Arc 1 - New Dawn

The beginnings of Dawn Bloom's adventures in modern Equestria.

- CH1
- CH2

CH1

Princess Twilight Sparkle and her expedition, under formal request from High Princesses Celestia and Luna, had been stationed in the Western Everfree forest for many weeks. They had been uncovering the secrets of what was a door predating even the Discordian Era. The door was initially discovered by a group of school fillies skipping class who had wandered too close to a ward. The ward had exploded, leaving two of the four fillies injured and one in critical condition. If they had not been terribly injured, perhaps the tale would have been written off as over-active imaginations, and another unlucky soul wandering too far into the dark forest would have been injured, or worse. While it was a regrettable situation, Princess Twilight was glad for it, if only to prevent further injury... and perhaps she was also a *tad* interested to see what was inside of the door. Despite being nearly as tall as Princess Luna had been once and with the maturity to show for it, Twilight never did out-grow her inquisitive and often neurotic nature.

Due to the nature of anything Discord, and how long his reign had lasted until Celestia and Luna had defeated him, it was very rare to see any treasures from before his takeover remaining, let alone full blown structures. Even after Discord's reformation thanks to Fluttershy a decade prior to the door's discovery, he spoke very little of the world before he came into control. So, it was up to Twilight and her team to unlock the mysteries of the past.

After weeks and weeks, the complex ward had finally fallen, but Twilight had ordered nopony enter until she could personally clear the halls of traps. While Twilight was already the finest mage known to pony kind from Equestria's Eastern seas to the sparse civilizations dotting the Western Frontier, she was also an alicorn. Alicorns were not only blessed with the natural gifts of all three pony races and innately magically adept, but they were also considerably hardy and able to dispel their physical forms to evade true death. To put it simply, Twilight could handle what her team of mortal ponies could not.

So it was with great curiosity that Twilight Sparkle, Princess of Equestria and Alicorn of Magic, strode into the unknown.

There were no traps, surprisingly. Rather, there were ancient carvings depicting the Thestral Kingdom, of which little was known. Twilight raised her brows in surprise; Thestrals were one of the rarer pony races, not even considered one of the 'big three' due to their sheer rarity by common ponies' standards (which she personally always found incredibly racist and exclusory).

Thestrals were an off-shoot of pony, technically considered a subclass set of species. Most commonly, Thestral Pegasi were seen in the presence of High Princess Luna, but they were only one side of a three-sided equation. Thestrals embodied all three pony races, sharing traits of Earth ponies, Pegasus ponies and Unicorn ponies. However, only Thestral pegasi were seen in any significant number since the fall of Discord. Earth Thestrals were rare, most commonly seen in Thestral neighborhoods in larger cities, such as Trottingham, Vanhoover and Seaddle. Thestral unicorns were even rarer, only perhaps 100 or 200 left among the 5,000-ish Thestrals remaining in

Equestria. Despite efforts by Luna after her return to restore the equality of Thestrals among the other pony races, they were largely discriminated against for their slitted eyes, thick coats, fangs and in the case of Thestral pegasi, membranous bat wings.

Thestrals were commonly seen in tight-knit communities, and never spoke of any history so significant that it'd be seen in pre-Discordian ruins. Even their folklore only went back as far as Discord's reign, and mainly described how Princess Luna 'delivered them' from a terrible, nondescript fate. Thus, Twilight's current fascination.

She would have stayed to read the murals' Old Equish scribing, if she had not caught a glimmer in the corner of her eye. A magical glimmer. Twilight cautiously walked deeper into the ruins, nothing but the droning sound of air entering this place after undoubtedly centuries of being hidden, her own heartbeat, and the sound of her hooves' clipping and clopping echoing through the long corridor. More murals tugged at her attention, but the glimmer could not be ignored. If there was a ward or a rune that could cause harm, she wanted to examine it and dispel it.

It took but a few minutes of cautious approach and constant arcane surveillance before Twilight entered a much larger chamber. It was full of opened sarcophagi, though they seemed to be more like upright stone coffins without coverings, not meant to be burial chambers. They were indeed meant to hold ponies, but they were empty. In the center, the magical glimmer intensified; a single sarcophagus surrounded by two larger ones. Twilight approached slowly, but there were no wards... Only a single point of magic that poured- absolutely *radiated* pure, ancient magic. The spell upon a simple scry was beyond imagining, so complex that Twilight's mind and heart raced with wonder.

