

TALES TO FAP TOO

ISSUE #1



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Cover by Note~

A HORSEFUCKER'S TALE

›E3 2015

- ›A 'special guest' is announced to come to the event
- ›Everyone crowds around a giant stage
- ›A fog covers up a large figure and another, feminine figure
- ›"Ladies and gentleman..."
- ›You recognize the voice immediately
- ›It's Gabe Newell
- ›"Lauren Faust and I are proud to present..."
- ›The fog dissolves to reveal a screen
- ›On it, it says:

›MY LITTLE PONY: EQUESTRIAN ADVENTURES:
EPISODE I

- ›"The NEW My Little Pony video game!"
- ›yfw
- ›Half of the crowd throws any object up on stage, the other half is cheering wildly
- ›"And for you haters..."
- ›Did Gaben just say 'haters'?
- ›Whatever
- ›"I present Half Life 2: Episode 3!"
- ›The stage implodes
- ›The Nokia Center is destroyed
- ›Butthurt remains present forever

You guys have any hopes for a MLP based game?

/v/ would awaken to its final form and destroy 4chan. It's first target would be /mlp/. /mlp/ having no allies, would left to defend the great beast from its flimsy stone walls. Then in its time of need, when all seems so lost, on the horizon one lone horsefucker spots, an incoming army. It is mlpchan. They come to aid in their fellow kinsmen from so long ago. /v/ is repelled, but it is not dead. It shall return again on the next crack of dawn. There, under the mighty taverns on /mlp/, the two shattered armies drink their sorrows away for they both know that the impending doom that awaits them. Then one horsefucker announces an idea. He would call upon the aid of the great deities of the land, one who has shown concern for them in the past. One who is named Lauren. And so the lone horsefucker rode, on seemingly endless plains, tirelessly and burning with passion. While back home, the sun has peaked and the great beast return. Both /mlp/ and mlpchan fighting bravely what appears a lost battle. Each soldier keeping in their hearts the return of the messenger and their God. And so the lone horsefucker, bruised and battered from the harsh elements, had reach the temple of Pony God. He brought his message and a plea for help. The great Goddess saw the horsefuckers sincerity and mulled over the situation. He had the horsefucker welcomed into the temple where he would be treated as a guest. He declined and opted to wait outside. He did not want to rest and relax while his brothers are fight and dying on his homeland. The Goddess was moved by the horsefucker's righteous heart. She went away, telling the horsefucker

to wait a while. The Goddess has met up with the an equally powerful deity, the lord of vidya, the God Gaben. God had heard the story of the great beast, of the fighting on /mlp/. He decided by all that is fun and entertaining that he would head over the lands of 4chan where he would what he can to help in any way. The Lauren took the horsefucker in her arms and together, they flew in unimaginable speeds back to their homeland. Where the great beast /v/ was inches away from destroying the small kingdom of /mlp/. Gaben stood before the mighty beast while Lauren headed into the kingdom with the horsefucker. There she provided healing and nourishment to the damaged and the dying. Her aura rekindled spirits ablaze to fight a new. Meanwhile, on the other side of the stone walls, where many anons watched, there stood the Vidya God, face to face with the great beast /v/. But it as not enough. As the great beast saw the God of vidya, it flew into a bloody berseking rage, it stood on its hind legs and spoke in a voice that rumbled the very mountains of its hate on the false God Gaben. How the once mighty Gaben could stoop so low as to acknowledge the offerings and altar sacrifices of the unworthy horsefuckers. There Gaben stood aghast, at how he was the cause of all this. The great beast vowed for all there to witness how he would destroy Gaben first, the /mlp/. And they foguht. Each with powers that cause earthquakes. Each blow having the potential to destroy armies. Gaben called out to the horsefuckers. He said though his powers are no match for this beast, he will hold it off for as long as he is able. He called upon the horsefuckers to find a way to destroy this beast.

And so the horsefuckers lost hope, that even one such as the great Gaben could be losing. But Lauren's presence soothed them. Just as she did before on a long time since passed. She assured them that the kingdom that is /mlp/ is a great one and, though has garnered the ire of its surrounding kingdoms, it is still a worthy cause to defend its lands. The horsefuckers were left speechless. Then the littlest horsefucker took up his sword and rushed out the gates to join the vidya God in the fight. And another followed suit. And another. And another. Soon the entire army returned to the fray carrying with the a newfound zeal burning across each of their hearts. The messenger horsefucker turned to Lauren. She spoke of how he should visit the other kingdoms to reforge the broken alliances that has bounded them from times past. She said she would be staying here, to provide help to his bretheren. And so he rode once more, this time, to the great mountain forges of the weapon masters, /k/. On the great mountain ranges that span the 4chan border lived the /k/ommandos. They are weapon masters. Since the time of their birth, they have been taught to use a forge. To mold iron and steel and their magma chasms, to be tempered by the blood of their enemies. A long time ago, their many travelers has visited the curious land of /mlp/ and brought back with the tales of cute and colorful imagery. Though many did not care for it, some spearheaded embassy projects to the land and it paved the way for a strange alliance. But as time passed, they drifted apart to some degree and though the contacts on /k/ still remain, they haven't heard neither vim nor verb on their former friend. The horsefucker

pushed through and on the giant metal gates of the /k/ mountain ranges her shout for assistance.

The /k/ommando guard noticed the horsefucker sigil on his arm and told the gateguard to grant him entry. And with a bellowing of the brass horn, the great metal gates swung open and the horsefucker gained entry. He said he has a message to deliver to the the leader of the /k/ommandos. He was escorted to the palace chambers though his escorts were alert and ready to attack if he were to do anything foolish. Such is the way for a horsefucker. The /k/ing saw the horsefucker from a across his halls and called out to him, he was no fan of the ponies they so praised but he did understand its appeal and as a personal rule, is genrally tolerant of their kind. Something that is not often found as a horsefucker. The horsefucker knelt and told the story of the great beast. Of the warring that even two gods cannot defeat. He is requesting help. One that is not easily given. The /k/ing looked at the horsefucker, in all his wounds and bruises. He took pity on him that even in such state he would ride out to seek us. But he could not give in to his request. If the horsefuckers story was true then the /k/ing would need all the /k/ommandos here on /k/ to safeguard the mountain ranges should /mlp/ falls and /v/ comes for them. The horsefucker upon hearing his words fell silent. He was disheartened, not at the /k/ing, his actions are justified and true, as he knows, but at the futility of this struggle. He rose from his knee, gave the /k/ing a gentle bow and hung his head low as he walked out the great halls of the granite palace. However, the /k/ing calls out to him.

He says of a legend once. That the great beast, though mighty, even rivalling that of the very Gods themselves, could be slain, by a weapon forged from a very rare material. The horsefucker turned around and stepped closer to the /k/ing, eager to hear more. The /k/ing went to a nearby chest and pulled out a worn out scroll that seems to have been written from the times of old. The /k/ing reads out the scrolls. It tells of the rare material. that the weapons forged from this could shatter any soul. It was Feminite. A shiny blue ore that glows with the strength of unchecked privilege. The /k/ing spoke about the weapon would be sufficient in slaying down the beast. But the hard part is acquiring the material. The /k/ing asked if the horsefuckers resolve was true and mighty. His love and loyalty for his board was true and unyielding. He replied, without delay, his sound resolve. The /k/ing was pleased. He gave the horsefucker a map and a sealed letter to be delivered to the kingdom where the legendary Feminite could be found. A place of political struggle. The kingdom of /pol/.

The horsefucker rode once more. Carrying the instructions of the /k/ing. That he was to go /pol/, acquire the Feminite and return to /k/ where it would be waiting. Though the map was tattered and worn, it was sufficient enough, for the horsefucker has heard stories of /pol/. How they would welcome some horsefuckers and have them participate in a forum involving political systems of the colorful ponies they so idolize. The messenger seems doubtful of the stories truth as he once visited /pol/ a long time ago. He saw it to be a place of strife. Where /pol/iticians wandered the streets spouting heralds of doom. Where its denizens argued

about the tiniest bits of change in the ruling system. The messenger passed a crest and saw the marbled city of /pol/. The glint of the sun pouring in its white walls, reflecting the rays to far horizons.

As the messenger approached, he found not what he was expecting. The place is in panic. Fires on the streets everywhere. Panic everywhere. People running around posting on the walls pictures of doompaul. it was HAPPENING. The word of the beast has already reached the /pol/lands. Amidst the chaos, the horsefucker braved the streets and headed for central building that housed the Council. The shadowy governing body of /pol/. The guard halted the horsefucker but he showed the sealed letter from the /k/ing. Though wary, he allowed access only on the grounds he should relinquish his weapon, a lowly little dagger. The horsefucker hesitated but agreed. He was not a fan of the /pol/lacks but the survival of his beloved kingdom, /mlp/ is more important. He was granted access into the Council halls here 7 shadowy cloaked figures stood there, waiting.

Though, the city outside was falling in shambles the 7 figures stood there, steel-nerved. They asked the horsefucker what is his agenda. He replied that he has come for a piece of the Feminite ore. A council member asks his what makes the horsefucker think that the Council would give away such a precious material. the horsefucker showed the letter of the /k/ing. The Council took it and read it, they promptly burst out laughing. The /k/ing has no power, his voice here is silent, said one of them. He does not know what it takes to rule, to govern, to lead people to glory, said another. The horsefucker felt insulted. He turned to them and asked them what

are they planning to do? What of the panic of the streets? What of the impending doom. They laughed louder. The walls of the rooms shook. The panic has been here since forever, said one. Impending doom is our birthright, our ideals, it has been a part of this kingdom since the day it was founded, said another. Doom has always been, and always will be, upon us, said one. The people of /pol/ know this by heart, said another. There is nothing we can do, said the last.

The horsefucker was enraged. He could not see how anyone could not strive to save they're homeland. He knows his homeland is poor and shunned by the many others surrounding it, but it is a place he had always known and loved. And though very few tolerate its existence, the community that has strived to survive there grey close to each other. The community itself was far from perfect, it was a great community nonetheless. He screamed to the Council the words taken from his burning heart. It was a voice small, unrefined in the art of debate but true, breathed emotions far beyond that the faceless Council members has felt in a long while. He spoke of his love for his land. It's people. It's community that has never felt the care of another outside of it, save for hate and contempt, and at best, apathy. The Council laughed far harder than before. Save for one. He stood there. Faceless, emotionless. And pondered at the words of this strange visitor. He reached for his cloak pockets and pulled out a piece of rock.

The other Council members was aghast but the one who submitted held his ground. He walked up to the horsefucker and gave up the blue ore. He said that each of the Council members each carried a piece of Feminite,

and the day a Council member loses his, was the day he steps down from his seat of power. The other Council members were silent. The horsefucker, though genuinely thankful, had to ask what that Council member was thinking when he did that. He laughed, though unlike all the other laughs that were given thus far. He said that this place, /pol/ has been a place of debate, of intellectual banter. That over time, emotions and personal feelings no longer entered the issue. It's been a long time since he heard such arrogance. Such fierceness. And such zeal. He turned to the other Council members and bid his farewell. He escorted the horsefucker out the gates of the marble city and, with a smile, he turned his back and closed the door. The horsefucker was silently thankful. He pocketed the stone and headed for his steed. But it was nowhere to be found. Instead, in its place, he found a note on the ground. It scribbled a word. A single word: topkek.

The horsefucker was startled by a tap on his back. It was a man clad in dark clothes. He introduced himself as an as/s4s/sin. And with a swift sudden motions, the as/s4s/sin forced a piece of cloth to the horsefucker's face. The horsefucker's vision blurred and darkened until he fell asleep. His last thoughts on how he has failed his homeland. He awoke on a chair surrounded by other who introduced themselves as as/s4s/sins. Though he was surrounded, he unbound. He feels these as/s4s/sins have something they need of you.

The one in the middle spoke. He introduced himself as Bateman. The underground lord of the shadow organization of /s4s/. He said was willing to help you. He spoke of his hatred against the great beast /v/ has

become of how it has devolved from the majestic creature of vidya it once was. That to help slay the beast was an honor. The horsefucker was overjoyed at the statement. But Bateman halted him. He explained he know of the horsefuckers quest. Of the Feminite. Of the Gods. Of everything. The as/s4s/sin network was wide and had many eyes. Bateman placed a blue rock on the table. The horsefucker fell silent. Bateman explained that /s4s/ had but one law, the law of luck. He explained that if he loses, /s4s/ would keep the Feminite and use it for themselves should /v/ ever attack them. If he wins, Bateman would command his as/s4s/sins to take the Feminite themselves over to the forges on /k/ lands. He also promised a small secret.

That the great beast would need an equal rival to be brought down. Or rather, serve as a distraction. Since it could probably destroy any warrior who comes charging at it carrying the weapon. He said of the legends of /b/. A sleeping giant that was once great and powerful a long time ago. But the mighty destroyer /b/ has fell silent and apathetic. Bateman states the /s4s/ knows how to rile up /b/ and make it seem like it was /v/'s fault. The two would battle and, given enough luck, you would use the weapon of legends to destroy the great monster. The horsefucker was skeptical, and rightfully so. But for his land, he would go though hell and back. He accepted this test of luck. Bateman smiled. He ordered an as/s4s/sin to bring 6 dice. The rules are simple, he explains. Roll a quad.

The horsefucker gulped. But for the land he so loved. He was willing. He took the dice. He prayed for the guidance of the great Lauren. Her image burned in her mind as he

rolled the ivory cubes in his hands. He closed his eyes and let them drop. Bateman stood there. Silently. He was stunned. He pointed on the table. Hex. Bateman faced the horsefucker. The horsefucker is as surprised as he is. In a flash, Bateman unsheathed his dagger and plunged it into the table. He screamed to all the as/s4s/sins in witness to call everyone. To prepare for war. Bateman turned to the horsefucker and smiled. Bateman took the horsefucker and led him outside through a sewer railing. He was back in /pol/. Bateman told the horsefucker to go, ride for /mlp/, everything will all set when he returns. But his steed, was nowhere to be found.

Out of nowhere a lightning stormed forth. It came from the heavens. It landed near the feet of the horsefucker. It was a blue horse with rainbow mane and long wings. It carried with it on its mouth a small letter. Make haste, it read, signed by Lauren. You glance at the majestic creature, one that was sent by the very God Lauren herself just to aid you in your journey. Remembering his quest, he resisted the urge to cum inside it and hopped on its back. They flew east. Riding as fast as the very lightning bolts. As the lands of /mlp/ came into view, you see the great beast, still mighty and powerful, is holding its ground. But now it was battle more than just the horsefuckers. There was a God, that it once held great and dignified. It was being attacked from afar by /k/ommando snipers. /pol/medics ran around the battle field taking the injured and the dead back inside the walls. The as/s4s/sins aided on the melee assault, going for backstab assaults. And on the other side, the giant of legends, /b/. Bateman kept his word. On the far side a, a /k/ommando spots you, he yells something and points to

the sky. You see one of the raise a package, wrapped in silk above the highest of stone wall of /mlp/.

The horsefucker know what it is. He swoops down, and grab it. The /k/ommados cheer as he does. The sight of your presence inspires everyone on the battlefield. They raise their weapons and fight once more, renewed by the his fiery aura. He opesn the package. A bow. And a single arrow to go along it. The arrow was tipped in the shiniest looking metal he has ever seen. The horsefucker realizes, he only has one chance at this. He steels his nerve. He strokes the horses rainbow main and shouts to the sky. The warriors below heard his cry and shouts in unison. The God Gaben turn around to see the horsefucker messenger. He smiled, sat down on the ground, too tired to continue battling. He turned to the monster he had faced, and watched. /b/ charges in. Dealing an almighty blow to the beast, it stuns him. /v/ anal-ravaged, slams on the ground, knockings horsefuckers and as/s4s/sins everywhere. It then lunges to /b/ for some payback. the horsefucker flies in closer. He can't afford to miss this shot. But as he does, one of the heads of /v/ sees him. It strikes. The rainbow horse is hit with a force that could rival a meteor. The horsefucker is knocked out of the pegasus. He is now falling head first a thousand feet up in the air with only his bow in hand.

In the instant he is falling down, he sees a glimpse of everything. He sees the mighty beast heading for him, ignoring the giant. He sees the blue horse being knocked away but regaining her composure and is now attempting to fly back to the horsefucker. He fears it is too late. The distance between them is significant. The warriors below all wear a grim look as they see the messenger.

They drop their weapons. They cannot fight anymore. A head of /v/ moving closer and closer. It opens its gaping maw at the horsefucker, ready to devour it whole. He does one last thing he can do. He takes the bow. Carefully readies the arrow. And takes aim. All while falling headfirst at incredible speeds. Time seems to stop. Everything pauses. And in this frozen instance, he lets loose his grip. He sees the shimmering arrow fly toward the open mouth on the great beast. It was enough for him. He closes his eyes and prepares for impact. His mind drifts to the world he experienced.

The arrow, shining across the sky like a fiery comet, pierced the mouth of the the great beast. But it did not stop there. It exited through the the back of its first head, and into another. And another. And another. Until it exited the beast and headed straight into sky, straight and true, unyielding and brave, just like the horsefucker that fired it. The arrow gleaned in the sky, like that of a new born star. It shown brightly and held its place among the heavens. The great beast, fell. All its heads lay silent and dead. The giant /b/ saw its adversary dead, did not want to bother with the lowly mortals around, he fled back to his land. Everybody fell silent at the scene. It was an indication of their victory. Tears across each of their faces. They cried and shouted for joy. But in all this celebration, the God Lauren was running towards a familiar body. One lifeless yet hold onto its honor as it died. She grabbed the horsefuckers body and took it up. Then the cheering crowds fell silent. Gaben walked close to Lauren put a hand on her shoulder and wept silently. Each of the warriors took of their helmet. They dropped their swords, and knelt. In front of the fallen hero that

saved them. Lauren called upon the blue horse and place him on her back. They started walking back the long journey back to the God's temples, where the horsefucker would be burried among the legends. The other warriors followed suit and walked behind, each step carried a sense of sadness. But it also carried a blazing passion of victory hard won.

THE BRADICAL ADVENTURES OF NORMAL NORMAN: OCTAVIA'S REVENGE

- ›Be Renate Pfeiffer, German exchange student
- ›I rarely get called that though
- ›Due to my talent with the cello, the music professor gave me the nickname "Octavia" and it just stuck with everyone else
- ›Don't really care about what the "in crowd", or whatever they're calling themselves, do
- ›I'm in another country, studying in a different continent, and making my family proud by playing in both formal events and sponsored concerts
- ›Don't know about you, but that's good enough for me
- ›However, I can't seem to get Alvina, some electronica-obsessed girl, off my back
- ›Apparently, her parents forced her to go to one of my concerts in an attempt to get her off that horrendous music, and she recognized me from school
- ›Now she won't leave me alone and constantly tries to get me to listen to what she calls "Vinny's Epic Wubs", whatever the hölle that's supposed to mean
- ›I refuse to call her that as well
- ›Alvina is a beautiful name, rich in history and culture, both in literature and song
- ›Vinny sounds like some sort of Italian mobster
- ›Stupid, idiotic, uncultured, incompetent Italians...
- ›Anyhow, I seem to be able to avoid her easily enough between classes by wearing a green wig
- ›No such luck after school

- ›I recently heard from her that there was a new student attending the school
- ›Some guy named Norman, and apparently he was a Neo-Nazi!
- ›Truth be told, part of me wants to strangle him, but another part of me pities him
- ›After all, apparently his parents set him up for failure by giving him that name in the first place
- ›Norman, as in old deutsche for northerner? Referring to Prussians and Scandinavians?
- ›Ugly, stupid, barbaric, irredeemable Scandinavians...
- ›That was like calling one's son Bennito!
- ›However, some purple girl can't seem to stay away from him
- ›According to Alvina, she claims to be a princess from some horse world
- ›Typical slavic, starting the day with a bottle

- ›Friday night
- ›Somehow, Vinny "convinced" me to go with her to some club she works in during weekends
- ›The way she "convinced" me reminded me of stories my grandfather used to tell me of his time in the Deutsche Demokratische Republik
- ›"Remind me what I'm doing here." - I asked her coldly.
- ›"Oh come on, don't be like that! Since apparently no shop can fix your computer and you don't have a cellphone or a tablet, I might as well show you my album by playing it live!"
- ›Note to self: Reread grandfather's journal in order to come up with better lies

>"Well, I've got to get to work now. Go on and have fun, I'll catch you later!"
>Before I could answer back, she was gone
>Perfect. There was a reason I brought my green wig
>Putting it on, I made my way to the front door. No one would recognize me as long as I had it on
>Few people coming in and out, I'd be able to slip out unnoticed
>Almost at the door
>"Hey, it's Octy!"
>Octy...
>No way...
>There's no way that imbec-
>"It's you, isn't it? Yes it is! Wow, didn't think you liked going to clubs!" - I heard as I felt my wrist being grabbed just before being turned around to face...
>Brad

>How this Irish-descended neanderthal recognized me with my wig, I don't even know
>"Hallo Brad. It was gut seeing you. If you'll excuze me, I've got to go." - I said, trying to turn around and just leave
>"Wait! Come on, me and some friends managed to get a table!" - he replied as he pulled me towards said table
>To be honest, I fully expected the table to be occupied by the testosterone-filled anglo-saxons and zulus of the football team
>I'd never expected the neo-nazi guy and the slavic girl
>Correction, just the new guy. The girl fit perfectly here
>"So as I was saying, Ted passes the ball to me so I start running over to their..."

>Brad just continued talking and talking...
 >The looks on both... er.... oh, right, Norman, and the purple slav, told their thoughts quite clearly
 >The purple girl looked genuinely interested in Brad's explanation of a sport as barbaric as the original English-invented game it was based on
 >Norman, on the other hand, looked ready to jump off a cliff
 >With nothing better to do, I decided to talk to him
 >"You do know people from many colorz and breedz go to clubz, right? So vhy are you here?" - I asked casually to someone so filled with hate
 >"... wait, are you calling me a racist?" - he asked, apparently insulted by my question. Typical
 >"No, I'm juzt vondering vhy you decided to come here."
 >"Well, I had to get my mind off school, and Brad invited Purple to come here, and she invited me, so I thought what the hell, might give it a chance."
 >He seriously calls the only person who talks to him Purple...
 >"By the way, what's with the wig? I know your hair ain't green." - It was a fair question, to be honest
 >"To hide. I play in high-clazz eventz. Have had my own concertz. I'm ze best cellist in the ze school, and is the reason I'm in zis country in ze first place. I can't be seen here."
 >"Ah..." - he answered emptily. "Well, don't worry. I won't tell anyone about you partying or anything."
 >"Danke, I suppose..."

>Be Vinny
 >It's time to start the show

>"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WHAT DO YOU WANT?!"
 - I yelled into the microphone
 >"PARTY" - yelled back the club
 >"GOOD! BECAUSE DJ-HU3M4N IS IN DA HAUS!"
 >And here we go. With skillful movement of dials and buttons, I began doing my thing.
 >Lets see what Ms. Fancy thinks about this now

 >Be Renate
 >OhdearGodwhatinthefuckisthatnoise!
 >The crowd is definitely going crazy, and what had been people dancing earlier has now turned into a riot
 >"AWRIGHT, COME ON TWILY! LETS DANCE!" - yelled Brad, pulling the purple slavic girl to the dance floor
 >However, she apparently didn't see it fit to leave her friend behind, and grabbed his hand, dragging him along
 >"Vell, you enjoy your night. I've got to gAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" - I couldn't help but yell as my arm got grabbed again, getting pulled into a human chain heading into the last place I ever wanted to be in
 >The Dance Floor
 >Minutes passed, feeling like hours, the sheer human ocean keeping me trapped there while being bombarded with what could only be described as a computer's sound card having a seizure
 >"COME ON OCTY, DANCE!" - yelled out Brad despite him being right next to me
 >Then again, with this noise, yelling was the only way to communicate
 >What happened next caught me by surprise, as Norman grabbed my hand

>"COME ON, LETS DANCE!" - he said as he tried to lead a dance with me
 >Or rather, it looked like dancing. Then again, compared to the random spazzing of everyone there, a drugged monkey would look like an expert dancer
 >"OK, JUST DO AS I DO!" - he said, moving from side to side, making hand and arm gestures, and so on
 >I'm just glad he didn't ask me to flail my arms

 >As much as I hate to admit it, and as horrific as the noise was, this was rather fun
 >This went on for a few more minutes before the "rythm" of the... -can't actually call it a song, but rather- noise slowed down
 >"Oh! Hold on, let me try something!"
 >"Try something? Vhat do you mea- WOAH, HEY!"
 >"Relax. I saw this in a movie." - he said as he began spinning while holding unto me
 >For a moment there, I thought he was trying to do some salsa, which kind of eased my mind
 >That turned into horror when the idiot let go
 >I would later learn that what he was trying to do was some sort of disco move, and the movie he was referring to was "Airplane"
 >When I regained my composture, I looked around to try and get my bearings
 >I found myself next to one of the gigantic speakers
 >At the slowest point of the song
 >OHSWEETMOTHEROFGO-
 >WUB-WUB-WUB WUBWUB WUBWUB-WUB-WUB-WUB-WUB WUBWUBWUBWUB WUB WUB-WUB-WUB

>Be Vinny
>Music, lights, dancing, booze, party
>Being a DJ, even if only part-time and during weekends,
is the best damn job ever
>Got to wonder though, where is Tavi?
>Haven't seen her all night since I left her down there
>Eh, must be having fun. Can't really blame her, what with
my PHAT BEATS playing!

>Be Renate
>Oh sweet mother of God, somebody please make it stop
>Getting spun around for a few seconds, followed by
being thrown, left me in an unbalanced, dizzy state
>On itself, that wasn't as bad as it could have been
>The 110 decibels suddenly being blasted out right next
to me, however, did manage to knock me down on my face
>"Holy crap, I'm so sorry! Are you alright?!" - he said as
he made his way towards me through the crowd
>Not that I could hear him, mind you, what with noise
being blasted almost directly into my skull
>"I'm so sorry about that! I could have sworn it was going
to work!" - he apologized pathetically
>A part of me told me to just slap him across the face
and leave the place already
>However, the lady within me, however, told me to accept
his apology and give him another chance to make up for
his mistakes
>"Hey, are you two alright?" - came asking the purple girl.
I need to make a note to actually learn her name
>"Ja, ja, I'm fine. Don't worry you two. Just a bit dizzy."
- I answered. Truth be told, my head was killing me after
that

>However, there seemed to be someone missing -
 "Where's Brad?" - asked Norman
 >"Oh, he went to get some drinks. Said he wanted
 something called vodka, and that he'd get me some too.
 How nice of him!"
 >An irish and a slavic drinking together... there is
 something magical about that
 >Never change, purple girl. You make your forefathers
 proud. Perhaps some day you'll be a cosmonaut or a great
 engineer

 >"Vell, I think I'll be leaving now. You two enjoy ze party."
 - I said, starting to walk away from there. It was about
 time I left
 >"Wait. I know that ended pretty badly, but let me make
 it up to you! Do you want a drink or something too?" -
 offered Norman
 >To be honest, a drink would be very welcome
 >Thus I decided to listen to my inner lady and give him
 another chance
 >I now realize ladies are utterly moronic
 >"Eh, fine. A drink would be good about now." - I replied,
 and so the three of us went to where Brad was getting
 the drinks
 >"Twily! Over here! I got an umbrella for yours!"
 >I immediately regretted it
 >"With Brad's ID, we're good to go. So, what do you
 want? A tequila, a martini, a... uh... a whiskey?" - said
 Norman, obviously straining to think of alocholic drinks
 >Well, atleast that told me he wasn't an alcoholic, so he
 had that going for him

>"I'll just have a white russian." - I answered nonchalantly, to which he gave me a confused look, followed by nervously looking around
 >"Er... are you hitting on me?"
 >My left eyebrow couldn't have been raised more even if the people at the dance floor fully raised the roof
 >I don't know what that sudden bulge in his pockets was, but as soon as a noodle popped out, I decided I didn't want to know

 >"... nein. It's a drink." - I coldly replied. He seemed to get the message, as he immediately left to get it
 >So far, this had been a terrible night, but at least I had a moment to breathe now, even if it was muddled by the noise and both Brad and the purple girl practically yelling next to me just to talk
 >A while later, Norman returned with our drinks
 >"Sorry I took so long. Apparently there's only one bartender, and like fifty people there."
 >"No worries. At least I could re-" - I wasn't able to finish that sentence before the purple girl jumped onto Norman, hanging from his neck
 >"'eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee Normy, ah've got an ibea. Whai don't ai show Octy sum majic?"
 >What. How could she be drunk already?! That was ONE glass! I can't help but, somehow, feel disappointed
 >"Er... I'm sorry, but I don't lean zat vay." - I answered back
 >"Purple, get off me!" - yelled Norman, trying to shake her off
 >And spilling my drink all over me

›"GAAAAAAH! HURENSOHN!" - I yelled out as I jumped off my chair, inadvertently drawing attention in our direction

›"OHSHITI'MSOSORRYHERELETMEHELPLYOU!" - exclaimed Norman, rapidly moving in my direction while still having the purple girl hanging from him

›This was going to end badly

›The table agreed, as it moved slightly between Norman and I as Brad got up, causing Norman to trip

›Next thing I know, I'm on the floor with a drunk slavic girl on top of me, Norman having been able to hold on to a chair

›"GET OFF ME!" - I yelled out in sheer frustration, anger having fully taken over

›"But you're so sooooooofvt." slurred out the purple girl as I tried to push her off

›Brad and Norman then came over and pulled her off me

›However, as they were about to pull me up, I noticed something

›Something terrible

›A part of my skirt had slipped under one of the table's legs during the fall, and was now jammed

›"VAIT, STOP!"

›*RIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIP*

›Excluding the noise in the background, there was silence

›As I got up by myself, lower undergarments fully exposed, there was complete silence

›After all, what was there to say that my glare wasn't saying already?

›"'ey Normy, dat looks laik da ones those worn in yer anatomy collection, hehehehe."

>At that point, I should have exploded
>Probably should have broken a bottle over Norman's head
>However, my anger was such, it went full circle and ended up in calmness
>In such a state, I could do nothing but just walk up to him
>"Norman, I just want to say, this has been the worst night I've ever had in mein life."
>"Yeah, I can understand that..." - he replied, great shame and terror present in his voice
>"Now, I think you should leave and take your friend home. And never speak to me again." -I then tugged out my ripped skirt from under the table's leg and walked away
>With a deep sigh, I headed to the bathroom to see what I could do to fix this, stopped when someone called for me again
>"Hey Tavi! Wait up! I just finished with my shift andWOAH GIRL! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!" - asked Alvina, stopping within a meter of me
>"I'd rather not talk about it." - I replied as I continued to the bathroom
>"Damn! You like to party hard, dontcha?!" - she mocked before a thought occurred to me
>"Vait, how'd you recognize me?!"
>"What do you mean? I just saw you and ran towards you." - she answered as I frantically touched my head
>"Oh no..." - I whispered, before it escalated into a continuous stream of "NEIN-NEIN-NEIN-"
>I quickly rushed into the bathroom, looking at myself in the nearest mirror, confirming my worst fears

›"ZAT DAMNED ITALIAN!"

›Be Norman

›Octavia was right, I had to get Purple home before she got her drunk ass into trouble

›Now if only she'd stop poking me

›"What is it?" - I said, turning to look at her

›"'ey Norman, gess who I am!" - she said, putting on a strangely-familiar green wig

›Oh shit

›Be Norman

›Currently spending my sunday at the library, as always, thanks to Purple

›However, I can't seem to stop thinking of friday's fiasco

›"Hey Norman, you alright?" - asked Purple, noticing my worried expression

›I let out a sigh - "No, I think I screwed up massively. I don't mind the school hating me, but I think I may have ruined pink-beige's life."

›"Oh... right..." - she answered - "I don't quite remember that night though. What happened?"

›"Well, simply put, a lot of bad stuff. And I lost her wig." - I replied, lying at the end

›Dammit Purple, why'd you have to get wasted and steal Octavia's wig?!

›"That seems simple enough to fix. Lets just get her another wig tomorrow! Besides, if it's just that, I'm sure it'll all be fine." - she said, patting me on the back

›"Yeah... maybe. Hope you're right." - I answered back, my attention being placed back towards an innuendo-filled book about a humanoid reptilian maid

›Monday

›Pictures of that night have been seen by practically everyone at school

›Had to hear a lengthy, disappointed speech from my parents in München after some jackass sent pictures to them

›Been hearing people talking behind my back and laughing

›Have had the football team hitting on me all day

›Friends in the music club have been giving me strange looks and are barely talking to me

›Found used undergarments in my locker this morning

›My name is Renate "Octavia" Pfeiffer

›And I'm going to stick a clarinet up Norman's ass

›Be Vinny

›It's monday afternoon, and Tavi invited me to her apartment

›Now that I think about it, I've never been there before

›Had some trouble with the guards letting me into the fancypants building though

›What, they've never seen a badass DJ before?

›Actually, this place was pretty fancy all on its own

›Soon enough, I got to her door and knocked

›Tavi just opened the door... wearing a fedora, shades, and a trenchcoat...

›Wut

›"Good, you're here." - she said looking around the hallway before pulling me inside

>"What's got into you?" - I asked as I looked around -
 "Woah... niiice place you got here!"

>Awesome view out a balcony

>Expensive-looking furniture

>A fully-loaded kitchen on a corner that was bigger than my room

>Massive TV

>I felt tempted to check if the toilet was made of gold

>"Ja, mein parents didn't vant me living in some tenant building while I vas here, so they paid for zis place" - she answered

>"Ho-ho-ho-boy, this is awesome! So, what do you want to do? Watch a movie, hang out, go to the ma-" - I asked as she took off the trenchcoat, fedora and shades and handed me an envelope

>"Er... what's this?" - I asked

>"A list and some money. I need you to go buy some things for me." - she replied, making me open it and read said list

>"Eh? Why don't you buy them yourself?"

>"I can't leave zis building. The whole day I've faced nothing but ridicule."

>"Alright, fine, fine. Lets see here. A box of nails, a two inch pvc pipe, a leaf blower??? What the hell are you scheming girl?!"

>"I'm not scheming anything. I'm plotting. They're different. And if you must know, I'm plotting a... surprise. For a friend." - she said with the most terrifying grin I've ever seen

>"Riiight..." - I answered back, continuing to read the list -
 "Box of pencils, five bars of butter... honey mustard? What's that for?"

➤ "Goes great with sauerkraut."

➤ Be Norman

➤ Monday night, relaxing on bed

➤ Today was, surprisingly, a pretty good day

➤ Few people paid attention to me

➤ Practically no one calling me a pedophile racist nazi
pervert

➤ Good day indeed

➤ But it feels like there's something I forgot

➤ What was it?

➤ I looked around my room, feeling as if whatever it was
could be found in there

➤ Xbox

➤ Computer

➤ Closet

➤ Wig on nighstand

➤ Oh right, I was supposed to return that wig!

➤ Picking it up, I noticed it stank of alcohol

➤ Well, that's easily fixed. Just got to stick it in the
washing machine

➤ Set to thirty minutes, add some bleach and detergent,
all good

➤ After it's done, I go back down, open the thing and...

➤ Oh...

➤ Oh dear...

