz house, but being sloppy in the desert where there are fewer distractions? This is something you should consider. Obviously, it’s her emotional baggage that is weighing her down. The more she practiced, the more it affected her.
- <sup>36</sup> **Glossaryck:** Mention that he is nonchalant and acting innocent.
- <sup>37</sup> **inferno:** Why is she perfecting the spell here? Her spellwork is supposed to be disorganized and sloppy.

- <sup>38</sup> **portals:** This generates unnecessary drama. Marco thinks Hekapoo is dead for like a chapter and a half. Then he finds out she is alive. Also, why are we trying to add to lore? Glossaryck should just state that he can bypass his kid's portal-blockades. On the other hand it would not be like him to give a straightforward answer. It is not like him to drop this bombshell on Marco for no reason, either. Give this more thought.
- <sup>39</sup> **watching:** Ease the reader into the scene instead of jumping into it. One minute, Marco is talking to Glossaryck who-knows-where. The next minute, Marco is in his bedroom.
- <sup>40</sup> **Star:** Should describe how exhausted, sleep-deprived, and desperate she looks up-close. Maybe her hair is in disarray. Also, this rewrite is a lot darker than the actual show. Not a suggestion; just a remark.
- <sup>41</sup> **It:** Join via semicolon. Have him think this as he carries the tray outside. Dedicate as many sentences to action as is possible. Any other sort of sentence, besides those containing dialogue, slows the story down.
- <sup>42</sup> **who:** Add in interaction with the chicken. Perhaps it looks up hopefully at the tray of food in Marco's hands. Then Marco walks past it; the rooster ruffles its feathers as Marco approaches Star. But do not make the rooster the subject unless you can pull it off without detracting focus from Marco and Star. Star does not seem to be in good health, Marco notices, when seeing her up close for the first time in two days.
- <sup>43</sup> **they:** Star alone has been the subject of this paragraph no matter how short it may be. It is odd to change the subject to both her and Marco mid-paragraph.
- <sup>44</sup> **decided:** This decision does not have enough context to be meaningful. It is never said whether or not he'd be going. It would be more impactful if, for example, Marco stated his intentions to Star and the latter took issue with it. Perhaps she was too tired to argue. Perhaps this argument took place right after escaping the castle.
- <sup>45</sup> **aback:** Should be implied rather than stated. Asserting the reason for her astonishment was important, I am sure. But it is done too deliberately. Show, don't tell.
- <sup>46</sup> **His:** The reader might confuse the antecedent this pronoun refers to. Star is the subject of the previous sentence. Again, stick to the one subject per paragraph rule.
- <sup>47</sup> **sunset:** Sort of wish there would be some discussion taking place between the scene-setting and the mention of the dream. But don't try to contrive dialogue. If you cannot think of anything for them to say,



- especially regarding the fight, then spend some time on it.
- <sup>48</sup> **involuntarily:** Append a reference to the dream Marco and Star had after escaping Mewni the second time. Perhaps have something in Marco's memory stir. Again, the feeling is still inexplicable. He cannot recall the full contents of the dream. Also, why does it seem like Star forgets she has a boyfriend, here? She's asking Marco about dreaming that he confessed his feelings for her. She has a boyfriend...
- <sup>49</sup> **Marco:** Have them discuss the topics of the argument, their broken friendship, and whether or not it can be mended. Personally, having them stop being friends is jumping the shark. Have them talk about Star not wanting Marco around. Insert a proper (partial) conclusion to this friendship subplot. It is of vital importance in this show. I cannot stress this enough.
- <sup>50</sup> **tray:** The tray is beside Star. Maybe she passes it to Marco, who sets it aside. Add in something about how that's the sort of thing Star dislikes about having a friend like Marco, who must always play knight for her.
- <sup>51</sup> **five:** This number is arbitrary. The reader might not consider this a short period of time. He does not know how much food is on the tray. He knows only that it was heavy. In any case, it is best to say she cleaned the plate in a short period of time, without fussing over the numbers.
- <sup>52</sup> **Marco:** He either strokes her hair, resists the urge to, or stops as he realizes what he is feeling again. But he knows already he is starting to have feelings for Star as of *Booth Buddies*. That reminds me: Marco confesses his feelings in that episode; why is his dream-confession important now?
- <sup>53</sup> **spot:** This is so lame. More sentences dedicated to waiting and describing time elapsing? Haven't we had enough of that? Just have Marco stare off sadly into the sunset while Star sleeps on his lap. You really missed an opportunity for a beautiful scene. Maybe he wishes the moment could last forever. Maybe he stares at the sun, and thinks that doing so will make it less willing to disappear beneath the horizon. The moment the sun goes, Star goes. It would have been poetic. But in any case, Marco can visit Star any time. It could come off as melodramatic, also.
- <sup>54</sup> **princess:** No aliases, mac.
- <sup>55</sup> **Just:** It would be better if the dialogue reflected her unintelligible mumbling in her sleep. But it could be challenging to pull off.
- <sup>56</sup> **best:** The more you repeat this, the more significance it loses. It's one of the best aspects of the show. Do NOT ruin this for anyone reading

- your piece.
- <sup>57</sup> **jacket:** “hoodie”. Also, exclude “signature” from this description.
- <sup>58</sup> **whirlpool:** “with what looked like ...”
- <sup>59</sup> **arrived:** This diverts focus from the dialogue. Relocate it to before the ongoing conversation or something.
- <sup>60</sup> **temple:** “then looked up.” ... “he said with a reassuring smile.”
- <sup>61</sup> **jumped:** You could leave this out. The jumping-in bit is implied. But the narrative lacks action overall. Just consider whether or not the sentence would work without it. Something could happen right after they exchange these words, which might prevent them entering Mewni. Explicitly stating their actions would remove all doubt that they had indeed dimension-hopped.

## Scene 8

# The Sky Baker

The Sky Baker was shooting blasts of magic at a herd of dark stallions. Behind her, the townspeople were retreating towards one of the secret entrances leading into the pie factory. Not even she had known it was there, until the Pie King ordered her to help facilitate the evacuation.

Her hands were glowing with power, as she levitated the fell horses off their feet and onto their sides. They toppled over each other like dominoes. The Sky Baker looked around her as she ran; the streets were empty save for a few stragglers.

“Come,” she shouted. “The King has ordered us to the volcano immediately!”

She lagged behind the stragglers, while looking over her shoulder every second or so. She emerged onto a street bordered by rows of alleyways. The Sky Baker found a dumpster to block each alleyway they passed. She heard Millhorses crash into the dumpsters and whinny angrily behind her as she fled.

They rounded the corner, and found themselves in a dirty residential square. To the Sky Baker’s relief, it was completely deserted; she let the stragglers to get to safety before her. But no sooner had they fled into a decrepit house, than a torrent of ink washed around the perimeter of the square. It was gone as quickly as it went.

And at last, the Sky Baker understood, as she watched the fell steeds emerge from the puddles: They were after her. The herd marched in unison towards the her. She lowered her glowing hands, which she balled into trembling fists, which then lost their glow. The fell steeds were closing in on her, one step at a time.

There was a neighing from overhead. The Sky Baker and the herd looked up. Atop the secret entrance to the pie factory was another dark steed, who galloped into the air.

The herd scattered as the newcomer entered the fray. It circled around the pie-baker, snorting at each of its fellows in turn. The dark steeds closed their eyes and bowed their heads, before dissolving into ink.

The new arrival closed its eyes and bent its knee to the Sky Baker.

“Why, thank you,” she said kindly. It was a strange feeling, she thought, running her hand over her savior’s mane; it was like she had met the horse somewhere before. She placed her hand on its forehead.

And then it happened.

A flood of images flashed beneath her eyes: a woman trapped in an iceberg, a grieving young girl shaking hands with her, that girl wielding a stick against her hated foe, and then a wondrous world of jellyfish and crystals and horses. She saw ink running down her hands. She saw a little girl tugging her arm, trying to tell her something important.

Then at last, Queen Moon opened her eyes.

“Star!” she cried. The queen’s now-spotless hand was still connected with the forehead of the Millhorse. She withdrew her hand. The Millhorse stepped back, bowed, and dissolved into an inky puddle like its juniors.

Moon looked up. Everything was coming back to her. She looked in the direction of Butterfly Castle, her hands balled into fists, now shaking with fury. Butterfly wings sprouted from her back and antennae grew out from her head. She spread her six arms outwards, and raced towards the horizon at full-speed.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **The:** You really ought to vary the phrasing of these magical attacks, or preferably, the attacks themselves. Are you really opening the chapter with the exact same words as the chapter title?
- <sup>2</sup> **secret:** Do not tell the reader this straightaway. Tell it when it happens or when it becomes relevant. Rather, show it. Just do not make any indication of future events when they are irrelevant to the current scene. You waste the reader's patience by doing so.
- <sup>3</sup> **ordered:** Use past-perfect tense. It happened before this scene and it is done happening.
- <sup>4</sup> **glowing:** Phrase variation of wandless magic, thanks.
- <sup>5</sup> **dominoes:** You used this same exact simile earlier in the story.
- <sup>6</sup> **stragglers:** "...to whom she shouted..."
- <sup>7</sup> **rows:** Go into detail about how the street was designed to rob tourists. The alleyways provide cover for thieves and there are hidden escape routes, which would be relevant in this scene.
- <sup>8</sup> **heard:** Moon should not be the subject here, as she is only observing the main topic of the sentence.
- <sup>9</sup> **They:** Stop switching focus from Moon to Moon and co. You'd make a stronger chapter with her as the sole focus.
- <sup>10</sup> **decrepit:** Now is a good time to mention hidden passageways.
- <sup>11</sup> **gone:** The puddles of dark magic are still there. The rain of dark magic is gone. Subject-antecedent ambiguity.
- <sup>12</sup> **glowing:** Tired of seeing this word.
- <sup>13</sup> **which:** This does not belong in a parenthetical remark. And the passive voice weakens the sentence.
- <sup>14</sup> **secret:** You are mentioning this when it is not relevant. You assume the reader knows where the entrance is, when you haven't actually made any indication of it prior to this sentence.
- <sup>15</sup> **dark:** Tired of these synonyms. Best to stick to the proper names for something or someone. Or rather, stick to exactly one. Nicknames are a thing, and all.
- <sup>16</sup> **who:** "which"
- <sup>17</sup> **turn:** Research phrases like these before using them.
- <sup>18</sup> **bent:** "bent its own knee". Also, can horses even bend their knees? Maybe they can bow their heads...
- <sup>19</sup> **last:** This chapter was like a page-long. You only get to use this when you are waiting for a very long time for something of great importance to happen. It's best to avoid these phrases, besides.