Twilight caught sight of something that gave pause to even her own magical discovery. Before she could look within the sarcophagus in the center, she circled around to stare at the skeleton that'd caught her eye. It was suspended in some sort of invisible field, an incomplete form of the spell that radiated from behind her. She dared not disturb the remains, and limited herself to visual inspection only. What truly alarmed her was not that it was an ancient deceased pony, but rather...

It was no regular pony skeleton.

Its skull was elegant, refined and bore a long, spiraled horn about the length of her own, perhaps longer. It certainly was once a female specimen. *She*, Twilight chided herself. What alarmed her was the presence of wing bones. However, they were not pegasus wings. The bone structure was that of a bat's wings, the digits intact with one another as though the bones had simply been a biology classroom's skeleton model. It was clear as day; this had been a Thestral alicorn... But what killed her? The other sarcophagus held a similarly decomposed occupant, though the structure of the bones and skull indicated he was a stallion. A stallion alicorn! No modern alicorns had been biologically stallions; only mares had ascended thus far, to the degree that Twilight assumed only females could ascend. In hindsight, this was a bit sexist of her.

After she finished gawking, Twilight's eyes laid upon a jaw-dropping sight. Within the center sarcophagus, the suspension field was a bright coral pink, pulsing and thumping with some invisible heartbeat, as though the spell itself was alive.

Within that magical field was a Thestral alicorn mare, no older than perhaps 20 or 21 years of age if Twilight's stunned mind had to hazard an educated guess. Twilight gasped as she scried the occupant, receiving no resistance from the barrier. The mare was *alive*. Without a second thought, Twilight gently brushed the complex spell with a more complex scry, trying to discern the spell's purpose.

After a long while of prying at the spell's unfamiliar runic formulas, Twilight could hazard a guess... This suspension field was keeping the mare in stasis, suspending her biological and magical processes entirely while keeping everything that she was alive. Judging by the magical decay, the spell had been holding for thousands of years, and would perhaps hold for another thousand or three more.

Twilight closed her eyes in thought. Typically a good scientist wouldn't destroy such a powerful spell before she could study it, nor understand the consequences of doing such a thing.

Typically, however, a good pony wouldn't leave a perfectly healthy young mare locked in stasis any longer than she needed to be... Debating, Twilight opened her eyes and circled around to the front, where a slightly eroded placard was carved messily into the stone. She couldn't help but try to read the ancient carvings, a small frown on her face as she read.

To anypony whom might wander into these preservation halls, bear witness to our daughter, and spare her life if thou hast any mercy 'i thy heart. Spare her so that she may once again gaze upon the beauty of an unsullied land and live fully 'i a world without the corrupting one's influence.

In Caelo Speramus.

Twilight was touched, and could only imagine that the elder alicorns had been this one's parents. Though there seemed to be more scribbles, Twilight couldn't make them out. Instead, she furrowed her brows in determination.

Her horn lit, and the unweaving of the spell began...

Twilight rushed out of the chamber as quickly as she could without disturbing the ancient halls any further. Her team, who'd been waiting anxiously, called out to her as she flew out of the corridor.

"All wards and traps have been dispelled- actually, there weren't any! Begin your work without me, I... I have to return to Canterlot immediately. Rusty Brush is in charge! Bye!"

And with that, Twilight teleported in a puff of magic, leaving an extremely confused and stunned expeditionary team in her wake.

When the ponies were organized and finally entered the catacombs, they would find the suspended skeletons, many ancient urns and treasures, stories and legends from a time long forgotten. Documentation would begin, articles would be written, and nopony would know of the slumbering alicorn that had once occupied the central sarcophagus.



CH2

"CELESTIAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH- Oof!" Twilight had practically flown towards the throne room from the long distance teleportation beacon on the other side of the castle, cries reverberating around the castle. Servants dove out of the way, and guards watched on with stoic faces; Twilight was known for her fits of panic, after all. Her tizzy had only stopped when she unceremoniously launched into another, much darker Princess on her way.