➤ Be Twilight Sparkle

➤ And my dear friend Norman has come to me with quite a
strange problem

➤ "So let me get this straight. You want me to use magic
to untangle this... er... white ball of hair... and make it

green?" - I asked, perplexed. This was a reall weird request

>"Yes, I kinda ruined it when trying to clean it. Think you can help?"

>"Well, it's very unusual, but should be rather simple. Hold on, let me get a book." - I said as I went to get one of the spell books found in the library

>"Should only take a moment." - I said, drawing a simple rune on the floor and casting the activation enchantment

>"There. That should do it." - I said, picking up a somewhat-familiar green wig... I don't know why, but looking at it made me thirsty for something. Kind of made me feel like I had a good time with it

>"Thank you so much Purple. I owe you one." - said Norman, before grabbing it and bolting back home

>Be Vinny

>Man, tuesday afternoon. Little homework, everyone hanging out somewhere, having fun

>Oh boy, sure would love to go watch a movie or something

>OH WAIT! I'm stuck running errands for Miss Mischief, who won't even tell me what she's going to do!

>Going from hardware store to hardware store, looking for a leaf blower

>Sure wish that kid hadn't stuck a nozzle in his mouth and blown his stomach to pieces

>Now tactical assault CQC ballistic child-seeking leaf blowers are a pain in the ass to find.

>Thanks Obama!

>As I headed to ANOTHER shop in my oh-so-important quest, I passed by a rather overly-decorated store

- >Looking through the window, I noticed it was a bakery
- >Somehow, rather familiar
- >"... Eh, fuck it." - I said to myself as I went inside
- >I immediately received a dropkick to the nostalgia
- >So many years ago, shopping with my mom as a little girl
- >All those sweets...
- >Walking to the counter, I had but a simple request
- >"Do you have any donutsteel?"

- >Be Norman
- >I did not see Pink-Beige in school today at all
- >After being repeatedly compared to some guy called Salieri(whoever that's supposed to be), the music club did tell me she was "sick"
- >Based on what I was told went down on monday, I don't blame her
- >"Oh darling, I think it's so sweet of you to try and cheer up the poor girl." - said the Aryan Beauty as Purple and her accompanied me to Sugarcub- I refuse to say that name
- >After sharing my problem with the girls, Orange and Pink offered to bake something to help me apologize
- >"Heh, thanks. I don't expect her to forgive me, but atleast she'll know I'm sorry." - I replied as we arrived at the bakery
- >To find Pink cornering a customer while holding a tray with cupcakes
- >"Pinkie, let 'er go, she just wants some donuts!" - said Orange, walking towards Pink to pull her away
- >"But my cupcakes are just out of the oven! I swear, they're extra exquisweetlicious!" - she blabbered on as Orange pulled her away

>"Ah'm so sorry 'bout that, Vinny. Is there anything else you want?" - said Orange, as she gave an apologetic smile
 >"I-It's alright Applejack. I'll just be going now." - said the blue-haired girl, before Purple stopped her
 >"Hey wait. I've seen you around school before. You always hang out with Octavia, don't you?" - said Purple. I could see where this was going
 >"Yeah, I do. Why, what do you want?" - asked White... wow, that feels weird
 >"Well, Norman here would like to apologize to her for his... ahem, mistakes, and we wondered if you could tell us where she was." - added the Aryan Beauty
 >"What, that racist guy?! The hell I will!" - she replied, giving me a look of complete dislike before Pink got right on her face, with the biggest puppy eyes I've ever seen
 >"Pleeeeeease?!" - said Pink, adding a pout in there
 >"Gah! Alright, alright, just keep her away from me! I'll do it on one condition." - she said, turning to Orange
 >"Hey AJ, your farm has lots of equipment, right?"

>Be Renate

>Cooking one's own meals seems to be an artform that is quickly fading away

>The pleasure of cutting vegetables

>The magic of experimenting with different ingredients

>The satisfaction felt when a new idea pays off in the form of an exquisite dinner

>But for now, I'd rather stick to something simple

>Something easy to make, requiring minimal steps, as my mind was focused elsewhere

>Oh dear grandpa, if only you were alive so we could have more magnificent talks

>But alas, old age and time did to you what it does to all
>Atleast I have your memoirs and manuscripts
>One of them proving to be most useful to me
>"Soviets And You"
>"Chapter 4: Effective Methods Of Conflict Resolution"
>Time passed as I waited for dinner to be ready, focusing
on the book
>Soon enough, it was done, and I poured the pasta and
sauce into two plates
>After all, Alvina would be back soon, and it would be
rude not to offer her dinner after helping me so much
>Speaking of which, there was a knock on the door as I
placed the plates on the table
>Donning the fedora, shades, and trenchcoat, I went to
open the door
>Only to find Alvina, with seven other people on tow, and
a dog. One of them being Norman
>"Hey Tavi, look what I got!" - she said, turning on the
leaf blower she was carrying, blowing the fedora away
and causing it to knock over the spaghetti

>"SURPRISE!"

>Be Renate
>And what the fuck is this...
>"OOOH! LOOK AT THIS PLACE!" - said the pink pole,
walking past me into my apartment
>"PINKIE! Ya don't just burst like that into other
people's homes!" - yelled the orange anglo-saxon as she
did exactly that

>"Hey, HEY!" - I yelled at them, to no effect, before turning to look at the others there outside, all with nervous smiles
 >Glaring at Alvina, I did the only thing there was to do - "What are zey doing here?"
 >"Well, they said they wanted to tell you something personally, so I asked them for this thing in exchange of bringing them here." - she answered with a smile
 >Dammit all
 >"Urgh... Fine, fine, just say whatever you want to say." - I said, leaning my head on my palm. I could feel my headache returning
 >The purple-haired bavarian nudged Norman forward
 >"Hello Pi- Octavia. I just wanted you to know that I am terribly sorry for... well, everything you've gone through because of my actions. I don't expect you to forgive me, but I just want you to know I'm sorry."
 >A silence descended on the doorway, as I stared unamused at the group
 >That is, until the blue greek decided to break it with a most simple of statements - "We brought cake!"
 >Once more, I am faced with a dilemma
 >To let them in, as would be expected of a proper lady
 >Or to tell them all to leave, as reason would have it
 >"... come inside."
 >I am considering delving into the buddhist arts and creating multiple tulpas
 >One would be a manifestation of my upbringing and the lady that it forged
 >The rest would be a firing squad

 >Be Norman

>I'm starting to think I should have come alone
 >"WOW! How'd an egghead like you get a TV this big?!"
 >"So, ya like rodeos?"
 >"Come ooooooon, just one bite. Pretty please?"
 >"Oh Darling, i simple ADORE your clothes, but don't you think they're a bit... hmmm, too minimalistic?"
 >"Um, excuse me, since your dinner was accidentally... um, ruined, would you like me to make you something? I mean, if that's ok with you. I brought some tofu."
 >"So, Octavia, since your computer is out here, mind if I use it? I want to review some pictures I got off Norman's computer."
 >"WOOF WOOF WOOF! *pant* *pant* *pant"
 >Yup. Should have come alone

>Be Renate
 >Well, ain't this perfect
 >Got a pole shoving a cake in my face
 >A bavarian subtly implying I can't dress myself
 >The greek athlete with her feet on the table while watching TV
 >That yellow scandinavian cooking... something
 >A DOG ON THE COUCH
 >A racist italian next to the dog
 >The anglo-saxon trying to make some actual conversation, which is appreciated
 >What else?
 >Oh, right, and a slavic girl watching porn on my computer
 >Only thing missing is for my apartment to be a bar, and you'd have a joke
 >...
 >Am I really that much of a doormat?

>"Ahem. I would appreciate it if you could please take your feet off ze table." - I said to the blue girl, to which she complied, if grumbling about it
 >"And somebody please get das thing off ze couch."
 >"Hey, that's no way to talk about Normy!" - said the pink pole
 >"I meant ze dog."
 >"Oh, right. Hehehe, sorry Normy." - she said, putting the purple dog on the floor
 >"And as for you" - I said, giving a stern look to the purple slav - "have some decency and stop looking at das on mein computer." - I commanded, getting a disappointed look, before her expression changed to that of... realization?
 >"Ah, that's right. Biology isn't a popular area of study. I keep forgetting that." - she said, a bit of shame on her tone
 >This is going to be a loooong night...

>"Dinner's done!" - yelled (more like whispered loudly) the yellow girl, bringing plates full of... tofu?
 >Thankfully, she didn't burn down the kitchen
 >Well, it can't be that ba-
 >Oh mein gott, was die scheisse
 >"Do you like it?" - said the scandinavian girl, with an expectant smile on her face
 >Just smile and swallow, Renate. Smile and swallow
 >There is a joke in there somewhere...
 >"Oh, I'm so glad you like it! Let me get you more!"
 >DAMMIT!

>Alvina, where did you go?!

>Be Vinny

>It was a good idea to just let them all do whatever they wanted

>As for me? Well, for one, this bathroom had a TV of its own and a sound system better than my own

>So, of course, had to see how my album sounded on it!

>Aww yis, so good!

>This silver toilet is pretty rad too

>Be Renate again

>"Hey Octavia, who's this old man?" - asked the purple girl, pointing to my laptop's wallpaper

>A younger me, next to an elderly man

>"Zat is grandpa Waldemar." - I answered - "He... died... a few years ago."

>"Oh, darling, I'm so sorry." - said the white girl

>"Don't be. As I said, it happened years ago. I do miss him though. Had many good stories."

>"Stories?" - asked Norman - "Like what?"

>"Stories about ze var, life behind ze wall, things he did in his life, stories like that."

>"Would you mind sharing some of them?" - he then added, with an expression of genuine interest. The looks of the others there showed similar interest

>I had a brief sigh "Alright."

>And so the night went on as I told story after story about Grandpa Waldemar

>Some anecdotes about his time in Danzig

>His tour of Paris

- ›That other time he was in Kiev and kept going east towards Volgograd
- ›Unlike what I was expecting, the night went rather quickly as story after story was told
- ›In the end, we all had some of the cake they brought before they all left
- ›Norman even returned my wig, explaining what had happened
- ›They may not be as bad after all

- ›Be Norman
- ›I'm glad tonight went well
- ›I might just have gotten someone to stop hating me, and actually made another friend
- ›Actually, I should probably look up some of the places Octavia mentioned in her stories
- ›Obviously know where Paris is
- ›Geography's not my strength, so don't know where the other places are
- ›Lets see now. Googling "Kiev 1940s"
- ›... huh...
- ›"Volgograd 1940s"?
- ›...
- ›Holy shit...
- ›Holy fucking shit...
- ›We just spent the whole night hearing stories about a Nazi

NEXT MORNING

- ›Be Renate
- ›Feeling pretty good

>Thinking it over, being angry at Norman and his friends was rather silly of me
>After all, it was an accident and those things happen. Definitely overreacted to that
>And given his company, I'd think it's fair to say he's not really a racist as everyone says
>Oh, time to get to my next class. Better put on my wig so Alvina doesn't see me
>As I walked down the hallway, I noticed everyone staring at me
>Just... kept on staring
>Just as before, people started talking behind my back
>Whispering, laughing, I could feel them pointing fingers
>As soon as I could I made my way to the bathroom to get out of the crowd
>"Vat vas das all about?!" - I wondered to myself as I looked at myself on the mirror
>Green
>Green skin all over
>My face, my arms, even my hands once I took off my gloves
>I quickly took off my wig, splashing water on my face to make sure this wasn't a nightmare
>Rapidly enough, I turned back to normal
>...
>I put on the wig again...
>Turn green
>I take it off again
>Back to normal
>Oh
>OH

>With that done, I went back to the couch to continue reading

➤ "Be prepared Norman." - I said outloud

>"Vith das little trick, you just made your vorst enemy."

>"Hehehe..."

>"Hahahahaha..."

>"BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA-"

>"Who are you talking to? And what are you wearing?" -
said a familiar voice, catching me by surprise

›Lowering my book, I see Alvina standing there, having let herself in

➤ There was silence for a moment

>"I'm going to pretend I didn't see anything." - she said, letting herself fall on the couch and turning on the TV

➤Be Renate

➤ Saturday morning

➤ Today marks Day 1 of what I am now calling "Operation Untergang"

➤ A 4-stage plan meant to bring down Norman and make him pay via rectal insertion of a clarinet

➤ Stage-1: Observation. Everything learned in this stage will affect all future actions taken in the followup stages

- All aspects of Norman's social life and his relationships must be documented

➤ Camera, binoculars, audio recorder and notepad at the ready, I left to carry out my mission

>"10:15 AM, saturday, Norman has met with the purple slave outside of his house. They appear to be engaging in casual conversation. Will follow."

>"11:42 AM, saturday, ze two of zem have met up with ze pink pole outside a confectionery store. Zey appear to have picked up a box and left her behind."
 >"12:23 Pm, saturday, ze two have returned to ze suburbs and arrived at vhat appears to be ze bavarian's house. Observation of Norman's face and body language suggest romantic interest. Recommend following zis up to gain advantage. Sidenote. Can see vhy he vould be interested in her. She vouldn't be out of place at all if she vere to visit München. Great features all around, good shape, vell-formed curv-"
 >"Tavi, what the hell are you doing?" - Alvina, out of nowhere
 >SCHEISSE!
 >"Hey, what are you- WOAH!" - she yelled out as I pulled her into the bush I was hiding in
 >"SSSSH! QUIET!" - I whispered kind of loudly - "Vhat are you doing here?!"
 >"Pinkie asked me to follow you. She saw you sneaking around and crawling out of a trash can."
 >ABBRECHEN! ABBRECHEN! AB-idea
 >"Al, besides ze purple girl, you know all of Norman's friends, ja?"
 >"Please don't call me Al. My mom calls me Al!" - she answered, a bit upset - "But yeah, I do. Why?"
 >"I need to learn as much as possible about zem, as fast as possible. Think you can help me vith das?"
 >"If you promise to never call me Al again, you got a deal."
 >"Wunderbar. Hehe. Hehehe. HEHEHEHEHE!"
 >"Tavi, you're starting to scare me."

>Day 2 of Operation Untergang

>Stage-1 had finished far quicker than I had expected
 >What should have taken days took a mere afternoon of talking to Alvina and, unexpectedly, Brad
 >Apparently, it would soon be... lets see these notes...
 Rarity's birthday
 >Getting Brad to divulge the details of the surprise party was easy enough. A coupon for free guitar maintenance at a local music shop
 >Honestly, given his lineage, it might have been easier to offer him booze, or a potato. But what's done is done
 >Regardless, the time had arrived for Stage-2 to commence. Infiltration and Sabotage

 >Monday, lunch time
 >Be Norman
 >For once, Purple wasn't with me, but only since she had other thing to take care of, leaving me with Pink and Orange
 >"So Pink, how's the you-know-what coming along?" - i asked
 >"Ah, ah, ah. I can't tell you silly! It's supposed to be a surprise!" - she replied
 >"Uhh, Pinkie, it was his idea. Ah think it's safe for him to know." - stated Orange
 >"Safe for him to know vhat?" - said a familiar voice as it's owner sat next to me. Pink-Beige
 >"Oh, about the dress-cake for Rarity's super-extra-secret birthday party that is actually the size of one of her dresses!"
 >DAMMIT PINK, ITS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET!
 >"Secret birthday party? Ho-ho, das sounds fun! Do you vant any help? Vith music, maybe?" - she Pink-Beige. Well,

it took a while for her to make up her mind, but it seems last week's surprise really did get her to like us

›"Of course sugarcube. Can always use the help! Say, since you're friends with that DJ, Vinny, ya think you could get her to help too?" - asked Orange

›Judging by the music from that one friday night, I wholeheartedly approve of this

›"Ja, no problem. Just tell me when and where. And if you want my help for anything, let me know."

›"Woohoo! Thank you Tavi!" - said Pink

›Be Renate

›MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

›Be Renate

›So far, progress has been made

›Norman and company do not suspect anything about my intentions, nor will I give them any reason to suspect anything but goodwill from my part

›However, I have come upon an impasse

›Norman's group is an unusually close one, each individual showing camaraderie for each other in levels and ways I had never seen before

›Breaking it will be a monumental effort, but I do believe I've found a weakness

›Creating a rift in the relationship between Norman and Rarity will inevitably create factions within the group

›Those who will take Norman's side

›Those who will take Rarity's side

›And those who will try to reconcile the party

›Seeing the level of unity present between them, if given enough time the last group will ultimately be successful

- I must begin recruiting allies. Either people who hate them and would cooperate, or those who could unknowingly act as spies like Brad
 - My chance to strike will be during Rarirty's party in two weeks
 - From what I understand, she considers herself to be a noble of common birth
 - As a fellow Bavarian, she also holds a natural appreciation for class in, music, art and clothing, just to name a few
 - I almost hate having to hurt her in order to succeed
 - Almost
 - After all, she still acted as an accomplice to that arschloch
 - I will continue to act as one of the group, but I must watch myself for more of their tricks
 - Already I've fallen for one of their ruses with the wig. That will not happen again
 - Laugh all you want while you still can
 - I'm onto you
 - You will all pay
-
- "Excuuuuse me? Why would I go to such a childish event?"
 - Be Renate
 - I remember why Sunset Shimmer is on many people's do-not-talk-to lists...
 - "Brad will be there, as well as his band." - I answered back
 - "Ugh. Vill, where, what, can't you talk like a normal person?!"
 - Wat

>"I mean, I know you're a foreigner and all, but if you're going to be here, actually speak american properly! Geez!"
 >Oh that's it. After Norman, you're next
 >"I'll take das as a no then." - I said, walking away
 >That was a terrible idea. Next on the list, Trix-
 >"Hey Octavia!" - I heard someone call out to me. It was the purple slav, Twilight, running down the hallway
 >"Twilight, how are you!" - I answered back
 >"I'm doing great. I wanted to ask you though: could you help me study for a test tonight? We're having a test on music history, and Norman doesn't know anything about that!"
 >"Tonight? Sure. I don't have any plans so it should be a problem." - I answered back. I couldn't let such an opportunity for interrogation pass like that
 >"Great! Lets meet infront of the library at six then!"

>At the library
 >"So, ze baroque period, ja? Easy enough." - I said as I opened my book and asked both Norman and Twilight to follow
 >For the next two hours I went on a detailed explanation of the Baroque period, making sure they followed
 >Then Norman dropped his head on the book
 >"Ugh... can't we just use magic to pass the test?" - said Norman, his choice of words betraying fatigue clearly kicking in. Lazy Italian
 >"No Norman! That would be unfair and irresponsible! Magic is a powerful force and even though it can help us in pretty much everything, using it to pass a test would be wrong."
 >What... The... Fuck...

>"Do ze two of you really vant my help, or should I leave?"
- I stated, quite annoyed. Magic... bah!
>"Oh, that's right! You haven't seen it before! Hold on, let me show you." - said Twilight, as I crossed my arms and raised an eyebrow
>This'll be good

>Be Twilight

>"Ok Norman, just like before. Show me your arm." - I said as Norman pulled back his sleeve
>Octavia didn't seem interested though. Maybe she doesn't like magic?
>And just as before, I wrote on Norman's arm
>This is no phony, I want to be a pony
>Using the activation rune, the spell was complete

>Be Renate

>And what the hell just happened?
>"V-vhat...?"
>Infront of me stood a miniature horse
>A... pony? Its coat the same color as the clothes Norman was just wearing???
>"TA-DA!" - it then spoke! I wanted to scream, but I believe the shock was just too much to let that happen
>"So, what do you think? Pretty great, huh?" - said the Pony-Norman
>"It's a really simple spell, to be honest." - then added Twilight
>"H-How did you do das?!" - I managed to let out
>"Easy really. Just followed one of the spells in this book, and used an activation rune." - she said, pointing to the

both the book and some strange symbol drawn on one of Norman's... front legs

>"... so... vill he stay like das?" - I then proceeded to ask, unable to think of anything else, all the while looking around, trying to find anything that would give these away as being a ruse

>"Nah, it'll only be for a few minutes." - she answered

>"Right..." - is all I could say as I sat back down, looking down at my book, only one thought on my mind

>FICK FICK FICK FICK FICK FICK FICK

>As soon as I'd finished helping them study for the test, I immediately rushed back home

>"Magic... MAGIC!" - I yelled out as I looked for my wig

>There it is

>Putting it on, the same effect as before could be seen

>Turning me green

>So this is how they managed to pull that one off

>If they can do magic, then that means I need to improve my own efforts

>No... no, that in itself won't do

>This isn't something I can just deal with

>I need something to help me counter that completely

>The game has changed

>Be Renate

>Norman's group has magic at their disposal. Who knows what they can do. So what CAN I do?

>I could steal their book

>But... who's to say they don't have a copy?

>Who's to say they ALL don't have a copy?

>Can't think like that. Need to risk it

>Tomorrow, I'm taking that book

>Wednesday afternoon

>Classes are over, haven't encountered Norman or any of his group

>Did manage to see them all leave together, meaning I'm in the clear

>I can't let them know I took the book though

>As such, I grabbed multiple books to check out and hid that one in my bag

>As far as the librarian is concerned, those are the only ones I took

>AAAGH!

>This stupid book explains nothing!

>It's just spell after spell! No actual explanation on how to make them work!

>Calm down

>Remember, Twilight did say an activation rune was needed

>BUT THIS STUPID BOOK DOESN'T HAVE ONE ANYWHERE!

>In a fit of rage, I threw the book, hitting the box where granpa Waldemar had stored all his valuables before he died

>And of course, it got knocked over, spilling all its contents

>With a sigh, I went on to pick them up

>As I lifted the box, however, I noticed something strange

>A panel, and a small book ontop of it. Looking into the box, I noticed it looked... deeper than before

- A secret storage section
- Picking up the lone book, shivers ran down my spine as I read the title
- "Secrets of the Vril Society, by Waldemar Pfeiffer"
- Holding the book in my hands, I could do nothing but stare at it
- After what seemed an eternity, I decided to flip to the first page, an overwhelming hesitation filling my every being
- "To anyone who finds this, my name is Waldemar Pfeiffer. I was a soldier in the eastern front against the soviets, and was at one point recruited to protect the members of the Vril Society and their work. In this book, I've written down everything I could learn from them and documents I could save before the base was destroyed to deny its use and contents to the communists."

- Amazing
- Terrifying
- Those were just a few of the things that could be said about the contents of the book
- Oh grandpa, what had you gotten yourself into?
- Experiments on animals and humans, sacrifices, ancient texts, militarization attempts, those were just a few of the things described in its pages
- However, what appeared to be of greatest significance was what the Vril Society had managed to develop near the end of the war, too late for it to be of any use
- All those years, they had developed spells and runes that, theoretically, should have worked
- Rituals, sacrifices, enchantations, nothing seemed to work

›None of that was necessary. They just lacked one thing
›"Ze activation rune" - I whispered
›Near the end they realized this and focused their research on creating one. And succeeded
›Schwarze Sonne, the Black Sun
›Not only did it work as an activation rune, but also as a merger and amplifier
›Drawing a rune-based spell in one of its spaces, or just writing a regular spell there, would merge it with other spells placed in different spaces, and would in turn exponentially amplify their effects
›This was simply... astounding. If I ever hoped to effectively counter their magic, I had to try this
›Grabbing an old shirt, I drew the Black Sun, followed by one of the spells from the library's book
›Like a bird and a feather, fly through the aether
›With a short, black glow, if such a thing was even possible, the shirt began to float
›I just stood there, looking at it for a second before blowing air in its direction
›And just like that, it began flying across the room, twisting and turning, avoiding the walls
›The moment I grabbed onto it however, it stopped
›Taking it to the bathroom and erasing the graphite with some soap and water guaranteed it wouldn't take flight again
›I had a lot to do now
›First, I would make copies of each relevant page of the library's book. I had to return it before they noticed it was gone
›Second, I needed to practice

›Operation Untergang

›Day 7

›I had reached a dead-end in my studies of magic

›This little book... so much information in it

›It was essentially a crash course into the dark arts, with all the tools and secrets its makers had developed

›But, practice was still needed. Specifically, experiments on people

›That is why I had prepared so much for Friday

›A classical concert had been organized in the local theatre, and I had been asked to play a piece, just like many other musicians who had been invited

›Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 in G

›Many high-class, self-important people. It was the perfect opportunity to test out a few things

›So far I had discovered that spells could be made to act sequentially instead of all at once, if an appropriate rune for that was added before any other

›Likewise, said spells could be "transmitted", as it were, instead of having to write them on those things or people the caster wished to affect, as long as a transmission rune was used as well

›Finally, each spell could in itself be linked to a particular sound beforehand, making said sound activate the Black Sun and cast the spell. Said sound could be a keyword or a pair of hands clapping. It did not matter

›If the Vrill Society had discovered all these before 1945, before defeat was imminent... I shudder to think what kind of world we would be living in

›Regardless, tonight I would discover if there was some merit to all of this

- ›9:30 PM, Town Theatre
- ›There I stood, in front of an expectant public
- ›All seats filled tonight. This was going to be good
- ›As everything fell into absolute silence, I began

- ›And so it all began, with the Prelude
- ›The first few notes triggered the first spell
- ›A simple lock spell, which magically locked all the doors and windows from which the piece could be heard being played. If the cello couldn't be heard when standing next to a door, nothing would happen to that door however
- ›Despite that limitation, the design of the theatre allowed for all inner doors and windows to lock themselves until a counter-spell was issued
- ›Yet nobody noticed, for the audience was in itself enthralled by my performance
- ›Then came the second part of the piece
- ›Allermande had a... different effect
- ›For when it was played, the notes carried a sleep spell that caused all who listened, except for myself, to quickly doze off
- ›And it worked just as planned as the audience fell asleep on their seats, and the other musicians fell to the ground unconscious behind curtains
- ›So I played on, until the Courante came
- ›The next spell to activate was a morphing spell
- ›To ensure that I could perform magic of the same type as the purple slave, I chose the same spell as hers
- ›And as the music carried it on, it was easy to see it working
- ›The audience changing into stallions and mares
- ›Passed out musicians becoming ponies behind the stage

›Seeing how their coats were based on their clothes, it made me wonder for a second, what would I look like with my gray dress and pink bow?

›As the Courante finished and I began the Sarabande, one of the bigger spells I put together was cast

›It was a merged spell, with its base-spells having different targets each

›It would cancel the sleep spell specifically. However, it would also use one of the spells developed by the Vril Society itself

›Mind control

›Two of those, to be precise

›The first was directed at the stallions, making them trot elegantly up and down the hall

›The second was directed at the mares, who would ride on the stallions' backs as if they were all proper human ladies

›Both parties carried on their duties perfectly, creating a sort of order where I had expected there to be nothing but chaos

›This went on for the next four minutes, as commands were changed on the go by the notes being played until everyone was back to their original positions

›Finally, the Menuet arrived, and the cancellation spells began

›First and foremost, everyone was turned back to their human selves

›Second of all, the doors and windows were all unlocked and the spell on them removed

›And finally, each person in the theater was released from their mind-controlled states, being able to think for

themselves once more instead of standing there as if they were zombified, just waiting for orders

- ›Just in time as well, as throughout it all I felt as if I could collapse any moment. Casting and maintaining seemed to actually place the weight on me, and not some ethereal magic force
- ›I had to keep that in mind in the future, and be very careful about it
- ›But in the end, the last portion was played. Gigue's notes activated the final spell
- ›Admiration
- ›That being or object to which their focus was given would suddenly be admired greatly for whatever they were doing
- ›And that is exactly what happened, as throughout its entirety the audience stood up in ovation for almost two minutes until Bach's Cello Suite No.1 was finally done
- ›Then the spell cancelled itself
- ›Thus, tonight I had managed to confirm the effectiveness of this... magic
- ›This night had been just perfect
- ›"Hope you're all ready. Zeres a new hexe in town."

›Be Vinny

- ›Man, Sugarcube Corner... don't quite get this place
- ›Been here for a while now, trying to figure out WHAT to play
- ›"Um... maybe something less... loud?" - said Fluttershy as I just gave her a stare
- ›"Loud? But the whole point is for it to be loud!" - I said, annoyed

>"Yeah, but you know Rarity. She'll just call it 'uncouth' and kick you out if you play that." - added Rainbow Dash.
 To be fair, she had a good point
 >"Alright, fine, fine. So I can't play my album there. Give me a second to come up with something." - I said as Applejack entered, carrying a box full of vegetables
 >"Howdy. So, where ya'll want me to put all these?" - she asked, as Pinkie popped out of nowhere
 >"The party is next weekend, so we can't cook anything yet, silly! Just put them in the fridge." - she said
 >"Alright. Someone mind helping me out then? Rest of the veggies are on Big Mac's truck outside." - she requested
 >"Sure. Lifting stuff might help me think." - I said with a shrug, going outside and picking a box
 >Having trouble carrying it...
 >Got inside...
 >To the kitchen...
 >DAMMIT!
 >Dropped the beets.

>Be Norman
 >The week came and went rather quickly
 >All the better
 >Looking at my cellphone's calendar, I couldn't help but let out a massive smile
 >10:30 AM, Saturday. Preparations were fully completed yesterday and it was only a matter of getting the Aryan Beauty out of her house and setting up the party
 >And that's where I come in
 >Strangely enough though, I don't remember deciding that, even though Purple and I organized who did what job...

>Not that I'm complaining
 >Well, here I am, standing at her door with only one thing to do. I knocked on the door
 >"Oh Norman! What a surprise! What can I help you with, darling?" - asked the most beautiful being in the world upon opening the door
 >"Well, since today is your birthday, I was thinking of taking you out for a good time. What do you say?" - I asked, following Pink's advice and sticking a rose in my mouth
 >"That'd be just splendid! Hold on, let me get a hat."
 >And soon we left, heading downtown
 >As we did, I turned around, seeing Brad carrying some of the things for the party and giving me a thumbs up
 >Man, what a cool guy who
 >Definitely would never do anything non-consensual to anyone
 >... I have no idea why that thought just popped up
 >"So darling, where are we going today?" - said the Aryan Beauty as we walked down the street, her arm wrapped around my own
 >"Wherever you want. We could go watch a movie, go to a fancy restaurant, GET WICKED TATOOS, anything." - I answered
 >For some reason, she gave me an annoyed look
 >"Norman, that isn't funny. Do what you want with your skin, but don't involve me in that."
 >What is she talking about?
 >"Er... ok? But anyway, what do you want to do?" - I asked
 >"Well, I know this excellent restaurant nearby. I've always wanted to go there, but never had the chance." - she answered, fluttering her eyes at me

>Ohsweetlordmyheart.png
>"Oh sweet lord, my pants!"
>I have no idea why she smacked me and gave me the cold shoulder on our way there...

>Be Rarity
>Why is Norman acting so strangely today?
>Well, I think I could excuse him if he was acting this way out of nervousness
>Except that we've gone out, either with the others or just the two of us, plenty of times before!
>"Norman, is something wrong?" - I asked as he drank cup after cup of wine he had ordered -I assumed- for us
>"Oh no, everything's fine. By the way, are you going to order?" - he asked, signaling a waitress to come over
>"Let me see then..." - answered - "I'll have a-"
>"She'll have a burger. Big, fat, glorious burger." - said Norman as he cut me off
>"Sir, we don't serve hamburgers here." - replied the waitress politely
>"Fine. She'll have this steak over here." - he then said, pointing at the menu, forcing the waitress to bend over to actually see what he was pointing at
>And as she did, he just gave me this repulsive smile due to how close his face was to her bosom. UGH!
>"I'll have the same." - added Norman, waving away the waitress as if he was some kind of lord
>With a sigh, the poor waitress turned to leave and handle our orders
>SLAP
>...
>He did not-

>He just slapped the waitress's butt!
 >"WHA- what is your problem?!" - I almost yelled out, containing myself and whispering over the table
 >"Problem? I've got no problem. I'm just enjoying myself. You know, this reminds me of the time Brad and I went to Hooters and-"
 >"Stop. Just... stop. I don't want to hear about Hooters. I don't want to hear about Brad. Just shut up." - I said, getting up and walking to the waitress
 >I needed to change my order, and give her an apology
 >Norman obviously wouldn't
 >I don't know what's wrong with him, but if he is going to act like this, it's better if we are both silent
 >Our food came, we ate, and soon came the time to leave
 >"Alright, lets see here." - he said - "Right. I pay this part, you pay that one."
 >"What?! I thought you were inviting me!" - I protested
 >"A man, pay for your food? What are you, an anti-feminist?!"

>Knock Knock Knock
 >"Hey Tavi, you ok? You've been in there for over two hours now!"
 >Silence
 >"Right... if you come out soon, Pinkie could really use some help moving that huge cake."
 >Be Vinny
 >I simply do not get Tavi
 >One thing's for sure. She sure takes her sweet time on the throne...
 >Anyhow!

>"1, 2, testing." - I said as I tapped the microphone - "DJ HU3-M4N IN DA HAUS!" - I then yelled into it as everyone covered their ears

>Obviously out of pleasure overload from hearing my voice

>"Did you REALLY need to get speakers THAT big?! I mean, we can hear you talk all the way across the room! Hell, my computer's speakers would have been enough!" - complained Rainbow Dash

>"Hey, if I'm going to be doing my thing here, I'm going to do it right!" - I answered, crossing my arms

>Then again, this wasn't so much a club as it was an oversized living room

>With a shrug, I lowered the volume a tad bit

>"MWAHAHAHA!"

>What the-

>"BWAHAHAHA -SNORT- HAAAAHA!"

>"What's that?" - asked Twilight, looking for the source of the laugh

>"Sounds like someone laughing! Oh, wonder what they're laughing about! I bet it's really fun!" - added Pinkie, poking from the kitchen

>"Hold on, I'll go check it out." - I said as I went upstairs

>As I suspected, the laugh became stronger

>Knocking on the door resulted in no response

>"Hey Tavi, the toilet takes lots of crap from everyone already! Don't laugh at the poor guy!" - I yelled out, trying to get her attention

>That apparently did it as the toilet was flushed, followed by the sound of someone washing their hands, that in turn followed by the door opening

>"I'm sorry, I just remembered a very good joke." - she apologized
>"Oh really?" - I answered sarcastically - "Tell me the joke."
>At that moment, the sound of a door being slammed open rang through our ears
>As we went downstairs, all we could see was Rarity standing at the entrance, completely drenched and smelling like Pepsi
>"Trust me. It was a very funny joke."

>Be Twilight
>"Er... uh, SURPRI-" - I yelled
>"SHUT UP!" - yelled Rarity, taking a deep breath as she came inside
>"Ugh... I'm sorry Twilight. Really am." - she said as she walked up to me and stopped herself from giving me a hug
>"W-what happened to you?" - I asked, concerning her current state. At that moment, Norman stepped inside
>"Why don't you ask HIM?!" - she yelled out - "I'll be upstairs taking a shower..."
>At that moment, we all ran up to Norman, wondering what happened
>"I don't know..." - he said
>"What do you mean you don't know?!" - asked Rainbow Dash with a mix of anger and confusion
>"I mean that I don't remember. All I know is that we went to a restaurant she wanted to go to, for some reason she was angry at me when we left, so I decided to take her see a movie. Next thing I know, we're getting kicked out and she's covered in pepsii!" - he answered
>"Wait, you don't remember?" - I asked

>"No! I just... blacked out!"
 >"Blacked out?" - I asked outloud, not really seeking an answer - "That's... really strange."
 >"Yeah well, ya better think of a way to apologize soon, or ah reckon she's gonna kick you out of here." - said Applejack, with a good point
 >"Right. Need to do something extra-special... Pink, how's the cake?" - asked Norman, heading towards the kitchen
 >"All done!" - she answered, skipping behind him
 >"Good, GOOD!" - he said, looking at it in its complete form. I have no idea how Pinkie managed to make a cake the size and shape of a real dress, but I've got to admire her skill
 >"Alright, Purple." - Norman called out to me - "Do you think you could write a spell on it so it can... I don't know, dance?"
 >With a smile, I answered - "Piece of cake."

