A1 - P4

 The gates were quite beautiful, you had to admit.
 It was symbolic, at least as far as what you knew.
 The twin alicorns of both night and day, hooves and horns raised proudly.
 A symbol of protection.
 For any other, it may prove comforting. But to you, it was just another promise of death.
 Ponies were packed on the streets leading up to the castle, barely making way for Festive Strike and your cart.
 They all wanted to look at the prize, the prisoner... The monster.
 You figured you'd give them a show, and so you stood as tall as you could in your cage and hissed loudly at a group of fillies and colts, who screamed and scattered into the crowd.
 A soldier glared at you and banged your cart, but you hissed at him too.
 You grinded your twisted horn against the cage, producing green sparks, and flashed your fangs at a particularly shy looking mare in the crowd. For some reason, her buttery yellow coat and long pink mane stood out to you. Then it clicked.
 That was Fluttershy, one of the mares who stood against Chrysalis and the invasion army! You felt newfound rage boil up into your throat and you almost screeched at her, but you figured you didn't want to offend one of the close allies of one of the nation's rulers... yet.

 The crowd began to thin out the closer to the castle you got, which you were glad for.
 It gave you time to fix your emerald green mane and tail into a somewhat respectable state before meeting the end.
 In the reflection of a cage bar, you looked into your lime green eyes and sighed. You hadn't stopped to really look at yourself since your capture.
 To most 'lings you were quite the catch. At hive summits even other Queens radiated with envy, and sentient drones drooled.
 But to a pony, you figured you were just another monster. Nobody fancied your bright lime draconic eyes, your draping emerald mane and tail, your lithe form or your shining black chitin.
 There was no love in this place, you thought sadly.
 While a royal could survive without love, her physical appearance would become monstrous. Despite Chrysalis's contempt for you, she did keep you well fed. While you hadn't eaten well in a week, you did still retain some semblance of your best self...
 That wouldn't be the case for long, if the ponies decided to keep you alive. Which you doubted.

 You looked back up and grimaced as you saw the gates to the castle open wide. At the back of the path through what you assumed were the royal gardens were three very special ponies...
 One of alabaster white, with a pastel rainbow mane flowing on invisible winds, taller than the other two. Her pink eyes rested on you, emotionless. She was decked out in golden regalia, it was actually quite impressive. You were almost honored that she dressed to meet you... Her wingspan spread slowly to its fullest, and the other two followed.
 Another, a dark blue with an ethereal mane that resembled the night sky. She was somewhat

shorter than the alabaster alicorn, but was significantly more dangerous looking. Her regalia was made of obsidian, with an elegant silver moon carved into her chest piece. Her glare pierced your soul, but she kept her composure well otherwise.

 The third, a lavender pony with an indigo mane and tail. Streaks of purple and pink were inlaid in her straight cut hair. Her horn seemed to be somewhat long, but everything about her was smaller than the other two, even her wings, which indicated that she was much younger. Instead of a hateful glare, her expression was curious, almost admiring, but you could taste the fear rolling off of her.

 You thought back to your Mother's stories, and recognized the lavender alicorn as Twilight Sparkle. Bemused, you were surprised that she'd ascended into a ruler in a year's time.

 The cart stopped, and your cage was lowered to the paved walkway just feet away from certain death.

 The alabaster one, Celestia, spoke.

 "Unchain her."

 Festive Strike was flabbergasted, "but Princess-"

 "Are we not a civilized people, Commander?" she challenged gently, "we can handle it from here. Unchain her."

 Festive Strike said nothing more, and he nodded to his soldiers. A few moments later, and your hole-ridden hooves were free of the shackles that bound them. Another moment, and your horn clamp was off, the only thing remaining was the collar preventing you from contacting Chrysalis. You looked up at Celestia, shocked and somewhat impressed.

 "Changeling, we do not know your name. Speak it," the darker alicorn, Luna you assumed, commanded you. You almost scoffed, how dare this accursed pony command YOU?! Instead, you picked yourself up and stood regally as you have been taught.

 "I am Anon, Princess of the Badlands Hive."

 The Princesses nodded, and Celestia spoke, "Then we are on equal grounds, Princess. Please, would you join us for tea?"

 You went bug-eyed and slack-jawed at that.

 "But... You captured me. Your soldiers assured me I would be executed, treated with the upmost cruelty- Mother, she-" you snarled, "you can't trick me, pony! Do not presume I am stupid enough to let my guard down!"

 Celestia looked at you calmly, "then don't, all we ask is you join us for tea, so that we may talk. I'm sure there is much for both of us to learn about the other, Princess Anon."

 You felt heavily conflicted. She was an enemy, a conniving witch! But then, there was the possibility that Chrysalis had... skewed the story a bit, if these ponies were telling you the truth. Which was new to you; you'd never experienced any sort of treasonous thoughts towards your mother until the past week away from the hive... It was kind of fun.

 "U-Um," Twilight spoke up, stepping forwards, "I know we got off on the wrong hoof. But Celestia wants to extend a hoof of peace to the Changelings."

 You glared, "you're kidding. You CAPTURED me!"

 Celestia sighed, "I asked my Commander and his platoon to escort you. Not chain you up and starve you. I apologize deeply on behalf of my soldiers for your inequine treatment. He and the soldiers under his command will be punished accordingly, I promise you."

 Luna shot a glare to Festive Strike and his soldiers, who shrunk under her gaze. You almost smirked in satisfaction at seeing that worm put in his place.

 You thought for a moment. They were SPARING you… the least you could do was try and pretend

to be civil until they hopefully released you.

 "Very well then, Princesses. I accept your apology and invitation to... tea."

 She smiled for the first time since your arrival. Droves of relief and joy sloughed off of her, it was almost intoxicating.

 Gods, what have you gotten yourself into...

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