- <sup>20</sup> **withdrew:** The subject off this sentence is the same as that of the previous.
- <sup>21</sup> **puddle:** I am getting nauseous reading ten different phrasings of the exact same thing. Be consistent, please. If you are worried about your words being dull and oversed, then this is a poor way to disguise the true issue: lack of sentencce variation.

## Scene 9

# Reunion

A thousand miles away and a thousand miles above the ground, Tom was pacing the garden of Ponyhead Castle in his star T-shirt and sheared pants.

A few days had passed since Hekapoo returned to Ponyhead Castle. She had reported that her mission was a failure, and ended in the defeat of Mina Loveberry and Rhombulus. However, she had maintained that there was good news, as well. She had reported that Star would return to Mewni in two days. She had ordered everyone to prepare for an assault on Monster Temple by then.

He, Ponyhead, and Kelly had been overjoyed to learn that Star was safe. But the elation had worn off in the days since then. Since Hekapoo's return, things were uneventful and stagnant. The castle's guests had grown restless, Tom included.

"Tom, m'boy!"

"King River." Tom bowed his head.

"No need for such formalities," replied the king, grabbing him roughly by the arm. "Come, let us have a walk."

"What ails you, son?" said River, passing a bed of flowers.

"This whole situation with Eclipsa and having to hide up here until Star arrives. I can't stand it," he said, looking over the edge of the clouds. "I feel like such a coward. I wish I could just go down there now and, and..."

The king let out a hearty laugh.

"What?" said Tom, a bit defensively.

River put his arm around his neck. "You remind me of Star, always blindly charging into trouble. Just relax, m'boy. Have a break. It'll be a few days until we start fighting. Come. Smell the roses. In fact," he said, spotting a bed of flowers nearby. "There are some right over there."

Go! Have a whiff. Take your mind off things.”

He shoved Tom forward. He inspected the flowers, then turned around.

“These are tulips, King River.”

“They are?” The king galumphed over and squinted at the flowers. “Can’t see a thing in this darkness. Can’t even tell what day it is, anymore.”

“It feels like it’s just been one long night,” said Tom heavily.

A frown creased the old king’s face.

“Ah well,” he said, picking a tulip. “Just have a whiff, then. It will do you good.” River inhaled the tulip and held another one out for Tom. “Here.”

Tom squinted his eyes, and then he sneezed. The bed of tulips caught fire. River and Tom looked at each other, their eyes wide. Then water splashed onto them from above.

“Sorry, Tom!” shouted Kelly from a tower of the castle. Ponyhead was holding a sloshing bucket by her mouth, leering down at the demon. She hurled the contents of the bucket over the bed of burning tulips.

“King River, Tom.” Hekapoo was walking towards them, a clipboard in her hand and a pen in the other. “Star is scheduled to arrive sometime tonight. River, are your men prepared for combat?”

“Yes, milady. I’ve ordered them to train non-stop since we arrived here. I’ve also been teaching them how to fight on eagle-back.

“Also,” he said, looking at Tom. “I think one of Tom’s friends has been sparring with them recently.” The king didn’t look quite mad; just curious about Kelly’s odd behavior.

Tom recalled the way that she had challenged River’s knights to duels. She had grown restless and bored, aching to release her pent-up energy in a friendly match. To her dismay, none of the knights were a match for them, and very few of them would have called these matches friendly. Then she had approached Tom, recalling the axe he had used while they were trying to trap Meteora. He had assured her that the axe was not for combat.

“That reminds me. I’d better go check up on them,” said River, hurrying out of the garden.

“Tom. I should have told you this earlier. But I told Wrathmelior to close the gates to the Underworld shortly before you were ambushed by those horses.”

He was torn between anger at the delayed news, and relief to hear that his parents were safe.

“Anyway, we’re going to be mounting an assault on the temple soon. Get ready,” she said, before walking away.



“Wait,” said Tom. “What if Star and Marco don’t make it here in time?”

Hekapoo stopped, and turned around.

“Then we attack anyway. If this goes on for much longer,” she said, gesturing all around her, “I’m not even sure if Mewni can be saved.”

Tom, Kelly, and Ponyhead were sitting in a circle outside the gates of Ponyhead Castle. Ponyhead was talking excitedly about Star’s arrival, while Tom and Kelly were polishing their combat gear.

The demon had polished his armor several times over the past few days, for the lack of anything better to do. He had seen Kelly do the same. They found themselves shining their spotless combat gear again, hopefully for the last time.

Kelly pulled a sword out of her hair, and began sharpening it. She tossed it aside, then she took another sword out of her hair. A few minutes later, Tom was staring, mouth agape, at the ground around him, which was littered with at least a dozen swords.

“Would you like me to sharpen your axe, too, Tom?” she asked, without looking up. “You might need it for the coming battle.”

“I told you before. It’s not for combat.” No sharpening block would have worked on his obsidian axe, anyway. The only way to sharpen it was to bathe it in the fires of the Underworld, which he decided he would conjure when Kelly was looking the other way.

A whirring sound from above made the three look up: a swirling blue vortex had opened up in the sky. Then a pair of purple horned boots touched down onto the puffy clouds of Ponyhead Castle.

“Oh. My. Gosh. Girl,” gushed Ponyhead. She tackled Star Butterfly into a hug. “We thought you was dead. Tom had us all worried.”

Kelly went to join Star and Ponyhead, while Tom helped Marco off the ground.

“Dude, what’s with the chicken?” he asked, pointing at Marco’s front pouch.

“Long story,” repeated Marco, his face reddening. Then they laughed. It felt like a relief to them both, after days of nothing but anxiety and worry. Tom filled Marco in on what had happened since Eclipsa went mad.

“I had to fight against legions of those dark horses,” he was saying. Kelly looked over her shoulder, rapt with interest. “Then Hekapoo showed up, and we escaped here.”

“Me and Star actually had to return to Mewni a few days ago,” said Marco.

Tom raised an eyebrow. “Wait, why?”

“Long story,” he said. “But basically, Star needed to learn a spell to return Eclipsa to normal.”

“Ohmigosh, Tom!” said a loud, ecstatic voice. He was tackled by his girlfriend, and so, Marco knew this was the end of their conversation.

He got to wandering the grounds of Ponyhead Castle. By the gates, Hekapoo was speaking to Talon. Marco waited until they were finished talking. She turned around. “Oh hey, Marco.”

“You’re alive?” he blurted.

“Nice to see you, too, buddy,” said Hekapoo roughly, her eyes darting away from him.

“Sorry. It’s just that Glossaryck told us that he could open a portal to Mewni. But he said he could only do it when the keeper of the portals — ”

“Wait, wait, wait,” interrupted Hekapoo. “You didn’t use the device I gave you?”

Marco explained his escapade at the ruins of Butterfly Castle a few days after they had last spoken. He explained how the journey was essential to the reconstruction of the Book of Spells.

Hekapoo’s eyes darted to Star, who was hugging her father warmly, then to Marco. “So has she mastered the de-crystallization spell?”

He took Hekapoo behind a wall. “Not yet. But Glossaryck told us she’s ready.” He paused for a moment. “I wouldn’t question his judgment.” He looked over at Star, who was now talking animatedly with her dad.

“Say,” said Hekapoo, looking around, “where is Glossaryck, anyway?”

“Weird. He was just here before me and Star left Earth.”

“Oh well,” she said airily. “He never liked to take sides, anyway.

“Now, listen,” she said in a more serious tone. “We’re mounting an assault on the Monster Temple in ten minutes.” She passed Marco. “Be ready by then.”

Star sidled up behind King River on the queen eagle in front of the formation. Hekapoo rolled up her dragon-cycle beside them; Marco was sitting behind her, his front pouch slung around him like a backpack.

Talon was revving up his dragon-cycle behind the two; behind him, sat Kelly and Ponyhead, both in their combat gear. They waved at Star, and she waved back enthusiastically.

Tom was in full-armor, riding on an eagle behind one of River’s knights.

The rest of the Butterfly Knights pulled up the rear and the sides.

The rooster crowed behind Marco. “Are we ready?” Hekapoo yelled over her shoulder. Without waiting for an answer, she revved up her

dragon-cycle. “Then let’s GO!”