>Be Renate
 >This is just golden
 >A dancing cake
 >This can only end well
 >"Alright, spell is done." - said Twilight, having written a spell on the back of the dress-cake with a toothpick
 >"I set the spell so that the cake... er, dress, will move to the rythm of whatever song is playing." - she added
 >"Mind if ve test it zen?" - I proceeded to ask
 >"Sure, go ahead." - was Twilight's answer
 >And with that, I grabbed my cello and began playing a small piece
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaYbTPuon_w (Only until 3:10)

>As if on cue, the cake-dress began to levitate and took the center of the living room, beginning to move to the rythm of Vivaldi
 >To be perfectly honest, it truly was something amazing to watch
 >Suddenly, the front door opened
 >It was Brad, coming back from the store with a bag full of pringles cans
 >"Hey guys, I'm back and- woah, is that a dancing cake?! BRADICAL!"
 >I swear to the ghosts of Manstein and Dönitz, if he ever says that word again, I'm ending him
 >"Alright sugarcube, seeing as the cake is doing its thing, ah think you should go get Rarity so we can have ourselves a darned party already!" - said Applejack, basically pushing Norman towards the stairs
 >"Vait." - I said, ending the piece, the cake floating back to its tray and regaining its original stance - "She may still be too angry at Norman, and him going up might make things vorst. Let me try."
 >"Sure, go ahead." - said Norman, as I got up from my chair and headed upstairs
 >Getting to Rarity's room, I knocked on the door
 >"Who is it?" - came through the door, a hint of anger still noticeable
 >"It's me, Octavia. Can I come in?" - I replied
 >Instead of an answer, the door was audibly unlocked. I took that as a 'yes' and walked in
 >Oh mein gott...
 >Having just gotten dressed after her shower, Rarity was about to brush her hair
 >No makeup

>Free-flowing hair
 >All completed with a kind, aryan smile
 >For a second, I completely forgot why I had come up here

>Be Renate
 >"Darling, are you alright?"
 >I need to do what I came here to do, and close my mouth before flies decide to rent space in there
 >"Er, ah, yes. I'm alright. We vere... uh, vondering if you vould like to come downstairs. Since zeres a no-longer-surprise party dass ve still want to throw for you." - I said, apparently having forgotten how to look people in the eyes when speaking. Or how to even speak properly
 >"Don't worry, I was planning on doing that. Just let me freshen up for a minute and I'll go down." - she said, to which I answered with a stupified nod before closing the door behind me
 >Returning downstairs, I let everyone know Rarity would be coming down soon, then went to talk to a bored-looking Alvina
 >"So, enjoying ze party?" - I asked jokingly
 >"Har har. You know, I wished they'd let me start blowing their minds BEFORE the birthday girl got here. Then I'd have something to do!" - she complained
 >"Hmmm, I've got an idea. How about you try to make ze cake-dress dance vhen she comes down? After all, ve already saw how it dances to Vivaldi. Lets see how it dances to Vinny."
 >I am never saying that nickname outloud again...
 >And so time was just spent waiting, until Rarity decided to come down

›As she took step after step, all present began singing the "Happy Birthday" song

›Be Writefag

›Decide not to type out that damn song due to not wanting rectal perforation by the RIAA

›Back to being Renate

›"To the birthday girl, I'd first like to give an apology for any mistakes done today, and give her a present from Pink, Purple and myself." - said Norman, as the cake-dress was brought back to the living room, getting a surprised gasp from Rarity

›"It even dances!" - exclaimed Pinkie, which Alvina took as her cue to begin playing one of her favorite songs for it

›Levitating once more, the cake took center stage

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGow4nmYkKA#t=5m0s>

›Be Renate

›Dear goodness, look at that cake go

›Left, right, twist, turn, bend, split, that thing was trying its damndest to find good moves

›And then it lost one of its sleeves, the cake section flying off and smacking Brad in the face, dropping him on his ass

›"Oh no, stop the music, STOP THE MUSIC!" - yelled Norman, a little too late

›It was happening

›The cake tore itself apart, sections of the cake-dress flying off everywhere, everyone seeking cover where possible

- After a minute since the song began, the spell cast upon the cake seemed to give up, as the cake simply exploded, covering anything that could be considered "clean" with sweet goodness
- As everyone crept out of their hiding spots, Norman visible entered into damage control mode
- Immediately, he hurried towards a cake-covered Rarity
- "Oh God, I'm so sorry! I didn't know that was going to happen and I ju-" - Norman tried to apologize, removing pieces of cake from Rarity's clothing and hair, but was cut off by her palm pushing him away
- "No. Just stop." - she said, her open palm turning becoming a finger pointing towards the door - "Just... just get out of my house."
- "B-bu-" - he tried to respond as reality hit him
- "OUT!" - she reiterated, her patience having being pushed beyond its limit by the events of that day
- Norman left, defeated, with Twilight and Pinkie trying to cheer him up as he went home
- Meanwhile, I stayed to help with the cleanup after Rarity locked herself in her room, tears forming in her eyes when she left
- Returning home, I thought back on what had happened
- Essentially, I had basically ruined, or atleast seriously soured, the relationship between Norman and Rarity
- Meaning, I had succeeded in one of my objectives
- Thinking further back on the original planning stage, I remembered almost feeling terrible for having her take the collateral of all this
- Somehow...
- Almost no longer applied

>Be Norman
>Got back home with Purple and Brad on tow
>Oh christ, what happened?!
>How did everything go so wrong?!
>"Norman, listen to me. It's not as bad as you think; just let Rarity calm down, and then you can talk to her tomorrow or monday!" - I heard Purple say as I baww'd my eyes out on Brad's shoulder
>"She's right." - said Brad as he patted me on the back - "You'll see that everything will be just fine." - he added finding no need to fly into the sunset and do a roll in the air while saying it
>"BSHEDUNWNSHTSHATALSHKSHTOSHME!" - I let out incomprehensibly as every word was choked out as one by the knot in my throat
>That was followed by Brad pushing me back and punching me across the face
>"Better?" - he asked, hoping that knocked me out of my pitiful state
>And it worked! That knocked me out of it
>Out cold on the floor

>Next day, Sunday morning
>Went to Aryan Beauty's house to try and fix everything, with Brad and Purple hiding nearby in case I needed help
>After knocking on the door, I was greeted by Aryan Beauty's little sister... er... what was her name?
>Ah, right, Mini-Aryan
>"Hi Norman." - she said - "You looking for Rarity?"
>"Yes I am. Could you call her for me?" - I asked politely
>"Sorry, she's not here." - she answered - "She went out with a friend about an hour ago."

›"Huh, really? With whom?"

›"Thank you so much for inviting me out here and letting me vent. You've no idea how much I needed that, and I didn't want to impose on poor Fluttershy."

›"Its vas my pleasure."

›Be Renate

›Taking Rarity out to some fancy coffee shop after what happened yesterday appears to have been a good first step

›"Excuse me ladies, may I recommend something to go with your coffee? We have a fine selection of pastries to choose from."

›Based on the glare she gave to the waiter, resisting the urge for the cake served here seems to have been a good precaution as well

›Be Rarity

›Got to wonder, why did I never talk to this girl before?

›I mean, she's been attending our school for two years now and I never spoke a word to her until recently

›We share so many interests and she's such a nice person too!

›"Say, you play in big, important events, right?" - I asked, interested in the music career she was aiming for

›"I wouldn't call zem 'important' so much as 'extravagant', but yes." - she answered, giving me an idea

›"Would you say that the people going to hear you play have an... interest in fashion?"

›"Ha! Ja, you should see some of ze dresses ze frauen wear to concerts! Some look gut, others completely ridiculous."

›Excellent

›"Hmmm, sorry if I'm overstepping in here, but could I make you a dress for the next event you play in?" - I asked

›For some reason, she became rather nervous before answering - "S-sure, I'd like das."

›"Oh wonderful!" - I said - "I'll need to take your measurements though. Shouldn't take too long, and I can do it back home."

›Be Renate

›This was... incredibly awkward

›"Ok, now stand still. Just need to take waist, bust, hip and arm sizes." - she said as she picked up a measuring tape

›"Actually, I'd like it not to have sleeves. Zey get in ze way when playing, you see." - I countered

›"Fair enough. I'll leave sleeves out of the design then."

›This wasn't the first time I had had my measurements taken while only in my undergarments

›Afterall, I'd have to get a new fancy dress from time to time to keep the pompous snobs from complaining

›But having Rarity do it, her hands going around me as they measured my sizes, her fingers occasionally touching usually-clothed areas of my body

›It was weird

›"And done!" - she said, her voice suddenly shaking me out of some trance I seemed to have gone into

›"I'll sketch something up with these and show you later, ok?"

›Monday morning

>Be Renate
>No major incidents, Norman being abused, de-spelled wig keeping me hidden from Alvina, the usual
>And as usual, got to my locker to get my books
>... only to find a box with cake-covered underwear inside
>"Oh wow! I knew you liked to strip at clubs, but I didn't know you had a food fetish too! Just how much of a pervet ARE you?!" - said someone behind me, loud enough for the entire hall to hear
>Sunset
>Fucking
>Shimmer
>"Now listen you-" - I said, moving right up to her face before she pulled back with a grossed-out look on her face
>"Stay away from me you pervert! I don't want you to infect me and make me fuck ice cream!" - she said as she walked off, cackling
>Those on the hallway laughed
>Outloud
>In whispers
>But they laughed
>And once more, the whispering, the pointing, all came back as before
>That's it
>That is fucking it
>Reaching into my bag, I pulled out my book and a marker
>Looking through the book, I find what I was looking for, writing a schwarze sonne on my arm, embedding it with a few runes
>Pushing my way through the crowd in the hall, I saw Sunset walking into the bathroom

>As I walked in, there she was, fixing her hair and adding some makeup
 >"SUNSET!" - I yelled, my rage prohibiting me from thinking of anything else
 >"Well will you look at you. What's the matter? Did the panties not fit?" - she said, mocking me, not even changing he focus from her own reflection
 >No words needed to be said, as I rushed her, pulling at both her hair and her jacket
 >"GAH! GET OFF ME YOU BITCH!" - she yelled, pushing me back and scratching my face with her nails
 >"YOU WANT TO FIGHT HUH?!" - she yelled as I rushed her, with an ace up my sleeve
 >"FRIEREN!" - with that, the black sun on my arm cast its spells, freezing Sunset in place, only allowing her to move her eyes as I pushed her to the wall
 >Turning her around, I removed her jacket and ripped off her shirt, exposing her back
 >Pulling out my marker, I got to work

>Tuesday, lunch time
 >Be Norman
 >Aryan Beauty still won't talk to me...
 >"I need to find Yellow and see if she can help me get back on her good side." - I told Purple as we walked to the cafeteria
 >"I get that. It's weird though. Rarity is usually really forgiving."
 >"Yeah well, I think I managed to piss her off too much."
 - I answered as we sat next to Brad
 >" 'ey guys, 'oy are ya?" - said Brad

>"... what the fuck did you just say?" - I ask, unable to understand anything through that thick accent
 >" Oi said, 'owaya?' - he answered
 >"Brad, you feeling ok?" - asked Purple
 >"Oi fale gran'!" - he answered, still with that thick accent
 >Looking at Purple, I saw her worried expression, not knowing what was wrong
 >I shrugged and notched it up to Brad being Brad
 >"Say Brad, have you seen Yellow?"
 >"Aye. she's outside, by de benches. Apparently she foun' sum dag sleepin' dare." - he answered as he took a bite out of a... potato
 >"By de way." - he added - "Oi 'eard Sunny Shimmy disappeared. Naw wan 'as seen 'er since yesterday."
 >"Woah, really?!" - I replied in surprise
 >"Aye. Sum people 'eard 'er screamin' in de gaff av wax, but that's it." - he said
 >"Gaff... av... wax... right. Well, see ya Brad. Need to find Yellow." - I said, heading to the exit
 >"I'll stay here with Brad. Try to figure out what's wrong." - said Purple, to which I nodded

 >"Hi Yellow!" - I said, apparently startling her - "What are you doing?"
 >"Oh, um, hi Norman. I was uh... trying to get this dog out from under the bench. Poor thing looks hungry and terrified!"
 >"And what's the problem? Why don't you just pull it out?" - I asked
 >"Well... it keeps trying to bite me whenever I get close..." - she said weakly

>"Not a problem. Allow me." - I said, taking off my jacket and wrapping the sleeves around my arms, making an improvised bag

>Kneeling down, I thrust forward, catching the dog before it could try to run

>I then noticed it was a she

>"Bright-orange Corgi GET!" - I said outloud

>Be Norman

>"GAHFUCKINGDOGAHHHMYARM!"

>I'm currently being mauled by a dog

>"No! Bad dog! Bad dog!" - yelled Yellow softly, glaring at the dog

>Somehow, that was enough to get it off me and to make it lay on the floor whimpering

>"Thanks Yellow... goddamn, that's going to leave a mark." - I said, checking over my arm

>No blood or wound, but that'll still hurt for a while

>"Ow... Anyway, Yellow. I wanted to ask if you could help me with the Aryan Beauty. She still won't talk to me."

>"Yes, I can do that." - she answered - "But, um, could you help me find this little guy's owner?"

>"Little girl. And sure, not a problem." - I answered as we walked back inside

>Almost immediately, the Corgi jumped off Yellow's arms and ran up to Brad, rubbing his leg

>"Woah dare wee dag!" - was Brad's response, as the corgi gave him puppy eyes

>"D'aaaw, ain't yer juicy? Cum 'ere." - he added, putting her on his lap

>Almost as if she considered Brad's choice of words to be off-putting, the corgi jumped off

- Instead, she attempted to open Brad's backpack by pulling the zipper with her teeth
- "Stop that, you!" - whispered Yellow in a relatively loud tone
- Ignoring her, the corgi succesfully opened the backpack, stealing a notebook and running off
- " 'ey, gie dat back!" - yelled Brad as a chase ensued
- Said chase lasted less than a minute
- "Where'd she go?" - asked Fluttershy, getting her answer a few seconds later
- The corgi walked up to us, notebook open, with what appeared to be "SS" written with mud on a random page
- Purple was the first one to make a connection - "Sunset Shimmer?"
- She then got on her knees - "Do you know where she is?"
- "Purple... She's not going to answer you. She's a dog." - I said, feeling I had to point it out
- "So is Spike, and you've talked to him before." - she answered, making a fair point
- The dog then barked, which Purple took as a yes - "Ok, where is she?"
- The corgi sat in place, giving Purple big, puppy eyes. Then it hit her
- "Sunset?"

- Be Twilight
- We went to the Library after class to try and figure out what happened to Sunset Shimmer
- "I just don't get it... magic was definitely used here. But from what I understand, no one besides me knows magic in this world." - I pondered outloud

➤ "But didn't you have to write the spell on me those times you turned me into a pony?" - asked Norman, making a good observation

➤ "Yes. And that's just the thing. I CAN'T FIND any spell written on her!" - I said, picking up Corgi Shimmer, passing my fingers through her fur, nothing written on it, nor able to see anything on the skin underneath

➤ "Then why not give her a bath, or shave her and try to find it?" - suggested Norman. Corgi Shimmer just growled at him though

➤ "Well, we could definitely give that a try..."

➤ Be Renate

➤ With classes over, I headed to Rarity's house as she wanted me to see the sketches she'd made

➤ Only major incident was dealing with Brad after he refused to stop saying that... that word

➤ "Totally BRADICAL!"

➤ Dammit brain, never bring that up again

➤ Regardless, he'll probably thank me later

➤ Not many fully appreciate their heritage, possibly due to never experiencing it like he is now

➤ Arriving at Rarity's house, I knocked on the door

➤ "Ah darling, you're here. Please come i- oh my goodness, what happened to you?!" - she asked in shock, seeing the scars on my face

➤ "Got in a little fight yesterday. It's nothing to worry about." - I answered with a smile - "Though if you've got something to cover it up with, I'd appreciate it."

➤ "Oh definitely. But please, step inside." - she said

➤ As soon as I got in, she handed me a folder with five different designs in it

>"Well, what do you think?" - she asked as I looked at each one of them
>Whilst they were all quite different from one another, one thing was for certain
>They all had atleast one flashy, obvious element to them
>"Er... don't you think they're too... extravagant?" - I asked
>"Hahaha, don't be silly."

>Be Norman
>Almost lost a few fingers trying to shave Corgi Shimmer in my backyard
>Had Brad and Purple not been holding her down, I might just have
>I could almost guarantee I was going to get plenty of shit once she changed back to normal
>Regardless, with that done, Brad held up the dog while Twilight looked her over for any markings
>"There!" - she let out, pointing to the corgi's back, right below the neck
>That particular spot had in itself been covered by black fur before being shaved off. Clever hiding spot
>"What is that?" - I asked, looking at some sort of circle filled with lines
>"I'ts a rune." - answered Purple - "But I've never seen one like THAT before."
>"Well, what are you waiting for? Wash it off. That should do it, right?" - I asked
>Without saying a word, she went into my house, coming back out with a wet sponge and a bar of soap
>Washing off the rune was easy enough, as it appeared to have been written with just a pen or a marker

- >And nothing happened
- >"That is bad... That is really, really bad." - said Purple starting to pace around
- >"What's de matter?" - asked Brad
- >"Unless she's on some sort of timer, she should have reverted back to her normal self. And I don't know what that rune was, or which spell was used on her." - she answered, continuing to pace nervously around the yard
- >I didn't like where this was going
- >"If we don't find whomever did this to her, and if she's not on a timer, then that means she'll stay a dog... permanently."
- >"Shoite!" - was Brad's response

- >Be Renate
- >I managed to convince Rarity to make her designs less... flamboyant
- >I felt bad for a moment, assuming she'd have to redo them all over, but she reassured me they would only need a few touches with an eraser
- >In my opinion, her revised work was much better
- >After all, simplicity works best for this kind of thing
- >Reviweing them again, choosing one was easy
- >A simple one, seemingly inspired by modern chinese designs, and in a pleasing prussian blue
- >Wednesday Morning
- >Be Renate
- >Like every schoolday, I went to grab my things from my locker
- >However, as I looked for the books I needed, my wig got caught on the inner edges of the locker and fell off

>"Stop right there, Renate Pfeiffer! The Great And Talented Trixie wishes to have a word with you!" - said Trixie as she approached me, instantly justifying my purchase a thousand times over
 >Gathering my wits and patience, I turned to look at her - "Ja, Trixie? What can I do for you?"
 >"Trixie's Rich and Important parents heard you play in your last concert and were genuinely impressed with your skill. Now they want to give you the privilege of playing for them and their Gracious and Influential friends in their next party. What do you say?"
 >That was better than I expected
 >"Vell, I don't have anything scheduled for the next month, so I probably can."
 >"Excellent! Trixie is pleased to hear that. I will let you know the exact time and day soon, but for now, ta ta!" - she said, strutting off to class
 >"Actually..." - I said, stopping her in her tracks, a thought popping in my mind - "If I do zis, could you do me a favor?"
 >"A favor, eh? And just what would you want Trixie to do for you?"
 >"Just an invitation. For a friend."
 >"Ha! Is that it? Consider it done. Trixie will get that for you."

>Be Twilight

>"Lets try this..."

>Writing another nullifier spell on Corgi Shimmer, I once more tried to revert her back

>With no effect

>"Oh Celestia, what's missing?! What am I doing wrong?!"

›As I said that, the bell rang, signaling the first class of the day

›"Oh no, I'm late! Find somewhere to hide in here Sunset. I'll be back during lunch time and keep trying!"

›Be Corgi Shimmer

›Holy fucking shit, these stupid jackasses are getting nowhere

›And stay here? Bitch please, I'm finding that stupid nazi cunt and biting her fucking face off!

›Following the dumb purple bitch, I snuck out the library before the door closed behind her

›Time to find the kraut

Be Twilight

›Lunch Time

›Returning to the library, I couldn't find Sunset anywhere

›"Sunset? Sunset!" - I yelled out, running outside

›Oh no, where did she go?!

›Be Corgi Shimmer

›Come out, come out, wherever you are

›There you are you pretty, pretty princess

›Oh, eating alone by the football field, are you?

›Hehehehe...

›"WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF!"

›FEEL THE PAIN, BITCH!

›Be Twilight again

›Barking

›There is barking on the football field!

>I immediately ran there as fast as I could
 >When I arrived, the barking continued, and I quickly found it to be coming from the stands
 >As I approached, I saw someone had picked her up, holding her at arms length
 >"Reallt, Sunset? Really?" - said the person in question - "You realize zere's a reason you're a corgi and not, say, a pitbull or dobermann."
 >"WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF!"
 >"Save it." - she said, as I managed to identify her as... Octavia?
 >"Since you decided to be an unartig mädel, lets see how you like being covered by a thousand ticks." - said Octavia, placing Sunset under her arm, the corgi unable to do much except bark and shake her stubby legs
 >"Put her down!" - I yelled, going up the stairs - "Octavia... did you do this to her?!"
 >"Twilight?!" - she stated in surprise - "Vell, ja. I did. Why? Don't tell me you care about this mistvieh?"
 >"I don't know what that is, but what I do know is that you can't go around turning people into animals! Change her back this instant!" - I demanded
 >"Why should I? Everyone's glad she's gone, and she's nothing more than an abusive, horrible person. I zink zis is fair punishment for her, ja?"
 >"Punishment?! PUNISHMENT?! You can't use magic to 'punish' people because you don't like them! That's downright evil!" - I yelled out in anger
 >"Really now? Then tell me. Vhat are you going to do if I don't change her back?"
 >Looking at my options, I realized I had only one
 >"Then I challenge you to a magic duel!"

>Be Renate

>I have been challenged to a magic duel at the school's football field

>"Alright, what are your rules?" - I asked my slavic opponent

>"We will each go to separate ends of the field and prepare our spells within a given time limit. After that limit is done, we will fight until one of us can't go on, and the other will be the winner. We will not take this beyond the field to avoid getting anyone else involved or damaging the school. Since I made the challenge, you get to choose the starting time limit."

>Wunderbar

>"Very vell." - I said, dropping Sunset and taking out a pen - "Once ve're both at our ends of the field, ve'll have one minute."

>Be Twilight

>One minute

>Is she serious?

>That gives each of us time to prepare three, maybe four spells

>I shouldn't need more than that to beat her

>As I walked to my side of the field, I carefully thought which spells I'd need

>Lets see, a speed spell and levitation spell would come in real handy to help me avoid whatever she throws at me and outflank her at the same time

>Firing magic blasts will also be good to have, and if time permits, a shield spell

- ›As I reached my starting position, I looked at Octavia on the other side, readying my pen
- ›"START!" - I yelled, as both of us began writing on our arms
- ›In 15 seconds, I managed to finish the speed spell
- ›In 20 more, I had completed the levitation spell
- ›With 10 seconds remaining, I finished the magic blast spell and immediately got to work on the shield
- ›However, I couldn't finish it in time, made obvious by the green blast of magic heading my way
- ›With my newfound speed and levitation, I managed to avoid it easily, and focused on evading as I tried to finish the shield spell
- ›Ten seconds over the limit, I managed to do it
- ›"Alright, lets do this!" - I yelled, charging into combat
- ›From what I could see, Octavia had cast a speed spell on herself as well, but no levitation
- ›Combined with her magic blast, that was two spells of at-most four

›Be Twilight

- ›This is turning out easier than I expected
- ›When she fires her magical blasts at me, I can just duck and weave, flying out of their way with speed and ease
- ›When I fire at her though, she has to run and guess, since the shots are coming from above
- ›"Give up! I have years of experience with magic! You can't beat me! Just turn Sunset back to normal!" - I yelled as I chased her down the field
- ›However, she suddenly stopped and turned around, shooting another blast at relatively close range

>"Gah!" - I let out as I cast my magic shield, blocking the attack
 >She just stood there with a grin though, arms crossed and all
 >Before I could wonder what she was doing, I heard a fizzling sound behind me
 >Turning around, I barely had time to cast my shield again as every shot she had missed hit it in one intense, horrendous volley, the last one breaking the spell and throwing me to the ground
 >Did... did they turn around and home in on me?!
 >"You know what happened the last time the Germans were underestimated?" - she asked, as I tried to get up - "Blitzkrieg."
 >With a sweep of her arm, the ground burst upwards, a wave of dirt and rock rapidly passing underneath me as the ground was torn asunder, just barely managing to get in the air in time to avoid it
 >Ok, so she used a homing spell on her magic attacks, and some sort of earth manipulation spell
 >That's four now, all she's got
 >"I swear, I don't want to hurt you. Just give up!" - I yelled once more, trying to get her to surrender
 >"Hmmm, nein." - she answered, joining her hands, forming a larger magical blast than those before
 >Assuming it would be another homing attack, I cast my shield just as she fired it off
 >However, instead of homing in or hitting me directly, it completely missed, going past me
 >Only to explode behind me, once more knocking me to the ground

>Somehow, despite its size, it wasn't as strong as all the other shots

>However, I soon found out I couldn't levitate anymore

>I couldn't levitate anymore

>When I tried to cast it again, I found that the spell I'd written was gone

>A dispelling attack

>Thats... five now

>HOW?! Neither of us have had time to prepare more spells!

>"Liebe Twilight, you may have more experience with magic than me, but that doesn't mean you're better than me!" - said Octavia as she clenched her fist, making it glow with an intense, green hue

>With her speed enchantment, she immediately closed the distance between us, forcing me to recast my shield once more, her fist impacting with it with a loud BANG

>BANG

>BANG

>BANG

>Octavia punched and swiped with amazing speed, forcing me further and further back with each impact on my shield

>Until I countered

>Timing the delay between hits, I cast a magical blast right as she punched, hitting her in the stomach and blasting her back a good ten meters from me

>That magical punch was her sixth spell now...

>"Dear Celestia, how is she doing that?!" - I said out loud as I used this chance to catch my breath

>That did not last long, however, as Octavia swiped her arm once more, generating another wave from the ground, in my direction, using said wave to get on her feet in an instant, if hunched over and holding her stomach in pain

>I couldn't levitate to avoid that anymore

>Using my speed enchantment however, I was able to get out of its way

>This was my chance

>If I could knock her out now that she was wounded, I could end this

>Immediately, I began running towards her, charging up a magical blast which I would deliver at point-blank to finally end this fight

>That is, until she suddenly threw a rock in my direction

>"GRANATE!" - she yelled, the rock exploding into a green fireball between the two of us

>Next thing I know, I'm on the ground, but so is her

>Seven

>Seven spells!

>Slowly, we both get up

>As she does, she keeps holding her stomach in pain. I think I did serious damage there

>However, having landed on a rock, on my left arm, wasn't good either

>I'm not sure if it was due to the adrenaline, or because of the shock of the damage being so recent, but one thing was for certain

>I couldn't feel my left arm, and the unnatural angle in which it was bent told me quite clearly that it was broken

>"L-LETS F-FI-FINISH ZIS!" - I heard Octavia yell to the top of her lungs as she gathered all her strengths just to stand straight

>"W-Wait! Stop, we're both badly hurt!" - I yelled in response - "J-just stop before this gets out of hand!"

>"Vhat, just because you're losing you vant to stop?! Los! LOS! YOU STARTED ZIS! YOU SAY I CAN'T VIN BECAUSE OF INEXPERIENCE! PROVE IT! BEAT ME!" - she continued yelling - "DO IT OR I'LL FINISH ZIS MYSELF!"

>As she raised her right arm, her hand clenched into a fist, I noticed it began to glow once more

>Again, I prepared to cast my shield, suspecting she would charge at me again

>But no... instead, a whirlwind started forming around her as I felt a large concentration of magic gathering in her fist

>What was she doing?!

>"LOS! MERGE YOUR SPELLS! HIT ME VITH ZE BEST YOU'VE GOT!" - she yelled once more, as if waiting for something

>Merging spells?! What is she talking about?! Spells can't be 'merged'!

>I did not answer. I didn't know HOW to answer that

>My lack of response, however, seemed to fuel an inner rage

>"FINE!" - she yelled once more, slamming her fist into the ground

>Next to Princess Celestia's own spells, I'd never seen such a bright flash

>Straining to look at Octavia, I could only see the ground exploding into a massive wave of rock and dirt, propelled by a green, magical force
>I wouldn't be able to avoid it
>I couldn't levitate
>It was moving in every direction
>And I couldn't run
>When the wave reached me a few seconds after her fist hit the ground
>Everything went dark

"Huh? Hey... HEY, she's waking up!"

>"Purple?! Purple, can you hear me?!"

>"Twily!"

>Be Twilight

>"Where... where am I?" - I asked, waking up to an uncomfortably-well-lit white room

>"You're in the hospital sugarcube. Gotta say, you got here in really rough shape." - I heard Applejack say somewhere in the room

>I didn't try to find from where. Quite simply, I didn't have the strength to even move my head to do that

>"Hospital... Hospital! Octavia! Where's Octavia?!" - I said outloud, straining my throat in the process

>"She's fine darling, don't worry. Tavi is alright." - I heard Rarity say from some other part of the room - "She got you out of... well, what used to be the football field. Carried you all the way to the school's main building."

>"Used to be?" - I asked weakly, confused as to what had happened in the end

>"Yeah, someone set up plenty of bombs over at the football field." - I heard Norman say - "The police are blaming the Chechens, for some reason. The point is, Purple, we're all happy you're fine."
 >With that, Norman came into my view, pulling me up and giving me a hug. As he did, I was able to see everyone else there. Rarity, Applejack, Dash, Pinkie, Fluttershy, and even Brad, all joining into what had become a group hug
 >And pressing on my arm
 >"OW! Owowowowow!"
 >"Oops! Sorry, sorry, sorry!" - I heard many of them say as they backed up
 >At that moment, a doctor entered the room
 >"Ah, Miss Sparkle, so good to have you with us again." - said the doctor - "You came to us in pretty bad shape, but to be honest, it looked worse than it really was. Broken left arm, broken femur on your left leg, and numerous burns. After seeing the damage those bombs did on the news, I'd say you got pretty lucky."
 >"What happened to Octavia?" - I asked
 >"Don't worry. Miss Pfeiffer came in better shape than you. A few broken ribs and numerous burns, but nothing too serious." - he answered - "Anyhow, we're going to have to keep you here for a few days."

Be Twilight

>Friday morning, getting let go later today
 >Norman and Applejack will be coming over later to pick me up
 >They're bringing an old-but-working wheelchair that Granny Smith used before getting her hip operation

>Judging by the need to stick a pencil into the arm and leg casts whenever I had an itch though, I could already tell the next couple of weeks would be annoying
 >But for now, I could just lean back on the bed and relax while I waited, enjoying the yogurt one of the nurses had brought
 >Until someone knocked on the door
 >"Come in." - I said, taking a spoonful
 >As the door opened, I almost choked on the yogurt
 >"Octavia?!"
 >"Hallo Twilight. How are you doing?" - she asked in a completely casual manner
 >"What do you want?" - I asked
 >"I don't want anything. Just making sure you're well." - she answered - "But if I were to want something, it'd be to make sure there are no hard feelings regarding Wednesday."
 >"Hard feelings? Oh no, of course not, it's not like you sent us both to the hospital or anything!" - I yelled at her
 >"Hey, you challenged me. I won. Fair is fair."
 >"But you cheated!" - I yelled again - "There's no way you could have prepared so many spells in just a minute!"
 >"Just because my method is faster than yours doesn't mean I cheated." - she answered calmly - "But anyway, just wanted to make sure you were alright. The doctors just let me go, and I'd rather go lay down on my own bed now. Lebewohl."
 >"Wait." - I said, stopping her as she turned to leave - "I'd like to know one thing."
 >"Hmm? And what is that?" - she asked
 >"Rarity said you carried me out of the field, looking for help. Why?"

›"Because, Twilight, despite what you may think of me, I'm not a bad person." - she said, turning to leave once more before something stopped her

›"Ah, almost forgot." - she said, pulling out a marker and walking towards me, writing on my leg cast

›Gute Besserung! -Renate

›Be Norman

›Something made Purple really upset

›I'm thinking it has to do with not being able to go to the school's library, seeing as the police and feds have the whole place in lockdown while they look into what happened

›Purple did ask me if she and her dog could stay with us for a few days though, to which my parents seemed to have no problem with

›As long as we didn't stay up until five in the morning playing COD, that is

›I sure wonder if her dog and Corgi Shimmer will get along though

›Probably not, but it'll definitely be fun to watch

›As I entered my room and let myself drop on my bed, I found Purple was still in the same place she was before I left, still on Granny Smith's old wheelchair instead of making herself comfortable on either my bed or the mattress we had pulled over for her, still reading the same magic book

›"Hey Purple, mom wants to know if you'll be able to go down for dinner or if you want me to bring it up to you." - I said, waiting for an answer

›None came

›"Purple?"

>Once more, no response
>Getting up, I took a few steps towards her and began snapping my fingers right between her face and the book
- "Earth to Purple, please respond, over!"
>That got her attention
>"Hmm? Oh, sorry. What is it?" - she said, turning to look at me
>"Mom wants to know if you want your dinner brought up."
- I repeated
>"Sure, tha'ts fine." - she answered, immediately returning to her book
>Oh come on
>Grabbing the book by the middle, I pulled it away from her, closing it with a snap
>"HEY! GIVE THAT BACK!" - she yelled at me, trying to punch me as I backed away from the wheelchair
>"Look, I know you're mad you can't go to the library anymore, but you've got to relax sometime. Hell, classes got cancelled this week, next week, and if the feds aren't done looking for bombs and studying the crater by then, probably the week after that! Trust me, right now we CAN afford to forget about school and responsibility, atleast for a while."

"GIVE IT BACK!" - she yelled again, making me sigh
>"I'll give it back if you explain to me what the big problem is. Is it the library? We can go to the public one tomorrow if you want. Is it about Sunset? Look, I respect your dedication but you told me yourself that you can't do anything until we find the person who did this to her."
- I said, sitting on the bed, placing the book next to me

➤ "That's the whole thing! I KNOW who it was! Octavia turned her into a dog, and Celestia knows what else she's done!" - she said, apparently breaking my brain for a second

➤ "... what." - was pretty much my answer - "Would you mind explaining?"

➤ "Alright, alright." - she said, rubbing her temples. I'm guessing a headache was setting in

➤ "I found her with Sunset on wednesday. Octavia was talking to her, bragging about the type of animal she'd turned her into, and I'm guessing she was about to put another spell on her too." - said Purple, her words alone keeping me silent and listening

➤ "Norman... those weren't bombs going off in the football field. Those were Octavia and me. I challenged her to a magic duel, trying to get her to change Sunset back to normal. And... and she beat me." - she said, her voice shaking near the end

➤ For a moment, she covered her face with her hands in shame as my mind processed all of this

➤ But then an important thought popped up

➤ "Hold on... since when can Octavia do magic?!"