"Twilight Sparkle! What has gotten into you?!" High Princess Luna had landed on her plot from the impact force. She was much taller than she had been when she first returned to Equestria just 10 years prior, standing just a couple inches shorter than her elder sister. However, this didn't stop Twilight's panicked flight from knocking her down.

"Luna! I'm so sorry- I... this is really important, where's Celestia?!" Twilight looked back behind herself, causing Luna to follow her gaze. A figure- a pony- laid unconscious on her back. It was, surprisingly, not the strangest thing Twilight had panicked over. Luna stood to her hooves and approached Twilight before the lavender alicorn could pull away.

"Why are you--" Luna brushed Twilight's sparkling mane away from the mare's face, and gasped, "it cannot be...!" The pony possessed both thestral wings and a horn!

"I found her in the ruins. I didn't want anypony else to see her, so I grabbed her before they could see... I didn't want them to panic," Twilight spoke quietly. Noticing that servants and guards were quickly surrounding them, she looked pleadingly to Luna, "we need to get to Celestia, she'll know what to do, right?"

Luna pursed her lips and nodded stiffly. Wrapping both Twilight and the strange mare in her large wingspan, they were gone in a flash of indigo light.

«★✧▬✦✦✦▬✧★»

Celestia had always enjoyed afternoons such as this. The warmth of her sun bearing down upon the land like a watchful guardian, the cool breeze forming waves in distant grassy fields and rustling the green leaves of trees and bushes. The birds' songs echoing through the fair lands of Equestria, and the light, tinny sound of a mare screaming. Ah, she wondered what that was about? However, the sound ceased, and she resumed her afternoon tea.

Suddenly, a dark form almost as large as herself and a familiar lavender mare suddenly flashed into existence on her tea terrace, and she sighed.

"Sister, it's good to see you," she glanced kindly at Twilight, "and Twilight... I thought you were stationed in the Western Everfree. What brings you home- Oh," Celestia stopped abruptly, eyes as wide as saucers staring at the new figure suspended in Twilight's magic. A light maroon thestral

with a slightly lighter, more saturated shade of maroon for a mane. Her tail was much longer than her mane, but just as curly and wild. A strip of light orange and another next to it of light yellow curled about in both her mane and tail. However, what was most alarming was the presence of both a spiraled unicorn horn, and a pair of thestral wings just below her withers. Though her eyes were closed, one could only presume that they had the characteristic slitted pupil of all thestral ponies. Two snaggle fangs poked out just below her upper lip, and her fur coat was quite thick compared to an average pony's. A textbook thestral mare, albeit with a horn...

Silence reigned for a good 15 seconds, before Celestia sighed and placed her tea upon its saucer. Not a single calm day in Equestria...

"Twilight, why is there an alicorn mare- a thestral at that- of unknown identity or origin, suspended in your magic, unconscious on my solar terrace?" Celestia spoke smoothly, preparing herself for the inevitable- pardon her language- shitshow about to befall her kingdom as soon as the mare was discovered by the press.

So it was that Twilight calmed herself and told the high diarchs of Equestria the whole story, once they had made the young mare comfortable of course. From the ward falling, to the minute details of the chamber, the deceased alicorns within their own sarcophagi surrounding the one containing the mysterious alicorn, and Twilight's decision to leave her team to document the rest.

Celestia, ever patient, had listened to the tale in its entirety. Upon Twilight's silence, she hummed thoughtfully.

"So, there was indeed a civilization of some kind before the Discordian era... Fascinating," Celestia stood to her hooves and walked towards the makeshift 'bed' (really, it was more of a lounge chair with a couple extra pillows) that they'd placed the unconscious mare upon for the duration of their talk.

"But sister, what are we to do? She will awaken to a world she does not recognize in time. I feel the stasis spell's remaining influence slipping from her as we speak..." Luna said with no small amount of empathy for the poor mare.

"Well, we certainly cannot recast the spell," Celestia said confidently, "I will not deny a pony the right to life, no matter how difficult her transition to modern society may be."

"But what about after she adjusts?! What about the technicali-" Twilight began, but Celestia raised a hoof to stop her spiel.

"I will do what I must, for both this pony's sake, and the sake of Equestria," Celestia explained, "I highly doubt based on the evidence she is any sort of danger, but I will evaluate her myself when she comes to."