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **star:** Does it matter what he is wearing? Also, where did he find a spare change of clothes?
- <sup>2</sup> **few:** Three days. Seriously, with all the unnecessary vagueness! She went to Monster Temple three days ago. She fled to see Marco later that day. Then Marco had that fight with Star. The next day, the duo ventured to the castle to retrieve the lost bit of the Book. Star trained for the remainder of that day. The day after, Star continued to train until dusk, which is where we are now, more or less.
- <sup>3</sup> **She:** A colon might effective here. “She maintained that there was good news: Star would be returning.” Not sure if you wish to keep that reference to how many days had elapsed or Star’s ETA lest you sound repetitive.
- <sup>4</sup> **overjoyed:** Stop summarizing.
- <sup>5</sup> **bowed:** He should do this before addressing River.
- <sup>6</sup> **River:** Stop scene-jumping.
- <sup>7</sup> **looking:** If you must use a participial phrase here, at least use one that shows Lucitor’s agitation.
- <sup>8</sup> **flowers:** The intentional vagueness makes the punchline to this scene transparent.
- <sup>9</sup> **tulips:** Is it in-character for Lucitor to play nerd?
- <sup>10</sup> **Ah:** He is unsettled one minute and picking flowers the next.
- <sup>11</sup> **then:** This happens much too suddenly. There is no build-up.
- <sup>12</sup> **demon:** No more of this.
- <sup>13</sup> **combat:** It would suffice to ask if they are ready. They are armed soldiers. What else would they be ready for when a major battle is coming up?
- <sup>14</sup> **ordered:** “had”
- <sup>15</sup> **here:** Using this word in conjunction with “arrive” is inaccurate. “Arrive” is a relative motion verb. What I mean is that you can only arrive “here”. You cannot arrive at any other place. I do not suggest that you put “here” after the verb.
- <sup>16</sup> **looking:** Should use a dynamic verb here, as opposed to a stative one. It is implied that River is looking at Hekapoo during the conversation. The reader could think he is looking at her one minute, then at Lucitor the next, without any sort of transition.
- <sup>17</sup> **quite:** So he is a little mad, then? Not a complaint; just curious.
- <sup>18</sup> **them:** “her”. Kelly is female, mate.
- <sup>19</sup> **very:** No.

- 20 **them:** “the knights”. There is an opportunity to add a sort of symmetry to this sentence. “...few of the knights could have called these matches with her friendly.”
- 21 **Then:** This bit about Lucitor’s demonic axe belongs elsewhere. It is irrelevant to the conversation currently being held.
- 22 **Tom:** “Then Hekapoo addressed Tom.”
- 23 **was:** No more of these non-dynamic sentences. They bog down the pace and so on. If you must indicate Character A is feeling Emotion 1, then show it and tie it into the scene.
- 24 **here:** Invisible. The reader might trip over this, in a figurative sense.
- 25 **this:** Apocalypse idea: Mewni is under siege from magical meteors being summoned by Eclipsa. Each day they grow in size. They might fall apart from a massive meteor that approaches Mewni. The dark fire motif might be overused, also.
- 26 **had:** No more aliases. No more telling the reader vaguely how much time elapsed even though he can figure it out on his own. I don’t even know the point of this. You’re trying to be informative, but you’re also being vague. But you’re also saying things the reader already knows. The reader might feel insulted or frustrated with you at this point.
- 27 **ground:** “swords littering the puffy ground”. Also, should Kelly not be more organized than this, especially when it comes to weaponry?
- 28 **anyway:** Suddenly switching from neutral PoV to Lucitor’s.
- 29 **whirring:** Star’s arrival really should be phrased more emphatically than this.
- 30 **purple:** They’re described by Star in the Guide to Dimensional Travel (?) as “rhino-horn boots”.
- 31 **hug:** Ponyhead has no arms.
- 32 **worried:** This sentence is way too formal for Lilacia.
- 33 **he:** Pronoun-antecedent ambiguity between like five people. How does this sort of thing even happen?
- 34 **repeated:** A remnant from an earlier revision. It no longer works, since he is not repeating himself.
- 35 **mad:** The author is interjecting himself into the prose by using this biased phrasing to describe Chapter 1.
- 36 **Kelly:** At least make it clear Tom does not want Kelly to know about how he can use axes in combat. Otherwise, this breaks the pace of the dialogue.
- 37 **But:** Leave off here and have Star tackle Lucitor in the same sentence.
- 38 **girlfriend:** No more aliases...
- 39 **and:** Too emphatic to the point that the reader might think the author is being dramatic simply for the sake of it.

- <sup>40</sup> **knew:** This story is littered with stative verbs, stagnant sentences, and scene-jumping. Avoid doing this in the future.
- <sup>41</sup> **roughly:** It would be better if she performed the action, and *then* spoke coldly.
- <sup>42</sup> **interrupted:** This dialogue tag is unnecessary.
- <sup>43</sup> **dad:** Refer to parents as either mother/father or mom/dad. Do not use both interchangeably. Doing so will ultimately call the reader's attention to it. If it is dependent on perspective, then why use the former? Ultimately, decide the tone of the prose, and decide if the story should be told from a neutral PoV, or from the PoV of some character.
- <sup>44</sup> **said:** "Her tone hardened. 'Now listen...'"
- <sup>45</sup> **sitting:** Present progressive tense does not effect an active voice.
- <sup>46</sup> **him:** No comma. Also, you should state straightaway that they sat behind him. Or rather, Kelly did while Ponyhead floated at her side. ...Although, wouldn't Ponyhead rather be closer to Star? But River is there.
- <sup>47</sup> **waved:** Ponyhead has no hands.
- <sup>48</sup> **eagle:** Sort of wish Tom had his own eagle. Maybe River could have trained Tom to ride one. But to expect mastery in just a few days? River's knights are stated to have mastered mounted combat in that time. Perhaps they were being trained ever since the end of *Battle for Mewni*.
- <sup>49</sup> **cycle:** "and cried,"

## Scene 10

# Divide & Conquer: Reprise

The group was flying through the clouds for hours. Star, Tom, and Marco had been looking to their sides for signs of Millhorses.

They felt themselves descend into an unnaturally thick mist. “We’re coming up close on the Monster Temple,” said Hekapoo. “Get ready.”

The group passed through a large smoky cloud. “Hekapoo!” cried Marco.

“I know, I know,” she said impatiently. “River, ready your men!”

“Knights of Butterfly Castle, rally!” boomed River. The clanging of swords and the roaring of war cries followed. The king took out his scepter, whose tip began radiating.

A circle of ominously glowing eyes bloomed in the mist.

“Talon!” shouted Hekapoo. “Get ready to dive in three, two...” Tom and Star nodded at each other.

A herd of pitch-black steeds charged at them from the mist. The Butterfly Knights struck at the beasts in unison, just in time to allow Talon and Hekapoo to nosedive straight down.

Star jumped off her father’s eagle. “Buttercup! What are you doing?” cried River, after zapping a Millhorse into smoke.

“Don’t worry, dad,” Star shouted back. “I’ll catch up with you later!”

And then he was gone from sight, lost in the haze. She landed on the shoulders of her boyfriend, who was firing jets from his hands and heels in order to slow their descent. Then they heard neighing from all directions.

“Talon!” shouted Hekapoo.

“On it, chief!”

They slapped the necks of their dragon-cycles. The fiery beasts inhaled, then blew searing flames at their prey, while rotating in a circle around the group. Hekapoo and Talon slapped their dragons again, then

pointed upwards; the scaly steeds nodded at their respective masters.

“Everyone, jump!” said Hekapoo.

Marco and Kelly leapt off, along with Hekapoo and Talon; Ponyhead dived downwards alongside them. The dragon-cycles soared upwards to join King River and his men.

A herd of Millhorses were congregating onto the spot where the group was about to land.

“Syrup Tsunami Shockwave!” cried Star. Torrents of sugary tree sap shot out of her sparkling palms and washed the dark steeds away. She leapt off Tom and landed onto the sticky ground, alongside the rest of her companions.

She was vanishing the sap from everyone’s feet and the ground around them, when Hekapoo spoke to the group at large.

“There are too many of them. We’ll be surrounded and overwhelmed if we stay in one place for too long. We all need to separate at strategic junctures to buy time for Star to infiltrate the Monster Temple. We need to divide and conquer, everyone.”

Marco and Star exchanged knowing looks with each other as everyone else chorused, “Right!”

“I’ll handle this group,” said Hekapoo, brandishing her scissor-knives. “The rest of you go on.”

Hundreds of Millhorses surrounded her. They were extricating their hooves from the sticky sap. They marched towards Hekapoo as the latter’s companions rushed off. Then she bumped into someone. She turned around to tell Tom to join Star, because she needed his help more. But it wasn’t Tom.

“Talon? Your job here is finished. You were supposed to return to Ponyhead Castle.”

The dragon-cycler cracked his fingers and slipped on his brass knuckles. “What, and miss out on all the fun?” He grinned over his shoulder. “No thanks.”

She looked surprised at him, then nodded. “Fine. Cover me.”

A bead of sweat budded on her temple, as she watched the fell steeds close in on them in unison. Hekapoo closed her eyes and concentrated. Hundreds of phantoms materialized in a circle around her.

“Get going,” she said to them. The phantoms flashed their scissor-knives, then raced towards the Millhorses.

“Ready, Talon?” Hekapoo said over her shoulder.

“Ready, boss.”

Then they launched themselves into the fray.



Further ahead, Star, Tom, Marco, Ponyhead, and Kelly were racing through the clearing. They were looking from left to right, waiting to be ambushed from the thick woods on either side of them. None of it felt right, running towards the Monster Temple without being met with any resistance. They were approaching a thick copse of trees separating them from the ancient structure.

“Stop!” said Marco. Everyone looked at him. “Can’t you hear it?”

“Hear what, Earth-turd?” snapped Ponyhead. “You heard what that Hekapoo lady said. We gotta move fast.” Then she looked frantically about her. “Huh? What’s that?”

The ground rumbled. They turned around. A herd was approaching them from behind. Snorts came from the trees on their left and right. Pairs of ghostly eyes were glaring at them from the woods blocking their path to the temple.

Marco unsheathed El Choppo, and Kelly drew her family sword out of her hair. They backed away and held their swords away from them. Marco slashed at Millhorses coming from the right and Kelly swung at those charging from the left.

“Tom, now!” said Star, her fists sparkling with power.

“On it!” The demon chanted ominously. His hands were engulfed within large swirling spheres of flame. He aimed them at the trees blocking the way to the Monster Temple, and then an inferno erupted from his fists.