➤ "I-I don't know. Not only could she do magic, but her technique was better, her strategy was better, and she did some things I didn't think were possible..." - said Purple, looking depressed

➤ If I had to guess, I'd say that was the look of someone with a shattered pride

➤ Her expression changed, as if a thought occurred to her

➤ "Norman... I'd never do anything to get you into trouble, but I want to know if you can do me a favor." - she said, waiting for my answer

>"Uhh, I guess?" - I replied, unsure what she wanted
 >Taking a long, deep breath, she started talking
 >"I need- no, I HAVE to know how she did it. How she beat me, how she managed to get more spells ready than I did during the duel, how she even learned magic in the first place!" - she said, pausing for a moment
 >Definitely did not like where this was going
 >"I want you to..." - she said, pausing again, apparently having difficulty getting her request out
 >"I want you to break into her home and look for any book about magic she may have."
 >"Spellbooks, guides, anything related to magic. I need to find a way to counter it in order to return Sunset back to normal, and undo anything else she's already done or planning to do."
 >To say that I was shocked by her request would be putting it lightly
 >Purple is quite possibly the biggest goody-two-shoes I know, and I mean that in the best way possible
 >For her to ask me to basically commit a crime, she had to think this was extremely serious
 >"I... need a second to think it over." - was my answer

 >Be Norman
 >In the end, I decided I would do it, or atleast give it a try
 >If Octavia caught me... well, I don't think she'd call the cops. Maybe
 >However, just to be extra sure, I asked Brad to help me out
 >"Here we are. Tennpenny Heights." - I said, looking at the large and fancy apartment building infront of us

- "Lets jist stop standin' raun. Cum on." - said Brad. I really hope he decides to drop that stupid irish accent soon
- Getting inside was no problem, seeing as the guards were just there in case someone started trouble
- Going up the elevator or stairs, however, was a different issue
- Both the elevators and doors to the stairs seemed to require either a password or an ID to open
- "So... what now?" - I asked, trying to think of what to do
- Brad beat me to it
- "Oi got it. Wait 'ere." - he said as he went to talk to the receptionist
- "Excuse me, cud yer unlock de elevator for me mucker an' oi?"
- "I'm sorry sir, but I can't do that. Access to rooms is only for residents and their guests." - answered the receptionist
- "Canny yer make an excepshun? Our mucker Renate jist got oyt av de 'ospital an' we want ter make sure she's gran' so." - said Brad
- The receptionists conflicted expression, however, seemed to indicate good news
- "Oh... yes, I heard what happened to Miss Pfeiffer. Poor girl... Oh, alright, I'll make an exception just this once." - she said, walking out from behind her desk and towards the elevator
- Dammit Brad, stop being so cool!
- "Bradical, t'anks!"
- That wasn't a serious request, faget

>Making sure to cover the keypad fully, the receptionist entered a 6-digit password, ordering one of the elevators to come down, a door opening soon after
>"There you go boys. Please don't cause any trouble." - she said, leaving us and going back to her spot
>Entering the elevator, I pressed the button for the eighth floor, patting Brad on the back

>DING

>We reached the eighth floor
>With no one on the halls, we calmly walked towards Octavia's apartment
>"Ok, you keep an eye out while I try to lockpick the door." - I said, Brad acknowledging with a nod
>I immediately got to work with my screwdriver and bobby pin
>On an electronic ID lock
>FUCK!
>"We need a new plan..."
>"Hmmm, ah've got it!"

>Why the hell did I agree to this?
>"ROI! LEF! ROI! LEF!"
>Currently, we were scaling up the backside of the building with nothing more than two picks each that Brad went home to pick up from his dad's climbing gear
>Somehow, it took me until we were between the fourth and fifth floors to truly realize how terrible an idea this was
>"ROI! LEF! ROI! LEF!" - Brad kept barking as we slowly but surely reached our destination

- I genuinely kneeled down and kissed the floor once we reached the Octavia's balcony
- "Gran' so, lets go inside." - said Brad, opening the unlocked balcony door and entering the living room area
- Once in, I quietly walked around, taking a look everywhere, refamiliarizing myself with the place
- Bathroom, living room, kitchen, and what's in here?
- Opening the last door available, I took a peek inside and barely stopped myself from slamming it shut
- "Waaat's de matter." - asked Brad as I slowly opened the door again to let him see
- Bedroom
- More importantly, with a sleeping Octavia inside
- The two of us just stood there at the door, looking around in doubt
- "So, waaat chucker we chucker?" - asked Brad. I assumed he asked should do now
- As he asked, I noticed the open pill bottle on Octavia's table, remembering she'd broken some ribs
- Painkillers
- If she had taken some before going to sleep, she'd be out cold for a while
- "We look out here first. Make sure to check every single spot. If we don't find anything, we'll come look in here." - I said, lightly pushing Brad back and slowly closing the door
- Taking a second to breath, we began our search for any magic-looking book we could find

- Searching around the apartment, we made absolutely sure that everything was returned to its proper order
- Ordered books back to bookshelves

- >Spread-out books back to wherever they were
- >Closed drawers back to being closed
- >Open drawers left open
- >Octavia's backpack placed back on the couch
- >We found ourselves with a rather interesting problem during our search, though
- >Every single book
- >Every single magazine
- >Every single thing with words on it, except for those inside her backpack, were in german
- >"Brad, any idea on how we're supposed to identify any magic books if everything is in german?" - I asked, turning around to look for Brad
- >And failing to find him...
- >"Brad?" - I asked, pacing around momentarily before a door open
- >The bedroom door
- >With Brad coming out, pulling up his zipper...
- >"What the hell were you doing in there?" - I asked with what was quite possible the most horrified expression I've ever had on my face
- >"Oi needed ter use 'er gaff av wax." - he answered
- >"Gaff av wax?! The hell is a gaff av wa- the bathroom?! Is that what it is?!"
- >"Aye, waaat else wud oi be doin' dare?"
- >Facepalming nonstop, I pointed him to the guest bathroom door, right next to the couch
- >After inflicting enough self-punishment, I took a look around
- >We'd basically covered everything already
- >"Well..." - I said - "I guess there's just one place left

>Once more, we went into Octavia's room, walking slowly and with extreme care to avoid making any sort of noise
>Using hand signals, I told Brad to look in the closet while I searched in her drawers
>As soon as he nodded in confirmation, we got to work
>I felt like an absolute pervert as I saw the underwear in the top ones
>Making sure there wasn't anything hidden underneath them was even worse
>Thankfully, Brad whistled in my direction, making me turn around to see him holding a black book and the box it had been in, giving me a thumbs up
>"Tavi, you home?" - we heard as the front door beeped
>Oh shit...

>"Tavi?"

>The sound of the front door closing and approaching footsteps might as well have been that of a shotgun being cocked
>Our reaction was fitting enough for both sounds
>Said reaction being, of course, to hide in the bathroom
>As I gently closed the door behind me, I noticed the Brad had not only brought the book he'd shown me, but the whole freaking box
>"What are you doing?! Leave that outside!" - I whispered
>"Naw. Dare were galore av books inside along wi' dis wan. They might be useful!"
>As soon as we heard the bedroom door open, we held our breaths
>"Oh boy. Guess she's was still pretty tired. Well, lets see if I can cook up something." - we heard the DJ girl say from the other side of the door

>With the door closing and footsteps moving away, we could breathe once more

>Taking a peek outside, I tried to think of what to do

>"Ok, Brad, we might be able to get ou- ...what are you doing?" - I asked, just staring at him as he sprayed Octavia's perfume all over himself

>"We nade ter cover ourselves we 'er scent. 'tis de only way we'll blend in wi' our surroundings an' escape."

>That piece of ingenuity apparently triggered break time in my brain

>Walking up to the sink, I took off my hat, turned the cold water handle slightly and washed my face

>How did I get myself in this mess?

>Taking a moment to think, I grabbed my hat, putting it back on

>"Follow me." - I said, slowly walking outside, back into the bedroom

>Once there, we waited for a second to make sure Octavia wasn't waking up

>She wasn't

>With the utmost care, I opened the bedroom door, peeking outside

>Whilst I couldn't see the kitchen, I could hear water boiling, vegetables being cut on a plastic plate, and DJ-girl humming some song

>Dammit

>If she was here to take care of Octavia, we would not have anything remotely close to a clear shot at getting out

>We had to take a risk

>I went out first, heading right for the couch

- ›Hiding next to it, I took a peek towards the kitchen
- ›From where I was, I could see DJ-girl in the there, with her headphones on
- ›If we could avoid making noise, we could get out of here
- ›Signaling Brad, he came right over
- ›Taking another peek, I saw her still occupied with preparing food, and decided to take this chance to plot out an escape route
- ›From where I was, the safest course of action seemed to be to crawl towards the dinner table, hugging the couch
- ›After that, we'd try to stick right next to the kitchen counter, which would cover us if she decided to turn around
- ›By pointing to the locations and making simple hand gestures, Brad seemed to understand the plan and agreed
- ›Seeing as he had the box, I went ahead
- ›Crawling through the living room was a simple manner
- ›Reaching the other end of the couch, I eyed the kitchen once more, making sure there was no movement coming from there
- ›Confirming none, I began crawling towards the dinner table, with Brad right behind
- ›As soon as I got there however, we began hearing dubstep
- ›That meant only one thing
- ›She took off her headphones
- ›"What is that smell?" - she said, walking out of the kitchen, forcing Brad to go back to cover and made me hide under the table
- ›Dammit Brad, why'd you have to put on that perfume!

>As she came out of the kitchen though, she didn't go towards Brad

>She came towards me

>Brad and I could do naught but watch as our end approached

>Until a door opened, followed by a yawn

>"Tavi! You're awake!" - said DJ-girl, walking towards the bedroom

>"What are you doing out of bed? You're still recovering." - she said, entering the room, apparently pushing Octavia in

>This was our chance

>With a speed to make Blue turn green with jealousy, both Brad and I got up and out of our hiding spots

>Despite our rush, we made sure to be as silent as possible with the door

>Opening the door, I let Brad out first, delicately closing it behind me

>However, I seemed to have been too close to the door, as my red jacket got caught on the side as it closed

>This was bad

>Really, really bad

>I would be able to reopen it unless I got a keycard

>With only one option, I pulled as hard as I could, damning my luck

>As the expected RIIIP sound was heard, I could do nothing but run, lamenting the sacrifice of part of my jacket

>Be Renate

>I got to say, those pills work wonders

>I can actually sit upright now!

>And as much as I tend to disagree with her when it comes to pretty much everything, I had to agree with Alvina about staying in bed until I recovered
 >Seeing as she came over to cook me dinner, I think this is a perfect opportunity to keep on reading Grandpa Waldemar's memoirs
 >Getting out of bed, I went to my closet to pick out one of his books
 >"...where's ze box?"
 >Taking a deep breath, I washed away the sudden rush of anxiety
 >I probably put it under the bed and forgot
 >"Nein, not zere..."
 >Well that was strange
 >I checked the drawers, as I might have placed it there for whatever reason
 >"..."
 >This was getting weird
 >Turning around, I returned to the closet, taking out everything on the bottom
 >Still not there
 >For a moment, I stood paralyzed as I felt my blood freeze
 >That was followed by rushing out the door
 >"Al! Al!" - I yelled - "Did you take a grey box from mein closet?!"
 >"I thought we agreed you wouldn't call me that! But no, why would I take something from your closet?" - she answered
 >Turning to look around, I could feel what I could only describe as a panic attack coming over me

- ›I immediately started running around the apartment, opening drawers and throwing their contents out
- ›Nothing in the living room
- ›Nothing in the kitchen
- ›"Tavi, stop! What are you doing?!"
- ›Nothing in the bathroom
- ›Nothing under the TV
- ›Outside, has to be outside!
- ›"Wait, where are you going?! You're not even dressed! Stop!" - she yelled, running around the kitchen counter to try and stop me
- ›Before she could grab me though, I managed to open the door, allowing a piece of red fiber to fall inside, having been hanging from the door
- ›Picking it up, the material felt quite... familiar
- ›I was almost sure I'd seen this somewhere
- ›"Hmm? What's that? Looks like a piece of a jacket" - said Alvina, trying to pull me inside, away from the door
- ›A red jacket...
- ›A RED JACKET!!!

- ›Be Norman
- ›After that bit of hell, I managed to get back home with Brad, sweaty and tired
- ›Dinner had already passed, with mom having left mine in the microwave for whenever I came back
- ›I'll eat that later
- ›For now, all I wanted was to get back to my room, give Purple the box with all the books, and collapse on my bed
- ›Brad could be Brad in a corner, I guess

>"Hey Norman. Any luck?" - I heard Purple say as I entered my room
 >Without a word, I lifted the box in a victorious manner before putting it on my bed
 >"Excellent! Maybe I can figure out how to change Sunset back now." - she said, as I entered Phase 2 of my plan, collapsing on my bed
 >"Glad you're happy." - I said -"Though you might have some trouble with the books we brought, seeing as they're all in german."
 >Suddenly, I felt a whole lot of pain on my face
 >"Norman, just because you feel disappointed about that doesn't mean you have to hurt yourself! Don't do that!" - I heard Purple say - "Trust me, even if it's in another of your world's languages, I'll probably be able to figure it out."
 >"Hurting myself? What are you talgrggaackgaa!!!!" - I yelled as my left hand suddenly latched unto my neck, trying to crush it
 >I immediately rolled off my bed falling and unto the floor as my own hand was strangling me, trying my hardest to get it off with my right hand
 >"That's not funny. Stop it, you're scaring me!"
 >"Oi don't tink 'e's messin' raun!" - said Brad, rushing to my aid and holding back my left arm
 >"T-thanks... Brad..." - I managed to say between my gasps for air
 >However, the calm didn't last long, as I apparently lost control of my legs, made obvious when I involuntarily kicked Brad in the nuts
 >My left arm now focused on pulling my hair and my legs took me towards my desk

>"PURPLE, HELP ME!" - I pleaded to her as my right hand punched me across the face repeatedly, while my left hand began smashing my head against the desk over and over again
 >I don't know how she could have helped, or if she even understood what was going on
 >Admittedly, neither did I
 >However, the terror I felt was something that simply could not be described
 >My legs, apparently determining that my head had had enough, decided to take me somewhere else
 >Towards the window
 >"Oh no, OH NO, HELP ME PLEASE!" - I cried out to anyone as I found myself running straight to the window
 >"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA- oomf!"
 >Had Brad not tackled me to the ground, that would have ended very, very badly
 >But it seemed the whole thing wasn't over, as my left hand grabbed a pencil that had fallen to the ground
 >With it, it began writing something on the wall
 >"Du bist verdammt tot!"
 >Suddenly, my body lurched upwards, trying to get Brad off, only resulting in my head hitting the underside of the desk, knocking my hat off
 >With that, I could feel my body go limp
 >Whatever was happening was over

Be Twilight

>I could'nt sleep
 >Not after what happened to Norman earlier
 >Him just... being hurt like that... and I couldn't do anything

- ›The rune I found inside Norman's hat after the fact told me everything I needed to know
 - ›Octavia was behind this
 - ›She probably discovered we now have her spellbooks
 - ›If she comes after us, I need to be ready and warn everyone else
-
- ›Be Norman
 - ›Sleeping until late on a saturday is always enjoyable
 - ›Even if my face and head are killing me for some reason
 - ›Oh, right
 - ›However, waking up without my hat felt... odd, to say the least
 - ›Finding a rune written inside of it, Purple forbid me from wearing it
 - ›After last night, I have no complaints about it
 - ›10 AM, good time to get out of bed
 - ›Only to find Purple already immersed in the books we brought back
 - ›"Good morning." - I said in a groggy tone
 - ›As expected, no response
 - ›Not pushing for one, I went downstairs to get breakfast
 - ›"Eh, cereal will do." - I said to myself, getting a bowl and milk
 - ›And then I remembered -"Right, the dogs..."
 - ›Grabbing two bowls, I went ahead to fill one with water, and the other one with dog food
 - ›So far, Corgi Shimmer hasn't exactly protested to it
 - ›Not that I would care if she did
 - ›Opening the back door, I went out to the backyard
 - ›Only to see a green, flaming object falling from the sky, headed straight for me

>And almost as soon as I saw it, a purple, semi-transparent barrier appeared between it and myself, stopping it and causing it to drop harmless unto the grass
 >Taking a closer look, I noticed it was a brick, with something carved on it
 >"If you care about your well-being, you'll return what you took from me."
 >NOPE!
 >Doing a 360° spin, I moonwalked right back into the house and locked the door
 >Fuck you dogs, get your own food!

>"Norman, I felt the shield spell I put around the house get casted! What happened?" - asked Purple as I entered my room, NOPE'ing right back into bed
 >"Our 'friend' decided to send me a present! Now if you'll excuse me, I'll try wake up from this nightmare." - I answered, closing my eyes and trying to force myself back to sleep
 >"This isn't time for jokes. Don't you get that she's really trying to hurt you?!" - she protested to my comment
 >"Purple, I think she wants to do something a bit more serious than just 'hurting' me." - I stated sarcastically. This shit's too out of hand
 >"Anyway!" - she said, a bit angry at my attitude
 >"I've been using your computer to decipher what this book says, and it's proving more difficult than I thought. I'm going at it word by word, but it's as if this language has no order at all!" - she said, failing to notice that to non-english speakers, our own language was like that as well

>Getting out from under the sheets, I turned to see what she meant by 'using your computer'
 >Google translator
 >To translate a book...
 >"So, have you figured out anything then?" - I asked with a sigh
 >"Not much, just this." - she said, turning the wheelchair around to show me a picture in the book
 >Some kind of circle with lines pointing to its center
 >"Looking over the book, I noticed it appeared repeatedly. It's the same rune we found on Sunset and your hat!" - she said, letting google translator handle the pronunciation of the name
 >Schwarze sonne, or black sun as it kindly translated
 >"Yeah, lets stick to black sun. No way we're going to be able to pronounce the other name." - I pointed out, Purple agreeing with a nod
 >"So, anything we can do with that?" - I asked
 >"Not until I figure out just what it actually is and what it does." - she answered
 >"Right." - I said, jumping out of bed - "I'll just go take a bath then. Yellow is going to help me with the Aryan beauty today, so I've got meet them for lunch and not screw up."

 >Be Rarity
 >"He'll be here soon, I'm sure of it." - said Fluttershy in her usual, delicate voice
 >"He better be." - I answered - "If he makes us wait, we're leaving."
 >"Yeah... I guess that's fair." - she answered

>Be Norman
 >Before leaving my house, Purple wrote one of her spell on my arm just in case something bad happened
 >Normally, I'd be annoyed
 >With what happened last night and today though, better safe than sorry
 >As I entered the restaurant, I took a quick look at my watch
 >Right on time
 >Looking around, I quickly spotted Yellow and Aryan Beauty
 >"Good day ladies, how are you today?" - I said as I took a seat at their table
 >"We're fine. Now, Norman, I'm here. What did you want?" - said Aryan Beauty, unamused
 >"Er... right, so I wanted to apologize for what happened on-"
 >"Save it." - she said, cutting me off - "Your behaviour that day was completely reprehensible and childish. If Fluttershy hadn't explained to me that you were just trying to throw me off to make the party an even bigger surprise than it normally would have been, you'd be nothing more than a pig in my book." - she said
 >As I looked at Yellow, she gave me a thumbs up and a smile
 >Thanks Oba- Yellow!
 >"So, I decided I'd to give you another chance, and then I'll decide whether I forgive you or not." - finished the Aryan Beauty
 >Setting myself into Don'tblowit mode, I watched my every word and move

>And as lunch came and went, our conversation reached an interesting point
 >"You know Norman, you look quite good without your hat."
 >"Hehe, you think so?" - I answered, flattered
 >"Oh yes. I really don't understand your obsession with it though. It's almost as bad as Tavi's obsession with having her wig on all the time."
 >"Wait, you've spoken to her?!" - I asked, surprised
 >"Well of course! She's a lovely girl, behaves herself like a true lady should. Been trying to get to know her better lately." - she answered
 >So that was her game. Not only was she attacking me, but she was targeting the Aryan Beauty as well!
 >Convincing Aryan Beauty that she was her friend, only to backstab her later and get to me!
 >That was a new fucking low if I ever saw one!
 >This had just jumped from simply defending myself, to absofuckinglutely personal
 >Alright, so this is how you want to play?
 >Fine bitch. I'm game. Lets dance
 >"Speaking of her, I'm making a dress for her next concert. I have to say, it's coming out great!"
 >And now the ball is in my court
 >"Here it is!"
 >Even though fashion wasn't exactly within my spectrum of interests, I had to admit
 >Aryan Beauty definitely put a lot of love and dedication to her work
 >The nearly-invisible stitches
 >The pleasant combination of colors, in this case a vivid tone of blue with some golden threads

>And an eastern design that made it all work
>If I were a /fa/ggot, I'd probably be drooling right about now
>"Wow... I don't have any words. This is pretty awesome."
- I said with genuine admiration
>"Oh you, it's not even finished yet! Save that for later when it's done." - was her answer
>"Alright, alright. Say, would you mind if I helped you out with it?" - I asked
>"Help me? Not to be rude, but I don't think you could actually help me out with this."
>"Hey, you said you'd give me a second chance. Let me make it worth it." - I insisted
>"Oh fine. I guess you could help me with the cleanup and getting some materials if I suddenly run out. What's the worse that could happen?"
>What's the worse that could happen, indeed

>Be Twilight

>So far, I've been able to partially translate the first chapter of this spellbook
>In order to keep my findings as organized as possible, I will be keeping an experiment log to record the effects of newly-translated content in a separate notebook
>"Log Entry A-1: The Black Sun"
>"From what information I could gather from what will be referred to as the 'Vril Book', the symbol known as the 'Black Sun' seems to be some sort of complex, multi-purpose activation rune."
>Placing my pencil on my cast, I wrote a simple levitation spell on it and a Black Sun right next to it, attempting to cast it

- >No effect
- >"Hmmm... maybe this."
- >Erasing the previous attempt, I drew a larger rune, writing the spell again in one of its many spaces, attempting to cast
- >Even though I'd been succesful this time, the dark glow from the rune as it cast it was... unnerving, to say the least
- >Making sure the spell was active, I attempted to lift Norman's hat from across the room, with great success
- >Once more however, the dark glow surrounding the usual violet aura of my own magic made me more than a little nervous
- >Turning back to my journal, I continued taking notes
- >"Attempting to cast as spell using the Black Sun as if it was a regular activation rune results in failure, as the spell need to be written within the rune itself."
- >"One could say that it doesn't activate spells so much as spells activate it."
- >"The dark glow generated by it has me worried, however. From my own experiences, that is a clear indication of black magic."
- >"Once I have finished translating all related texts, I'll be sure to attempt to find anything and everything I can about its origins and creation."
- >Suddenly, the door opened
- >"Norman, you're back!" - I said, rolling my wheelchair over to give him a hug
- >"Hey Purple. Listen, have you figured out how to use those spell Octavia uses?" - he asked
- >"I've made some progress. Why, what is it?"
- >"I think I know how we can get even."

>"Get even?! Norman, I don't care about getting even with her. I just want to stop her before she hurts you or anyone else again!" - I said, disgruntled

>How could he be even thinking about that?

>"Fine, fine, then think of it as our chance to do just that." - he said. I didn't like where this was going

>"Octavia will be playing at some important event soon. Don't know when or where, but Aryan Beauty is making a dress for her."

>I REALLY didn't like where this was going

>"So, seeing as I'm helping her with the dress, I could write some spell on it for you."

>"You want to use one of Rarity's dresses?! Are you insane?! And- hold on, why is she making a dress for her? Didn't you tell her what she's done?!"

>Norman let out a sigh as he sat on his bed - "No, I didn't. Apparently, Aryan Beauty considers her a friend. A really good friend at that. Seemed to think very highly of her. I don't know about you, but I don't have the heart to tell her. Not yet, atleast." - he answered

>"Yeah... I understand what you mean. But still, using one of her dresses?!" - I emphasized

>"Hey, I don't like it either, but if the last few days are any indication, she's going to come after us. Sooner or later. At some point, we'll have to stop playing defensive and take her out of the game. This is as good a chance as we're going to get."

>Norman had a point, but it still felt very wrong

>Be Renate

- ›Ever since I got out of the hospital, my sleep cycle has been thrown out the window
- ›Waking up in the middle of the night due to drugs wearing off and the pain returning was absolutely no fun
- ›Sleeping until afternoon, something many would consider an absolute pleasure any day, was simply unbecoming of me, regardless of whether or not I actually managed to get some sleep at night
- ›Which I didn't
- ›Getting out of bed as carefully as physically possible, I grabbed my pill bottle and went to grab some water from the kitchen
- ›As I walked out of my room though, I noticed the building staff had brought over my mail
- ›Musicians Monthly
- ›Some dubstep-focused magazine with a taped on piece of paper saying "<3 Vinny"
- ›And an envelope
- ›Placing the magazines on the kitchen counter, I opened the envelope
- ›"Dear Ms. Renate Pfeiffer, you are hereby formally invited to-"
- ›Oh good, just what I was waiting for
- ›Writing down the time and place, I proceeded to throw away the usual overly-polite letter and take out the rest of the envelope's contents
- ›A confirmation for my performance, categorizing me as a guest musician, as usual
- ›And an invitation, directed towards Rarity

- ›Going anywhere isn't really that big a deal

>As long as the pills do their job, only real risk of pain is bumping into people
 >Given my destination, a taxi made that a non-issue
 >As soon as I got there, I knocked on the door
 >"Renate, darling, how good to see you!" - said Rarity as we shared a careful hug, making sure not to put any pressure on my ribs - "What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in bed?"
 >Her gentle touch..
 >That soft skin rubbing past my cheek...
 >The lavender fragrance coming from her hair...
 >"Tavi? Heheh, you can let go of me now."
 >"Oh. Sorry." - I said, doing just that - "I wanted to give you zis personally."
 >Handing over the invitation, I awaited her reaction
 >"Oh... oh my... oh my!!!" - was her initial response
 >"I was hoping you liked it." - I stated
 >"Like it? Like it?!" - she said, before jumping towards me out of happiness
 >"Darling, I LOVE IT!" - she proclaimed, trapping me in a bear hug
 >OHSWEETVERDAMMTMERCYFICKFICKFICKFICKFICK
 >Do not yell
 >DO. NOT. YELL.
 >"Oh, how I've always dreamed of going to such a party! The class! The sophistication! I can't thank you enough!" - she said, hugging me tighter

 >Be Norman
 >Tuesday morning
 >Man, it sure was nice going through Monday without something magical trying to obliterate me

>You know what isn't so nice?
>Getting chased down the street by a giant crab
>"Shitshitshitshit!" - I said outloud as a parking meter was vaporized as I ran past it
>A giant crab with green laser vision
>"Nooooorrrrrrmaaaaaannnn~"
>That talked
>It was at times like this that I wondered why the streets were always so empty
>Then I realized I didn't care because there was a gargantuan crustacean closing up on my ass
>Moving to turn at a corner, Purple's spell cast itself right before one of the crab's shots hit me, knocking me to unto the street
>Before I could get up, it had already closed the distance between us
>As I attempted to run away, I collapsed once more, it's larger pincer having caught my right leg
>Trying to get away, moving to the other side, I managed to move forwards, pulling the crab along with me
>Not that that did much good as it simply wouldn't let go
>Losing my balance, the crab turned me on my back, snapping its smaller pincer at an extremely high rate
>I did NOT want to know what it was planning to do with that
>Then again, I probably wouldn't find out seeing as it was charging its FREAKING LASER EYES!
>"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!" - I yelled like a little girl
>Almost as if on cue, the crab was hit by a van, its larger pincer being ripped cleanly off the main body while the crab was sent flying, exploding into a green mist of magic some twenty-odd meters away

>The van's passenger door suddenly opened
 >" 'op in!"
 >Dammit Brad, stop saving my ass! You're making me look bad!
 >SCHEISSESCHEISSESCHEISSESCHEISSESCHEISSE
 >DO NOT YELL
 >"Y-y-you're v-v-v-vel-el-come..." - I managed to say as I patted her on the back with relative strength, hoping she got the hint
 >"Hmm? OH! I'm so terribly sorry!" - she said as she put me down
 >Oh god
 >That was horrible
 >Enjoyable, but absolutely horrible
 >It took me a few moments, being bent over right at her door, before the pain subsided enough to allow me to stand straight again
 >"Better?" - she asked with a forced smile, quite ashamed of herself - "I'm so sorry, I don't know what got to me."
 >"It's ok..." - I replied, taking a seat in her living room - "Just need to catch mein breath."

 >"Thanks for the help Brad. Thought I was done for."
 >"Naw problem, mucker."
 >"... right. Anyhow, would you mind driving me home?"
 >"Sure tin'. De Bradwagon 'ill git yer dare in naw time."
 >"The what?"
 >"Well, yer clap. Me ban' alwus uses me van whenever we go somewhere together." - said Brad
 >"Your band, huh? Wouldn't that make this a bandwag- OH GODDAMMIT!"
 >Soon enough, we'd arrived at my house

- "Thanks for the ride, Brad. Want to do something later?" - I asked as I got off
- "Sure, jist gie me a call. For nigh, oi nade ter 'elp de football team fend somewhere else ter practice. Clap yer!"
- As he drove off, I had only one thought
- I really, really wished he'd drop that accent

- Be Twilight
- I've made significant progress with the book so far
- Once I got the basic grammatical forms fully understood, it was a simple manner of translating the words themselves
- As I got further into the book, I wish I hadn't
- "Hi Purple." - said Norman as he entered the room, noticing my mood - "What's the matter?"
- "Ugh... it's that book. It's just... horrible!" - I said - "Some of the things described there. I... how can anyone do anything like that?!"
- Confused, Norman grabbed my translations and began reading
- As he read on, his expression changed from shocked to disgusted to sickened to horrified, ending in a blank
- "Well now... guess I shouldn't be surprised the word 'nazi' appeared there a couple of times..." - he said
- "That word. For some reason your computer wouldn't translate it. What's that?"
- "Are you serious? You don't know who the Nazis were?" - he asked with a tone of disbelief
- I shook my head
- "...well, I don't know how you passed previous history classes, but ok." - he said - "Basically, they were a bunch

of evil, racist jackasses who considered themselves to be the 'Master Race' and ended up killing a whole bunch of people. Remember the stories Octavia told us about her grandfather? I dugged around a bit after that night. Turns out, he was one."

›Be Twilight

›After what Norman said, I knew I had to look more into this

›I spent the rest of the day searching for information about the Nazis

›This online encyclopedia was of great help, but it also proved to be very distracting

›Two hours in, I had somehow managed to start reading about a fat italian plumber with blue overalls who loved mushrooms

›Getting back on track, I continued reading about some of the... atrocities... committed by these people

›I found it very hard to believe anyone I knew could be related to them

›For the first time ever, I didn't want to keep reading

›"Hey Norman, lets go somewhere." - I said to him as he played on his Xbox

›"Sure. Where do you wanna go?" - he asked, pausing his game

›"Anywhere. Just... lets go for a walk, visit Applejack's family, I don't care. Anywhere's good." - I answered

›"Ok. I'll call Brad and ask him to give us a ride."

›Be Applejack

›BANG BANG

>"AJ, git yer sister in the house! Big Mac, go git the chainsaw from the shed!" - ordered Granny Smith as she reloaded Ol' Trusty
 >Twilight, Brad and Norman came to visit
 >Getting Applebloom inside the house, I turned to our guests
 >"Would ya'll mind explaining to me why there're giant crabs in mah farm?!" - I demanded
 >"Hi Brad!" - said Applebloom
 >"Ah 'ell naw! 'owl on macky, oi'm comin' ter 'elp!" - yelled Brad, jumping out the window
 >"They're not just crabs! They're magic crabs! Octavia's sending them to hunt me down!" - answered Norman
 >"Say what now?" - was my only answer as the sound of chainsaw-on-carapace was heard
 >"Look, we can explain later." - said Twilight - "But right now, we need to deal with them!"
 >BANG
 >"Sugarcube, yer in no condition to deal with ANYTHING right now. Ya stay here with Applebloom. Norman, come with me." - I ordered, exiting the house
 >Almost immediately, a crab crashed against the wall and exploded into green mist
 >"BRADICAL!"

 >Be Norman
 >Oh god, what did I get myself into?!
 >"Norm, catch!"
 >Turning to face Orange, I saw a freaking AXE FLYING AT ME!
 >"AAAAAH!" - I yelled, miraculously catching it in mid-air before it gore'd my face

>"Quit being such a baby and git chopping!" - ordered Orange

>"Wait, you're unarmed! What are YOU going to do?!" - I asked

>Her answer came in the form of a giant crab getting its front-half stomped to the ground, and a second one getting kicked right infront of Brad's van as he drove it around, running crabs over

>Seeing as everyone was giving a good fight, I headed to the closest crab

>"Alright, it's now you and me, crunchy!" - I yelled at it

>It responded in the form of a laser beam melting the axe's head

>"... huh... URAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" - I let out as a battlecry, beating the crap out of its carapace with the handle

>"Oi canny believe it tuk us tree 'ours ter clear dem oyt!" - said Brad, leaning on his van

>"Huhuhuhu, wasn't that fun, kiddies? We shoul' do that again sumtime." - said Granny Smith, downing some moonshine while sitting ontop a pile of crab corpses, with her shotgun on her lap

>"Yeah... fun." - was Orange's response, looking at the hole on the side of her house

>"Twilight, dontcha think ya overdid it? Just a bit?" - she asked

>"I'm so sorry! They were swarming through the window and I had to clear them out quickly!" - answered Purple, erasing spells from her arm-cast - "Besides, you saw that gargantuan one! What was I supposed to do?!"

>On my end, I just sat down on what was left of Orange's couch and had some apple juice

- ›I was sweaty
- ›I was tired
- ›A crab pinched me in the ass
- ›I just want to go home
- ›Fall on my chair
- ›And complain on /v/ as to why vidya can't be this metal

- ›Be Norman
- ›"AHA! GOT IT!" - yelled Purple
- ›"Got what?" - I asked, focusing on CoD. Light Blue and her two cronniees were getting their shit wrecked
- ›"Cancellation spells! We can turn Shimmer back to normal now, and counter Octavia's magic!" - she yelled, excited
- ›And she was well within her right to be; this was great news!
- ›"Hey Blue, sorry but I need to get going. Kick your ass later, alright?"
- ›"What?! How dare you suggest the Skilled and Pro Trixie was losi-"
- ›Before she could finish, I disconnected and turned off my Xbox, guessing what Purple would do next
- ›"So, downstairs now, right?" . I asked, receiving a nod as Purple bagged her translations and a pencil
- ›Pulling the wheelchair out of my room, I pushed her towards the stairs
- ›Once there, I carefully rolled her down the wooden planks dad had stuck in there to ease going up and down
- ›Reaching the base of the stairs, we went to the backyard
- ›Picking up Corgi Shimmer, I handed her to Purple

➤ "Alright, this'll only take a second." - she said, writing on Shimmer's back

➤ As she activated the spell, Purple's eyes glowed with an uncomfortable green hue, her retinas turning red for a second

➤ Likewise, Shimmer's back glowed black for an instant

➤ As soon as that happened, Purple let her jump off to the ground

➤ Almost immediately, Shimmer changed from a dog to a human, thankfully completely dressed

➤ "Gaaah! Took you idiots long enough!" - she said, cracking her back and neck

➤ "You could be a bit more grateful." - I said, giving her a glare - "Purple's been working her ass off trying to find a way to change you back!"