"Sister, perhaps I would be a better candidate for that," Luna piped in, "I can look the part, just to... ease her mind and heart. It would be better to awaken to a pony who seems familiar, at least."

"Good idea, Luna," Celestia smiled softly, and a bit sadly. Luna expressed some thestral features, a sort of magical scar following her fall to the Nightmare. A thicker coat, hybridized wings and tufted ears adorned her. Though they were indeed full sisters in blood, they were as different as… Well, night and day, "I will leave that task to you."

«★✧▬✦✦✦▬✧★»

Her mind ached, as though her thoughts were asleep for a long while. In fact, it wasn't just her mind that ached… Indeed, her Highness Princess Dawn Bloom Tenebris of the Noctus Empire, felt like utter garbage. With her eyes still closed, she tested her limbs with a groan, feeling her joints popping and her wings stretching after what felt like an eternity.

When Dawn did open her eyes, she gasped quietly. Everything was different; no longer was she in her bedchambers within Nox Castle, but in an unfamiliar (yet comfortably dark) room. The night motif was not lost on her; glittering gemstones glimmered dimly along the walls and ceilings like stars, and the lunar symbols were on darn-near every rug, pillow and tapestry. She groaned and sat up, testing her body further. However, she paused. Two softly glowing turquoise eyes watched her with keen interest, and she gasped. Before Dawn Bloom could utter a word, the figure stepped out of the shadows. A sleek, tall alicorn mare almost as tall as her mother with a dark blue coat and a starry, ethereal mane stared at her with interest. Her wings were partially feathered, a trait of the Surface ponies, yet they tapered off into membranous bat's wings like her own. The pony's eyes were not slitted like her own, but her coat was thick and fluffy, leading her to believe this alicorn was some sort of hybrid.

"Who are you… W-Where am I?" Dawn Bloom finally spoke, her voice hollow as though it hadn't been used in a long while. The dark alicorn smiled kindly.

"I am High Princess Luna Selene of Equestria. Though, you may refer to me as just Luna," the alicorn's voice was mature, somewhat deep. Her enunciations were direct, leaving no room for misunderstanding, "you are in my chambers currently. It seems the spell that kept you as you were all this time left your body in a state of shock you needed to rest off."

Equestria.. She was a surface pony, but not any she'd ever heard of. Dawn Bloom had never heard of a surface pony royal that was an alicorn, and not by that name…

"Spell? What…" Dawn Bloom frowned, confusion spreading across her features as she tried to process what Luna could have meant. Luna sighed.

"You were… asleep for some time," Luna sat on a cushion nearby, her horn flickering as a silvery blue flame started in the fireplace, "I will tell you all I can, but first I would like to ask you a question in turn. What is your name?"

"…I am Princess Dawn Bloom Tenebris, of the Noctus Empire, daughter of Emperor Phalanx Gleam Tenebris and Empress Moonbright Tenebris," Dawn Bloom introduced herself as Luna did, and quickly added, "but you can just call me Dawn Bloom."

“Very well, Dawn Bloom,” Luna hummed, “the truth is, we found you in an underground chamber some three days ago, under the influence of a highly complex stasis spell…” Luna decided to omit her supposed parents’ fate just for the moment, “a mysterious door with a ward was located in what we know as the Everfree forest, perhaps 60 miles from our current location. A group of young fillies were injured when they suffered an unfortunate accident upon finding the door. Under the supervision of Princess Twilight Sparkle, an expeditionary team worked tirelessly to uncover what was within…

“It seems we found more than just ancient artifacts, and Princess Twilight quickly released you from the spell and brought you here to myself and my sister,” Luna’s eyes held a light of pity in them, causing Dawn Bloom’s gut to twist.

“Ancient-- How long- How…” Dawn Bloom choked, suddenly feeling quite light headed, “why was I in that spell?!”

“We were hoping you could tell us, Dawn Bloom,” Luna stood up from her cushion and gingerly approached the emotional mare, “what is the last thing you remember?”

Dawn Bloom squeezed her teary eyes shut, shaking her head, “I don’t know… The castle was in a blur! The guards were mobilized, my father told my mother and I to run,” she sniffled, “the next thing I know, we’re in some sort of stone room? With a bunch of other ponies, and-” Dawn Bloom paused suddenly, eyes wide with realization.

“Dawn Bloom?” Luna pressed.