“Winterstorm Hyperblow!” cried Star. A blizzard blew across the burning ravine, obliterating all traces of the hellish fire. A clear path was paved for them ahead. The trees that were spared were covered in a mixture of ash and snow. The air was thick with smoke and the remains of the Millhorses that had been lurking within the woods.

Tom summoned stone walls on either side of them as the group sprinted towards the Monster Temple. But the Millhorses crashed straight through the solid Underworld stone.

Marco and Kelly caught up to Star, and swiped at two steeds charging straight at her. One Millhorse leapt straight into the air at her. She was about to charge a spell when Ponyhead swiped her axe-horn through the dark stallion, shouting, “I got your back, girl!”

Behind Ponyhead, four Millhorses were galloping straight at them. “Ponyhead, get behind me! Blueberry Cupcake Bazooka!” A shimmering bazooka materialized into Star’s hands.

Two of the dark steeds galloped aside to evade her shots. “Starfish Tsunami!” she cried, aiming her palm at them. One of them was washed aside by the tide, and the other jumped high into the air to lunge at Star.

“Spider with a Top Hat Blast!”

A barrage of bullets punctured the last Millhorse many times over, until it finally disintegrated into shapeless smoke.

Star squinted through the thickening mist. She saw the silhouettes of more Millhorses, charging at them from the front; she charged her fists again.

A row of the dark steeds was charging at a slant at the group from the right. Marco slashed and kicked at each one trying to ram into him. Each strike and sword-swipe was delivered with the precision and deliberation of a dedicated martial artist.

Kelly was maneuvering her sword through the enemies on the left, slicing through them like butter. At one point, she had leapt into the air and ran her sword through the horses during a mid-air somersault. She was shedding tears of joy and screaming in exhilaration.

In the back, Tom was suspended in mid-air, launching fireball after fireball at the herd pursuing them from behind. He summoned stone walls to slow the pursuit of the Millhorses. Some toppled over backwards. Others crashed straight through, only to gallop headfirst into a burst of demonic flame.

He looked over his shoulder: the group was approaching the base of the temple. His eyes glowed demonically, then he shot a raging inferno at the Millhorses chasing them from behind. He propelled himself upwards and landed onto the base of the Monster Temple, where his friends were waiting.

Tom commanded stone walls to rise up out of the ground around them, enclosing them in an arena about half as wide as the Butterfly Castle throne room. They held fighting stances, ready to take on the Millhorses that would be charging through any second.

“We’ll hold the ground here, Star,” said Tom, indicating himself, Marco, Ponyhead, and Kelly. “You go on ahead.”

“Got it. Come on, Marco,” said Star, whisking him by the elbow.

“Wha — ? Hey!”

“Come on. There’s no time to waste. Let’s go.”

Seconds later, a stone wall rose up from the ground, separating Star’s remaining friends from the steps to the Monster Temple.

“Alright, let’s do this,” said Ponyhead fiercely.

The wall opposite the temple crashed, and a dozen Millhorses leapt through the debris. Tom took flight and hurled fireballs at the new arrivals, with Kelly and Ponyhead alongside him. Half the herd had evaporated into smoke before they were in melee range.

Summoning his obsidian axe, Tom wheeled around and swung it onto a Millhorse that was inches away from impaling him.

“So you can use that axe in combat,” teased Kelly, a mischievous grin on her blood-marred face.

“No time to talk. Just fight!”

He let his axe fall to the ground again, as she watched with admiration. She shrugged, and absentmindedly swiped her sword at a Millhorse that was about to stomp on her.



They were nearly at the top of the stairs. Star and Marco leapt over the edge, and saw Eclipsa blocking the ruined entrance to the Monster Temple.

The queen was looking down, unmoving. Then her head suddenly jerked up; her eyes were as blank as Marco remembered. She extended her umbrella and expanded it, pointing it at Star Butterfly.

Marco had his hand on the handle of El Choppo, when Star strolled forward.

“Stand back, Marco.”

He looked at her, and nodded. He backed away as Star approached the ancient queen without a trace of fear in her eyes.

The two Butterflies stood facing each other. A gust of wind swept between them.

Then lightning flashed across the sky.

Marco blinked. Star had transformed into her Butterfly Form, and deflected one of Eclipsa’s dark bullets with her yellow energy shield. Whispers filled the air, and the tip of the dark umbrella glowed.

A dark spectral butterfly zoomed past Star’s head.

“Mega Narwhal Blast!” cried Star.

Eclipsa used her umbrella to shield herself against the torrent of narwhals charging at her. Each of the narwhals bounced off a violet energy shield reinforcing the umbrella.

Then she lowered it by an inch.

“Mega Rainbow Fist Punch!” The queen was blown back miles away by the impact. Star rushed into the air towards her, only to be engulfed by a spidery cobweb that shot out of Eclipsa’s wand.

The queen dived towards the bundle. She gracefully pirouetted in mid-air in order to evade a giant laser beam shooting out of the web. Eclipsa’s face was inches away from the net she conjured, when a giant bazooka ripped through it.

“Mega Raspberry Panzerfaust!” cried Star. Eclipsa was blown in the face with a concentrated cluster of sparkling raspberries. The explosion shook the skies and engulfed her within a shroud of dust.

Star jerked aside in mid-air to avoid a dark bullet shooting out of the dust.

“Mega Winterstorm Hyperblow!” She shot at the direction whence the bullet came. A barrage of dark bullets fell, frozen in small glaciers, momentarily before exploding in a storm of hail that cleared the dust.

The shards of razor-sharp ice splintered upon contact with the energy barrier that Star had erected. Then a torrent of butterfly phantoms began ramming against her; she felt her wrists going numb with the shock of each impact.

“Mega Mystic Suck Transport!”

The barrier transformed into a black hole that swallowed the Midnight Shriek spells. Black holes opened up on all sides of Eclipsa, and out of them, zoomed the shrieking butterflies she had directed at Star, now heading straight for their original caster.

Star raced towards Marco to ferry him to the gates, when a cracking sound made her stop her descent.

She looked up.

The black holes she conjured shattered to pieces, like shards of obsidian glass. The dust cleared to reveal the dark queen, cocooned within a shell of violet energy.

“Mega Sparkle Lightning Blast!” yelled Star, once the barrier dispersed. Eclipsa danced around the blast, then retaliated with one of her own lightning spells.

A horrible cry rent the air. “NO!” cried Marco.

Star was reverting from her Butterfly Form. Her arm was burnt black and smoking. She was plummeting to the ground. Eclipsa dived in pursuit.

“Mega Shooting Star Explosion!” cried Star. She aimed her good hand at the queen, firing at her at point-blank range.

Dozens of shooting stars exploded onto Eclipsa all at once; the impact threw Star back against a wall of the Monster Temple. She felt the wind being knocked out of her lungs. She lay there, her butterfly wings limp and slowly fading.

A pair of glowing spades shone through the dust, followed by a pair of eyes, gleaming malevolently in the shadowy night. An arc of lightning crashed down near the ancient queen. Stormclouds swirled around her as she raised her umbrella, and pointed it straight down at Star. The tip of the wand began to crackle with electricity.

“Black Velvet Inferno,” whispered a distorted voice.

A ray of darkness shot out of the umbrella and collided with Star.

“STAR!” screamed Marco, his voice breaking.

Eclipsa gasped.

A single, uninjured hand was holding up a yellow ethereal barrier, keeping the Black Velvet Inferno spell at bay. The ground began to shake. Star’s hand was shuddering violently as she struggled to keep the barrier aloft. As she had with Eclipsa’s daughter just a week before, Star found herself backed against a wall, a thin barrier separating her from certain death.

It began to flicker and fade; this is it, thought Star, tears welling in her eyes.

But then, the barrier she’d been single-handedly sustaining began to expand. Blue shockwaves were emanating from some point on her left. “Mom!?”

Queen Moon was holding up Star’s energy shield alongside her, pushing it back against Eclipsa’s deadly spell. “Don’t give up, Star,” she said, her diamond cheek-marks glowing, “no matter what.”

Moon looked her daughter in the eye as she continued to reinforce the barrier. “You’re a strong girl. I believe in you,” she said, giving her daughter a reassuring smile.

Suddenly, Star realized that there was someone else beside her, too. “Marco!?”

“Don’t worry, Star,” he said, forcing the shield back with his scalding hands. “I got your back, no matter what happens.”

She looked momentarily surprised at Marco; his cheeks were suddenly glowing in the shape of crescents.

Then her heart was soaring, and her strength returned. There were tears in her determined eyes, and the hearts on her cheeks shined brilliantly in the darkness, as she pushed back even harder.

Star’s barrier was growing larger and larger. The Black Velvet Inferno ray was shrinking and dwindling. Eclipsa glanced at the tip of her umbrella. It was glowing white-hot as she struggled to maintain a hold on her own spell.

Then the barrier overwhelmed Eclipsa, and with a deafening pop, it exploded.

Its conjurer collapsed onto the ground. “Star!” said Marco. “Are you alright?”

She smiled vaguely at him. “Yeah.”

Moon was looking at a velvet cocoon suspended in mid-air, a crease in her brow.

“Mom, is... is it over?”

The three of them watched the cocoon in the air crack like an eggshell.

Just as Star expected an explosion and a horrible scream, a pair of spades glowed inside the shell. Eclipsa’s rebounded spell dissolved into black mist around her.

“Get in the temple,” said Moon, morphing into her Butterfly Form. “I’ll handle this.” Violently pulsating skeins of electricity wrapped around her six hands; Star and Marco had not moved. “Go, now!”

A blue barrier wrapped around the closing gates to the Monster Temple. Eclipsa shot a bundle of dark flames at the barrier. But the attack was intercepted by a blast of lightning, which sent it flying in a completely different direction.

Moon soared, floating between Eclipsa and the gates. She conjured a blue neon sword, and crashed it against the ancient queen, who fended off the strike with the length of her umbrella.