➤ "Oh, sorry, I forgot how useless cripples are." - she replied, strutting towards the door - "See you suckers later."

➤ And just like that, she left out the front door

➤ Going back inside, I could hear Purple sighing sadly

➤ "Hey, don't let what she said keep you do-" - I stopped myself, noticing something was missing in the kitchen

➤ "Holy shit, she took the bag of dog food."

➤ Sunday

➤ Brad's garage

➤ "So Normy, waaat can Brad chucker for yer?" - he said, taking a drink from his beer

➤ Needed someone to talk to, and Brad seemed like the ideal guy

➤ "Purple's been acting really strange lately. And I mean REALLY strange" - I said

>"Ah? 'oy so?"

>"Ever since she finished translating that damn book, she just won't stop reading her damn translation over and over again!" - I yelled, getting offered a cold one

>Sure, why not

>"I mean, she's barely eating. EVERYTHING pisses her off. And she just keeps practicing whatever that book says! Hell, today I fucking woke up with her trying to write on my face!"

>"Well nigh... uhh... oi got nathin'." - he answered

>Thanks Brad, you're really helpful

>"By the way, what time it is?" - I asked

>"Jist aboyt 3. Why?"

>"Need to be at Aryan Beauty's house at 4. If I'm lucky, a freaking trash golem won't try to smash me on the way there." - I said, taking a sip - "Anyway, want to play some vidya?"

--

>Here I am. At Aryan Beauty's with a mission

>After some arguing, Purple and I decided we would just use what she called a "magic nullifier" to prevent her from using magic in the first place

>I was expecting something fancier, but hey, whatever keeps her from sending monsters my way

>"Alright Norman, I just need to make final checks. Just pull wherever I tell you so I can give it a proper once-over." - said my Venus

>Now it was just a matter of waiting for her to leave the room for a second and drawing a black sun with three runes somewhere inconspicuous

>I have to wonder why three are needed if it's only one spell though

- >Anyhow, the problem was, where?
- >Given it's design, there weren't many good spots
- >The collar was too small and too exposed
- >The interior was too hard to actually reach and write in
- >And even though the writing it on the interior of the split-bottom-thingy would leave it relatively expo-
- >Oh, fuck it
- >Just wrote it there
- >If this was a hat, it would be far easier
- >I miss my hat.

- >Be Norman
- >Monday morning
- >Just one more week until classes start up again
- >Which means only one thing
- >"Hey Purple, now that you can get rid of Octavia's magic, mind dispelling my hat?" - I asked as I stood next to her, holding my hat
- >To say I had puppy eyes on would be putting it lightly
- >When she lowered her notebook and looked at me, my pants almost became a landfill
- >"Pu-Purple?" - I stuttered as I stared at her - "Your eyes!"
- >"What about them?" - she asked coldly, placing her notebook on her lap and reaching for me hat - "Hand that."
- >"Well they're all... green and red and glowy!"
- >As she wrote what I assumed was a cancelling rune on my hat, she raised an eyebrow at me
- >"Of course they are. This is black magic I'm dealing with here. Don't worry, I'm not letting it get to me past this."

- she said as she practically smacked me in the chest with my own hat

➤ "There. Now quit bothering with trivialities and with stupid questions. I need to keep studying."

➤ "Sheesh... sure you aren't?" - I thought to myself as I put on my spell-free hat

➤ Expecting to immediately get taken over again and thrown out the window, I waited for a second

➤ "What is it? You think I didn't do it right?!" - Purple growled at me

➤ "No, no, nothing like that! I'll... uh... I'll be going now." - I said, leaving my room

➤ I didn't feel like staying with Purple today...

➤ Heading downstairs, I went to get something to drink at the kitchen

➤ Only to have Spike start barking at me like a maniac from outside

➤ Come on, I made sure to fill his bowl and plate to the brim this time!

➤ Screw this, I'm out of here!

➤ Sitting on a bench at the park with a coke bottle, I started thinking

➤ Maybe it's about time I pull off an intervention and take that thing away from Purple

➤ HOLYFUCKINGSHITCRABCLAW!!!

➤ "Hi Normy! What you doing?"

➤ "Goddammit Pink, you almost gave me a fucking heart attack!" - I thought to myself, getting up from the floor

➤ Pink sneaking up on me is one thing

➤ Doing so in a crab costume is... entirely another

>"Say, do you like my costume?" - she proceeded to ask
 >"Hi Pink." - I answered, finally back on my feet - "It's...
 uh... where did you get that?"
 >"Oh, Applejack made it for me! From REAL CRABS, can
 you believe it?!"
 >Dammt Orange
 >Got to wonder what else she and her family are doing
 with all those dead crabs
 >"Actually... yeah, I can." - I answered, taking a sip from
 my coke - "Feels like a real shell."
 >Wait
 >Feels?
 >Looking down, I could see my left hand had grabbed unto
 Pink's right-pincer-covered-hand
 >Oh shit
 >Almost immediately, I tried to remove my hat with my
 right hand but it was too late
 >"Pink! Take my hat off, quick!" - I yelled
 >"Silly Normy! Your 'Aryan Mistress' isn't here! Unlike
 her, I like your hat!" - she said as I grabbed her other
 hand
 >...and started leading on a Salsa routine
 >"Oooh, if you wanted to dance you could have asked!" -
 said Pink, going along with it
 >"No, Pink, take my hat!"
 >"Fine, fine you silly billy." - she said as I spun her around
 >Taking my hat off in the process, hanging it from a
 pincer
 >Cutting off the routine, I took my hat from her
 >"Thanks Pink, now come on! If that just happened, then
 I've got a feeling we're not safe out here!" - I said,
 dragging her along, returning home

➤ "Awww, but I wanted to dance!"

➤ I immediately rushed into my room

➤ "Purple, we got a problem! My hat's still enchanted!"

➤ "No, I'm pretty sure it was cancelled." - she answered without removing her eyes from her notebook

➤ "And I'm pretty sure it wasn't! I was just at th-"

➤ "At the park and Pinkie took off your hat, right?" - she stated

➤ "Ye... yeah. How'd you know?"

➤ "That was me, not Octavia. Don't worry, you weren't in any danger. I just needed to test that spell. So thanks for your help."

➤ As far as I know, I've never been angry at Purple

➤ Annoyed? Sure

➤ Butthurt? Most definitely

➤ But this was the first time I'd ever felt legitimately enraged towards her

➤ Crushing my hat, I threw at her face and stormed out

➤ I don't even think she took a second look to see if I was gone

➤ Standing outside my house, I couldn't help but sigh

➤ I felt as if I was losing a friend...

➤ Seeing my current mood, Pink wasted no time giving me a pat on the back

➤ "Cheer up Normy! You know how Twilight gets when she's studying." - she said - "Hey, why don't you get Rarity to make you a new hat?"

➤ I gave it a thought - "Yeah, that sounds good."

>"Glad you think so. Anyhow, I promised Mr. and Mrs. Cake I'd work extra-hard since we still got this week off, so see ya!" - she said, shuffling away like a crab

>Knocking at Aryan Beauty's door, I was received by her little sister

>"Hi Norman! You wanna talk to my sister?" - she said with her squeaky voice

>"Yeah, if you could call her for me-"

>Er...

>What was her name?

>Sweaty...

>Suedy...

>Sweaty Ball???

>"- Mini-Aryan, I'll just wait right here."

>"Then you'd have to wait a while. She's upstairs with a friend. You can come in though!" - she said with a sweet smile

>"Right, right." - I said, stepping inside

>As I went upstairs, she ran off to the living room, where two other girls were messing with a laptop, one of them being Orange's sister

>Assuming Aryan Beauty would be in her room, I walked there, stopping upon hearing voices coming from her parents' study

>Seeing as they apparently travelled a lot, that room was rarely used by them

>Which was perfectly fine for my shining diamond, given that she turned it into her clothes-making-workshop-room place

>I really need to start remembering the names of things and people...

>I knocked on the door
 >"Come i~n!" - I heard the Aryan Beauty answer not a moment later
 >Opening the door, I saw her sitting on a fancy chair, looking at the blue dress in the middle of the room
 >"Norman, darling, how good to see you! Did Sweetie let you in?" - she said as I walked inside
 >"Yeah. She's with her frie-" - I didn't finish my sentence, freezing in place as I saw who else was in the room
 >"Hallo Norman." - said the other person, holding a cup of tea
 >Octavia

 >Play it cool Norman, just play it cool
 >"He-Hello Octavia, how are you doing?" - I said, moving slowly in Aryan Beauty's direction
 >"Sehr gut, danke for asking." - she answered, taking a sip of tea
 >"We were just talking about this coming wednesday." - added my white angel
 >"Tavi's playing at a party in the country club." - she said, pointing at a chair for me to sit on - "Oh but where are my manners. Would you like something to drink?"
 >"No, no, it's alright Ary- Rarity." - I answered, taking a seat - "Actually, I wanted to ask you a favor."
 >"Oh? And what would that be?"
 >"I was wondering if you could make me a new hat, to replace the old one." - I said
 >"But darling, you look so handsome without it! Why would you want to hide your gorgeous hair like that?" - complained my angel

>"She's got a point, Norman. You look better like dass." - added Octavia - "But zen again, I suppose it gives you a sense of control over ihr leben, ja?" - she said with a hint of a smirk
 >"I don't know what you just said right there, but seeing as SOMEBODY did some nasty things to my hat, I find myself needing a replacement."
 >"Norman, there's no need to yell. We're both sitting right here." - said Aryan Beauty, with an annoyed pout
 >"Sorry. Got carried away there." - I apologized
 >"Anyhow, it's getting sehr close to lunch time." - said Octavia, looking at me straight in the eyes - "I know zis one place where they serve a wunderbar crab-soup."
 >"That sounds delicious! Don't you think so Norm?" - said Aryan Beauty
 >"Yeah, perfect." - I flatly answered, giving Octavia a glare
 >"Well, if we're going out for lunch, I need to freshen up a bit. Tavi, you coming?" - asked Aryan Beauty as she got up from her chair
 >"It's fine, I'll just vait here vith Norman." - answered the she-devil
 >"Alright, I won't take long." - said the Aryan Beauty as she left the room, leaving the two of us alone
 >After an uncomfortable moment of silence, I spoke up

 >"What are you doing here?"
 >Octavia just raised an eyebrow, taking another sip of tea - "Vhat does it look like? I'm visiting a dear freund of mein und having a pleasant time vith her."

>"Don't you play stupid with me! I know you're just using her!" - I said loudly, visibly angering her - "Why are you doing this anyway?!"

>"Doing what, exactly?" - she said, keeping her cool

>"Everything! Turning Shimmer into a dog, blowing up the football field, sending monsters my way! All the things you're doing with your magic!"

>"So your slav freund told you about dass." - she said, taking another sip - "As I told her before, ve are even. She challenged me, I von, ve both ended up injured. Nozhing more to say."

>"Meanwhile, Sunset received justice for all ze pain she's caused everyone, myself included."

>"You, on ze other hand..." - she said, snapping her fingers

>Almost instantly, I became immobile, as if something was keeping me restrained to the chair

>"What are you doing?! Cut it out!" - I said, the chair levitating, taking me towards her

>"You have been a great pain to me zis whole year. Und insinuating dass I vould use Rarity as a simple pawn does not help your case."

>"Then why did you ruin her birthday party?!" - I answered back

>"Now vhy vould you zink I did das?"

>"The blackouts that day. You mind-controlling me a week ago. I just had to put two and two together."

>"Heh, so you're not a complete dummkopf." - she said, the chair landing softly, yet keeping me restrained - "Ja, das vas me. And I greatly regret it too..."

>"What?" - I asked, confused

>"Nozhing. Forget it." - she said - "Anyvay, you asked vhy I vas doing all zis. Consider it payback. For all you've done to me."

>"Done to you? What are you talking about?!"

>Calmly, she put her teacup on the table next to her

>Only to stick her face directly infront of mine, pulling my head towards hers, feeling as her fingernails dug into my skin, forcing me to stare into a pair of angry eyes

>"ZE INCIDENT AT ZE NIGHT CLUB?! ZE HEXING OF MEIN WIG?!"

>No words exist to describe the sensation of someone screaming directly into ones mind

>The echo

>The pain

>"ARE YOU REALLY ZAT MUCH OF AN ARSCHLOCH ZAT YOU CAN'T REMEMBER EVEN ZAT?! DO YOU JUST GO AROUND HUMILIATING PEOPLE FOR FUN?! YOU'RE NO BETTER ZAN SUNSET!"

>It's enough to make any sane man be willing to give up anything, just to make it stop

>"UND TO TOP IT ALL OFF, YOU DECIDED TO BREAK INTO MEIN HAUS UND STEAL FROM ME VHILE I VAS BEDRIDDEN!"

>I could swear that at one point, my poor mind just retreated somewhere else, trying to get away

>Amaaa~zing graaa~ce...

>"EVERY SINGLE ZING I'VE SENT AT YOU HAS HAD ZE SAME MESSAGE, BUT APPARENTLY YOU'RE TOO MUCH OF A DENSE ITALIANER TO UNDERSTAND!"

>But the screeching and pain simply did not stop

›"SO CONSIDER ZIS YOUR LAST VARNING! GIVE ME BACK ZE BOX YOU STOLE, VITH ALL ITS CONTENTS, OR I SWEAR ON OPA WALDEMAR'S GRAVE, ZE GÖTTERDAMMERUNG VILL NOT EVEN COMPARE TO VHAT I VILL DO TO YOU!"

›Everything felt before was childsplay compared to the sudden mind-shock that came right after

›Next thing I knew, the Aryan Beauty was entering the room, my chair back in its original spot

›"So, shall we get going?" - said my white angel as I tried to reorient myself after that... nightmare

›"I'm ready if you are." - said Octavia, exiting the room

›However, I didn't respond

›"Norman, are you alright?" - asked the Aryan Beauty

›"Y-Y-yeah, I'm fine. I'm fine." - I answered, trying not to appear shakened

›"Well lets go then!"

›Lunch was over

›Returning home, I threw myself in bed and hid under the sheets

›Sweet lord, that was horrible

›Peeking from under the sheets, I noticed Purple in the same spot as always, doing the same thing she had been doing when I left

›"Hey Purple. Would you be willing to return Octavia's books?" - I asked nervously

›The glowing-green-eyes stare I received as an answer was more than enough to make me go back under the sheets

›Be Renate

>Monday night
 >"Seriously? THAT's what you're wearing?"
 >Alvina dropped by to visit
 >"Ja. Rarity made it for me. Vhat do you zink?"
 >"I think it's tacky as fuck." - she stated bluntly - "Then again, I'm not into playing pretty-princess dressup, so what do I know."
 >"Don't tell me you're still upset dass your papa is making you go."
 >"Oh no! Not at all! Why would I be upset about going to a high-class party filled with a bunch of high-and-mighty, self-important snobs when I could be doing literally anything else?!" - she ranted outloud before letting out a sigh - "Sorry, sorry. Just... forget I said that, ok?"
 >"No vorries. Look at it zis way though." - I said, patting her on the shoulder on my way to the kitchen - "Now you get to listen to mein music all nacht long."
 >"Heh, sounds good." - she answered with a bit of a smile - "But you know, I really wished my parents didn't try to pull off this kind of crap all the damn time."
 >"Hmm? Like vhat?" - I asked, pouring myself a glass of water
 >She then began making exaggerated poses
 >"Al, go to the ball and act like a lady. Al, why can't you behave like my friends' daughters? Al, stop listening to that horrible noise, it'll rot your brain! Al, be fucking perfect! GAAAH!"
 >"Sounds to me like zey are vorried about you." - I commented
 >"Oh yeah? Because to me it sounds like they want some kind of fucking princess! No! Fuck you dad!" - she yelled out with genuine anger

>I remained silent. I knew she had a strained relationship with her parents, but never imagined it to be bad enough to warrant an outburst like that
>"Do... you want to talk about it?" - I asked
>"No, it's alright. I-I'll show myself out." - she said, walking to the door
>I stopped her before she reached it
>"Are you sure?" - I asked, trying to not press the issue
>"Yeah... I'm sure. Thanks anyway." - she answered
>As the door closed behind her, I could hear her sob

>Be Norman
>Tuesday afternoon
>"Explain ter me again why we're doin' dis." - said Brad as I stood on his shoulders, trying to glue a small camera and a mini-antennae on the side of a window
>"Purple wants to make sure her spell works tomorrow. Now quit moving before you drop me." - I whispered loudly
>Sneaking around and into the Cantertown Country Club was pretty easy
>Getting to the big, fancy-ball building was easy as well
>Only real problem was setting this damned thing up before anybody saw us
>Cantertown...
>Canterlot High
>Wondercolts
>Statues of steeds everywhere
>Goddamn, what's this town obsession with horses?!
>Seems like Purple made the right choice when she moved here
>Getting sidetracked...

>"Alright, done." - I stated, hopping off Brad's shoulder's
>"Aboyt damn time. You're 'eavy, yer nu?" - he answered
>"Yeah, yeah. Bitch later. Let's just get out of here."

>BRAD'S BRADICAL ADOBE
>That is what was written on a huge, glitter-decorated sign in Brad's living room
>"Brad, what the actual fuck..."
>"Yer loike it? Me mom said oi cud put it up while dad was workin' abroad."
>No, fuck it
>I wasn't even going to question that at this point
>Without a word, I let myself drop on the couch
>"So, how's this thing work anyway?" - I asked as Brad hooked up some cables to his TV
>"Easy. Jist use de control ter rotate de camera an' zoom in or oyt, an' press de red wan ter record." - he said, sitting besides me
>As soon as he turned it on, the TV started showing a live feedbeing sent by the camera
>Whole place was being prepped for something big
>"Niiiiice. Where'd you get this thing anyway?!" - I asked as I toyed around with the control a bit
>"Me dad gave it ter me. He towl me a russian businessman gave it ter 'imself after he 'elped de guy clean up sum 'ames reagrdin' arab grub."
>"The hell kind of job does your dad have?!"
>"Oi don't nu. Last time oi asked 'imself, he said he removed kebab."

>We spent some time making sure this worked completely

>With nothing happening...
 >"I can already tell tomorrow night's going to be fun..." -
 I said, taking a fistful of popcorn from Brad's bowl
 >Noticing my boredom, Brad's face looked deep in thought
 for a moment before an idea hit him
 >" 'ey, did oi ever show yer dis class awesum tatoo oi
 got?" - he said, pulling back his right-arm sleeves to
 show...
 >Nothing
 >"Brad, you don't have anything there..." - I said with a
 raised eyebrow
 >"Waaat, ye blind? Luk, 'tis a leprechaun on top av me
 van, rockin' oyt wi' its guitar!"
 >Dammit Brad, stop being retarded
 >"Did you get drunk and didn't tell me? There. Is.
 Nothing. On. Your. Arm." - I flatly stated as he looked at
 the spot it was supposed to be
 >"Oi clap 'oy so'tiz. Yer canny appreciate art, can yer?
 Gran'..." - he said with that awful accent as he rolled
 down his sleeve
 >"Den again, guess oi shouldn't 'av taken Renny's offer.
 She's a musician, not a painter, so oi suppose that's why
 yer allerge it."
 >"Excuse me, what? Renny?"
 >"Yeah. Yer nu, Renate? Octavia?"
 >"... Brad, have you been speaking like an irishman for the
 last couple of weeks?"
 >"Waaat? Naw! Why wud oi chucker dat?"
 >Of fucking course

 >Be Renate
 >Busy reviewing what I'll be playing tomorrow night

- I had originally planned on doing Ben-Haim's "Music", followed by Dallapiccola's "Adagio", and Gabrieli's "Seven Ricercari"
- However, when I presented those pieces to the organizers, they were rejected
- Apparently, all of these rich people's knowledge of music is limited to that of a sixth grader's
- So for the millionth time, I was asked to play Bach's "Six Suites"
- Scheisse...
- Eh, they're still paying so it's not a big deal
- As I reviewed my sheets, there was a knock on the door

- "Rarity?! Uh- So gut to see you! Come in!" - I said, surprised at the unexpected visit
- "Thank you dear." - she said, entering my apartment - "Did I ever tell you how I simply adore your place?"
- "I zink you've said das, ja." - I answered, noticing the dress bag she was carrying - "Vhat's vith das?"
- "Oh, this? Well, to be honest, I just need your opinion on something." - she said, pulling down the bag's zipper
- Carefully, she pulled out a blue dress out of its bag
- "Anywhere I could change, darling?"
- Without a word, I pointed towards my bedroom
- This was going to be interesting
- A few minutes later, she came back out looking rather... impressive, stunning even
- "So, what do you think?" - she asked, doing a turn as she came out of my room
- "Looks sehr gut on you. Vhere you buy it from?"

➤ "Oh no, no dear. I thought you knew by now. I make all of my own clothing. Or rather, for special events." - she answered

➤ With nothing to really critique about it, there was only one thing to say

➤ "Zehn von zehn, vould veaar." - I stated with two thumbs up

➤ Be Norman

➤ Wednesday night

➤ "Hey Normy, where's Twily?" - asked Brad as I got comfortable on his couch

➤ I'm so glad Purple managed to undo that stupid spell...

➤ Brad was seriously getting annoying

➤ Fucker's even sad because he can't see his invisible tatoo anymore!

➤ "She said she'd rather stay back home. Which means she basically wasted our time by making us set this up." - I answered

➤ "She did say she wanted a recording." - answered Brad, sitting next to me, offering a bowl of popcorn

➤ You know we're not watching a movie, goddammit...

➤ Then again, I'm not about to reject popcorn

➤ "Hey look. People are showing up." - said Brad, making me focus on the screen

➤ Now it was only a matter of waiting for Satan to show up, leaving this thing recording, and then kicking Brad's ass in CoD for a while

➤ Oh, hey. Aryan Beauty's there

➤ Wait...

➤ Be Renate

- ›The taxi ride to the country club was uneventful
 - ›And based on Rarity's call before I got here, it seems she had no trouble getting in either
 - ›As I paid the driver and walked in, I felt a sense of drowsiness creeping over
 - ›Taking my medication before leaving home was probably not the best of ideas
 - ›Then again, laying down and not moving at all during an event like this wasn't really an option...
 - ›Well, it's not like I was going to play something I hadn't already played a thousand times before
 - ›I'll just enchant the cello and let it correct any mistakes
 - ›Getting past the reception, I found Rarity waiting by the door to the Main Hall
 - ›As I walked towards her, I felt... weird
 - ›A sudden tingling sensation in the back of my mind
 - ›Probably just a side-effect of the painkillers
 - ›"There you are, dear! I have to thank you again for inviting me here. This place is so... so... fantastic!" - said Rarity as she gave me a cautious hug
 - ›It was so nice to come to an event like this with someone who was sincerely nice and with class
 - ›As opposed to the metaphorical effluvial grime of false-politeness that is usually found
- ›"It wasn't a problem. Really. Now, let's go in, shall we?" - I said before the two of us entered the main hall
- ›As was to be expected, the place was packed
 - ›Classy suits and fancy dresses present as far as the eye could see
 - ›The biggest of the big in this town, all trying to outdo each other with expensive clothing

- >Good for them
- >Before joining the other musicians, I suddenly found myself with a dilemma
- >"Is there a problem, darling?" - she asked, noticing a hint of worry in me
- >"Nein, nozing. Just remembered somezing."
- >Rarity didn't know anybody here
- >And I wasn't about to just leave her with a bunch of uptight snobs
- >Looking around, I looked for someone that seemed bored
- >That looked annoyed
- >With an expression that said "I'd rather be at anywhere else than here."

- >Be Rarity
- >"And that fat guy over there? White suit, TOTALLY-not-a-bodyguard following him around? Belltower, owns the security company of the same name. Buncha rent-a-cops if ya ask me."
- >This was the last place I ever expected to find Octavia's DJ friend
- >In a dress...
- >"And that old guy in the red suit, sitting by the podium? Tennpenny, owns Tavi's luxurious apartment building."
- >Much less that she'd leave me with her
- >"And that other old guy that looks like he just came out of a Metallica conce-"
- >"Excuse me, but..." - I interrupted her - " could we, um, change the subject?"
- >"Yeah, sure. What you want to talk about?"
- >"Well, why don't you tell me about yourself?" - I asked her

›"Not much to know." - she answered, taking an appetizer from a waiter's tray as he passed near us

›"I do music, work as a DJ on weekends, and drive my parents crazy with "shenanigans", as they call it. What about you?"

›Seriously can't believe she left me with her

›Be Renate

›Having reported in, I was free to mingle around until it was time to play my pieces

›So of course, I took the time to sneak away with my cello, into the bathroom

›Carrying a pen with me at all times had become a habit by now

›As such, writing a quick spell on the back of my cello was a simple-enough task

›That done, I splashed some water on my face to keep myself awake

›Given that my drowsiness was caused by painkillers, coffee probably wasn't a good idea

›Drying my face, I turned to look at the mirror to see if my hair needed fixing

›Only to bend over, supporting myself with the sink, holding my head as it started pounding in pain

›As quickly as it started, the pain subsided

›"I need an aspirin..." - I said to myself as I shook my head and reached for my cello

›However, it was gone

›Be Rarity

›"DJ... human...? What?" - I asked, confused

>"No, no, no! You have to pronounce the four. DJ HUE-M4N."

>"I'm sorry darling, but that is the worst artistic name I have ever heard." - I replied

>"Oh reeeally now?" - she answered with indignation - "So tell me, miss perfection, what would YOU consider a good name?"

>"Well, let see..." - I tried to think of something - "How about... Vinyl?"

>"Explain." - she answered with a raised eyebrow and crossed arms

>"Well... you do ask everyone to call you Vinny. And, if I understood you correctly, your "job" involves scratching vinyl records, right?"

>She just stood there thinking to herself, before she started nodding slowly

>"I like it. That's actually really good! I can hear it already. Vinyl... Scratch! Yeeeeaaaaah!" - she answered smiling

>Before I could comment further, Tavi appeared all of a sudden, visibly stressed, almost on the verge of panicking

>Be Renate

>With my cello missing, I began a frantic search around the place

>It wasn't long before a lack of success, accompanied by an ever-increasing sense of panic, led me towards my friends

>"Girls, have you seen mein cello?!" - I exclaimed, breathing heavily

>They just stood there exchanging looks before turning to look back at me

›"Umm, you left it with the other musicians, dear. Just before you went to the bathroom." - answered Rarity, pointing to the musicians' table

›Sure enough, my cello was there, placed against my seat

›"How ze..."

›Without saying another word, I practically ran towards the table

›Looking it over, nothing seemed wrong with my instrument

›It was tuned properly

›None of the strings were damaged

›There wasn't even a scratch on the wooden body

›Only thing out of place was the lack of the rune I was more than certain I had written upon it mere moments ago

›With a sigh, I let myself fall on my seat

›A pleasant change, what with my own drowsiness getting worse

›Taking my medication right before coming here had been a rather poor decision, no doubt about that

›Only option now was to power through the night

›The fact that I could feel the headache coming back was not helping

›"Really? Tired already? If you can't even keep your eyes open, how the hell are you going to play?" - said a man behind me

›Being too busy rubbing my temples, I paid him no mind

›"I mean seriously, I thought the people who got invited to play at these parties could actually handle the job!" - he added

›"Just ignore him. Not worth ze trouble." - I thought to myself

➤ "Then again, you can't expect silly foreigners to measure up to American standards, can you kraut?" - I heard before being poked in the shoulder

➤ "Das ist verdammt es!" - I yelled in my mind as I lurched off my chair, ready to confront whomever that was

➤ Only to realize, there was no one there

➤ Be Norman

➤ "Brad, did any of that look weird to you?" - I asked, slapping his hand as he tried to steal some of my popcorn

➤ "Ow! Dick. And what are you talking about?"

➤ "For starters, Octavia's been running around like crazy and talking to herself... hold the fucking phone!" - I said, pulling out mine

➤ Or I would have, if I had it with me

➤ "Dammit. Must have left it at home. Mind lending me your phone?" - I asked Brad, receiving a nod in return

➤ "Alright, lets see here." - I thought, looking at his contacts list

➤ "P... Pur... wait, no, that's in my list. T... Twi..."

➤ Sure enough, I found it quickly

➤ As "Twily! <3 <3 :3"

➤ Reminder to self: Punch Brad in the groin

➤ Beep... Beep... Be- "Hi Brad!"

➤ "Purple, it's me, Norman. Erm, what are you doing?"

➤ "Nothing much, just... tying up some loose ends." - she said

➤ "Aha.. I'm watching the fancy party Octavia went to right now, and she's freaking out. Just WHAT are you doing?!" - I asked, anger clearly noticeable

➤ "Consider it as me repaying a favor. Hehe. Hehehahaha-" - she answered as the call died out

> Staring at the TV screen, I put away the phone, and leaned back

> Absolute silence, up until I felt the need to scratch my neck

> At which I noticed I was sweating heavily

> "Brad... I think I'm fucking dead..."

> Be Rarity

> Octavia was really worrying me now

> As I approached her at her table, I noticed she had turned quite pale in the last few minutes

> "Tavi? Are you alright?" - I asked, getting no response from her

> Trying to get her attention, I placed my hand on her shoulder, apparently startling her

> She was quite... cold

> "Oh, it's just you." - she said, her voice sounding very tired - "Sorry, I'm... not doing vell right now."

> "Anything I can do for you? I could get you some water if you want."

> "Nein, nein, it's okay." - she answered, rubbing her forehead - "Just need to get through ze night and I'll be alright."

> "Are you absolutely sure?" - I asked, taking the seat next to her - "Because if not, I can just call a cab to take you home."

> "Ja, I'm sure." - she answered as one of the waiters walked up to us and whispered something in her ear

> "Vell now, looks like it's time for vork. Vish me luck." - she said, getting up and grabbing her cello

- ›Be Renate
- ›As I walked towards the stage, I could feel my instrument become heavier and heavier
- ›The intense lights were not helping my case either
- ›Fortunately, once up there, playing my piece wouldn't require my eyes to be open
- ›However, I had a minute before the violinist currently on stage was over
- ›Having apparently not done it before, I took this time to quickly draw the necessary runes on the back of my cello
- ›Just in time as well, as the previous musician bowed to the audience as soon as I was done
- ›Walking unto the stage, I became rather lightheaded
- ›An issue that was quickly resolved as soon as I sat down
- ›Having my cello positioned comfortably, and holding my bow with a firm grasp, I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, letting my hands do their job
- ›And for the millionth time, began playing Bach's "Six Suites" for a crowd of rich people
- ›Really wished they would pick another song once in a while
- ›As was the usual, Suite No. 1 was performed flawlessly
- ›Having a space of around ten seconds, I took a deep breath
- ›Suite No. 2 began, as usual, with the prelude's powerful, recurring theme brought up in its first half, with the scale-based cadenza of the second half culminating in a powerful chord
- ›As the allemande came up, however, I could feel a yawn coming

- ›Trusting that the enchantment on the cello would account for any mistake, I let myself yawn softly, opening my mouth just enough for it to not be noticeable
- ›Almost immediately, my eyes flared wide open
- ›In that one moment, the allemande's short cadenzas overextended themselves for little under half a second
- ›Looking around, no one seemed to notice

- ›"Don't let it distract you. Just keep going" - I said to myself as the Suite's first minuet approached
- ›Bracing myself for it, I perfectly carried out the demanding chord shifts and string crossings
- ›However, that uncharacteristically left my arm tired
- ›With Suite No. 2 coming to an end, I had a few seconds to collect my thoughts
- ›This whole situation was very bad
- ›The enchantment didn't seem to be working, a tired arm would result in a hard time with Suite No. 3, and I couldn't check the run while on stage
- ›Looking around, I could see multiple people staring directly at me
- ›"Scheisse, zey must have noticed!" - went through my mind as I began playing the third suite
- ›Once more, the prelude began with a scale-based movement to start things off
- ›For the sake of not straining my arm while in this state, I opted to change the subsequent arpeggio from an energetic state to a mild one
- ›The result was absolute torture to listen to
- ›Turning back to the audience, they somehow seemed to not have noticed, but at the same time more people were staring right at me

- After that auditory heresy, the thumb position and return to the scale theme were quite welcome
- Suite No. 3's allemande, however, was not as such
- Containing an up-beat consisting of three semiquavers instead of just one, it was... troublesome
- Thankfully, the rest of the Suite wasn't nearly as demanding
- As Suite No. 3 ended, a sense of dread came over me
- Suite No. 4 was next
- The most technically-challenging of the six
- If I could get through it, I should be fine
- The problem was actually performing it
- As soon as it began, I could feel its demands
- What would normally be a simple fixture into the E-flat and use of extended left-hand positions was, under this circumstances, an absolute nightmare
- Attempting the flowing-quaver movements with a tired arm and a clouded mind resulted in my greatest fear
- Error, after skip, after error
- And then I heard it
- Laughter

- I couldn't find it
- So many people looking at me, yet I couldn't tell from whom it was coming from
- Stupid cadenza
- Stupid return to the scale theme
- I just wanted this to be over already
- Soon enough came the peaceful sarabande
- As it was performed, I noticed another horrendous error

- › Adding a chord to a second beat, when only first beats are supposed to have them
- › And all the while, it was still going
- › The laughter was gone, but it had been replaced by giggles in the background, which only grew even more after that one mistake
- › Soon enough, I breathed a sigh of relief as Suite No. 4 ended, and with it the giggles
- › Once more, I tried looking around to see from where it had all come from
- › I did not get my answer by the time I began Suite No. 5
- › Finally, a calm prelude
- › A slow, comfortable, and rather emotional French overture that explored the range of the cello
- › In other words, very easy to play
- › Until the second half of the prelude, that is
- › In an instant, it became an extremely fast and demanding fugue
- › The tension on my fingers let me know of the missed chords, the inappropriate posture, and how my bow was now failing me
- › And through it all, it came back
- › The laughter, in full force
- › I kept my eyes shut, just focused on salvaging this
- › Just had to finish this one, get one more Suite done, and then I could leave
- › As the horrendous bastardization of Bach's solo resounded in the main hall, I made myself look
- › Only to see the entire audience up in arms
- › All of them, pointing, laughing
- › All of these rich, smug philistines making a ridicule out of me!

›In a single thrust, I got off my chair, knocking it over
›Immediately, I pointed my bow at everyone in the audience
›"SHUT UP! SHUT UP, ALL OF YOU! "

›Be Twilight
›So far, this has been too easy
›No challenge at all
›Medicated, and with her guard down?
›Way too easy
›And now this outburst?
›"I got you now..."