“…My mother placed me in the chamber, she told me to sleep, and that when I awoke… It’d be safe,” Dawn Bloom looked down at her hooves, suddenly feeling rather distant from her own body. Luna tsk’d and lifted her chin with a hoof.

“Dawn Bloom, I… it brings me no joy to say this,” Luna sighed, “but you are a brave, intelligent young mare who deserves nothing short of the truth. Based on our research thus far, it has been approximately 2,500 years since you were placed in the stasis spell.”

Dawn Bloom nearly vomited at that. Her blood went cold, and she seized up in horror.

“Two- Five-” she suddenly stood to her hooves and raced to the closed curtains, flinging them open and staring at the world beyond. In the sudden light, her slitted coral eyes narrowed to needles.

A bustling city under the sun, architecture she didn’t recognize, ponies fluttering, trotting and racing around in all directions below. Shops with strange foods, fashions and gadgets. Guards with armor not of her empire… Dawn Bloom stumbled back into a comforting wing embrace, and she couldn’t hold it back any longer. She cried, then she wept, and full out sobbed. Grief shook her body until she could no longer do even that. It was hours that the elder Princess sat with her, rubbing her back comfortingly.

By the time Luna needed to raise the moon, Dawn Bloom had gone quiet entirely. By the time Luna lowered her moon, Dawn Bloom had fallen asleep. It was only by sunhigh that she finally shifted,

and stood to her hooves.

“My parents,” she started. Luna looked at her, puzzled, “they’re dead, aren’t they? My empire, gone. My legacy, dead. I’m… no doubt the last of my kind,” Dawn Bloom’s voice was hollow and fatalistic.

“Your parents… they no longer roam this plane,” Luna finally confirmed, “they were found within the chamber, but the spell did not hold properly. It was incomplete, damaged somehow. Our forensic ponies suspect that the spell kept them asleep, but did not hold their bodies in stasis… They…”

“Tell me,” Dawn Bloom demanded simply, “I’m not a foal. I need to know.”

“They likely starved to death in their deep sleep,” Luna said sympathetically. If that impacted Dawn Bloom, she didn’t show it beyond a twitch of an ear. She stared out at the morning rush of ponies below.

“However… there are still many thestral ponies,” Luna smiled softly, “I have kept watch over them as much as I could since the Discordian Era- the era we suspect followed the end of your empire’s reign. They are a minority in Equestria, but they remain strong. They are tenacious ponies…”

“It does my heart good to hear my people live on,” Dawn Bloom lowered her head, “I don’t know how I’ll face them…”

“Perhaps it’d be best to visit such problems at a later time,” Luna offered, “my sister and good friend, the other Equestrian Princesses, wished to meet with you once the matter of your awakening was completed.”

“...Okay,” Dawn Bloom sighed. Luna smiled encouragingly.

“Perhaps you would like to eat as well?”

“I don’t suppose you Equestrians would have any, ah, thestral cuisine?” Dawn Bloom said hopefully. Luna just chuckled.

“Ah, but I have a guard full of thestrals. It’s in my best interest to feed them well,” Luna guided Dawn Bloom to the door of her chambers, quietly casting a glamor spell on both herself and the younger alicorn to fix up their manes and clear their faces of dried tears, “I am sure we can find you something proper to eat…”

«★✧▬✦✦✦▬✧★»

The castle staff had, curiously, been sparse on Dawn Bloom’s way to the throne room. No doubt her arrival was to be kept on the down low, if Luna’s tale of how things went down was at all true…

Her mind wandered as they walked through the unfamiliar castle corridors. She wondered what Princess Celestia was like, what her savior would think, what strange questions they'd have or odd traditions they'd share. It wouldn't take long to find out, as they had arrived at the large set of double doors rather fast.

"Do not worry over etiquette, Dawn Bloom," Luna encouraged, "you are from a time before even our own, and we will not chide you for 'bucking up', as ponies of this time say."

"You speak as though you yourself are unfamiliar with these matters," Dawn Bloom raised a brow.

"Ah, that is a long story," Luna said sheepishly, "suffice to say, I myself was.. Away for some time. I will tell you sometime soon."

Dawn Bloom nodded, and looked ahead as a strange golden aura wrapped around the doors and opened them up.