Star had reverted completely from her Butterfly Form when Marco whisked her away into the the Monster Temple. Her other arm was flailing about, completely numb. The battle between Moon and Eclipsa shook the walls of the decaying building. Her eardrums vibrated as she dashed through the halls alongside Marco.

“What happened here?” asked Star, looking around at the crumbling foundations of the temple.

“Hekapoo said that she, Rhombulus, and Mina fought Eclipsa here earlier,” said Marco. He and Star spotted Mina bouncing against the ceiling like a balloon. They quickened their pace, knowing that they could end up like her if they stopped for just a second.

“Wait,” said Marco, squinting his eyes through the dust. “Where are we going?”

“Oh!” Star skidded to a halt.

“Star, what are you doing!? We have to hurry!”

“I summon the All-Seeing Eye...” she chanted over Marco’s pleas.

And then in her mind’s eye, appeared Globgor, whom Star had seen in a painting during a previous adventure. Her eyes remained closed as she jerked Marco’s arm through the many doorways and the punctured walls of the Monster Temple.

She opened her eyes, and found herself and Marco standing in Globgor’s chamber.

“Star? How did you do that?”

“No time,” she answered quickly. “Marco, the chicken!”

And no sooner had she said this, than they heard a sparkling of electricity behind them. Marco looked behind Star; Eclipsa’s umbrella was half-raised at Star, yet half-lowered also. The queen was slowly floating towards them.

Setting the fowl down, Marco drew El Choppo. “I’ll buy you some time. Just do the spell.” He charged at Eclipsa. He swung at the air around the queen, hoping to draw her away from Star.

The tip of her umbrella collided with the edge of his sword. She flung Marco into a wall before soaring into the air, and taking aim at Star for the final time.

Then the crow of a rooster echoed throughout the chamber.

A sparkling inferno of magic was launched from Star’s good hand onto Globgor’s crystal prison, which began to melt away like ice in heat.

The umbrella slipped from her gloves. A shuddering gasp escaped Eclipsa. The whites slowly returned to the ancient queen’s eyes. The veins ensnaring her cheeks faded away. She blinked twice and her eyes drooped, before she fell gracefully from the air.

“Eclipsa, Eclipsa!” cried Globgor. He stomped out of the crystal and rushed over to catch her. She landed on the palm of his hand, then was cuddled against his arms as he shrank down to her size.

“Honey, boo. Is that you?” Eclipsa moaned softly. “I had the worst nightmare. It was cold. It was dark. I was... all alone.” A single tear seeped from her eye onto Globgor’s forearm. She was shivering; the shadows under her eyes reflected her heart, heavy with sorrow and grief.

“Eclipsa...” said Globgor, closing his eyes.

He spotted Star half-kneeling on the floor; Marco was limping towards her.

“You two. What has happened?”

Both Star and Marco looked away from Globgor. Neither of them wanted to tell him that his only daughter was dead. Neither of them wanted to tell him how Eclipsa was betrayed by her own magic.

“Found you, Eclipsa!” a voice chimed. Mina Loveberry landed into the room. Globgor shielded his wife from the crazed Solarian warrior. Marco and Star looked in horror at her; neither of them had any strength left to stop her.

She bellowed a hearty laugh. “Ready or not,” she chimed, beginning into a sprint, “here I come!” Globgor braced himself, holding Eclipsa tight in his arms.

But then Mina froze in mid-air; she fell to the ground with a clatter.

Someone was leaning against the wall behind her, his snake-arms

crossed in disapproval. "I never liked her, anyway," scoffed Rhombulus, his crystal head still glowing.

Then, the rooster walked up to him and tilted its head. It crowed, and Rhombulus gave a high-pitched squeal.

Someone started giggling softly.

"Eclipsa?" Globgor tried to nudge her awake again. "Eclipsa. Eclipsa!"

She opened her eyes gradually. "Oh, Globgor, honey," she said weakly, touching his cheek. "It's been quite a while, hasn't it? How have you been?"

Tears fell from the Monster King's eyes as he held his wife close to him, half-crying and half-laughing at his wife's joke. More than anything, he was overjoyed that she was going to be alright.

Star and Marco were watching, with relief and adoration, the heart-felt reunion between two people who had been separated for over three hundred years.

"Oh, uhh, Star," said Rhombulus. "Glossaryck told you to come outside. He said it was important."

"Glossaryck?" said Star. She made to get up, but couldn't even lift herself off the ground. Then suddenly, the weight on her numb side shifted up. Marco had slung her left arm around his neck.

"Ready?" he said.

"Nope," said Star, smiling weakly. "But let's go anyway."

Sunlight was seeping through the holes in the structure. Marco wondered if it was midday. He had memorized the routes that Star had taken when she had used the All-Seeing Eye spell to find Globgor. But he did not need to.

Three voices were calling Star's name throughout the halls. As weak as she was, she had no strength to call back. Marco sat her against a wall, and sat alongside her. "We're over here," he called.

Ponyhead gave a gasp of fright. She began to ooze tears when she saw Star's heavily scalded arm. She raced to Star's side. Somehow, Star was the one who had to comfort Ponyhead, as the latter began crying, talking, and moaning without pause. She brushed the nape of Ponyhead's neck with her good hand, while Kelly went to Marco's side.

"What happened?" she asked, as Tom knelt at Star's side.

"Star... Star was facing off against Eclipsa. That's how she got her arm broken."

Kelly looked at her with great concern; she looked like she was in half a mind to go over there, as well. Marco noticed a large gash mark on her cheek when she turned her head.

"What happened there?" he asked.



“Oh, this?” she said, touching her cheek. Her voice shrank to an excited whisper. “Tom gave it to me.”

“Tom?” Marco glanced at the demon. In a low voice, he said to Kelly, “Was his aim with that axe that bad?”

“Nope,” she said with a poorly suppressed grin. “It was just perfect.”

When Marco still gave her a confused look, she continued. “And it was sort of my fault, anyway, considering I was the one who attacked him first.”

“Why?” said Marco incredulously.

“I wanted to see how good he was. He put up a way better fight than King River’s knights.” There was a fire in Kelly’s eyes as she spoke.

“But never mind that. Here,” she said, extending a hand towards Marco.

The sky was visible again. The dark clouds had vanished. The long night was over. The Millhorses that infested the land were but a distant memory. The land of Mewni had almost returned to normal.

Tom and Kelly walked Star and Marco out of the Monster Temple. The rest of Hekapoo’s assault team was waiting outside. King River was on the ground, bowing his head. There, laying on the ground, was —

“Mom!” Star shouted. She felt her voice crack in her exhaustion. Leaning out of Tom’s grip, she stumbled into a run. She skidded along the ground and knelt at her mother’s side.

“Mom. Mom!” she cried, shaking her. “Come on, Mom. Wake up! You have to wake up! Why... Why did she have to come here?”

“That was her choice,” said a voice from above. Glossaryck floated down until he was at eye level with Star. “Shortly after regaining her memory, she rushed over to Butterfly Castle, worried that you were in danger from Eclipsa. I reconvened with her there. She had already deduced that Eclipsa would be here. I merely told her of your plans.”

Tears streamed down Star’s face. “Glossaryck, can’t you — ?”

“I don’t take sides, Star,” he said shortly. “Besides, look!”

He tilted his head at Moon, who was slowly opening her eyes.

“Mom?” said Star uncertainly.

“Star?” she wheezed. “Is that you?”

“Mom!” Star hugged her. Tears spilled from her eyes onto Moon’s shoulder. It looked as though she would never let go.

“Now, now, dear,” Moon said weakly. “Not so tight.”

“Well, congratulations on learning the new spell, kiddo,” said Glossaryck. “Now if you excuse me, I must be off. I, for one, am greatly exhausted. I will be sleeping for about three months. I imagine you will have your hands full until I wake up.”

As he made to leave, Star called after him. "Wait, Glossaryck."

He stopped and turned to face her in mid-air. "Hm?"

"You said you don't take sides, but you've been helping us all along. Teaching me that spell, helping us get to Mewni..."

"This was just part of the lesson, kiddo," he said casually. "I know you always did your best in the heat of the moment. So when I found out that you wanted to learn a new spell from the Book, I was more than happy to teach it to you.

"But really, then," yawned Glossaryck, opening a portal with his toenail. "I really must be going to sleep. This has been quite the affair. If you excuse me..."

Marco took out his scissors. He made a cutting motion in the air. To his surprise, a dimensional rift opened. "Let's get Queen Moon into a bed," he said to Star and River. "She needs the rest."