›Be Rarity
›The hall had fallen into a stunned silence
›In the middle of an exemplary performance, Octavia got up all of a sudden and started yelling at people!
›Then the unthinkable happened

›Be Renate
›Absolute rage
›That was the only way to properly describe what I felt
›"ALL ZESE PHILISTINE UNTERMENSCHEN
VOULDN'T KNOW MUSIK IF IT HIT ZEM IN ZEIR
VERDAMMTE FACES!" - was the sum of all my thoughts
›I took a look at my bow, then at my cello
›In that moment, a terrible, terrible thought popped out of nowhere
›A thought that should have died quickly, yet, somehow, was pushed to the forefront of my mind
›It was as if something was pushing it forewards, compelling me to take action

>Lacking a clear state of mind, it was as if that something took over
>Gritting my teeth, I stuck the bow next to the bridge, underneath the strings
>With a cry of unadulterated rage, I ripped the strings right off with the bow, before smashing it against the instrument, splitting the bow in half
>That very instant, all anger disappeared
>All that was left was confusion
>I looked at the ruined bow in my hand
>Then at the state of my cello
>And finally, at the stunned audience
>They all became but a blur, followed by darkness

>Be Rarity

>I couldn't believe what I'd seen
>After that... madness... Renate had fallen to her knees, before completely collapsing on the stage
>Before I could even get up from my chair, Vinyl had already ran all the way towards the stage
>As soon as I got up, she jumped unto it

>Be Brad

>"Hey Norm, you ok?" - I asked, poking him a bit
>No response
>Only a dropped jaw and a pair of widened eyes
>Snapping my fingers infront of his face did nothing to help
>Nor did taking off his new purple hat
>"Well, it would be a shame if this went to waste." - I said, seeing the perfect chance to claim what was rightfully mine

›Focusing years of experience and dexterous hand movements, I took the bowl of popcorn

›Be a fly

›Buzz buzz buzz

›Oh hey, a nice and moist cave

›Be Norman

›My gag reflex suddenly kicked in

›Incidentally, it also brought me out of my state of shock

›Noticing the TV was showing one of Brad's chinese cartoons, I turned to him

›The bastard was eating the last of my popcorn

›"Hey Norm! Glad you have you back with us. Thought I was gonna have to splash some water on ya."

›"Brad, pass me your laptop. We have to delete any trace of that recording right now." - I demanded

›"Wait, why? We spent the whole day setting the camera up and making sure this worked!"

›"Because if it gets out, people will know something was up. Knowing our luck, some skilled nerd is going to trace it to us and people will know we were responsible!"

›"But I only provided the camera! You and Twily did the magic thingy!" - Brad protested

›"IF I GO DOWN, I'M TAKING YOU WITH ME!" - I replied - "Besides, THAT wasn't supposed to happen! I guess I should have been more suspicious when Purple asked for a recording, but FUCK!"

›"I guess we're in a -bit- of trouble then..." - said Brad nervously

›"What? Why?"

>"Well, while you were just sitting there with your mouth open, Twilight called me-"

>"Brad."

>"-and she MIGHT have asked me to-"

>"BRAD."

>"-send the recording to her. While she was using your computer."

>"... Get your keys."

>If there was one thing Brad could do right, it was driving at high speeds

>Even more so when he decided to use his other car

>"Don't worry Norm! The Bradillac will get us to your house in an instant!"

>He also had a tendency to make me want to punch him in the face

>But true to his word, it wasn't long before we were back at my house

>With our plan consisting of "Rush upstairs, delete video", we immediately entered through the front door

>"Hiiiiii sooooon. How is the best kiddo in the whole world doing todaaaaaaaay?" - said my dad, ambushing us at the door and restraining me with a bear hug

>"Da-gah! Dad, let me go!"

>"Son, you're too skinny! Tomorrow we're going to the gym!"

>"Man, I wish my dad hugged me like that." - said Brad as mom came out from the kitchen

>Holding a tray full of still-greasy corndogs

>"Ooooh, you brought compaaaany! Want a corndog?" - she asked as Brad stared at the tray, nodding

>"Here- have some then!" - she said, grabbing Brad by the hair and sticking his face against them

>"OHGODITBURNS! THEY'REDELICIOUS!"

>"DAD! CUT IT OUT!" - I said, breaking free from him

>As I did, however, I noted something on the neck of his shirt

>A Black Sun

>"Oh shit..." - I thought, immediately pulling Brad away from my mom

>"Upstairs! Run!" - I yelled at him, booking it to the second floor

>"SON, COME BACK HERE! YOUR FATHER WISHES TO SHOW YOU LOVE!"

>Brad and I immediately locked ourselves in my room

>"WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT?!" - he asked, taking a bite out of a corndog

>"Dad had a rune on his shirt! I think they're being mind controlled!" - I answered as I looked around the room

>Only then did I notice that Purple wasn't here

>"Oh dammit... where did she go?!" - I said, noticing a disting lack of wheelchair

>"Norm, what if... What if Octavia got here before us? What if she hexxed your parents and took Twily?!" - said Brad, starting to panic

>"How?! We saw her collapse in the country club!" - I answered, reinforcing the door with a chair

>"Yeah, but what if she got up again? What if she decided to blame you for what happened anyway and used her magic to get here first?!"

>What Brad was saying was a scary and plausible situation...

- ›One that we couldn't afford to dwell into too much at the moment
- ›"Hold the door, I need to check my computer." - I said, getting to my desktop
- ›As I did however, I noticed a particular folder was open
- ›My porn folder
- ›It lacked all ten of its sub-folders and fifteen GBs of videos and images
- ›Worse still, was that the Recycle Bin was empty

IN SEARCH OF MOTHER

Anonymous cracked open his eyes and stared at the ceiling. He had slept all night and all morning. The fact that the alarm was the first thing to wake him up was a miracle by itself. He couldn't remember the last time he had a full night of sleep. Before he could recall why that was, he felt a reminder climb up the side of the bed and underneath the covers.

A little lump made its way from the bedside to his chest, forging a path towards Anon's face. Massive eyes sparkled into his own from under the covers, a pair of massive sky blue orbs. Anon reached his hands down and pulled the creature out from under the sheets, pushing back the covers and dropping the thing down on his stomach.

The little abomination smiled wide as Anon continued to blink at him a few times, still trying to gather his thoughts as he woke up. Anon ignored it for the moment and switched off his alarm clock before turning back to face it.

"Hey dad! I made sure no one woke you up this morning."

Anon mumbled some form of thankful response and started to sit up. The half-child slid down into his lap and sat down on his insectoid haunches.

"So, do I get a hug today? Do I?"

Anon sighed and opened up his arms, much to the little bug-human's delight. With a leap, he wrapped his arms around Anon's neck and nuzzled his face into his chest, his swiss cheese legs scrambling to gain footing against the surface of Anon's shirt. Anon returned the hug for a few moments before ushering him back down to the bed, swinging his own legs over the side and getting up.

The moment he opened his bedroom door, he was greeted by the sounds of chaos. Pretty much like every morning, in fact. A pair of changeling satyr-children ran around wrestling with each other, tackling each other to the ground and a kicking with their exoskeleton legs. First one and then the other, they saw Anon coming and stood up on their holed hooves, pressed against the wall to let him pass with their arms folded behind their backs.

Anon rolled his eyes and ignored them, moving on towards the living room. They gave each other a glare when they thought he wasn't looking and fell in step behind him. As he entered the living room, he noticed half a dozen more abominations running around the couch and crashing over the end table. He let them be for the time being and headed for the kitchen. Ignoring the sounds of crashing dishes and roughhousing children, he poured himself a bowl of cereal and sat down at the kitchen table.

A large group of children gathered around the table, pushing and shoving each other to get closer to their father. He ignored them, like he always did, and kept eating. After a few moments of silently enjoying his breakfast, he put down his spoon in his empty bowl and pushed it away, turning his attention to the horde before

him. They all smiled at Anon like they had done absolutely nothing wrong, as if that was even a remote possibility.

Anon sighed and leaned on his elbow. "Alright, someone go first. I don't care who."

They all started shouting at once, jumping over one another and trying to climb up in his lap. "ALRIGHT, EVERYONE, PARK IT AND COOL IT. SIT THE FUCK DOWN." Anon raised a hand, and his voice, bringing the room back down to a calmed state as the childlings returned to the floor.

"Fine. Guess I have to choose. You, closest one. What's happening?"

One of the children, a little girl, smiled and came up to his feet. She wrapped an arm around his leg and looked up at him with pleading eyes, her smile immediately disappearing into a pout as she got his attention.

"Daddy, Church was being mean to me."

Anon's expression remained entirely unmoved. "Did you hit him?"

She frowned. "Yes."

"Did he stop?"

"No."

"Well, obviously you have to hit him harder. But if that still doesn't work, follow him around and find out what he likes. Then take it away from him and make him promise to leave you alone. It's easy."

The little girl pouted for real and crossed her arms. "But why don't you just spank him?"

"Because if I were to spank every one of you, I'd be here all day. And your asses are made of bug bone or something. Shit hurts. Next!"

Chrysalis had been a fine enough woman, when she was in her human form, Anon thought. He'd grown to love her, but whether or not he had actually fallen in love with her or the image she was projecting still wasn't quite clear in his mind. That night was one of the best he had in his life. The years that followed it, however, were less than satisfactory.

Seven years ago, Anon had awoken to find his house filled with somewhere between seventy a hundred eggs. He never did actually get an accurate count, and there was no way he could get one now that they hatched.

On his fridge, there was a simple note:

"I had a great night. Unfortunately, I can't stick around. Love loses its taste if you keep feeding from one person. Please watch after my little ones, because Celestia as my witness, I sure can't. <3"

That was the day Anon had become father to about a hundred little bug people.

The next child, a little boy, came up and smiled. Anon patted him on the head.

"What's up?"

"Nothin', I just wanted a hug." The kid held out his arms in anticipation.

Anon sighed and bent over, giving him what he asked for. "I still don't get what's up with you guys and hugs."

"We just like 'em, is all."

Anon placed him back down on the ground. "What's your name?"

"Crispy."

Anon smiled. When the majority of them had grown old enough to read single words out loud to themselves, he had let them go through a dictionary and choose their own names. There was no way in hell he was going to name them all himself. Since they didn't really have the ability to read whole sentences at that point, most have them had chosen their names without knowing the meaning behind them.

"Nice name, kid. Next."

Anon spent the rest of his morning dealing with the issues of the day and rubbing his temples. Eventually, all of the kids who wanted to see him did so, and Anon did pretty much all he could to solve their problems.

He placed his bowl in the sink and looked at the time.

Great, I'm going to be late again, he thought. Of course, there wasn't much consequence for being late anymore.

One night Anon had discovered that his children had the ability to disguise themselves as... well, real children. The next morning, he had brought five of them to work, in an attempt to explain why he was so late every day.

Apparently five was enough to get him off the hook, so his schedule had been a lot more malleable in recent times.

Anon threw on some new clothes and headed for the door, waving goodbye to all of the childlings inside.

"I'm leaving. If you need anything, I'll be back at the usual time. I still don't know how you guys are alive considering you won't eat anything I feed you, but, you know, do what you always do for lunch, if you even eat it. Don't destroy the house any more than you already have."

A chorus of goodbyes blasted at him from within, nearly shattering his eardrums as he stepped outside. A few more changeling creatures played in the front yard, following Anon's rule and disguising themselves as humans while outside. One of them spotted him and beamed, flying toward him with invisible wings. She landed on his back and wrapped her arms around him in a hug.

Anon nearly tripped from the surprise attack. "Hey, no flying outside, we've been over this! We don't want the neighbors freaking out." He glanced around to make sure no one noticed. "What do you want?"

"I just wanted to ask if you had a good night's sleep! It was my idea to leave you alone until you were awake." She tilts her head to the side and keeps her smile up, as if waiting to be showered in praise.

"The kid who was waiting for me to wake up said it was his idea."

"Aw, man! I bet it was Jet. He's such a lying butt head. I bet he got a hug for it, too?"

Anon nodded. "Yep. I still don't understand the hugging thing, but hey, if its all you guys want from me, I can do it. What's your name, anyways?"

"Mistake!" She dropped from his shoulders and stood in front of him, eyes squinted and smile wide.

Anon couldn't help but smirk. "Such a fitting name. And to think, you came up with it all on your own."

She reached out her arms and Anon obliged, picking her up for a quick hug. "I have to leave now, but I guess I have time for one more hug. Especially in return for a good night of sleep."

He set her down on the ground and stepped over her, leaving the house behind on his way to the sidewalk. "Bye, Mistake. Tell your brothers and sisters... well, I don't know. Tell them I like them when they aren't breaking things. Or fighting. Or blamin-" Anon sighed. "Well, tell them I like them on rare occasion."

She nodded as Anon walked away. She watched from a distance as Anon left for work, leaving the children alone to their own devices. One of her sisters, Breeze, came up beside her.

"I'm hungry. Let's go get some food."

Mistake nodded and licked her lips, looking off down the row of houses. The sisters nodded at each other and headed down the street, still in their human forms. They approached the front door of a house they haven't visited before. Breeze reached up and rang the doorbell, quickly jumping to Mistake's side as footsteps approached the door. An old lady answered, taken back by the height of her unexpected visitors.

"Hello, miss! We just wanted to know, would you like a hug?"

Misery watched her siblings run around the house, too busy with themselves to notice her. She sat on the edge of the living room coffee table, swinging her chitinous legs over the side. A little boy, by the name of Church, ran across the crimson carpet with another brother close behind him. She suppressed a smile as he tripped, causing both boys to start tumbling across the room.

Misery's sister, and the person she spent the most time around, Whistle, fluttered up on the table beside her. Misery nodded silently to acknowledge her presence and went back to watching her siblings destroy the house. Something crashed in the kitchen behind them as Whistle nudged her sister and started up a conversation.

"Whach'ya up to, Misery?"

Misery sighed and swept her hand in front of her.
"Watching."

"Watching what?"

"Our wonderful brothers and sisters."

"Why?" Whistle tilted her head and gazed out over her siblings.

Misery kicked at the air in thought before answering.
"It's funny."

Whistle giggled as a pair of boys wrestled all out on the floor, complete with biting and scratching. With a sly grin, she grabbed the TV remote next to her and tossed it at them, clocking one of them in the head.

"I guess it is kinda funny." Whistle glanced back over at Misery. "Why don't you wear your hair in pigtails like everyone else? I think it'd look really pretty with your blue hair."

Whistle reached out a hand to stroke through Misery's hair. Before it even made contact, Misery's hand was there to block it. Whistle sighed and let her hand drop back down to the table in defeat.

"I'm just saying, Misery, you have the prettiest hair. The rest of us just have boring ol' black. I think yours would look nice if you did it up. It's just so... plain, when you let it hang like that, like a mop!"

"The hair stays." Misery gave her sister a cold look that told her to drop the subject. She did. Instead, Whistle roamed her mind for another topic. She found one that had been eating at her mind for a while, though she had never had the courage to talk about it with someone else.

"Misery, what do you think... our mom is like?"

Misery didn't even skip a beat. "We don't have a mom."

"Well, I know she's not here, but someone has to be our mom. Everyone has a mom and a dad."

Misery blinked and tilted her head up, gazing through the living room window. Whistle was not alone, of course. Misery had been thinking about the same thing. Every time she let her thoughts wander too far, they always returned to that ghostly, invisible figure, the one missing piece from her life. It wasn't because she wanted a mother, though, but rather what only her true mother could give her: answers.

But Misery didn't like thinking about that for too long. Most of the time she just pushed those thoughts out of the way and thought about more relevant things, like where to find her next meal. Once more, she shrugged away the thoughts and turned back to Whistle.

"It doesn't matter. She's gone."

But whistle was already focused on something else. The little girl pursed her lips and made true to her namesake, whistling to herself as she zoned out on the wall ahead of her. Misery rolled her eyes and went back to her own musings.

~

"So what are they like?"

Anon looked up from his empty coffee cup and met eyes with the woman who sat across from him. Shit. The recent lack of sleep was draining his focus. This was the first date he had been on in two years, and he still couldn't pay attention to what she was saying. He pushed his empty cup to the side and rested on his elbows, putting on his best apologetic smile.

"Sorry, I, uh... what are who like?"

Katie didn't seem too offended. "Your kids. You brought a few of them to work, I heard, but I never saw them. Are they cute?"

Anon's eyes flashed for a moment, as if reliving hundreds of past events at once. His left eye twitched as he tried to take a drink from his empty coffee cup before answering.

"They're, uh... yeah, I guess they can be cute. When they want to be."

She smiles wistfully. "I always wanted a few kids. How many do you have? What are their names?"

Anon opened his mouth to say something, but no words came to his lips. How was he supposed to answer that? Obviously he planned to tell her about the horde eventually, but he always figured it would happen later, for some reason. He glanced out the window as if in search of some answer, and to his surprise, he found one.

Mistake, one of the children that had approached him on the lawn a few mornings ago, was walking down the street next to a little boy that looked just a bit older than her. She was in her disguise, thankfully, and she held a little yellow balloon on a string in her left hand. Her right hand was locked with the boy's as they strolled down the street together, smiles on their faces.

"Well, funny you mention it! One of my daughters is just over there. The one in the light blue shirt and the balloon."

"Oh, how precious!" Katie pressed up against the window to get a look at her. "And I guess that's her boyfriend? Nothing wrong with getting experience a bit early, I

guess." She watched until they rounded the corner, going out of sight. "She is adorable. I love that little cute pigtail. I'm guessing she got the black hair from her mom?" She reached across the table and ruffled Anon's brown hair, causing him to chuckle awkwardly.

"Yeah. The black hair is hers." He paused and stared out the window. "They take quite a lot from their mother."

Katie respected the silence that followed and took the pause to take a sip of her own drink. She looked over Anon with a curious gaze. His eyes had bags the size of her own purse, and his eyes were glazed over so far he never looked like he was even aware of his surroundings. She waved a hand in front of him to get his attention before continuing.

"What was she like? The mother, that is."

"She was..." Anon struggled for the words. "She was very authoritative. She just had this air around her, this aura, where you couldn't tell her no. She wasn't overbearing, or even overly-commanding, just..." He scratched at the table as his mind fumbled over the correct terminology. "It was like you were talking to royalty, if that makes sense."

Katie sipped her drink again. "And she left? Leaving you with the kids?"

Anon nodded slowly. "Yeah. Left behind her kids, and a whole lot of questions."

The coffee shop slowly began to empty as the sun fell further down in the sky, business crawling to a halt as the day closed to an end. Anon and Katie both said goodbye and began their walks home, leaving the coffee shop and its empty booths behind.

The streets of Bakersfield, California weren't lively after dark. The city was one of many that contrasted the stereotype, in that it actually enjoys its sleep. Despite its size, it managed to retain just a bit of that small town feel. As Anon rounded the street corner on his way home, he spotted Mistake again, this time enjoying an ice cream cone on a bench near the street. Anon took a seat next to her, causing her to turn to him in surprise.

"Oh! Hi daddy." She turned her attention back to her ice cream cone.

Anon squinted at the cone in confusion. "You guys never eat anything I give you. What's with the ice cream?"

"It tastes good." She smiled and tried to wipe the ice cream off of her face with her sleeve, missing a little bit on her upper lip.

He shrugged. "Well, guess I can't argue with that. Who gave that to you?"

"Bobby bought it for me."

"I saw you walking with a boy earlier. Was that him? You two were holding hands."

She nodded. "He bought me a balloon, too. That flew away though." She looked up at the sky mournfully.

"Right. And how old is he?"

"Twelve."

"A bit old, isn't he? Shouldn't you be breaking the hearts of boys your age instead?"

She shrugged. Anon looked up at the sky for a few moments, as if in search of the balloon. His eyes eventually settled on the dim glow of the sun peeking out from behind the building in front of him, warning him of its eventual departure from the sky. He nudged Mistake and pointed the way home.

"We should probably be heading home. The sun is going to go down soon."

Mistake gnawed on the edges of her ice cream cone, the ice cream itself already consumed. "Can you carry me? My legs hurt."

"No." Anon stood up and started walking. He heard the little taps on the concrete as Mistake ran over to his side.

"But daddies always carry their kids around. I saw it!"

"Yeah, well." Anon shrugged. "You're heavy."

"You're heavy," Mistake retorted with a grin, "And you smell like cheese."

"Yeah, well, your face looks like someone dropkicked you into a minefield."

Mistake stuck out her tongue and grabbed on to Anon's hand. "Yeah, well, your face looks like a butt."

"Truly, I have been bested." Anon looked down at her with a smirk. "You have quite the dirty mouth, you know that?"

"Not as dirty as yours."

"Come on, I don't even swear around you guys." Anon racked his memories. "... that often."

Mistake scoffed. "Yeah, right. You say bad words all the time, daddy."

Anon stopped and let go of her hand, crossing his arms and looking down at her with a raised eyebrow. She smiled up at him, her face still plastered with bits of dried ice cream.

"Name once. Name once when I have cussed in front of you."

Mistake coughed into her hand and puffed out her chest. She adopted a stern expression, like that of a drill sergeant or a police officer. She pointed at a row of invisible bug-children as if they had disgraced the holy motherland. Mustering up the deepest voice possible, she tried to mimic her father.

"I can't believe you guys broke my fucking TV! That thing was fucking expensive! Do you even understand how money works? Do you, you little pieces of-"

Anon hushed Mistake and looked around quickly around the deserted street, making sure no one was around to hear. "At-at-at-at-tah! Shh! Alright, I get it." He sighed and continued his walk, Mistake falling in step behind him. "Shit. I never really noticed I talked like that in front of you guys. Suppose there's not really any use in changing it now. You know not to use those words, right?"

Mistake grinned. "Yeah, I know. Only when I get hurt or someone else says them to me first."

"Well, close enough." Anon flicked her ponytail. "You're too much like me for your own good, you know that?"

~

Anon sank into the couch, finally in the relative comfort of his home. He tried to ignore the sounds of crashing furniture behind him as he bent over and picked up the remote from the floor, flipping on the television to whatever happened to be on. He settled for the news

and let it blare in the background, using it solely for the purpose of white noise as he closed his eyes and retreated to his happy place.

It wasn't long before he was drawn back out of it. Anon felt a poke on his arm, trying to get his attention. He cracked open an eye and turned his head to face a satyr child, one with long blue hair and sparkling green eyes. Anon sighed and opened the other eye, giving her his full attention.

"Did you break something?"

"No."

"Do you want me to get someone in trouble?"

"No."

"Do you want to watch the TV?"

"No."

Anon stared at her for a few moments. "Which one are you again?"

"Misery."

"Right. What do you want, Misery?"

Misery looked off to the side in thought. Her brain tumbled over phrases and words, trying to find the right

question to ask. She decided that simplicity and straightforwardness would work the best.

"What was our mom like?"

Anon frowned slightly. "You've been thinking about her?"

"A little."

"Well, this is the second time I've had to answer this question today. I guess it's a bit easier this time, now that I don't really have to hold back any details."

Anon looked up toward the ceiling, as if trying to get better reception for his thoughts. "Her name was Chrysalis. Always a bit of an odd name, you know, but she was an odd woman. Well, not really a woman, but... you know. It suited her. She was about my height, maybe a little taller. Green eyes and blue hair. I thought it was dyed, but seeing it on you, I guess it's natural." Anon stared at her for a moment. "You do look a lot like your mother."

Misery made the motion to continue and Anon sucked in a deep breath, thinking hard. "Let's see... well, she wasn't human. I think that much should be obvious. You... things, you aren't human either. Not entirely. Your mother had the decency to tell me before we-" Anon paused and glanced down at the girl. "Do you even know what sex is?"

She shook her head.

"I should probably talk to you guys about that sometime. Anyways, she let me know she wasn't human before we went all the way. At the time, I just thought, you know, she was crazy, because she definitely did LOOK like a woman. And I was alright with that, because I was madly in love with her. Next morning, only trace I found of her was a note on the fridge and a hundred-something of you guys. That was seven years ago."

Misery didn't look satisfied. "You don't know where she is?"

Anon let out a short laugh. "Sweetie, if I knew where she was, you would not be under my dysfunctional custody anymore. Do you think I enjoy depriving you of your childhoods?"

Misery sighed and curled up on the couch, bringing her arms in front of her and her lips to a pout. Anon tussled her hair and stood up.

"I'm going to bed. I'd suggest you guys all do the same. Goodnight."

Misery watched him go, the only figure she had that resembled a parent. He wasn't really a father, of course, and they both knew it. Every single one of the children knew it. Misery didn't blame him, of course; she had sense enough to know that he couldn't possibly spare the time and effort for over a hundred children. He never asked for them, and he refused to take responsibility for them. That's why Misery needed to find

their mother. If not for justice, then simply for some answers.

She sighed and dropped off the side of the couch, rubbing her weary eyes as she trudged along the living room floor. Her only lead, her father, knew nothing. She had no idea where to find her mother, much less how to get there. She was stuck in this town, in the middle of nowhere, with no clues, no leads, and no hope.

As she dragged her hooves through the hall, she noticed a blue glow coming from underneath the door of the computer room. She pushed it open out of curiosity. Huddled on the floor of the room was at least a dozen or so childlings, all staring up at the screen of the computer on the desk above them. Some movie, a western of some kind, was playing on the monitor for the rest of them to watch. Misery took a seat in the crowd next to a younger boy, a male offspring named Star.

Star turned to face Misery and smiled, pointing up at the screen. "I found a cowboy movie on the internet. It's about a guy who has to ride across the whole desert to find his wife."

Misery stared up at the screen. As she watched, something gnawed at her thoughts... something Star had just said. Something in his words had triggered an idea.

"You said you found it?"

Star nodded. "Yeah. Jet over there wanted to see a cowboy movie, so I searched one up. None of these guys know how to use the computer like I -"

Misery cut him off. "You FOUND it? On the internet?"

"I... yes? I did." Star looked at her, confused.

Misery's eyes sparkled. "Movie's over. Come up to the computer, Star."

Star shrugged and followed Misery, the pair of them fluttering up to the computer chair and taking a seat. The other children groaned as Star closed the movie, turning to Misery for further directions.

"Go to the... the place where you go to find things. Like you found the movie. We need to find something."

~

Anon awoke with a start, nearly hitting his head on the wall behind him. A pair of huge, cyan eyes peered at him from the darkness beside the bed, watching him closely. With a sigh, Anon reached over and switched on the bedside lamp, revealing Mistake. She shivered in her shirt and shorts, clutching herself tightly to try and hold back the night air. She was in her natural form, black many-holed legs and unblinking solid cyan eyes making their appearance. Anon blinked a few times and then sighed in defeat, knowing this was something he couldn't ignore.

"What is it, Mistake? It's..." Anon glanced at his alarm clock. "... almost midnight. You scared the crap out of me."

"I-I had a scary dream. Can I sleep with you tonight?"

"No." Anon reached over and switched the lamp back off, covering the room in darkness once more. As he tried to fall back into sleep, he could feel her gaze digging into his sleeping form. He popped one eye open again and stared into those deep cyan orbs once more. Anon switched the light back on. Mistake stood in the exact same position as she had been before.

"Do you mind closing your eyes? Or like, disguising them so they look normal? Because they glow in the dark when they're like that. It's very bothersome."

Mistake just stared back, her lip beginning to quiver. Anon sighed and lifted up the covers. "Alright. Fine. Get in here. Just... be quiet and don't wiggle around. I'm trying to sleep too."

Without a word, Mistake climbed into the bed, crawling underneath the covers and burying her head in Anon's chest. He rolled his eyes and lowered the blanket, wrapping one arm around her and nodding off to sleep.

As Anon dreamt, he could swear he heard the sounds of scuttering bug-children around him, quick whispers between one another as they moved about. His sleeping mind told him to pay them no attention, to just keep sleeping and ignore it. The steady heartbeat of

Mistake made him drowsier and drowsier as he drifted further and further from consciousness, leaving the waking world behind...

~

Anon let his eyes open as slowly as they wanted to. He felt good this morning. REALLY good. An entire night of sleep, as rare as it was, was exactly what his body needed to get back in shape. Strangely enough, no children had ran through his room at four in the morning, no furniture came crashing down in the hallway, and no rabbid dog was let in through the front door while he was asleep. He felt a slight movement on his chest and looked down, finding that Mistake was still nestled up against him. A thin line of drool came out of the corner of her mouth and settled into a dark spot on his shirt.

Anon sighed and pulled his arm out from under her, causing her to begin to wake with a short series of mumbles. As Anon glanced around the room he found something... off. Something was very wrong this morning, and he couldn't place it. Glancing down at the clock, he found part of the problem: it wasn't morning at all. It was just past noon. He stared at the clock in disbelief as Mistake yawned, stretching her arms to the sky. She smacked her lips a few times and stared at the wall, obviously still in the process of waking up.

The second uncanny thing hit Anon like a train. The entire house was quiet. He sat up and listened, trying to find some sound, some screaming child, some pitter patter of hooves in the hallway, any noise at all. But there was nothing. Nothing except except Mistake's soft yawn.

Anon slid out of bed and threw open the bedroom door to find the hallway completely empty. No bug children in sight. A quick check around the house confirmed his suspicions, discovering that every single one of the children, aside from Mistake, was missing. Anon sat down at the kitchen table with his head rested on his elbows, thoughts rushing at a million miles an hour.

Mistake entered the kitchen, slowly sauntering over to the fridge. She flung open the door and pulled out a juice box, sitting down next to Anon at the kitchen table, oblivious to the situation around her. He stared at her for a few moments as she sat there quietly sipping on her juice, still drowsy from so much sleep in one night.

"... Mistake."

She jumped slightly, as if woken up from a trance.
"Hmhm?"

"Mistake... where are... where..." He gestured around the house, juggling words on his tongue. "Where are the rest of your brothers and sisters?"

Mistake looked around with surprise, just then noticing the unusual absence. "Oh. I dunno."

Anon sucked in a breath and stood up, already heading for the front door. "Oh nooo, nononono. We have to go find them. We have to find them. What if they get into trouble? What if they don't put their disguises on?" He paled even more as worse thoughts came to him. "What if they tell the police where they came from? What if they

come back here? What if they want answers and I don't have them and they take me in for questioning and-" Anon threw open the front door and headed out. "Mistake! Come on, we're going on a walk."

"Coming, coming." Mistake finished the last of her juice box with a smack of her lips, tossing it in the trash can and running for the door. Just before she crossed the threshold out to the yard, her old form was replaced with the one of an ordinary little girl in a flash of green flame. She joined her father on the sidewalk and kept an eye out.

Misery peeked around the corner of the house, taking care not to be seen. About a hundred of her siblings sat and roughhoused with one another behind her, making her wince at every noise. She turned around and hissed at them to be quiet, not really expecting it to help. It didn't.

She turned her attention back to the scene ahead of her. In front of the house was the local elementary school. On a normal saturday, it wouldn't be worth noting, but lucky for Misery, that day was not a normal Saturday. A large charter bus was parked in the drop-off zone, with a few teachers and students standing outside going through roll call. Misery needed that bus, and she had a plan.

Her inner musings were interrupted as she heard a startled gasp from the porch. Misery turned around to behold a woman, looking to be in her thirties, coming out of the house behind them. She seemed shocked to find a hundred eerily similar children parked on her lawn. At the

sound of the gasp, they all turned to face her at once, definitely not helping the situation. Misery sighed and waved a hand, turning her attention back to the bus.

"Get her. Things are about to get messy anyways."

Two changeling boys, Jet and Pocket, looked at one another with the same mischievous grin. They stood up and walked to both sides of the shocked woman, carefully skulking along the ground to remain unnoticed in the horde of their brothers and sisters. Synchronized, they each dug deep down within themselves, finding that one organ that humans lacked that allowed them to do what they were about to do. With no effort to suppress the noise, similar to that of making a spitball in the back of one's throat, they simultaneously released globs of thick, green fluid over their target. The woman didn't even have time to scream as it blanketed her, pinning her to the ground and preventing her from making any more noise. The boys beamed and stepped away from the green mess, taking pride in their work. Misery rolled her eyes and looked back to the bus.

"I'm going to lure them over here in a minute. Everyone, get ready."

Misery cringed as a deafening chorus of affirmation rang out from the horde of children, likely drawing attention the attention of the entire block. Eager to start her plan before her siblings had a chance to ruin it, she started across the street towards the parked bus. As she approached, several children turned

their heads to watch her. Misery stopped in the middle of the street and waved her hands, attempting to get all of them to look in her direction. Through the use of jumping up and down and several loud noises, she finally had the eyes of every child and teacher upon her.

"Hey! The ice cream man is giving away free ice cream over there!" She pointed to the row of houses where she had just emerged from.

In a collective agreement to disregard any rules the teachers had set in place, several children immediately ran away from the group and ran for the houses. Misery smiled as the teachers cried out in anguish, chasing after them. Soon, most of the other children figured they would join in, and the entire group had left the sidewalk and ran out into the street. She didn't even turn around to see if her trap succeeded, pushing through the panicked crowd and towards the vehicle. She heard shrieks of surprise as she rounded the side of the bus and entered through the door on the side.

The bus driver was an older man, around fifty years of age. He turned at the sound of someone entering the bus, confusion clear on his face.

"What's going on out there? Where did everyone run off to?"

Misery stepped forward and pulled out a slip of paper, handing it to the bus driver. "This is a map. Follow it."

The bus driver unfolded the slip of paper and scanned his eyes over it. "But... the field trip is going to San Francisco, isn't it?"

"Just take us there."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, little girl."

"Then get out. I'll drive."

"I don't think you know how to drive this bus, sweetie." The driver frowned and tucked the map into his pocket, grabbing Misery by the arm and leading her out of the bus. Misery kicked at his legs and struggled to pull her arm free, to no avail.

"Look, missy, we're going to find a teacher and-" The driver gasped in pain as a kick dug into his knee.

Misery was too close to give up now. She had found a lead, a clue to where her mother was. She had a bus to take her, and all of her siblings, to it. She had a goal, and she had a means, and the only thing standing in her way was an old man. Misery hissed and kicked off of the ground, climbing up the front of the man's shirt. She pinned him to the bus and stared into his dull, brown eyes, gazing into them with such fury and intensity that he was left speechless. Her eyes flashed, glowing a fiery green for a split second before fading back to their normal emerald hue. The man's eyelids drooped from a surprised upright position to a relaxed slouch. His once brown eyes now shone a dull green.

Misery pulled her arm back, and the man released, his grip now eased. She took a few deep breaths to calm herself, the moment of fear and instinct passed. Her chest rose and fell with the breaths, leaving her standing there on the sidewalk as confused as the bus driver had been moments ago. Now, he just stood there, like a pole, staring off into the distance.

A cough broke the morning silence. Misery turned to see Whistle, standing in front of the horde of changeling children. A few of them had green slime still dripping from their mouths, eliciting the occasional wipe of the sleeve. They all stared at the scene in front of them, first at the docile old man, and then to Misery. The changeling girl stared back, at a loss for words. Finding it too hard to speak, she simply raised a hand and pointed at the bus's open door. The changelings filed in, one by one, without a word. Whistle stood behind, letting the others go first, before taking a stance next to her sister.

"... what did you do to him, Misery?"

Misery looked up at the old man in silence for a few moments. "I don't know. Get in the bus."

"Did you hurt him? Why isn't he-"

"Get in. The bus." Misery ended the word with a sharp hiss, letting it be known that the conversation was over. Whistle frowned and climbed inside.

Misery stepped before the old man, waving to get his attention. The bus driver's empty green eyes slowly fell down to look at her, without a single spark of thought. The changeling girl pointed into his pocket, where he had stored the slip of paper.

"The map. Drive there."