Before her and Luna was a tall, slender alabaster alicorn mare with hair like a pastel aurora sitting upon a golden throne. A symbol of the sun was carved into the gold crest at the top of the throne. She had a wise, but kind expression on her face.

Next to the solar alicorn was a significantly smaller lavender alicorn mare, with a mundane mane and tail like Dawn Bloom's own of indigo and two stripes of pink and purple. She sat upon a silver throne with a six-pointed star carved on the crest. Her eyes were a vivid purple, and lit up with wonder upon seeing Dawn Bloom. An empty throne to Celestia's other side was crafted from obsidian, and a crescent moon was carved into it in a similar fashion to the other thrones.

"Ahhh, welcome you two. We were just ordering some brunch! Care to join us?" Celestia's motherly voice eased Dawn Bloom's nerves a bit.

"Of course, sister," Luna chuckled, "but first, I'd like to introduce our newest guest. Princess Dawn Bloom Tenebris, of the Noctus Empire."

Dawn Bloom bowed deeply to Celestia and Twilight, nose almost touching the ground below.

"I am honored to stand before you, and thank your Highnesses for your gracious hospitality…"

"Oh none of that, dear," Celestia laughed heartily, "please, just Celestia and Twilight. Though we are not acquainted personally just yet, I believe we can drop the formalities in this case."

"You're welcome to join us for breakfast, Dawn Bloom," Twilight smiled kindly, "I understand thestrals have a more omnivorous diet than most ponies. Don't worry, we have a gryphon chef in the castle that prepares food for Luna's guard. Just say the word, he'll take care of you."

Dawn Bloom smiled nervously and nodded. Clearly these modern Princesses were a great deal more casual than those from her time period…

"I'd like that… Thank you y- Twilight…"

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Breakfast was phenomenal! Dawn Bloom hadn't realized how hungry she was until she'd taken her first bite, and before she knew it, five plates of escargot and an entire hydra wellington were down her gullet. After ravenously consuming her meal, she gracefully tapped a fancy embroidered towel to her mouth and smiled sheepishly. The food gave her some life, the sparkle in her eye finally igniting after so long. The other Princesses had barely touched their meals yet, and stared shocked at the younger.

"I'm sorry… I haven't eaten in.. Well, 2,500 years give or take?" Dawn Bloom looked down at her empty plates and blushed.

"Oh, not to worry," Celestia psh'd a little, "you should see Luna with her moon pies…"

"Or Tia with her cloud frosting cakes," Luna mumbled, giving her elder sister a sour glare. The two glared at one another with vitriol before they began laughing. Twilight shrugged her wings, and took a bite of her blueberry pancakes.

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Celestia cleared her throat and sat on her throne. Luna and Twilight followed, serious expressions on their faces.

"Now.. we must discuss one other matter," Celestia spread her wings to their full span. Luna and Twilight spread their wings as well, and Dawn Bloom suddenly felt rather small, "the matter of your future in Equestria.

"An alicorn is a powerful thing. Ponies will naturally flock to us, for guidance and for power. They have always seen us as… divine. I'm sure you are well aware of the affairs of the alicorn race. You know full well you cannot hide your nature forever. Your empire is long dead, nothing remains of it in the modern day. Yet, you are still an alicorn. Ponies will question your presence, they will seek you out for guidance, they will take your word as gospel, and inevitably follow you."

"We would like to make things easy for you, Dawn Bloom," Twilight continued for Celestia, "You do have a future here; you can become a Princess of Equestria."

"It is better to ascend you to a throne now to avoid… complications," Luna grimaced, and continued, "you can take the kingdom from an alicorn, but you cannot simply take the alicorn from an alicorn."

"You're just giving me a throne? Like that?" Dawn Bloom gawked, a little suspicious, "you barely know me! You're…"

Celestia held a hoof up to silence Dawn Bloom.

"Don't misunderstand, you will be mentored and kept under supervision. Officially, you will be a crown Princess of Equestria, but your job for the foreseeable future will be to educate yourself,

rather than to politick and hold court.”

“Essentially, you’ll just be an honorary Princess,” Twilight smiled, “even I wasn’t a ‘full Princess’ when I ascended. I had to earn my privilege to rule alongside Celestia and Luna. It’ll be the same for you.”