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **Star:** What are the others doing? Also, do try to describe their actions individually. The way it is executed is lazy.
- <sup>2</sup> **They:** Avoid phrasing stuff like this. Try narrating from Marco's PoV, since Hekapoo is near him, and she speaks in the very next sentence.
- <sup>3</sup> **We're:** This belongs in a separate paragraph.
- <sup>4</sup> **whose:** I have qualms about using "whose" when referring to the ownership of an inanimate object. You refer to an inanimate object having ownership of some other object.
- <sup>5</sup> **radiating:** "Its tip radiating with power."
- <sup>6</sup> **Tom:** Describing the setting in which these events take place will help.
- <sup>7</sup> **beasts:** No more synonyms or aliases, please.
- <sup>8</sup> **straight:** As opposed to nosediving up, or in any other direction?
- <sup>9</sup> **their:** "his". When Lucitor is firing jets, there is no one but him, until Star jumps onto his shoulders just moments before. In any case, it would be appropriate, I think, only if this were separated from the sentence during which Star jumps onto Lucitor's shoulders. See past progressive tense.
- <sup>10</sup> **They:** Refer to the dragon-riders explicitly. The reader might get confused about who "they" are. On the other hand, it is implied already. It might be helpful to disregard this comment.
- <sup>11</sup> **group:** Implied and very much clear. Do not underestimate the reader.
- <sup>12</sup> **respective:** Use only when ownership is significant. A grammarian might suggest leaving it. He may argue that the dragon(s) may have more than one masters. He may then ask which dragon serves more than one master. A reader may not care for the specificity, and in fact find it intrusive. The show already establishes to whom the dragons belong, and that they both have one master each.
- <sup>13</sup> **upward:** They'd be better suited to warding off Millhorses at the current altitude to prevent any ambushes from above. Same for River and his knights. They are far higher up than the dragons.
- <sup>14</sup> **congregating:** Have someone comment/panic about this before Star does her thing.
- <sup>15</sup> **Hundreds:** Happens far too suddenly. There is no indication of the others retreating while Hekapoo stalls for time. Also, make the mission a bit more dire. The lot will eventually be overwhelmed unless Star reaches the Temple in time. Also, Mewni is destroyed if she doesn't reach the Temple in time. Make it seem like a suicide mission, an all-or-nothing gamble. As it is, there is not enough tension. This story is

- way too campy.
- <sup>16</sup> **return:** She told him to get his dragon to ward off skyward assaults. Why is she surprised now? But it is not like she explicitly told him to do so, unless it was off-page, in which case, it was probably a conversation you should have written in. Still, Hekapoo should not be surprised now, since he was part of the group that she'd spoken to earlier.
- <sup>17</sup> **dragon:** None of this synonym nonsense. A participial phrase might open this sentence better. "Cracking his fingers, Talon ..."
- <sup>18</sup> **looked:** Too many stative verbs.
- <sup>19</sup> **phantoms:** Why are Talon and Hekapoo needed, when the latter can generate hundreds of phantoms of herself, each capable of fending for herself?
- <sup>20</sup> **Ponyhead:** "Star raced to the Monster Temple with her friends trailing behind her: Marco doing this; Tom doing that; etc..."
- <sup>21</sup> **waiting:** They are waiting in motion? It is odd but not unheard of. I think you meant they were anticipating an ambush, in which case, you should show it. Marco and Kelly have their swords ready to draw, Tom's fists are lit, PH's horn is combat-ready, and Star has her magic on standby.
- <sup>22</sup> **right:** To whom, the group? As-is, the author is artificially setting the mood by telling the reader how the scene is supposed to feel. Do not do this. Do not do this.
- <sup>23</sup> **What:** "Wuzzat?" I know you hate being grammatically incorrect, but to have Ponyhead speak in proper sentences is out of character. This might be the most challenging character to write dialogue for. It is also the one you least want to write the dialogue for, given your biases, which you communicated to me earlier. But it is a necessary component of your writing. If Ponyhead is in a scene, she will be loud, obnoxious, and overly talkative to the point that even your reader will hate these scenes. But that's the point.
- <sup>24</sup> **They:** Enough of the collective subjects performing some action in unison. The reader will want to know what each member of the group is doing. You are doing the individual members of the group an injustice by saying they're all doing one thing at the same time.
- <sup>25</sup> **backed:** They should really be more offensive. They are protecting Star, yes, but the more they back away, the less room they have for melee combat. These two should know this as practiced fighters. Backing away is campy, somewhat like the narrative itself. There is no real threat. Dark Eclipsa is there, but she does little to threaten Mewni, unlike her late daughter.
- <sup>26</sup> **her:** The reader will want to know the setting in which she is saying

- this. Action and dialogue by themselves might work for plays. But as this is a narrative, it is essential that you, the author, set the scene.
- <sup>27</sup> **blizzard:** Use the active voice.
- <sup>28</sup> **spared:** We do not need sentences dedicated to describing the scenery. It should remain in the mental background where it belongs. On the other hand, this sort of thing is important; see the remark about setting the scene. Also, feel free to ignore this comment.
- <sup>29</sup> **Millhorses:** If you wish to call attention to this, do not do it half-heartedly.
- <sup>30</sup> **But:** Are Marco and Kelly not handling the sides? Is not Tom not covering them from behind? In any case, there is no previous mention of Millhorses charging at them from the sides as they sprinted through the path that Star and Tom cleared. The reader might wonder which Millhorses the author is speaking of. Maybe just say that “Millhorses charged straight through...”
- <sup>31</sup> **She:** Kelly or Star?
- <sup>32</sup> **four:** Only four? This is what I mean when I say this story is campy. It plays it too safe. You create threats that you know Star and co. can handle. You write unrealistic scenarios that should end in the defeat of the protagonists. Your wish for a happy ending is constricting the rest of the story. Do not let it. You can have your happy ending, but just make sure it was worth it.
- <sup>33</sup> **palm:** These descriptions of spellcasting are too generic. They consist of Star/Moon aiming their hands at something, and shooting magic attacks. Try some variation in the manner of spellcasting. Or at least vary the phrasing of wandless magic, as stated earlier.
- <sup>34</sup> **finally:** How long was it in mid-air? Is Star just running while the Millhorse is leaping with moon physics?
- <sup>35</sup> **more:** Stop being vague. How many more? You frustrate the reader by being vague, especially if you do not need to.
- <sup>36</sup> **steeds:** Aliases. Nix.
- <sup>37</sup> **delivered:** This is not a fight scene.
- <sup>38</sup> **butter:** I recall you complaining about reading this lame description of a fight in a children’s book. Do not repeat it here just because the author got published. Published authors can suck more than unpublished ones, you know.
- <sup>39</sup> **somersault:** This is the closest thing to a fight scene in this entire story. Make more like it. A lot more. Let this be an example of how you should write your fights.
- <sup>40</sup> **was:** Past progressive is passive. The passive voice should be avoided, especially here!

- 41 **them:** This vague use of plural pronouns frustrates me. You start with a singular subject, relative clause, then a plural object that includes the singular subject. It is confusing.
- 42 **then:** “as”
- 43 **them:** Similar phrasing can be found in the previous paragraph. Do not be repetitive. Tom is warding off enemies pursuing the group from behind.
- 44 **commanded:** Replace with a verb that the reader can actually visualize.
- 45 **half:** This belongs in a semicolon. The dimensions should be given with more specificity. You are giving the width of the enclosure. What about the height? How tall are these Underworld pillars? You must set the scene properly.
- 46 **would:** Who knows this, Tom? Again, the author is injecting observations that are not specific to any given character in the scene. “seem” and “feels like” are phrases that indicate the author’s inadvertent immersion into his own work. He is inserting himself into the story without even knowing it. It is a sign he cares, but it does ruin the experience for the reader. In any case, these sensations are tied to no one in the scene, but are still there.
- 47 **indicating:** Generic and vague. The reader cannot visualize this.
- 48 **time:** Star’s dialogue really should be far less formal and stiff than this.
- 49 **Seconds:** “After Star and Marco left,”
- 50 **smoke:** Why? If it is because of the fireballs, then just say so.
- 51 **obsidian:** The reader knows what his axe is made of. Stop reminding him!!!
- 52 **that:** There is an abundance of relative clauses and loose sentences in this story. Try and use other forms of sentences lest the reader get tired of your go-to sentence format.
- 53 **teased:** This would work better without the dialogue tags. Maybe Tom looks at Kelly here.
- 54 **axe:** You used the word “axe” two paragraphs ago. The reader will get bored of reading this word.
- 55 **swiped:** “slashed”. Less is more. Try to be less wordy; do not make your reader work too hard unless it is necessary. The more wordy you are, the more the reader will want to glaze over your prose. Also, did the Millhorse disintegrate? If the Millhorses can be felled with one sword swipe, then they are not much of a threat.
- 56 **that:** Relative clauses can get tiring to read, as stated previously.

- 57 **They:** The pacing could be improved if you showed them running up the steps.
- 58 **backed:** “backing away as”
- 59 **her:** Eclipsa or Star?
- 60 **other:** Maybe they look each other dead in the eye. A prelude to the final battle should have much more build-up than just two sentences.
- 61 **had:** Show action instead of jumping. This is why you feel the pacing is off, and that events in your story happen too suddenly.
- 62 **narwhals:** The passive voice is really killing the pace of this fight scene.
- 63 **towards:** Implied.
- 64 **Eclipsa:** “Then Eclipsa”
- 65 **raspberries:** I love this point-blank blast scene. I really do. But that’s not how the attack works. Refer to *St. Olga’s*....
- 66 **dust:** You should continue where you left off in the previous paragraph. The reader is thinking of the dust cloud. Instead of pulling mental focus from the dust cloud and placing it onto Star, you could say something like “Out of the dust, zoomed a dark bullet that clipped Star on the shoulder.”
- 67 **shot:** “aimed her magic”
- 68 **whence:** This esoteric word will distract the reader. I suggest you replace it.
- 69 **shards:** Jumping again...
- 70 **with:** Passive voice. Nix.
- 71 **descent:** “and look up:”
- 72 **black:** In the next draft, Star should not use this spell twice since it fails the first time. Perhaps have Eclipsa bombard Star with Midnight Shriek Barrage, then have Star defend with her energy shield. Eclipsa closes in as she is bombarding the shield; then she swoops in, and swipes Star aside. Cue beam battles.
- 73 **dark:** No more aliases. If you hate reading these, then why write them?
- 74 **danced:** In mid-air? Provide more detail than this, since dancing in mid-air is not exactly a common occurrence. You should describe to the reader exactly how Eclipsa is dodging these attacks.
- 75 **cry:** In your next draft, insert the scream into Star’s dialogue when she is trying to use Mega Mystic Suck Transport to trap Eclipsa. It would have a much stronger emotional effect on the reader, I think. “Mega Mystic Suck Tra — GYAAH!”
- 76 **was:** Stative verbs are stagnant verbs, inappropriate especially in a fight scene. Even more inappropriate, considering this is the final