The driver slowly dipped a hand into the pocket, pulling out the map. He unfolded it with his bony hands and scanned over it, the spark of life returning to his eyes for a moment as his thoughts returned to him long enough to fulfill his mission. When finished, he nodded, folding the slip back up and stepping into the bus without a word. Misery followed behind him.

~

"Daaaaad, my feet hurt."

Anon ignored her and kept walking, knowing she'd keep following behind anyways. He didn't have the time or the patience to stop for a rest. Not while they were still out there, his... unholy spawn, probably destroying the lives of innocents virgins or something. He had walked through half of the city with his daughter, now, and had found no trace of the insectoid children. He would have found it delightfully ironic that the things he had wished away for the past seven years would suddenly be the most sought after thing in his life, were it not so infuriating.

He glanced behind him to check on Mistake, who trudged forward in an over-dramatic limp, complete with agonizingly slow speed. He sighed and scooped her up under his arm, throwing her over his shoulder like a viking warrior bringing home a kidnapped villager. Mistake giggled and went limp, enjoying the free ride.

"Dad, why are you so scared?"

"Because all of your brothers and sisters are gone."

"But I thought you didn't like us?"

"I don't."

"Then why do you care?"

Anon sighed. "Because if they get into trouble, or get captured by the government, or open some interdimensional portal to wherever the hell they came from, then it's on MY ass. And I don't like things riding on my ass."

Mistake wriggled out of her father's grasp and fluttered down to the ground, now walking beside him without any of the previous melodramatics. "You never really cared before, though."

"I always tried to keep you close by, at least. And disguised when you were outside. Those were my only two rules." He threw his arms in the air in exasperation. "With so many of you, it was the only thing I could do to

keep you guys out of trouble, and you all went ahead and broke the rules anyways."

Anon rounded the street corner, coming to face a small park. Several children ran around in the shade of the trees, throwing a frisbee between each other. None of the kids with half-bug. Anon groaned in frustration and headed further south, Mistake in tow.

It just didn't make sense to him. Bakersfield wasn't that big. With a hundred or so children on the loose, each with magical abilities and a knack for causing issues, he was expecting the scene when he walked out of his house to resemble something out of Gremlins. But to the contrary, he had seen absolutely no sign of any of them. No screams of terror, no crashing vehicles, no strange insect hives spawning out of the ground. Eventually Anon came to the conclusion that with such large numbers in such a small space, the only way he wouldn't run into any of them was if they were traveling together in a group. But why would over a hundred bug children who were constantly at each other's throats travel together?

Anon's thoughts were interrupted as he heard a soft squishing noise underneath his left shoe. He grunted and tried to pull his foot off the ground, finding it cemented to the concrete. Try as he might, the shoe refused to separate from the ground. He sighed and undid the strings, leaving the shoe behind. He glanced around, trying to find out what he had just stepped in.

In front of him was a scene he wasn't prepared for. The entire stretch of sidewalk before him was covered in splotches of some sort of green slime,

extending all the way out to the end of the street where it turned. Giant mounds of it seemed to be more present near the center, where it was in higher concentration. As he looked into the mounds, he noticed something inside of them: living people, suspended in the gel and looking terrified.

One of the nearby mounds contained an adult. Anon leaned in, careful not to touch the mess. His eyes darted around, a terrified expression glued on his face. He was obviously aware, and still alive, but incapable of moving. Careful not to step in any more of the stuff, he made his way into the center of the mass. This shit was NOT natural, he knew that much. Anon tiptoed through the patches of clear ground, careful not to step in even a single spec of the green trap. He made his way from the sidewalk onto the nearby house's lawn, where the concentration of the stuff was higher. Mistake watched from a distance with an interested look in her eye, slightly amused by her father's ballet act among the slime.

Anon cursed under his breath and gestured around him. "I'm guessing this stuff is from you guys?"

Mistake nodded. "That's sticky goo. Jet showed us all how to do it a long time ago. He caught a bird with it."

"Where does it come from?"

"We just spit it out." Mistake shrugged.

"Well, that's... something." Anon stepped around a particularly large mound, with two adults trapped inside together. "How do you get rid of it?"

"If you get water on it, it goes away."

Anon nodded and glanced around the yard, eyes landing on a hose left unraveled in the middle of the grass. He took it and made aim at a nearby mound of slime, showing it in water. As soon as the water made contact, the strange material began to mix with it, losing its solidity and becoming liquid again. Soon it began to wash away and shrink down, receding from the mound and flooding down into the grass, revealing what was kept inside: a very scared looking child. The kid shuddered on the lawn, gazing up at the sky as if paralyzed with the thought that he was finally free.

Anon waved a hand in front of his eyes and got his attention. "Hey. Kid. You alright?"

The child nodded slowly, still out of shape. "Y-you can b-breathe in t-there... but it's s-so cold..."

"Hey, kid, stay with me." Anon snapped in front of him to get his attention once more. "Where are the things that did this to you?"

The kid sat up and pointed down the street, towards the elementary school. "B-bus. They took the bus."

~

"I can't believe we took the bus."

Whistle gazed out the window, Misery sitting next to her. While most of the changeling children behind them had already forgotten about the scene with the bus driver, including Whistle, Misery was still trying to wrap her head around it. The old man seemed healthy, physically, but mentally, he was gone. She had tried speaking with him, with no amount of success, finding that he would follow orders if she gave them, but was not able to speak his own mind. At this point, Misery questioned whether or not he still had a mind.

A smaller changeling, named Faith, tugged on Misery's shirt, pulling her out of her thoughts. She smiled up at her in a way that made her suspect she was about to ask for something. "Misery, can we stop and get a snack? We're hungry."

Misery scowled at her. "Star says we'll be with Mom before the sun is even down. We'll get something to eat there."

Faith pouted and retreated to the back of the bus with the rest of her brothers and sisters. They were all in their disguises still, a hundred little girls and boys with a rainbow of eye colors and clothes. The bus was well past it's capacity, many of the children sitting on the floor and on top of each other, some places with four to a single seat. Misery guessed the bus only held about fifty or so passengers, but they were making do with the space

provided. She sighed as a couple of brothers scratched at each other over a tiny spot of space, knocking over another small group that sat on the ground next to them. With a loud whistle, she grabbed their attention, and motioned for them to cut it out. They gave each other death glares, but obeyed.

And Misery had to admit, her brothers and sisters had been strangely obedient. Their usual off the wall, violent behavior had calmed down substantially when she started to give them orders, and they usually followed said orders to the letter. Still, they weren't like the bus driver: the bus driver was mindless, she could tell that much. He was driven to do whatever she asked, with no thought of his own unless called upon. Her siblings that she ordered around, they still had working brains. They chose to follow her, either through determination to see their mother or a lack of anything better to do, but they could stop following her at any time. Misery had to wonder how long that control would last, and whether or not it was even worth it.

As the bus drove on, she even started to question whether or not it was a good idea to bring the hive with her in the first place. They were big, noisy, and hard to lose. She was almost sure that she could have snuck away by herself and made it to her destination without her siblings. She had thought, at the time, that more people meant more help, but now that she dwelled on it she realized they may just slow her down in the long run. Finding a bus that would fit them all had taken most of the afternoon anyways, longer than this entire trip was even supposed to take. Star had promised her that the

map said they would be there in about four hours, and even that was four hours too long.

She turned to the bus driver, finding that she, too, was already getting impatient. "Driver. Where are we?"

The bus driver didn't turn away from the road, but slowly lifted a finger to the map that was propped up against the dashboard. It landed on the eastern border of Bakersfield. They hadn't even gone more than a few miles. She looked out the window to confirm it, finding that the houses of the city were beginning to fade behind them, slowly being replaced by more and more farmland. They had only just breached the city limits. It was going to be a long, long ride.

Misery felt a nudge on her arm and turned to face Whistle. "Why isn't dad coming? We should have brought him. I'm sure he wants to see momma too."

Misery waved a hand dismissively. "I'm sure he does. But he's got a life to get to. He wouldn't go out of the way to find her. And I didn't want to ask him, because he'd probably try to stop us. He doesn't like us going too far."

"Do you think he's going to try and come after us?"

Misery looked out the window once more at the city, retreating behind them. "No. Like I said, he's got a life. He won't follow us. Not like he even knows where we're going."

~

"Daddy, where are we going?"

Anon kept walking down the street, heart pounding and mind racing. He looked up from the sidewalk, trying to get his bearings. Somewhere downtown, it seemed. "I don't know. Shut up, I'm thinking."

Mistake waved through a window as they passed a cafe, apparently knowing some of the people inside. She sped up a bit to catch up to her father and looked up at him. "Well, shouldn't we go find the bus they took?"

Anon sighed. "Yes, Mistake, that would be ideal." He looked down toward her with a scowl. "Unfortunately, we have no idea where they're going with that bus."

Mistake glanced back in the direction they had come from. "Shouldn't we have used the hose and got the rest of those people out of the goo?"

"They'll be fine. The sprinklers will come on eventually."

"I don't know, some of them looked pretty scared, an-"

"Mistake." Anon dropped to his knee and put his hands on her shoulders, looking her in the eye. "They will be fine. We have something more important to take care of right now. Do you have any idea where they would be heading? I mean, you're one of them."

The little girl bit her bottom lip in thought, looking off to the side. "... wellllllll..." she let out a breath, "... nope. If they made a plan, they did it last night, when I was sleeping with you."

Anon groaned and leaned against a light post, resting his feet for a moment. He realized he had been walking around most of the day, now, doing nothing but panicked thinking. And he had dragged Mistake with him the entire way. Her face was red and her hair dripping with sweat. She sat on the sidewalk and heaved a sigh of exhaustion, happy to take a break from walking. Anon took a seat next to her and tussled her hair, getting her attention.

"Alright, let's think about this. Obviously they can't walk to where they're going. They wouldn't need the bus if they did. So, they aren't going anywhere inside the city."

"Right." Mistake nodded.

"And since they've never been out of the city, they had to learn about this place from somewhere else. Right?"

"Mhm."

"So, maybe they left clues behind. A trail to follow." Anon pointed towards the direction of his house. "Something, anything that could be a hint, would probably be at the house."

Anon pushed himself back up to his feet, making causing Mistake to groan in contempt. "Then why didn't we just go there first? We've been walking for ages..."

The walk to their home took substantially less time than the walk they had spent their morning on. Anon threw open the door to the house and stepped inside, Mistake cradled in his arms. He dropped her on the living room couch unceremoniously and started poking around the house, looking for anything that could help. A thought suddenly occurred to him and he headed for the hallway.

"Mistake, see if there's anything to go on in here. I'm going to check the computer."

He didn't even stay behind to hear her protest. The door to the computer room squeaked open with a slight push. Anon didn't like the children touching his computer, but he found that one of them, Star, knew how to actually use it properly. About a month ago Anon had let him use it on the promise that he wouldn't break anything, and he had done a pretty good job on keeping that promise so far.

He pulled out the chair and took a seat, wiggling the mouse to bring the computer to life. Whoever had used the computer last (and it wasn't him, so it had better been Star or else he was going to have to slap a bug) had left it open on a few pages. The first was some kind of conspiracy website, like the kind that have "explanations" about vampires and ghosts. This one in particular was about aliens. Anon skimmed through the page. Apparently the alien under investigation here was

some kind of shapeshifter. Anon sighed and sat back in the chair, realizing what had happened.

He had searched for answers himself, the first few years after she had disappeared. He spent hours, days, entire weekends glued to his computer screen, looking for some sign. He hadn't found anything. A few conspiracy sites, like that one, but nothing substantial. As the abominations had gained a foothold in his life and entered a hatchling phase, he had given up on finding her ever again. But it was obvious that with the details he had given her, Misery had started her own search. And whatever she had found, she had taken all of her brothers and sisters to go see.

And her search had been much more successful. Maybe it was because the information just hadn't been there when he searching for it, but Misery had gathered entire stores of information that he had never seen seven years ago. There were maps, essays, pictures, the whole lot. Anon was almost entirely convinced most of it was complete bullshit, but obviously something on this page had been enough for Misery to go off in confidence. As he reached the bottom of the page, he saw immediately what it was.

A very blurry picture sat at the bottom of the webpage, but what could be seen was definitely enough. A younger woman, somewhere in her twenties, was looking into the camera with glowing green eyes. Her flowing blue-green hair fell down almost to her waist. A glint of a shining white fang shone out from her mouth. The picture was cut off from her midsection down by a few trashcans. The picture was taken in an alley, and from the picture's description, it was taken in Las Vegas. He didn't

even have to look at it twice to know that it was his "lover", Chrysalis.

The paragraph of text below it went on to explain how the photographer had been chasing after the mysterious woman for months, after swearing he saw her in her "true form" one night in the back of a hotel parking lot. Her current whereabouts were unknown, but presumably she was still in Vegas somewhere, hiding from whoever knew about her existence. Anon scrolled back up and stared at the photograph for a moment longer. It was definitely her, he knew it. Misery must have known it too. That was reason enough for them to head for Vegas.

Anon tabbed to the next page, which was Google Maps. He didn't have to stare at it long to know what it was: a map between Bakersfield and Las Vegas. 281 miles. The route traveled through the mountains and down South, through Barstow, and then back North to the shining city of sin itself. Las Vegas, the gem of the Mojave desert. It was almost like a beacon, beckoning from across the sea of sand, as if Chrysalis was calling back the children that she left behind. Like bringing moths to a flame.

Anon printed a map for himself and headed back out into the hall. Mistake hadn't moved from the spot where he had dumped her on the couch. She began to speak, but Anon cut her off before she even had a chance to whine about her legs again.

"We're going. Now. We need to find a car we can borrow."

She groaned loudly. "Oh, come on! We've been walking all day!"

"We'll rest when we have a car." Anon went to the couch and picked her up, throwing her over his shoulder once more, her legs dangling behind him. She was actually exhausted this time, he could tell, but they didn't have time to rest. "Do you know anyone with a car we could borrow?"

Mistake scoffed. "Why are you asking me? You're the grown-up."

"Mistake, let me explain something to you." Anon opened the door and started walking down the street, not even sure where he was headed. "I've lived about 20 years longer than you. Half of those years were spent in this city. And I can guarantee you, you still know more people than I do. That is how far out of the way I go not to associate myself with the hicks that live here."

Mistake giggled lightly and poked her father in the cheek. "You need to get more friends. And I know lotsa people, but none of them would just give you a car because you asked."

"Well, the only person I'm even on remotely good terms with is Katie. And she's too sane to let me borrow her car for some crazy mission to Vegas." He sighed. "Guess we have to ask though, don't we?"

Katie's house was on the other side of town. By the time Anon arrived, his own legs were beginning to ache and beg for the sweet release of sitting. He ignored

their pleas and stepped up to her front door, setting Mistake down on the ground beside him. He knocked a few times and stepped back, waiting for a response. After a few moments the door opened and Katie came into view, wearing a pair of sweats and a loose t-shirt. They looked at each other for a few moments before her brain flared to life, registering who was standing before her.

"Oh! Anon! Uh, I didn't think I'd see you today. I was going to call later tonight and ask you how you were doing. Say, you're lookin' pretty well rested. Did you get in a few hours of-" She stopped and gasped as her eyes fell on Mistake, who sat on the porch with a prize winning beam.

"Yeah, hi, Katie. This is my daughter-" His lips glued together, almost calling her by her true name. Doing so was probably unwise.

Before he could even finish, Mistake finished for him. "The name's Lauren. Nice to meet you."

Katie smiled. "You named her Lauren, after your mother? That's so sweet."

Anon had completely forgotten that was even his mother's name, but he was thankful for Mistake's save. "Listen, we, uh... we need to borrow your car. Just for today. Maybe also the first half of tomorrow, depending on how things go."

Katie paused and leaned against the door frame, confusion etched across her face. "My car? Where are you headed, Fresno?"

"A bit further than Fresno, actually. But I can't really tell you where, or why. You probably wouldn't believe me anyways."

Katie chuckled. "Come on, I've seen some weird things in my time. Try me."

He sighed. "Well, to put it short, the rest of my kids are gone."

Katie's eyes widened as she turned around, heading back inside. She went to a small table off to the left of the entry hallway and picked up a phone before Anon could stop her.

"Oh god, we need to call the police. We can file a missing persons--"

"Katie, they aren't missing. I know where they are. That's why I need the car."

Katie put down the phone and returned to the doorway, the look of confusion returned. "Where could they have possibly gone that you would need a car to get to? Lamont?"

Anon shook his head. "Further."

"Arvin?"

"Farther than that, for sure."

She scoffed loudly. "What, did they go to Vegas to play the tables?"

"Well, I highly doubt they'll be doing any gambling there, but..."

She stared at him, no hint of amusement in her eyes. "Is this some kind of joke? Because it's not funny."

Anon shrugged. Katie stared at him in disbelief, her jaw hanging in the air. Her hand drifted to the door knob as she slowly backed away into the house, preparing to shut the door in their faces. Just before she did, Mistake stuck her foot in the doorway, blocking it open as it came to a sudden close. Normally that kind of thing would seriously injure the person involved, and probably break the leg of a normal seven year old, but the bug-child's chitinous legs absorbed the blow without much more than a bump. She pulled it back quickly before Katie had a chance to see what had blocked the door, but it kept it open for the second that Mistake needed.

"Actually, Katie, my dad IS joking. But you and I both know he's not very funny." Mistake smiled apologetically up at the woman in the most charming way she could muster. "He wanted to drive me up to the Fresno water park! We've been planning this for months."

Katie paused and looked back up at Anon, who took the hint and nodded vigorously. "Yes. Just messing with you, Katie, come on. How would someone even manage to lose their kids in Vegas?"

Katie sighed and turned around, taking her purse off of where it was hanging on the wall and retrieving her keys. She handed them to Anon. "Sorry, I'm not in high spirits today. Just make sure you fill it back up before you bring it back." She smiled down at the little girl. "And you two have fun at the water park, ok?"

The door closed and the pair headed for the driveway, heading for the car. It wasn't a fancy one, by any definition. In fact, it was a Dodge Neon from 1995, and it didn't look a day younger than the twenty or so years it had riding on its back. Anon unlocked the front door and climbed in gingerly, as if worried that he might send it to a pile of junk before they even started it. Mistake waited for him to unlock the passenger door before climbing into the seat beside him.

"You're a pretty quick liar. Thanks for that save. Well, both saves, including the name." Anon brought the car to life with a turn of the key, the car almost sounding like it was whining to be in use.

"You are terrible with people. You should just let me talk from now on." Mistake glanced at a label on the dashboard. "It says that children under ten should sit in the back."

Anon pulled the car out of the driveway, his phone leading them on the same route Misery was taking. "Don't worry about it."

~

"Don't worry about it."

Star poked at the fuel gauge with a finger, worry etched across his face. "No, I'm pretty sure we should worry about it."

Misery sighed and pulled Star away from the dashboard by the shirt. "I'm telling you, don't worry about it. We'll be fine."

"Misery, the fuel gauge is almost empty. That means the bus is going to stop moving any second now." Star scrunched his face and pointed up at the map. "And we aren't even halfway there yet. Nearest place that isn't just a load of sand is Barstow, a few miles ahead. Vegas is way past that. And I don't think our friend here is in any condition to fuel us back up." Star gestured up towards the bus driver, still completely focused on the road with his dull green eyes.

Misery took a look at the map. As Star had pointed out, the only thing even visible for the next hundred miles was Nipton. Either they stopped here and didn't get caught in the middle of the desert, or they took their chances and just crossed their fingers. Misery didn't like those chances.

"Driver. Get off the highway, we're stopping in Barstow."

Star breathed a sigh of relief and went back to the seats in the bus, forcing one of his sisters to squish against the wall to get himself a seat.

Whistle frowned. "So, we're taking a stop?"

Misery nodded. "Hopefully this won't be any longer than it has to be."

"Are we there yet?"

"No."

Anon honked at the cars in front of them, impatience growing. The traffic was strangely active, especially at this time of day, which both worked as a blessing and a curse. On the plus side, Anon hoped that the traffic was slowing down the children in their path to Vegas. On the down side, it was also slowing him down. Though he was capable of keeping his impatience on a leash, the same could not be said for Mistake.

"When are we going to be there?"

Anon glanced down in his lap. "The phone says we'll be there in five hours. Which is ridiculous, because we've already been driving for an hour and it said it would take four before we even left."

"Is it broken?"

"No, it's just 2013." Anon sighed and honked the horn again. "Jesus, come on! My kids have probably eaten a homeless guy by now!" He sighed and sat back in his seat, arms crossed. He turned to Mistake and raised an eyebrow. "I have been meaning to ask, what exactly do you guys eat?"

"What do we... eat?" She looked puzzled. "Food?"

"Well, obviously you CAN eat food, but unless you've got some kind of hidden basement full of hot pockets that you went to for the first five years of your life, food isn't what keeps you alive." Anon shrugged. "When you guys first hatched, I tried to feed you. You wouldn't eat anything. But you kept going, kept growing. Eventually I just gave up and let you guys do whatever, as long as you weren't getting hurt. You all got old enough and learned to walk and talk all on your own. You've been more or less living on an extended leash since then."

Anon looked down at Mistake to check if she was even still listening. She looked up at him with wide, shining eyes.

He glanced away in discomfort. "What, so you don't know what you eat? Do you just not eat at all?"

"Hm? Oh. Uh..." She looked down at the floor in thought. "Well, what happens when you don't eat?"

"Well, normally when a human doesn't eat, they get hungry. Like, this feeling in the pit of your stomach that doesn't go away until you get some food. A really nasty feeling. And your body starts making weird noises."

"Oh!" Mistake beamed. "That happens sometimes when we go too long without a hug. Well, I've never heard my tummy making noises, but the nasty feeling thing happens. And then when you do get a hug, or sometimes a pat on the head, or a kiss on the cheek..." Mistake rolled her eyes to the ceiling as if remembering eating the best chocolate cake ever made.

Anon took his eyes away from the road for a moment to lock eyes with his daughter. "You're shitting me. You're telling me that you feed off of hugs? Because if so, that explains some things."

"I don't know, I'm just answering your question."

Anon just shook his head in disbelief. "So... how long can you go without a hug before you start feeling bad?"

"I dunno. Usually it's about a day." She frowned. "Star tried to test something. He made us all go a few days without hugging to get us real hungry, and then he told us to hug each other. It didn't work."

"Well, I suppose even unnatural bug children can't discover the source of infinite renewable energy." Anon scoffed and took his eyes back to the road.

Mistake continued to stare at him, as she had earlier. Any memories she had of him were definitely not pleasant fatherly ones, but apparently when she was too young to remember anything, he had watched over her and her siblings with loving care. From what he told her, anyways. It almost didn't register in her mind.

"You used to be a good daddy?"

Anon glanced in her direction, a bit taken back by the statement. "What, are you implying I'm not a good daddy now? That hurts my feelings."

"No, but, earlier. You said you used to watch over us. And tried to feed us. And made sure we weren't getting hurt. Why did you stop?"

"I haven't..." Anon let his words trail off as he thought about it. "I haven't stopped. Well, alright, maybe I did. But it's because I don't need to anymore. You're all grown up now. You don't need my help, or my attention."

Mistake silenced herself as Anon went back to focusing on the road. The cars ahead budged forward another few inches, giving him a small window of opportunity to drive up. As they pulled forward, Anon noticed why the traffic was so heavy: an incident was visible in the middle of the highway ahead. A few police officers circled around the scene, directing cars around and further down the highway.

"Shit." Anon pointed into the back seats. "Mistake, go sit back there. And put your seatbelt on. And... like, try to grow a few inches so you don't look like you need a car seat."

Mistake did as she was told, climbing into the back seat and buckling up. She tried to sit up as tall as she could, craning her neck towards the roof of the car. Anon pulled up beside the police officers a few minutes later. He looked over the crash site, finding nothing better to do with his time. He called the attention of a nearby officer and pointed to the wreckage.

"Hey, chief. What happened here?"

The officer looked over the scene. "Well, apparently one of them armored trucks with the money in 'em got jacked here. Few fellas drove up next to it, pushed it off the road, kicked the driver out and took off with it down thataways." He pointed further down the freeway. "All that ruckus caused quite a few collisions, as you can see here."

Anon nodded and rolled the window back up. He had suspected that his children were involved in some way, but he realized now that it probably wasn't rational to go blaming every unusual occurrence on his unnatural spawn. Sometimes things just happened on their own, and crime was no different. In a few minutes, the traffic moved on past the accident, opening up the road once more. As soon as Anon was clear, he stepped on the gas pedal, happy to be free of the hold up once more.

Mistake looked out the back window at the scene disappearing behind her. "You're really nervous around cops. Did you do something bad?"

"Please, Mistake. Do I look like the kind of person who would be caught doing something illegal?" Anon looked out over the horizon that stretched ahead, the sun about to begin its descent off of the edge of the world. "I can't believe we got held up like that. The rascals are probably already in Vegas by now."

~

"We should already be in Vegas by now."

"Well maybe you should think about checking the gas gauge on the buses you hijack next time. Then we wouldn't be in this mess." Star kicked a few pebbles across the asphalt in frustration.

Misery flashed a glare in his direction, but otherwise ignored him. Getting stuck in a desert town literally in the middle of nowhere was definitely not her intention. Vegas was still 150 miles away, if Star was reading the map right, and unless they magically found something that could bridge that distance within the next ten minutes it seemed as though they were going to have to spend the night in Barstow.

At the moment, they were in the middle of a large parking lot. A "Food4Less" grocery store displayed its bright sign proudly, bathing the immediate area with a

soft yellow glow as the sun began to resign over the horizon. It was now occurring to Misery that she didn't even know WHERE in Barstow they were going to stay. There had to be somewhere in the city where her group of misfits could spend the night, but she had no idea where to look. She realized she would probably have to consult Star again, as much as she hated going to him for ideas. She sighed and walked over to him nudging him in the side to get his attention.

"Star. Any ideas where we should stay tonight?"

"What, you think I'm not working on it?" Star frowned and scratched his chin in thought. "Let me give it to you straight, then. Unless Mr. Zombie in there happens to have a wallet that weighs more than I do, I don't think we have enough money to rent a few hotel rooms. The map we have doesn't show much about this town, but Barstow isn't that big. We could probably find an abandoned building or something to crash in, but it would have to be soon, before it gets too cold. Deserts get cold at night." Star gestured to the bus behind him. "We could probably spend the night in there, if we had to, but I wouldn't count on much warmth besides what we can provide by huddling together. Which isn't much."

Misery nodded silently and waved him away, having heard his advice. She didn't like going to Star for solutions, but she wasn't even going to pretend that she was as intelligent as him. Everyone had their strengths, but Misery's strength didn't lie in her knowledge of the world: that's why she needed people like Star around.

She glanced around the nearly empty parking lot. Many of the childlings had stepped out of the bus to stretch their legs. A few of the hungrier ones were harassing people coming in and out of the store, trying to exchange favors for hugs. She cringed as one of her siblings nearly toppled a man trying to put groceries in his car, clinging on to his leg like a cat on a tree branch. She needed to get them out of sight, and soon, before they started drawing unwanted attention.

Misery whistled, something she didn't do often, to summon her second in command. Whistle was by her side in moments, breaking away from a conversation she was having with one of her brothers. "Whistle. Round everyone back into the bus, and keep them there. I'm going to take Star and a few others around town and look for somewhere we can call home for the night. Make sure no one gets in or off the bus, unless it's an emergency. We'll come back for everyone later. You're in charge until I get back."

Whistle saluted. "Yes ma'am." She turned around and put her fingers to her lips, belting out a whistle loud enough to be heard throughout the entire parking lot. The children stopped and turned their attention. "All'ya boneheads, get back here! Everyone in the bus!"

Misery nodded curtly in approval. Before the bus crowded with the obnoxious horde, Misery peeked inside to check on the bus driver. Much as he had since the incident at Bakersfield, he sat still without a trace of emotion on his face, still sitting in the driver's seat and

staring out the front window. Misery's frown deepened, but she let him be for the moment. There wasn't much she could do anyhow.

She exited the bus. Star and a few of his brothers and sisters sat on the ground near one of the nearby wheels. Misery nodded to them and gestured with her hand, pointing the way deeper into town. They followed in step behind her, heading out of the parking lot and into the unexplored territory. The sky became as black as the asphalt they walked on, the sun now completely vanished from the sky. Not that it mattered much to the children. With nothing but a simple blink, their cyan eyes lit up in bright spectacle. The streets lit up before them as if the sun was still shining bright overhead, only instead of the normal array of colors, everything was an overwhelming shade of cyan. Nightvision came at a price.

In turn, Misery's eyes shone green. She led the way through the winding streets of the medium-sized town, peeking around alleyways and climbing to high places for better views. Though they had wings, they were not very functional aside from short bursts in order to make large leaps, or possibly keep them hovered in the air for a few moments. Anything more than that was subject to failure, and was only a good idea if the child in question wished to get hurt. Due to this, Misery often relied on her followers to boost her to high places, sometimes requiring the wings to give her the tiny boost she needed to reach a ledge. As she climbed to the top of a local drug store, she scanned the area around them, ignoring the chatter of her siblings on the ground below. She realized she didn't exactly know what she was looking for, and leaned over the edge and called Star's attention.

"Star. What are we looking for?"

He sighed. "Something big. Preferably with no lights on. That'll usually mean there's no one in it."

She nodded and went back on the roof, scanning once more with newfound knowledge. She darted her eyes across the landscape for several minutes, finding nothing of interest. Just as she was prepared to give up, however, her eyes fell over something exactly as Star had described. She marked it in her memory and dropped down off the side of the roof, falling into the arms of a few of the children waiting on her. She dusted herself off and nodded to Star.

"There's something big to the East, near a park of some kind. Not a single light on. We should be heading there."

"Sounds like a plan. Lead the way, we'll scout it out."

The group headed away from the drugstore and further East, making sure to stay out of the sight of any passersby. There weren't many people out in the town, especially as the sun had just gone down, but every once in awhile they ducked out of sight to avoid the gaze of a lone man or woman enjoying a late night stroll down the street. They were in their human disguises, of course, but Misery didn't want to take chances with the people here. The way she figured, the less people that knew they were here, the better. She had been treated like a child long enough to know that children generally weren't

encouraged to go on road trips to Vegas by themselves, and the law would no doubt attempt to stop them if they were discovered, human children or inhuman abominations alike.

They arrived at the sought-after building in short order. They stood outside its front entrance, gazing over it for any signs of movement. Finding none, Misery took the first steps towards the doors, glancing around at the lawn around them. The grass was old and dry, having died long ago. Patches of weeds stuck up from the dead earth. The place had definitely seen better days. As she approached, she noticed a sign on the wall and stopped to read it. She had trouble understanding what it said, so she read it out loud to herself.

"Fi st... Fi st C rist an Chur?"

Star came up behind her and glanced up at the sign, also curious. "See the spaces there, in between the letters? Some of the letters are missing, I think." He gazed at the decayed sign for a few moments in silence. "I think it supposed to say 'First Christian Church'. Keep your manners, Misery, we're on holy ground. Wouldn't want God to smite us as the abominations we are, now we?" He grinned to himself and walked inside, leaving Misery to stare at the sign for a few more seconds.

The inside of the church was even darker than the night outside, with no moonlight to help. Misery had seen a few churches around Bakersfield, and had even been inside one once while following an elderly woman for a snack, but she had never liked the atmosphere they gave

off. But this church, with its dilapidated, aged walls and destroyed furniture, almost felt more homely than any lively and living church ever did. Star poked around the place, checking for any stray animals or structural weaknesses. The other escorts found something less useful to do with their time and went back outside, drawing things in the patches of dirt with a stick.

Star prodded at a pew's cushion before sitting in it, making sure there were no nasty surprises hidden inside. He looked around the congregation area slowly, taking it all in. "Well, I guess this will work. Not exactly the Taj Mahal, but beggars can't be choosers. No holes in the roof, got at least four walls, and it's probably big enough. Only thing we'll have to worry about is fighting each other over who gets to sleep in the pews." He laid back with a yawn. "Dibs, by the way."

Misery walked through the lines of pews, making her way to the stage in the front. A podium stood like a monolith, front and center, a few rays of moonlight falling directly on it from a small window in the ceiling. She spotted a stool sitting in the little space in the back of the podium, where the preacher would stand, tucked away from sight. She dragged it out and stood on it, barely tall enough to look over the top of the podium at the pews below. Star stared at her with an expectant gaze, one eyebrow raised.

"Get the others and go back. Tell Whistle to lead everyone here. We're staying here tonight."

~

"Are we staying here tonight?"

Anonymous ignored her and stared at the far wall of the mechanic's office, brain entirely devoted to preventing an anxiety attack. They hadn't been free of the traffic for all of twenty minutes before their car broke down.

Between the time it took to get a tow truck out to the freeway and the time it took to actually get to the nearest town, Tehachapi, the sun had already fallen out of the sky. Mistake was definitely faring with the situation better than her father was, kicking her legs through the air in boredom and poking at various trinkets on the mechanic's desk.

Anon turned to her and smacked a pencil out of her hands and back onto the table. "Stop touching stuff."

"Daaad, I want to go. This is boring."

"We have to wait for the guy to come back. He's looking at our car."

"He's so slow..."

"Well I don't know if you noticed, but I can't do jack shit about that."

Mistake dashed her hand out when her father turned his head and took the pencil back, fiddling with it out of his sight this time. "So are we going to stay here tonight?"

Anon sighed and put his head in his hands, fighting off a stress-induced headache. "Unfortunately, yes. It's not like we can go anywhere without a car."

"Where are we, anyways?"

Anon pulled out his phone and took a look at the map. "Little town called Tehachapi. Right in between the Mojave Desert and the mountains we just went through. One of THOSE towns with nothing of interest and loads of creepy people that smile way too much. Went through here, once, on my way to Arizona."

"Where are we gonna sleep?"

"Eh, we can probably find a hotel." He shrugged and pocketed his phone. "Or, worst case scenario, an inn. Which is like a hotel, except everyone tries to be friends with you."

Anon was interrupted as the mechanic returned from the door behind them, walking past them and sitting behind his desk. He put on his best customer-friendly as if in hope to make them forget their car wasn't working. Mistake smiled back, while Anon simply stared at him expectantly.

"Well, friends, seems like your car is pretty old! Almost too old. Driving it out in the summer heat all day, especially near the desert, is not good for its aged bones. We got to make lots of repairs to get it running again,

not including the secondary ones that you probably didn't even know you needed." He wiped his brow and let out a breath. "Right, first off, your transmission is busted. Aside from that, we're probably going to have to take a closer look at your radiator and your hubcaps could--"

Anon leaned on his elbows and stared into the man's eyes with a glare. The mechanic stopped dead in the middle of his sentence, confused and slightly nervous.

Anon didn't move an inch. "I will give you two hundred dollars plus whatever the price is to shut the fuck up and get the car fixed by the end of tonight. No bullshit, no extra repairs. You keep the money for yourself, and none of your co-workers need to know you got it. Deal?"

The mechanic stared at Anon for a few seconds, processing what was just said. Suddenly, a smile flashed across his face, and he reached across the desk to shake hands with Anon. "We have a deal, brother. Nice doing business with you."

Anon ignored the handshake and stood up, grabbing Mistake's hand and leading her out. She waved goodbye behind her as Anon turned for his final words. "I'll be back tomorrow morning for my car. It'll be ready by then, and no later."