“You are right, we do not know you… But we are not mistrusting, nor stupid,” Luna said, “you are new, an unaccounted for variable. Yet we would rather avoid the storm by granting you an honorary title, than weather it by releasing an unknown alicorn unto our ponies and letting them fill in the blanks. Better to grant you protections and an apprenticeship of sorts right away, than simply ‘wait’ to get to know you better. It is not ideal, but it is the easiest solution.”

“So you’re keeping me on a leash, while keeping ponies calm,” Dawn Bloom hummed, “smart.”

“Partially so, yes,” Celestia nodded, “I admit, I want to keep you close so we can monitor you, but I also would not send a young mare from another era entirely out into the world unprepared and alone… While you being an alicorn does complicate things and means you must be granted royal status for your protection, alicorn or not, I would offer you the same amnesty.”

“Do I have a choice?” Dawn Bloom wilted a bit, “what if I said no?”

“I’m afraid you don’t have much of a real choice, Dawn Bloom. While you may decline, it would make things much harder for yourself, and us as well,” Celestia said sympathetically.

“…Alright,” Dawn Bloom sighed, “this is better than being thrown to the wolves… I accept your offer, and your mercy.”

“Very well. We shall announce your arrival in a few days’ time, and hold a coronation as quickly as we can,” Celestia folded her wings, and looked at Dawn Bloom with a glimmer in her eye, “I imagine you’d like some say in the decor?”

Dawn Bloom couldn’t help but smile giddily.

“I’d love to.”

«★✧▬✦✦✦▬✧★»

“As you may know, my little ponies, my former student Princess Twilight Sparkle and a team of our finest explorers were exploring ancient pre-Discordian ruins in the Western Everfree for some weeks,” Celestia announced, using a spell to amplify her voice across the crowd, “this was an incredible discovery that led to the realization that there was in fact civilization before Discord’s tyrannical rule. A civilization of thestral ponies who inhabited the expansive caverns beneath Equestria, known as the Noctus Empire…

“However, their history was lost to time after Discord’s reign began. It was only thanks to a particularly fascinating discovery we know what we do now. An alicorn mare was discovered, in a deep sleep, within these ruins. Suspended in a stasis spell, the Princess of the Noctus Empire was

kept safe for thousands of years… Until Princess Twilight uncovered her and broke the spell. This brave mare has truly stood the test of time, and now stands among us as an equal.

“Now it is my honor to present Equestria’s newest Princess from a time long forgotten… Alicorn of Hope, Princess Dawn Bloom Tenebris!”

Cheers erupted from the crowd, but not as loudly as they once rang for Princess Twilight a decade in the past. Many stamped their hooves and hollered, but many remained silent, staring with various expressions of mistrust and even anger as Dawn Bloom emerged from the glittery curtains to stand upon the ceremonial balcony. Her thestral wings were spread wide, eyes glowing slightly with power as she presented herself to the ponies of Equestria. Her coronation dress wrapped around her body like a silken toga. It was a deep purple fading into pink, then orange and then yellow, complimenting her coat and mane colors well. A bronze peytral with spiraling designs adorned the base of her neck and chest, and bronze shoes with a matching spiral design adorned her hooves. A plain bronze tiara glimmered from atop her head, reflecting the afternoon sun rather stunningly.

“Ponies of Equestria,” she began, voice amplified, “I see your expressions of mistrust, confusion… anger. Many of you would accept me with open arms, offer me unconditional love and adoration. But for those of you who see only a mare you do not recognize, a mare who is from a country you never knew the name of until today, a mare who has been raised to a throne she did not seemingly earn… I understand you, I see you. It is my hope that in time, I will earn my place among you, and be worthy of your adoration and respect. Equestria is not where I was born or raised, but it is where I place my loyalties. While my empire is no more, I stand here now to declare my fealty to this proud nation and its ponies. The High Princesses have offered me a place in this world and have given me mercy and amnesty. In exchange for their kindness, I promise to serve this nation, you, to my fullest.

While I have not yet earned your respect, I do agree… I will strive to be worthy of it.”

Dawn Bloom, instead of backing away or dismissing herself… kneeled. She bowed to the ponies of Equestria, smiling. It was entirely unorthodox! Celestia shuffled a little, uncomfortable, but allowed it to commence. As Dawn Bloom rose, cheers erupted again, perhaps a little louder this time. It was a start.