- showdown of the story. I mean, if you exclude the off-screen Moon vs. Eclipsa fight, and the Marco vs. Eclipsa fight. Should the latter be removed, I wonder? Should I rewrite the ending of the chapter, and story? This requires some thought.
- 77 **her:** Implied. Also, one point-blank blast is enough. Do not retroactively ruin the first by adding another.
- 78 **impact:** Implied. "...and Star was thrown back..."
- 79 **felt:** This stative verb is sapping the scene of its impact!
- 80 **ancient:** "near Eclipsa". Stop with the aliases.
- 81 **emanating:** The phrasing may not intimate to the reader that the sky-blue shockwaves are on the shield itself. Also, why does Moon not simply blindside Eclipsa? Maybe because doing so would not save Star from BVI. If she is on the verge of being engulfed by the spell, then attacking Eclipsa might not stop BVI killing Star. The rest of the attack might continue even after its caster has been interrupted.
- 82 **Queen:** Is her title relevant in this scene? Perhaps it is meant to emphasize her sudden arrival.
- 83 **You:** Put more thought into the pep talk. This is too generic.
- 84 **there:** "...someone else was beside her." Economize on words. The more words you write, the less likely the reader will spend time reading them. The more needlessly complex and esoteric your words are, even moreso.
- 85 **barrier:** Relocate to after the BVI description.
- 86 **overwhelmed:** Make the scene clearer by using words that describe the action rather than tell it. Use a verb your reader can visualize.
- 87 **crease:** This description should be closer to Moon, not the BVI spell.
- 88 **air:** We established this like two paragraphs ago.
- 89 **explosion:** "followed by a scream". May not want to echo phrasing from Chapter 1.
- 90 **closing:** Can they not fit through the hole Mina made earlier in the story?
- 91 **floating:** "putting herself between..." Make these characters' actions and intents clearer.
- 92 **from:** Not necessary.
- 93 **Her:** "She felt..."
- 94 **they:** No more plural pronouns describing people do stuff in unison.
- 95 **Star:** Surely, you should describe what Star is doing? Also, just have him turn around or something. Why does the direction he looks in have to be relative to something, when the source of the noise has already been established in the previous sentence? Also, this last scene is anticlimactic compared to the previous. The tension just dies once they



- enter the Temple and Eclipsa is busy fighting Moon.
- <sup>96</sup> **half:** Redundant phrasing. If you wanted to show that Eclipsa is paralyzed by her fear of hurting Globgor and desire to kill Star, do it some other way.
- <sup>97</sup> **hoping:** It would work better if he held a stance that barred an enemy's path. Having him take the offensive is counterintuitive to the mission. But having characters take the offensive to protect their loved ones is okay. Examples: Star vs. Eclipsa and Marco at BF Castle. Having them do it out of rage for their loved ones getting hurt is permissible, if not encouraged. These characters are human first, heroes second.
- <sup>98</sup> **sword:** This fight is one sentence long and makes Marco look pathetic. This is a chance to show off more of Eclipsa's melee combat. Her scuffle with Lucitor in Chapter 1 was also a good opportunity.
- <sup>99</sup> **good:** The passive voice should be used for background elements, like with the rooster.
- <sup>100</sup> **ancient:** Stop saying this.
- <sup>101</sup> **away:** into... smoke? Should provide more description here.
- <sup>102</sup> **She:** One subject per paragraph.
- <sup>103</sup> **from:** Not necessary.
- <sup>104</sup> **eyes:** Maybe "three eyes" could work better. It would accentuate the fact that he is a monster.
- <sup>105</sup> **only:** Why is this word here? To emphasize the fact that he could not have more than one daughter during his short marriage? Nix.
- <sup>106</sup> **Solarian:** Aliases, begone!
- <sup>107</sup> **holding:** Nix this callback to Marco doing something similar in Chapter 1. It could further reinforce the fact that Marco loves Star. But I would rather have characters mirroring their own actions from earlier in the story, rather than the actions of others.
- <sup>108</sup> **she:** "clatter" might confuse people. You should establish the fact that she is frozen, first.
- <sup>109</sup> **leaning:** Should be a participial phrase.
- <sup>110</sup> **glowing:** Why? Do not append actions to dialogue tags just for the fun of it.
- <sup>111</sup> **rooster:** You are dedicating a paragraph to placing the rooster in the foreground?
- <sup>112</sup> **stated:** Too wordy. Nix this "started to" and "began to" nonsense unless you can justify it.
- <sup>113</sup> **Globgor:** I hate how the antecedent is in the dialogue while the pronoun is outside it.
- <sup>114</sup> **alright:** Wish you would show another sign of Eclipsa being well. This telling nonsense must end. And telling the reader Eclipsa will be alright

is an example of that author self-insertion nonsense from earlier. Also, how is this a joke?

<sup>115</sup> **Rhombulus:** Star looks his way for a moment before he continues the sentence.

<sup>116</sup> **suddenly:** Too many “then’s” and “suddenly’s”, and especially “Then suddenly’s”

<sup>117</sup> **Marco:** Precede by (semi)colon rather than period. Also, establish that Star is weak from fighting and doing the spell. Maybe she collapses shortly after she succeeds.

<sup>118</sup> **Star:** What about Marco? Why must everything in this story be Star-centric? Other main characters exist, too, you know.

<sup>119</sup> **Ponyhead:** Scene-jumping again.

<sup>120</sup> **Tom:** This belongs in the background.

<sup>121</sup> **low:** Why is he lowering his voice *after* saying Tom’s name?

<sup>122</sup> **night:** This exposition must go.

<sup>123</sup> **Temple:** Where is Ponyhead?

<sup>124</sup> **shouted:** Nix dialogue tag.

<sup>125</sup> **skidded:** “and” Also, why does she do this? It’s easy to describe, yes, but there is no reason why she does it. Won’t her knees scald or something? Won’t her tights be ruined?

<sup>126</sup> **floated:** Add more description. Help the reader visualize the story. “descended” would work better here, also.

<sup>127</sup> **uncertainly:** Insert sentence indicating Star is facing Moon again. It should follow Glossaryck’s cue.

<sup>128</sup> **would:** The active voice would make this scene so much stronger. Or rather, just don’t tell the scene. SHOW it!

<sup>129</sup> **Star:** “Star called after him as he made to leave.”

# Scene 11

## The Dream

It was a golden afternoon. They were laying atop a pile of hay in the back of a wagon. The light was fading from the land of Mewni. Star and Marco were looking at the shadows cast along the countryside passing them by. The dewy pastures sparkled in the sunset. The silhouette of the moons hovered in the sky, like actors behind a curtain.

“Marco?” The sound of Star’s voice warmed his heart, even moreso than the rays from the falling sun. “Do you sometimes wonder?”

“About what, Star?”

“Wonder if we could stay like this forever.” She let out a content sigh, as she gazed at the stars blooming in the sky.

“Just you and me, and this invisible goat,” she giggled after it bleated. “We could run away, just the two of us. We could go to any dimension we want.”

She paused and stared up at the sky. “You know, ever since I found out I’m not a princess, I’ve been thinking about what I want to do next. I know it’s silly to just leave Mewni, but — ”

Just then, her hair fluttered in the gentle night breeze. In a moment that took Star by surprise, Marco caught the loose strands and tucked it behind her ear. She looked at him curiously long after he withdrew his hand.

“I don’t think it’s silly at all, Star. In fact, let’s just never get off this wagon. Let’s go wherever this thing takes us,” he said, gesturing uselessly to their driver.

“As long as we’re together,” he continued, resting his hand on hers, “it won’t make a difference to me.”

A fleeting moment passed. Then Marco and Star quickly pulled away from each other’s warm touch. They turned their reddening faces away from each other.

Marco rested his head on his crossed forearms. “You know, Star. I’ve been thinking, too... about us.” His face was starting to feel hot, in spite of the cool wind blowing in his hair. He looked up at the blood-red sky. He could feel his heart pounding; he felt his best friend’s eager eyes on him.

# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **It:** Consider merging with epilogue.
- <sup>2</sup> **afternoon:** No telling. The other bits of the paragraph already emphasize this. You could keep it provided you add a colon, followed by the other bits. Also, use this phrase just once during the story. Otherwise, it loses its charm.
- <sup>3</sup> **wagon:** “moving wagon”.
- <sup>4</sup> **Star:** This paragraph is off. It alternates focus between Star, Marco, and the scenery every other sentence. Segregate the scenery into its own paragraph. Also, try not to TELL the reader the afternoon was golden. He must infer it from the showing you are supposed to do.
- <sup>5</sup> **sparkled:** “were sparkling”. Overall, is past progressive not the ideal tense to describe scenery? Simple past would be indicative of action, which is scarce here.
- <sup>6</sup> **curtain:** “... waiting for their part.” or something to that effect.
- <sup>7</sup> **moreso:** Light rays cannot warm internal organs. This comparison is invalid.
- <sup>8</sup> **at:** “up at”.
- <sup>9</sup> **blooming:** Perhaps add in a bit about how the sky is darkening and that it is dusk. Consider using “blossoming” as a synonym, but not as a lazy workaround to prevent yourself being repetitive. Definitely not.
- <sup>10</sup> **giggled:** Pacing of the prose does not match that of the scene. It sounds like Star is talking uninterrupted, until the goat bleats.
- <sup>11</sup> **next:** Perhaps add in the bit about the cool, gentle breeze while she is speaking. Then Marco grabs a loose strand that gets stuck to her face, and tucks it behind her ear. He does this as she is about to do it herself. Or maybe she just doesn’t notice it.
- <sup>12</sup> **Marco:** This is fine. But be aware that this violates that one-subject-per-paragraph rule we talked about.
- <sup>13</sup> **curiously:** Add comma. Change to past progressive. Consider if the second bit wants the past-perfect tense.
- <sup>14</sup> **away:** Stale phrasing. Double penalty since it’s repeated in the same paragraph and in two consecutive sentences.
- <sup>15</sup> **blood:** Have it be night-time at this point. Say something about their faces being bathed in the light of the Blood Moon.

