“Mondale’s journal, 19th Moon of First Winter in year 10,081 one day before the new moon. The sky is black. Things are going well. The ponies at the bar were easy to convince. I only had to break a few legs, couple noses, tore off an ear. I can still taste the copper of blood in my mouth. Information points to a pony on the midnight train to deer territory. Time to get to work.”

The pony standing out in the dark of the night near the train platform slapped the journal back together and stuffed it into the interior pocket of a trench coat. Hooves clicked heavily against the wood of the platform as he settled back down to watch the ponies getting on the train. Some of them stuck out to him. The one with the missing eye and the scar running down his face to his neck. The one carrying the steamer trunk rattling and jostling over the cobblestones. Some that had coats pulled tight to their bodies got him to glance their way, but most of them seemed to be cold, not desperate to hide things. Then there was the fancy looking fuck walking across the way flanked by two other ponies dressed in loose fitting vests. The ones near him itched at their sides, somewhere above their heart, every once in a while. The pony watching the passerby got up and stretched his dark blue wings. His hooves settled a weather beaten brown fedora onto his untidy mop of salt and pepper gray hair. He cinched his heavy canvas duster’s belt tight around his waist and began moving towards the train.

He walked back towards the rear of the train. Rain was brewing up above but had not yet started to pelt the ground. Lightning flashed in the distance where the rails of the train led and thunder rolled to the train station like a wall of sound. There was a bad moon rising tonight. The pony latched onto the back of the train as the engine began chugging smoke out into the open air. The brakes on the train released with a screech and his hooves clung to the ladder on the back of the train. His stomach moved in his gut as the train rushed headlong into the storm. The pony on the back of the train shot a breath out of his nose into the air. His limbs were starting to itch for movement, to feel the tremors of impact juddering up them and feel the splash of warm blood and the scratch of chipped teeth and bone across his face. He closed his eyes and waited for the rain to start as air streamed past and the mechanical noise of the train filled the night for miles around.

The first drips of rain sliding their way down his face awakened the trench coat clad pony holding onto the ladder at the back of the train. It was about time to get going. He tried the door at the back, locked. A quick sigh escaped his lips and he pulled the heavy trench coat off his back. The covering slipped off him and it revealed his body. It was a patchwork of peculiar scars and flesh warped by pain. His blue cobalt fur was patchy at best and almost non-existent at worst. The coat pressed against the glass above the door and he braced his back against the railing on the back of the train as he held the coat there with his front hooves. His left back leg came up for a moment and lashed out at the window. There was a crack. He lashed out again and felt the glass fall into the cabin of the train car. He took his coat away from the now gaping window of the door, shook glass out of it, and pulled it back on. Blue hooves scrabbled around for a moment for the latch on the opposite side of the door. He found it and flicked his hoof up to detach the latch and allow himself in. The door came open smoothly. He looked at the glittering carpet of glass on the other side of the door. It didn’t bother him as he made his crunching way over it. There had been worse pain tonight than this.

The interior of the cabin was lit by the feeble light from a lantern near the door to the next car. It illuminated cloth covered cargo and dust. He walked to the closest section of cargo and produced a cheap knife from his coat. It took the ropes holding the cargo still and the canvas on the cargo off in a few sawing strokes. The blade of the knife levered the lid of the box open and the smell of print and ink heralded the newspapers contained in the box. There was another smell underneath that though. Something warm wafted with the bland smell of fresh print newspaper. His hooves tore through the papers until he came to a glittering collection of stones sitting in the middle of the newspapers. When the light of the lantern touched them, their soft glow intensified and the warm smell grew more prevalent. The trench coat pony slammed the lid back onto the box and shoved it towards the back of the train. It slid easily through the open door and into the night with a crash muffled by the noise of the train straining to move its smoke belching bulk along the rails. The pony looked around himself and noted the other cargo. He didn’t bother opening it up.

The lantern came off the nail it hung on with a light little clink. Trench coat swung it around the cabin in a slow arc as he checked for anything he might have missed. Disturbed dust hung in the air. Ropes and discarded canvas littered the floor. He turned and headed further into the train. There was still something left for him to do.