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“Did you see that bow? A Princess bowing to her subjects! How scandalous! I’d just die!” Rarity whispered. Applejack rolled her eyes.

“Now sugarcube’, way Ah see it is her Highness is jus’ declarin’ her loyalty to th’ ponyfolk,” the farm pony chuckled, “was charmin’, seein’ a humble Princess.”

The close friends of Princess Twilight had gathered in a corner of the coronation’s reception. While the ponies present were mostly nobles and noble-adjacent, some were friends of the crown or castle staff.

Rarity opened her mouth to continue, but Dawn Bloom had walked up to them. She smiled and bowed her head respectfully.

“Twilight told me I should introduce myself to you,” Dawn Bloom, despite all her grace, seemed quite nervous.

“Ohmigosh! New friend, new friend!” Pinkie Pie jubilantly cheered. Rainbow Dash smirked and extended a hoof to Dawn Bloom. With a confident shake, RD’s approval of the new Princess rose.

“Rainbow Dash, Wonderbolt captain. Nice to meet’cha, your Highness.”

“Um… Hello, your Highness… I’m Fluttershy,” Fluttershy curtsied and smiled shyly. Rarity dramatically curtsied as well.

“It is splendid to meet your acquaintance, Princess Dawn Bloom,” Rarity graciously smiled, as though she wasn’t just gossiping, “I am Rarity Belle, fashion extraordinaire…”

“I’m Pinkie Pie!” Pinkie Pie announced simply, bouncing all the while. Applejack stepped up, and bowed her head respectfully.

“Name’s Applejack. Ah work the orchards down ‘n Ponyville. Excuse mah manners, Ah don’t typically come to all these noble-type parties.”

“It’s no problem at all. It’s lovely to meet everypony,” Dawn Bloom smiled sincerely, “I’m afraid I don’t know a lot about these parties either… They’re very different from- before.”

“Darling, if it’s not too much trouble, perhaps you could tell us more of your culture, hm?” Rarity spoke sweetly, fluttering her lashes, “I am sure your wonderful empire had such lovely fashion!”

“And cute animals…” Fluttershy added.

“Awesome thestral parties!” Pinkie Pie interjected.

“Ah’m mighty curious to hear ‘bout yer empire as well,” Applejack nodded, “but maybe we’d best be leavin’ ya to yer studies, Princess. We wouldn’t wanna take up all yer time with letters…”

Dawn Bloom chuckled, “I’d be happy to correspond with you all in the future, I think a little outside contact with modern ponies would keep me sane…”

“Well then that’s settled! And I’m sure you’ll see me around, ‘Highness,” Rainbow Dash butted in, “since I’ve been captain, the Wonderbolts have been re-integrating with the Equestrian military.”

“Well, don’t be shy. I can’t wait to hear from you all. Until next time,” Dawn Bloom smiled and bowed her head, circulating back into the calm swarm of nobles.

Rarity hummed, fluttering her fan a bit, “well, she’s certainly an inoffensive thing, isn’t she? Rather mild!”

“What’d you expect? A priss?” Rainbow Dash snarked, earning her a withering glare from Rarity, “nah, most thestrals I’ve met are super chill. Not like all of ‘em are, just somethin’ about their culture, I’unno.”

“Well Ah like ‘er. She’s honest n’ don’t beat around the bush!” Applejack affirmed.

“I think she’s very nice…” Fluttershy said neutrally, “maybe she’s just trying to get along with everypony…”

“I’d be nervous too! Think about it; she woke up in a completely new place around a bunch of ponies she didn’t recognize! And then she’s gotta be a Princess for a whole new nation while coping with the loss of her old one- and not to mention she’s gonna learn everything over again! EEK!” Pinkie Pie took a deep breath after her spiel, and smiled, “I like her!”

“Uh, now that’cha put it that way…” Applejack scratched the back of her neck, “Ah gotta say she’s a real trooper…”

“Oh… well I suppose I could… perhaps cut her some slack,” Rarity admitted sheepishly, “after all the poor dear is in an entirely new society…”

Rainbow Dash furrowed her brows and looked back out at the new Princess, who was still circulating among the nobles.

“Yeah… Poor kid."