# Epilogue

Star was standing on top of a spire of Butterfly Castle. She had retreated here to bask in the light of the golden afternoon, away from her duties as the Acting Queen of Butterfly Kingdom.

She had had a lot to oversee in the past few months, and not even a broken arm could slow her down. She had not allowed herself to rest in light of all that had to be done.

Butterfly Castle was still in ruins. She had had to rally her people to patch it up. They had informed her that during the crisis with Eclipsa, they had been swallowed up by holes in the ground. They were still shaking after spending a week in the Underworld. Star had rolled her eyes at them.

Some of her subjects had learned the value of self-sufficiency and independence while working tirelessly towards the reconstruction effort. The Acting Queen had refused to heed their every whim and worry, as her mother had.

Resting in the infirmary of Butterfly Castle, in addition to Queen Moon, was Queen Eclipsa, from times long past. She was making a steady recovery. The castle physicians noted that her health drastically improved whenever the Monster King, Globgor came to visit. As frightened of him as they were, they could not deny that his presence was an ostensible boon to the ancient queen's recovery.

Star had made a decree shortly after the battle at the Monster Temple, that Eclipsa and Globgor could not ever, by any subsequent decree, be ousted from Mewni. She had made it clear that they were not to be harmed or antagonized without due cause. She knew that her mother would be furious about it when it was time for her to resume her reign. But Moon was, in fact, the very reason why Star had made such a decree to begin with.

Many citizens of Butterfly Kingdom were in an uproar about Globgor staying on Mewni. He was still widely feared and resented by many.

But his love and devotion to his wife earned him the sympathy of some denizens of Butterfly Kingdom. He and Eclipsa still grieved for their lost daughter. Star had silently vowed, once it was time for her to officially take the throne, to create a future in which no family would be torn apart like this ever again.

At the discretion of the Magical High Commission, Mina Loveberry had been kept frozen after she had tried to attack a nearly helpless queen. A minority of Butterfly Kingdom took issue with their decision, after learning that the queen in question was Eclipsa. They protested about how no one would keep them safe from Globgor. Most people, the Acting Queen included, did not bother to listen to them.

“Hey.”

Star faced away from the setting sun. “Hi.”

“The castle physician said your mom will be ready to take her throne back tomorrow.”

“Yeah, I know,” she said. “It’ll finally be a relief once I don’t need to be Acting Queen anymore. I don’t even want to think about the day when I become Queen.”

There was a moment of silence. Then Marco said, “So I heard that Tom and Kelly are hanging out more.”

“Yeah, I know,” she said, glad at the change of subject.

“Me and Tom broke up,” she said suddenly. “We decided that it’s for the best.”

Star smiled warmly at Marco, and though he tried not to show it, she already had a pretty good idea of what he was thinking. She walked over the curve of the spire to gaze over the shining waters of the harbors of Butterfly Kingdom.

Marco chose not to follow her. He knew she was enjoying the view and did not want to spoil the moment. He noticed the gauze still wrapped around her forearm.

“Hey, Marco,” she said, turning around. “Come join me.”

The setting sun shined bright behind Star. Her sea-green dress ruffled and flapped, and the strands of her shiny blond hair fluttered, as a fleeting breeze swept behind her.

Marco couldn’t tell if he was being blinded by the last rays of the Mewni sun or the radiance of his best friend’s smile. Finally, he walked over and joined her. They watched the sunset, side by side.

“Do you remember a few months ago, before we went to Mewni,” said Star, as the wind began to blow at her ankles, “when we watched that sunset on Earth?”

“Yeah. What about it?”

“I was about to tell you about that dream I had. Remember?”

“I think so,” said Marco, staring out into the sea.

“I told you that there was a sunset, and that you were there.

“I remember that you were about to confess something,” she continued, as the shadow of a cool night breeze swept her bangs.

A loose strand fell into her eye.

And instinctively, Marco caught it.

He slowly tucked it behind her ear. It was in that moment that he and Star both knew. He saw his hand, still touching the side of her face. His hand ran absently over her cheek.

And then Star and Marco leaned in.

That night, they lay atop that spire gazing up at the starry sky, hands interlocked, neither of them able to think of anywhere else they would rather be.



# Annotations

- <sup>1</sup> **top:** “atop”
- <sup>2</sup> **She:** “having retreated ...”.
- <sup>3</sup> **here:** Unsure about the usage of relative location identifiers. From Star’s perspective, Butterfly Castle is “here”. From the reader’s, it is “there”.
- <sup>4</sup> **few:** This bit does not make the sentence less vague. Also, why the vagueness. It’s been three months. Why are you trying to be half-vague? You must trust the reader to infer from Glossaryck’s fourth-wall break how much time had passed since the Eclipsa crisis.
- <sup>5</sup> **allowed:** This is reiterating the previous sentence. Either merge them together or nix one of them.
- <sup>6</sup> **informed:** We speak of the castle’s reconstruction. But suddenly we’re talking about what the denizens of Butterfly Kingdom were up to during the Dark Eclipsa Arc?
- <sup>7</sup> **had:** This paragraph belongs with the previous one. This is an epilogue and that it is exposition-heavy. In any case, this passage is just way too vague. Also, British spelling is “learnt”.
- <sup>8</sup> **sufficiency:** This epilogue frames a scene by exposition. But this is too vague. Rethink this passage.
- <sup>9</sup> **refused:** Seriously with all the vagueness!
- <sup>10</sup> **Moon:** I am no fan of how Moon, an important character in the plot, is only mentioned in the epilogue in a parenthetical remark. It is a disservice to her, honestly.
- <sup>11</sup> **recovery:** Should this sentence really be here?
- <sup>12</sup> **ostensible:** Superfluous. What does this word add?
- <sup>13</sup> **ancient:** Try grep’ping “ancient queen” and see how many hits you get. Same for “^Then suddenly”. How many times must you call Eclipsa this? Stick with ONE NAME.
- <sup>14</sup> **made:** “also made”
- <sup>15</sup> **Moon:** This much should be obvious from the nature of the decree. Why does it need to be explicitly stated? Consider your reasons, and whether or not they are valid.
- <sup>16</sup> **widely:** Made redundant by the last two words of this sentence.
- <sup>17</sup> **Eclipsa:** Add in a bit about Globgor not caring much for how others saw him in light of recent events. Also, who rules Mewni, now? The rightful Queen, or the puppet Queen? This issue must be addressed in your next draft.
- <sup>18</sup> **officially:** This can be misconstrued as a parenthetical remark, even if it would not agree in tense if interpreted as such.

- <sup>19</sup> **this:** Relative indicators should be nixed, to be honest. From Star's perspective: "this"; from the reader's: (unknown).
- <sup>20</sup> **took:** "had taken". The epilogue is in the form of an exposition preceding the *Shining Star* ending.
- <sup>21</sup> **faced:** "turned"
- <sup>22</sup> **throne:** The issue of Star and Moon not truly being royalty must be addressed sometime during the narrative. Here, it is assumed that Moon will resume her reign, even though Eclipsa is the rightful heir. It is a plot point that is dismissed for convenience's sake. Perhaps Star will liase between Moon and Eclipsa regarding the topic.
- <sup>23</sup> **I:** Italicizing this would help communicate which bit of the sentence is being stressed.
- <sup>24</sup> **moment:** These moments of silence litter this piece. They are too often treated as the centerpiece of a sentence. They are a framing device and should be treated accordingly.
- <sup>25</sup> **Marco:** It should be made clear that Marco is the one who visits Star. But they reprise their lines from *Cleaved*, which might serve as a hint, even though it is really an Easter egg. Ultimately, this is your call. Cleverness versus clarity, anyone?
- <sup>26</sup> **suddenly:** It would be better if there were some dialogue that led to this revelation.
- <sup>27</sup> **tried:** This sentence belongs in the previous paragraph.
- <sup>28</sup> **harbors:** Is there more than one? I guess it sounds more poetic.
- <sup>29</sup> **Butterfly:** Implied, given where she's standing. That being said, I'd keep it.
- <sup>30</sup> **He:** In general, do not tell the reader how a character is feeling or what he is thinking. It slows down the story. A dynamic story is preferable to one that is stagnant, static, and "jumpy". Describe actions which reflect their thoughts/emotions.
- <sup>31</sup> **noticed:** "His brow creased at the sight of..." Perhaps add more about his worries and how he dismisses them for her? It would be an indicator of character development following that fight three months prior.
- <sup>32</sup> **Star:** Add in a line about the wind here instead of sticking it at the end of the next sentence.
- <sup>33</sup> **fleeting:** I do not feel like the breeze should be fleeting. Fleeting implies that the wind blew for just a moment. It'd be better if it were blowing continuously behind Star, as her dress ruffles and her hair flutters, while Marco sees her next to the sunset.
- <sup>34</sup> **could:** Do not tell what these lot are feeling.
- <sup>35</sup> **best:** I dislike the overuse of this word. It refers to a very special friendship. Use it only sparingly, or better yet, not at all. It is the sort

of thing that should be implied rather than stated. It should **NEVER** be used as a synonym or an alias.

<sup>36</sup> **Finally:** Stop using this word.

<sup>37</sup> **wind:** Try not to mention the wind too often, as doing so will lose it its impact. It will inadvertently shift into focus, when it belongs in the background.

<sup>38</sup> **bangs:** Star does not have these.

<sup>39</sup> **instinctively:** Avoid use of adverbs. Replace with something like, “By instinct”. Wait, no that sounds terrible. Just ignore this.

<sup>40</sup> **That:** It might not hurt to add in a transition. The final scene comes far too quickly after the kiss. But it still works, I think.

<sup>41</sup> **starry:** “beneath the starlit sky”

<sup>42</sup> **interlocked:** Intertwined or interlocked. Either works, but this is up to you. I prefer the latter, personally.