He came to the second car and stopped for a moment before opening the door. Something was wrong. The next cabin was a passenger cabin. Ponies sat in seats and dimmed lights gave enough illumination to either stay awake or fall to sleep by. Trench coat squinted through the window at the ponies. They weren’t moving. Breathing, but there was none of the movement that would indicate any of them being awake even though all of them sat upright in their seats with open eyes. He brushed a hoof against the door and felt coalesced magical energy. It was warm and soothing. He grunted and bit his lip before opening the door.

The wave of soothing energy hit trench coat as soon as he walked inside. The floor suddenly looked comfortable and his mind worked at the speed of a lethargic snail. He felt control slipping away from himself and saw that the other ponies in the cabin were muttering something.

“Thesunthesunthesunthesunthesunthesuntheseunthesun.” They whispered so fast that it become one long susurrus of sound instead of intelligible words.

Trench coat bit into his lip hard enough to draw blood. He felt more control slipping away. The loss had ebbed but not stopped entirely. He bit harder. Flesh tore and blood ran down his muzzle. A scream growled its way out of his throat, pain mixed with ardent defiance. His head cleared and he stopped biting through his own bottom lip. Trench coat reached up and pressed his hoof tip against his lip. His front teeth had gone through to the other side. That was going to be a pain in the ass. He made a mental note to take it out on the first sun cultist he found, with compounded interest.

The next two cars were much the same. Passengers sitting dazed by the spell and incapable of resisting the control of the mental magic forced on them. Another growl bubbled its way into Trench coat’s throat. He found what he was looking for in the next car. Sunlight sigils on the walls and floor of the cabin with cultists pouring energy into them to keep the spell working. Their eyes were closed in concentration and sweat dripped down them to coat the floor in a thin sheen of liquid. Trench coat advanced towards them with heavy steps. One of them noticed and started to open his eyes. He almost managed to see the shining hoof that came down on his skull. The blow crunched into his skull and bounced him off the floor. He didn’t get up. The second cultist managed to open his eyes but he spent a crucial second wondering if he should drop the spell or attack. Trench coat did not wait for him to decide. The cultist got a good look at the hoof that busted his teeth into his mouth. One involuntary swallow later and the sun worshipping bastard wouldn’t have to worry about his calcium intake for the next few months. While the robed cultist was reeling from the punch to his mouth he still managed to mumble out the words to sustain the spell. The next punch collapsed his throat like a thin tube of tin foil. He fell to the ground and contributed to the pool of blood spreading from the smashed head of his partner. The one with the smashed head twitched around for a minute before going still. The one sporting the smashed teeth and the compacted throat gurgled as blood welled up in his mouth. Trench coat reached down and gently turned the head of the still living cultist up. He watched emotionlessly as the poor bastard drowned in his own blood. He gave a few feeble splutters that sent warm red over Trench coat’s face. Legs gave about three week kicks and went limp. Trench coat stood and smeared the blood on his face around. He took a deep breath of the copper tinged air and headed into the next car.

The next car held the same ponies chanting and looking on as others had. Another cultist at the end of the car held a knife covered in crimson. His wrist was open and bleeding onto the floor. He used the un-sliced hoof to smear the blood into symbols and runes as he chanted the same words as the other ponies in the cabin. Trench coat rushed forward. He never saw the ponies behind him rise up with knives of their own, cruelly curved affairs with ancient blades pitted with rust by time. When he reached the cultist holding the knife he slapped the blade out of the madpony’s hoof with a contemptuous flick of his own. Trench coat continued forward and bit into the robed pony’s throat with a bass growl that sent flecks of blood splattering out of his mouth. Then he felt knives dig into him and the world went white with pain. The cultists screamed. Some screamed at him in rage as they stabbed into him. One screamed in terror as he pressed his hooves to his throat to staunch the gouts of blood coming out of his neck. Knives screamed through the air and dug into his flesh with the meaty sounds of frantic amateur butchery. The burning pain in his face worsened and he screamed. Trench coat heard something underneath all that noise, a train car’s door opening. Hoofsteps coming towards him. A slow and deliberate chant.

“Sol qui adolebit impii in tenebris languor. Nota est domina nostra sancta lucem.”

In a few moments, he didn’t feel anything.