The mechanic winked and waved goodbye with a sly smile. Anon rolled his eyes and pushed Mistake out the door in front of him, letting a draft into the auto shop as he left it behind. He stepped around a pile of tires and let go of

his daughter's hand, letting her walk beside him unrestrained. They walked down the barely lit streets, moving from one pool of light to the next underneath the street lights that dotted the sidewalk.

Mistake glanced between the repair shop and her father. "I take it back. Maybe you ARE good with people."

Anon scoffed. "No. Not good with people. I'm good at dealing with bullshit. It's a skill you acquire through years of being surrounded by it.

"Two hundred dollars, though? Isn't that a lot?"

Anon shrugged. "If I didn't give it to him up front, he would have weaseled it out of my anyways. That's what mechanics do. They make you notice repairs you 'didn't even know you needed' and then charge more money from it. All I did was promise him the same amount of cash, but for him to keep to himself instead of splitting it with his co-workers. It's business."

Mistake mulled over his words as Anon pulled out his phone and started tinkering with the map, looking for places where they could get some dinner and a place to sleep. The cold desert air blew through the empty streets, causing Mistake to shiver slightly and press up against her dad's leg for warmth. As they walked, she experimented with her night vision, blinking her eyes open and shut as she turned it on and off. Anon was distracted by the flashing light in her eyes as she did so, causing him to groan and put his phone away in annoyance.

"Cut it out, Mistake. Someone's going to see you doing that. Not to mention it's freaking ME out."

Mistake grinned mischievously and looked up at Anon's face, flashing her eyes back and forth as fast as she could. Anon slapped the back of her head playfully and smiled, shielding his eyes.

"Gah- fuck, stop it! You're going to give me an epilepsy attack!"

Mistake giggled and returned her eyes to normal. Anon shook his head and swore a few more times before recovering. He turned to face her and eventually broke out into his own chuckle, flicking her ponytail. "Really, you are too much like me for my own good. I'm pretty sure you gave me a headache."

"Oh, don't be a baby." Mistake stuck her tongue out. "Where are we going?"

"There's a diner around this corner. We'll find someplace to sleep, soon, but I want some dinner first. And roadside diners have the better burgers than anywhere else, usually, just as a rule."

The walk to the diner only took a few more minutes. Anon pushed the glass door open and stepped inside, greeted by a very welcome blast of warm air. The floor sported a black and white tile pattern, matching with the black and white stools that lined the counter in

the center of the restaurant. To the side, next to the windows, several big red booths sat in a line. The place was mostly empty aside from a few patrons at the counter, drinking coffee and chatting with one another. Adding to the whole old-timey feel of the place, a few classics that wouldn't have been out of place in the 1940's played from a genuine jukebox in the corner. A few of the customers turned to look at the newcomers, but didn't find much interest and went back to whatever they were doing.

"Jesus Christ..." Anon shook his head. "It's like my grandmother took her house and turned it into a restaurant."

"Did you like your grandma's house?" Mistake glanced around and scrunched up her nose at the distinct smell of... age.

"No."

Anon nodded to a nearby booth and pushed Mistake towards it, letting her slide in first before taking a seat across from her. Despite the diner being nearly empty, they still had to wait a few minutes before a waiter came to serve them. When she did arrive, Anon had to suppress a sigh. He could tell her type from across the restaurant, by her wide, all-too-sincere smile. He frowned and leaned on his elbow, hoping it was enough to express disinterest. As soon as she arrived, it was evident that it wasn't.

"Heya, welcome to Kelcy's! How can I serve you today? Can I start you off with some drinks?"

"Coffee." He glanced at Mistake. "Water for her."

Mistake frowned. "I don't want water. Can I have a milkshake?"

"No. You can have water."

"But I don't want water. Water tastes boring."

Anon raised an eyebrow. "Well then, you can have nothing."

"But I'm thirsty!" Mistake whined.

"Then you can have water."

"But you aren't getting water water!"

"You're right. I'm having coffee. Because I'm an adult, and I need it to function properly."

Mistake crossed her arms defiantly and sat back in her booth. "I want coffee too."

Anon sat back and crossed his own arms, raising his eyebrows in amusement. "One coffee, one water."

"Alrighty!" The waiter nodded and smiled wider, dropping a kids menu on the table and deciding to end it before it

got any uglier. "I'll let you two order then." She walked off towards the kitchen.

Mistake huffed and turned away, deciding to look around the diner instead of at her dad, who decided to pull out his phone and tune everything else out. The place was nearly empty, as she had noticed when she walked in, but now she was really starting to get a look at the few people that were present. A group of men, supposedly friends, sat on the stools lined up against the counter, exchanging hushed small talk and sipping on their drinks. A couple, most likely locals, sat a few booths further away from them, discussing local events at such a volume they were definitely the most obnoxious things in the room. Mistake cringed from the noise and turned to face the door, which had just opened to a new guest.

She watched as he looked around the room cautiously, taking count of everyone in the room as if in suspicion. He paused as his eyes fell on Mistake, and her father, and stared at them for a few moments. Mistake stared back. He was wearing a heavy brown trenchcoat and a wide-brimmed hat, with his head ducked down so that few of his facial features were visible. He reminded Mistake of some of the cartoon spies she had seen on TV, and it made her giggle as she imagined a safe falling from the ceiling on his head. Eventually the awkward staring contest ended and the man took a seat at the far end of the counter, alone, leaving everyone else in the diner to their own devices.

Eventually, Mistake's surroundings began to bore her, and she turned to her kids menu for entertainment. She pulled out a few of the crayons and started coloring

in the shapes on the back, glancing at the food choices every so often. Anon lost interest in his phone and put it back in his pocket, turning to his daughter.

"So, how much do you really know about yourself?" Anon put a hand out before she could speak. "And I mean, like, as far as the weird supernatural shit goes. I don't want to hear about your girl problems. I mean what can you do that a normal little human girl can't? I feel like I should know this stuff if we're going to be hunting your brothers and sisters down."

Mistake didn't look up from her drawing, green crayon in her hand sprawling out over her paper. "Well, you obviously know that we look weird. And there's the spitting goo, and the night eyes."

"Right." The waiter returned with a pot of coffee and a mug, and a glass of water. She sat them down on the table, saying she would return to take their order shortly. Anon poured himself a mug of coffee and took a sip before continuing. "And, of course, you can cover up your alien bits to look human, just like your mom. If that is what you are, anyways."

Mistake nodded and put down her green crayon, taking a sip of water. "Yep. Well, that's part of it. We can disguise into whoever we want."

Anon stopped with his mug halfway to his lips, raising an eyebrow of surprise. He set his coffee down. "Hold up. You can do what?"

"When we do the green fire thingy, we can turn into whoever we want. Sorta. We can't turn into some things."

"What have you turned into?"

"Well..." Mistake stroked her chin, trying to remember past disguises. "I like to copy a lot of the little girls around town. Some of them have nice dresses. And this one time I copied a little girl I saw on TV. And one time I tried to copy Bobby, but that was yucky."

Anon stared at her in disbelief. "And... you can all do this? You can all magically transform yourselves into other people for seven years, and I never knew?" He leaned on his elbow and thought about it for a moment. "... well, actually that sort of makes sense. If you were all disguised as other children, I'd have no way of telling."

Mistake nodded. "Misery said it was probably a good idea not to tell you about it. Because you aren't one of us. She wanted it to be our secret." Mistake brought her hands up to her mouth in realization. "Don't tell Misery I told you."

"Don't worry." Anon shook his head, still trying to make sense of things. "You said you can't turn into anything, right? Just some things? How does that work?"

"Well... the more we change from how we really are, the more icky we feel." Mistake stuck her tongue out in mock discomfort. "When I'm like this, with just my legs and

eyes fixed, it doesn't feel that bad. It still feels better when I'm normal, but I could stay like this for a long time. When I try and copy other girls, though, it's..." She shivered. "It's really bad. I can only do it for a little bit." She frowned. "When I tried growing bigger, once, it didn't even bother feeling weird, it just hurt."

Anon nodded slowly, starting to understand. So she could transform, if she needed to, but any massive transformations made her extremely uncomfortable. Changing things like size or growing new body parts was probably out of the question entirely, at least until she got better at it. If that was even how that worked. Anon had to admit to himself that he didn't have the slightest clue what kind of powers he was dealing with here.

"You need to show me that sometime. That sounds trippy as hell. So is that it? No more freaky powers I need to know about? Your blood isn't acid? You don't have a nuclear self-destruct device strapped to your arm?"

Mistake shrugged. "If there's more, I don't know how to use them yet. I don't know how this stuff works either, dad."

Their conversation was cut off as the waiter returned with her notepad, smiling wide as ever. "And what will you guys be having tonight?"

"The Kelcy's Klassic. Side of garlic fries." The 'K' in 'Klassic' came out of Anon's mouth like a nail that had

been digging into his gums. He handed the waitress his menu and went back to his coffee.

"And I'll have the Kacy's Kids Kombo, please!" Mistake smiled wide and went back to coloring in her menu, this time with a black crayon.

"Alright, I'll have you two set up in no time!" The waitress winked at Mistake and went back to the kitchen, leaving them alone once more.

Anon looked up from his coffee with surprise. "You ordered something? I thought you ate hugs or some shit."

"Well yeah, but I have to LOOK like I eat food, right?" Mistake shrugged.

"Oh. Well, good thinking, I guess." Anon glanced down at her menu. "You're coloring everything in green and black. Why don't you use other colors?"

Mistake looked at her coloring as if coming to a realization. "Oh. I dunno, I just like these colors."

"Just making sure you don't think that fire hydrants are black."

"I know."

"And the sky isn't green."

"Yeah, I know, dad!" Mistake scrunched her face and put her crayon down. "I just like coloring things green and black."

Before Anon could retaliate, the phone in his pocket buzzed. He pulled it out to look at the caller ID. Even though the screen was obstructed from her view, Mistake could tell who was calling by the terrified shade of white on her father's face.

"Shit. It's Katie. What am I going to tell her about the car?"

"Tell her the truth. It broke down."

"Well I can hardly tell her it broke down about a hundred and fifty miles Southeast of where we're SUPPOSED to be!"

"Well then, tell her we broke down in Fresno, doofus!"

"Ugh, I should take this outside, there's probably going to be yelling..." Anon pushed himself out of his booth and headed for the door. "If my food shows up, don't touch it."

"Why would you even worry about that?" Mistake watched him go, the door swinging shut in his wake. She sighed and looked back down at her menu, coloring in an acorn with her green crayon.

Anon returned several minutes later, more calm than Mistake was expecting. He quietly filed back into the restaurant and took his seat across from his daughter, pocketing his phone as he did so.

"Well, that went better than I expected. She's still a bit pissed though."

"Well, I would be too." Mistake giggled and took a sip of her water.

"She's being pretty reasonable, despite everything. Knows it can't possibly be my fault that the car broke down, especially considering what a piece of junk it is. Says she'll even pay me for the repairs when we get back."

"But?" Mistake put down her crayon and looked up at Anon, waiting for the bad news.

"But, she wants us to be back with her car before the end of tomorrow. Which doesn't leave us a lot of time to get a hold of the rascals."

Mistake nodded in understanding. The waiter arrived with their food quickly, seemingly appearing in front of them out of the blue as she put the food on their table. Anon's mouth began to water as he eyed his burger, while Mistake poked at her food with a look of disgust. Anonymous dug right in, taking a few hefty bites out of his sandwich, spilling some of the toppings onto his plate. Mistake watched with half curiosity and half revulsion, keeping one eye open to watch and her tongue sticking

out to the side to express her displeasure. She looked back down at her own food and picked up a french fry, twirling it around in her fingers experimentally. Cautiously, she brought it up to her mouth to take a bite. She immediately scrunched up her face and forced it down her throat with a grimace, going for a drink of water to wash away the taste. She groaned and pushed her food away.

"I'm hungry, dad."

Anon wiped his mouth with a napkin and pointed at her plate. "That's why you have food."

"But it all tastes gross."

"Well, I'm sorry, what do you want me to do about it?"

Without saying any words, Mistake opened up her arms as if gesturing for a hug.

"Ugh, no, not right now."

"Why?"

"Because it's weird."

Mistake tilted her head to the side and stared at her father incredulously. "I am your DAUGHTER."

"Yeah, but... I don't know, I don't like hugging people. Not in public."

"Dad. Come on. I'm hungry."

Anon put down his burger with a sigh. "Alright. Fine. A quick one. Come over here."

Mistake grinned triumphantly and dove under the table, crawling through the posts supporting it. She clambered up between Anon's legs and dragged herself up into his lap, wrapping her arms around him and pressing her head to his chest. She sighed contently and pressed her cheek up against him, pulling him as close as possible as if squeezing the love out of him. Anon slowly raised an arm around and rested it on her back lightly. He patted her a few times and then let go.

"Alright, you can get off now."

"No." Mistake grinned and nuzzled her head into his chest.

"Come on, I gave you a hug. Now let go. People are staring."

"You might be done hugging me, but I'm not done hugging you."

Anon sighed and gave up, letting her sit there. She was there for nearly a minute with her eyes shut, just hugging him, completely silent. After a while, she finally spoke up. "I love you, dad."

"I..." Anon looked down at his daughter, pressed up against his chest. "... uh, yeah."

Mistake giggled. "This is usually when a normal person says 'I love you too', you know." Mistake pulled away and sat back in his lap, reluctant to return to her side of the table. "But you don't have to. I know you love me anyways, even if it's hard for you to say it. You pretend like you don't care, but you're still our daddy."

Anon sat, at a complete loss for words. He let Mistake stay seated in his lap for several more minutes as they huddled together in silence. Eventually the diner became even more quiet as the few patrons that were present ended up filtering out of the restaurant, leaving the two alone. Anonymous pulled out his phone and took a look at the time.

"Hey, Mistake. It's getting late. We should go find a place to sleep."

Hearing no answer, he glanced down in his lap. Mistake's eyes were shut, her head resting against his arm. Her chest rose slowly up and down with her soft breaths, signaling that she was fast asleep. He sighed and pocketed his phone, gently lifting her up underneath her legs and standing up. Finding it tricky to do with one arm, he took out his wallet and placed some money on the counter, heading for the door.

As he stepped into the cold night air, he looked up at the moon. It shone down on him from its perch in the sky, covering the streets in its soft blue glow.

Somewhere out there, his children were probably looking up at the same moon, cold and alone with no one but themselves. They needed his help. Deep inside, Anon felt something he had not felt for years, a feeling that had only touched him once, when the eggs had first hatched. Mistake shivered, and Anon pulled her closer. There was an inn nearby. Anon wiped away a single tear and started heading for it.

Misery stared up through the window in the ceiling, straight through the glass and up at the moon above. The church was silent, aside from the occasional snore or shift in movement from any one of the hundred children in the pews below. She sat at the edge of the podium at the front of the stage, directly under the beams of moonlight. She turned her attention away from the moon to look over her brothers and sisters that lay sleeping below. She recognized a couple whose faces were in sight: Star and Faith sat in the front pew, nestled close to one another. Whistle had fallen asleep directly in front of the stage, trying to stay up as late as Misery. She had promised to help Misery watch over them that night. Misery hadn't really expected her to live up to that promise, anyhow.

Seeing everything in order, she looked back up to the moon. She knew that, at home, her father was probably staring up at the same moon, wondering where they were. He would probably be worried, at first, but eventually it would dawn on him that they were finally out of his life, and that he was free. Misery was sure of it.

And the church finally slept, it's last wake patron finally dozing off atop her podium. Snores and shuffles were the only sounds that filled the rest of the night, and the only thoughts were in the form of dreams.

"Dad, I can't sleep."

Anon scoffed and adjusted the pillow under his head. "Bullshit. You fell asleep in a crowded diner, and you didn't wake up until I had to put you down in the lobby. You can definitely fall asleep in that bed."

"But I can't, I'm trying!"

"Well I don't know if this has occurred to you or not, but I'm trying too. And neither of us are going to sleep if you keep whining about it."

"But I caaaan't!"

Anon glanced over at the bed from his spot on the couch. "You already have the bed, girl, what more do you want?"

Mistake sat in thought, thinking of some request. "Can I have a bedtime story?"

"No. When the fuck have I EVER given you a bedtime story?"

Mistake sighed. "Never. I just saw it happen on TV once and I thought it was cute."

"Sleeping little girls are cute too. So roll over and shut up."

Mistake stuck her tongue out and crossed her arms, but did as her father asked and remained silent. The pair sat in the dark motel room quietly as Mistake rolled around in the bed, trying to get comfortable. Anon scratched his leg uncomfortably as he shifted around on the couch, as well.

"Alright, fuck it, I can't sleep either. What did you want to talk about?"

"I dunno." Mistake sat up in her bed and turned to her father. "Want to know what I found in my sock yesterday?"

"... I think I'm going to provide the conversation starters, if that's alright."

Mistake grumbled and flopped back in the bed. "No one ever wants to hear about the sock."

"Alright, here's one I've been meaning to ask." Anon swung his legs over the side of the couch and sat up. "Why the name 'Mistake'? I mean, you probably weren't old enough to know what it meant when you chose it, but why hold on to it?"

Mistake shrugged, and didn't say anything for a few seconds. "I dunno. I like it."

"Well, yeah, it got a chuckle out of me too when I first heard it. But you can't really want to be called that for the rest of your life, right?"

"Why not?"

"Well, I mean..." Anon scratched his head, looking for words to explain. "It's not really a NAME."

"What, and the rest of ours are? What about Star? And Jet? And Whistle? What kind of a silly name is WHISTLE?"

"Well, those are cute. They're like those names that celebrities give their children after they drink one too many martinis the night before they go into labor." Anon scratched his head again. "Mistake is more like... what a really poor woman with no job or husband names their child when she drinks one too many bottles of cheap wine the night before they go into labor."

"Well, I chose it, and I like it." Mistake huffed. "I think it adds character."

Anon scoffed. "Yes, because you definitely need an extra dose of character." He returned to his back, laying his head against the armrest. "Alright, here's another one. This one will probably be harder to answer."

"Go for it."

"If you hadn't been sleeping with me that night..." Anon turned and directed the end of the sentence towards her. "... would you have left with the other children?"

Mistake bit her bottom lip and pulled the covers up to her chin. She rolled the question around in her head before sighing and throwing the covers off, sitting up and embracing the cold desert air to answer.

"Right then, probably. You didn't really seem to care about us all that much." Mistake furrowed her brow. "And I've got a few choice words to say to mom."

"You and me both, kid." Anonymous nodded slowly. "But thanks for being honest. And you're probably right. Maybe I don't care."

"Hold on, I wasn't done yet." Mistake scooted over to the edge of the bed. "I said THEN, I would've gone. Left you behind and fwoosh, off with everyone else. And I wouldn't have cared. I didn't think you loved us much anyways."

"Is this supposed to make me feel good at any point or are you really just trying to give me a massive guilt trip right now?"

"Still not done, shut up." Mistake smiled. "Anyways, that's what I thought THEN. But now, I don't think so. I think you loved us this whole time. From those stories you told me in the car, it sounds like you used to be more up-front with it." Mistake's smile began to fade. "But then over

the years, you just kinda got tired. You forgot how to love people, because you spent it all on us. And deep inside, you still love us. You just forgot how to tell us. I don't think you would be chasing the rest of them all this way if you didn't care anymore."

Anon stared at the ceiling in silence. Mistake couldn't see his face in the dark room, even as she craned her neck in search of an expression. With a sudden cough, and a quick swipe with his hand underneath his eye, Anon seemed to return to the living world.

"Damn, girl, I haven't heard something like that come from anyone but a therapist. Are you sure you're seven?"

"Almost eight!" Mistake smiled and flopped back in her bed. "And I told you, I'm good with people. I know what to say to get them to feel how I want."

"Wait." Anon sat up slightly. "So was that all a lie? You don't actually think any of that?"

"Night dad.~" Mistake rolled over and pulled up the covers.

"No, really, did you mean that?"

"Go to sleep."

"Well I can't go to bed if you leave me like that! Mistake? Mistake, I can't sleep!"

~

"Hey, Misery. Misery. Misery! Look, I hate to wake you from your beauty sleep, but we have to get to work if you want to get out of here."

Misery cracked open an eye. She had fallen asleep in a sitting position, holed legs dangling off the edge of the podium and her back hunched forward. Now awake, she was suddenly aware of the precarious stance, causing her to gasp and sit up straight. She regained her balance and turned to the source of the voice that had awoken her, Star, who stood on the floor below, looking up at her impatiently.

"Well? Come on. We have to find some way out of this town. The bus isn't an option anymore."

Misery rubbed her eyes and dropped the the floor with a quick burst from her wings, landing softly and without a sound. "I tried to stay awake for most of the night. Did anything happen while I was sleeping?"

"Yes. Our mom showed up, gave us all hugs, told us how to get to our home planet and flew off on a rocketship made of pure gold." Star stared at her blankly. "Oh, wait, no, she's still miles and miles away. And she's not going to get any closer unless we find a way out of Barstow. So get up and come on, I've already got a group ready to scout with us."

Misery blinked a few times and looked past him. A few of her brothers waved at her from the door, beckoning outside. Filling the pews, and the spaces between them, were a hundred-plus of her brothers and sisters, some wide awake, some waking up, and some still fast asleep. Whistle yawned from her spot on the floor next to the stage, raising her arms to the air and inviting the morning air into her lungs. Misery kicked her lightly to get her attention and jabbed her head in the direction of the exit.

"I'm heading out. No one leaves or enters the church. In fact, we should be taking a look around the place. Get everyone to gather anything useful they can find. If it's light enough to carry and not nailed to the floor, I want it piled in the center of the room by the time I get back.

Whistle saluted lazily and rolled onto her side, trying to get out of the sunlight that was pouring in from the ceiling window. "I got it, Misery, I got it. Don't worry about us."

Misery nodded curtly and spun around on her heel, pushing past Star and towards the door. She motioned for the three children standing by the exit to fall in step behind her, and they did. Star caught up to her and joined her by her side as they left the church and stepped out into the dry, hot sun of Barstow's streets.

"Alright, so here's the deal, Misery. I figure we're already on borrowed time and the longer we play this crazy game the higher the chances of everything falling

apart. So we need to get to Vegas as soon as possible before that happens, yeah?"

Misery nodded. She knew that it was only a matter of time as well. Too many things could go wrong, and none of the cards were on their table. "I agree. But the question is, how do we get to Vegas?"

"I've been thinking about it." Star gestured at the church behind him, just as they rounded a corner and put it out of sight. "If we plan on bringing all of them along, there aren't many options. Unless we can get that bus up and running again, the only other way I see it happening is by train."

"Train?"

"You'll see in a second." Star gestured ahead of him. "We took a slight detour on our way back to the bus last night, when we went to gather everyone else. Turns out Barstow has quite a few rails running through it, and a train station. Vegas is the only real settlement worth visiting to the East of here, and I can guarantee you one of these trains leads there."

Just as Star finished his sentence, they turned the last corner. A wide stretch of train tracks sprawled out before Misery, with a few buildings on the other side marking the edge of the town. A bridge spanned out across it, apparently being the only way across. A few trains were already stopped beneath the bridge, either refueling or transferring cargo one way or the other.

Misery stared at the scene before her in silent calculation before turning back to Star.

"So, the trains are an option. Though I suppose the hard part would be to tell which ones are going to Vegas, and then getting everyone on board without getting seen. It would be much easier to get the bus working again."

Misery turned to face him and raised a curious eyebrow. "You mentioned that before, actually. About getting the bus working again. Do you have an idea?"

Star nodded with a stoic expression. "Maybe. See, buses don't run on normal gas like other cars. They refuel at special stations in bus garages, which you can only get into if your bus is from the same company. There's a very slim chance, but a chance nonetheless, that there might be one of those stations here in Barstow. Like I said, slim, but enough of a chance to at the very least be considered."

Misery nodded slowly. "I understand. Speaking of the bus, though... I want to go back, to check on the bus driver. We should have brought him with us last night. I want to make sure he's not hurt, or worse, told someone about what happened."

Star nodded and clapped his hands, getting the attention of their escorts. "Sounds good. We'll keep an eye out for other options on our way, too. The sooner we get out of here, the better."

The walk to the parking lot took a few minutes longer than either Star or Misery were expecting. The summer heat was unbearably sweltering, slowing down their progress significantly. When they finally arrived, Misery pointed out an area behind a nearby dentist's office where they could spy upon the bus without being seen. A row of heads peaked from around the corner of the building, careful not to extend themselves too far in case of being spotted.

That early in the morning, business at the grocery store was rather slow. Almost no cars populated the parking lot, with only a few dotted across the asphalt sparsely. The charter bus sat in the middle of the lot, shimmering in the heat like a desert mirage. Misery spotted the bus driver immediately, standing off to the side of the bus and talking to a man. He seemed confused as he tried to explain the situation and why his bus was parked incorrectly, and why he couldn't move it somewhere else. Misery felt relief as she noticed that he spoke with exaggerated arm movements, sighing happily as she heard his angry shouts drift across the parking lot to her ears. It meant that he was himself again, no longer burdened by the glowing green energy in his eyes.

Star noticed too. "He seems to be back to normal. If we can refuel the bus, can you take control again?"

Misery turned and glared at Star, who held up his hands as if accused of murder. "No. Not again. Not ever again."

"Jeez, alright. I'm just saying." He sighed. "Look, if you want to get to mother, you're going to have to use

everything at your disposal." He poked at her forehead a few times. "Everything. Even the stuff that God would consider cheating."

Misery grunted and took one last look at the bus driver before turning away. "Well, he's alright. A bit shaken, probably confused, and stuck here like us, but alright. That's good enough for me. Come on, let's scout out the rest of the town before it gets too active."

~

Whistle leaned back against the wall, picking at the peeling paint as she watched the pile of assorted items growing in the center of the assembly room. Children filed in and out of the room, dropping off pieces of clutter they found throughout the abandoned halls of the church. One of the boys, Pocket, entered, dragging an empty metal bucket behind him. With a grunt, he lobbed it on to the pile and spun around on his heel to find something else.

Whistle whistled. "Hey, Pocket. Over here."

"What?" Pocket rolled his eyes and walked over, arms crossed impatiently.

"How close are you to finishing? How many rooms do you have to clear?"

"Well, we already emptied the kitchen and the foyer. The closet in the hall has a lot more stuff in it than we

thought and we're still trying to find people who'll actually go in the bathroom." He scrunched up his face in disgust as he recalled the stench. "None of that progress was made with help from you, I might add."

"Hey, Misery put me in charge. I have to oversee everything."

"Well, I still think you're just being lazy." He grunted and gestured towards the ever-growing pile of trinkets. "I don't get why we're doing this in the first place. All of this stuff is just junk."

Whistle shrugged. "I don't get it either. But, if Misery wants it, she gets it."

Pocket furrowed his brow and opened his mouth to say something, but let the thought die in his throat. He shrugged. "I guess."

"Someone is coming!" Pocket and Whistle were interrupted as Faith pointed out of the front window with urgency, her voice drifting in from the foyer.

"Who is it?" Whistle frowned worriedly.

"I dunno, some lady. She's almost here!"

Whistle widened her eyes in panic and brought her fingers up to her mouth. Placing them between her lips and taking a deep breath, she delivered a whistle loud enough to wake the dead. Pocket covered his ears with a

wince of pain as his sister smiled, proud of her best and loudest whistle yet. Now having the attention of every abomination in the church, she shouted at the top of her lungs.

"Alright, everyone, there's a stranger coming! Crawl into whatever corner you can find and hide!"

Each child dropped what they were doing and dove into their respective hiding spots. The deteriorated pews filled quickly as the kids flung themselves behind them face-first, laying down on their stomachs and hoping that the mystery woman wouldn't venture far into the building, and the backs were tall enough to keep them out of sight. As Whistle clambered behind the podium, Pocket realized that most if not all of the obvious hiding places were taken.

In a mad dash, Pocket ran out into the foyer. Faith hissed at him from underneath a nearby table, pointing away and frantically whispering at him to hide. He looked about, trying to find even the most basic place to conceal himself. A light fixture dangled from the ceiling above, presenting one of the only hiding spots left in the whole building.

With newfound determination, Pocket lept forward. Faith hissed louder as he jumped on top of her table. Using his wings to propel him and keep him balanced, he clambered up against the wall, climbing all the way to the ceiling with gusts from his wings. Pushing off with his legs in a risky leap, he launched himself across the room, ending his pseudo-flight by grabbing hold of the light in the center of the room. He swung

from it for a few seconds before finally settling down, hanging in the air. Faith let out a relieved sigh just as the front door opened.

A woman, looking to be somewhere about 20 years of age, entered the room. She peeked her head through the doorway, her bright red hair glowing with the sunlight pouring in from behind her. She put her foot forward and came into full view. Pocket watched her carefully as she tiptoed around, glancing around the dark room with interest. She stopped directly underneath Pocket's hiding place, eyes scanning her surroundings. As he stared down at her suspiciously, he didn't notice the cracks forming in the ceiling, warnings of what was to come.

Running out of the little strength that it had left, the ceiling gave out. The light shuddered and dropped a few inches, only kept in the air by the wires that supported it. Pocket yelped and lost his grip in surprise, just as the woman looked up to investigate the commotion. She gasped and quickly brought her arms up to catch him. Pocket fell into her open arms, apparently as surprised to be caught as the woman was to catch him. Her blue eyes sparkled with curiosity as she looked the boy over, checking to make sure he was alright. Pocket stared up at her awkwardly, his eyes unblinking.

"... hey."

"Hello." The woman raised an eyebrow.

"... can you put me down?" Out of the corner of his eye, Pocket could see his brothers and sisters leaving their hiding spots, skulking out of their dark corners and creeping up on the intruders. The woman was still unaware.

"Oh, yeah. Sure." The woman swung Pocket around and dropped him on his feet. "What are you doing in here, all alone? How did you even get up there...?" She glanced up towards the ceiling in confusion.

Pocket continued to stare at her with suspicion. He backed away from her without saying any words. The woman began to repeat her question, but stopped dead in the middle of her thoughts when she finally noticed the horde beginning to form around her. She slowly spun around, finding that she was now completely surrounded by the strange looking children. The door where she had come in was blocked.

"I'm not alone." Pocket stepped backward into the crowd, disappearing from sight.

The woman chuckled nervously, pointing a thumb at the door behind her. "I can... just leave, if I'm interrupting something. It's no trouble at all, really. I'll just get going."

The children glared at her and continued to stand around her, blocking any exits. An awkward silence ensued as neither human nor abomination knew what to

say next. Finally, Whistle spoke from the back of the crowd.

"Get her. Misery doesn't want any witnesses."

~

Anon grunted as the sunlight poured through the window into his eyes. As he rolled over to try and get comfortable, he found himself falling out of the couch and on to the floor. Mistake was awoken by the thud and the following string of swears. She rubbed her eyes and yawned, sitting up in her bed. She smiled as she spotted her father, rubbing his forehead and kicking the couch before heading into the bathroom to get ready.

A few minutes later, Anonymous grabbed his room key and the pair headed out the door. They descended the stairs down to the lobby, Mistake trudging along slowly as she remained in the process of waking up. The motel owner, Mrs. Vasquez, stood behind the check-in counter, browsing through a magazine. She waved happily as she saw them come down the stairs.

"Oh, hello, you two! Good morning, Lauren, you look like you slept well."

"Yeah, waking up's the hard part." Mistake yawned. "Dad, can I give the motel lady a hug?"

Anon sighed. "Yeah, make it quick. We have to hit the road soon."

"Oh, well I'd be happy to give a hug to a sweet little girl like you!" The older woman stepped out from behind the counter and kneeled down, opening her arms. Mistake scurried forward and embraced her in a hug as Anon tapped his foot impatiently.

"Alright, that's enough of that. Come on. I'm pretty sure if we don't get our car now the mechanics are going to turn it into scrap."

Mistake waved goodbye to Mrs. Vasquez as they left the motel behind, heading to the street. Anon glared at the tacky signs and early rising pedestrians around him as he strolled down the street, daughter beside him.

"I've seen too much of this damn town. The sooner we leave, the better."

"Oh, it's not so bad." Mistake marched along the sidewalk with exaggerated strides, stomping along the concrete and swaying her arms with newfound energy. "The Mrs. Vasquez is really nice. She gives really tasty hugs."

"Tasty hugs? What, some hugs taste better than others?"

"Mhm! I think it depends on how the person means it. You know, sometimes when you give a hug you're doing it just because you know you're supposed to, but sometimes you give a hug because you really love someone. Sometimes you give a hug because you know they need it. Sometimes you give a hug because you need it." She shrugged. "And

usually, everyone's hugs just taste a little different no matter what."

Anon raised an eyebrow. "Yeah? What do my hugs taste like?"

Mistake rolled her eyes. "What does the color blue look like?"

"It looks... blue?"

"And your hugs taste like hugs." Mistake smirked. "I can't really explain it to you if you have no experience with it. It's like trying to tell a blind person what it's like to see. It isn't like eating normal food."

"Fair enough. Let's talk about something else, then."

"Ok! Wanna know what I found in my sock-"

Anon cut her off. "On second thought, the repair shop isn't fair off. Let's enjoy the morning silence."

Mistake huffed, but let it go. The pair rounded the corner, bringing the mechanic's shop into view. One of the sliding garage doors was open, letting the two of them watch as several men scurried around the cars inside. One of the cars, the broken down Neon that they had driven into the town, had several people working on it. Within a few moments, the mechanic they had spoken to in the office pushed himself out from underneath the car and immediately noticed the spectators. He waved with a

smile, which Mistake returned, and made his way over to them.

"As you can see, the repairs are well underway." He wiped oil from his hands on his pants with a proud beam.

"The only thing I can see is that the car isn't fixed yet." Anon scowled. "Our deal was tomorrow morning. It's tomorrow morning."

The mechanic's smile didn't even waver. "We had to call in for a part. But we have it now, and it'll be installed in no time. The end of the hour, tops."

Anon scowled deeper and leaned forward. "Make sure that's right. Because if it's not done by then you don't get your bonus."

The mechanic glanced behind him and nudged Anon with his elbow. "Let's not talk about the bonus in front of the boys, eh?"

"You have an hour." Anonymous took Mistake by the hand and led her away. "No longer than that. Get it done."

Mistake groaned as they left the mechanic fade behind them. "Ugh, what are we going to do for an hour?"

"No idea. There's really not anything to do in Tehachapi. But I just realized I left my wallet in the motel room. We'll have to go get that back."

As they walked back down the street to the motel, Mistake posed a question that had been on her mind. "How do you think they're doing?"

"Your brothers and sisters?" Anon scoffed. "Probably better than we are. They're a resourceful bunch, and there's always been a couple of smart kids in the bunch that are probably keeping the group together."

Mistake could tell her father was actually very worried by the way he bit the inside of his cheek as he finished his sentence, but she accepted the answer anyways, not wanting to keep pressing him and causing him stress. As they rounded the corner once more, the motel came in sight. Anon pushed open the door and stepped inside, daughter in tow. Mrs. Vasquez was still positioned behind the counter, smiling as ever.

"Oh, welcome back! I had a hunch you'd be here soon."

"Well, it's not by choice." Anon rolled his eyes. "Mechanics being mechanics."

"Oh, I know that story." Mrs. Vasquez pointed up the stairs. "By the way, there was a visitor here looking for you. Like I said, I had a feeling you'd be back, so I sent him up to your room and told him you'd be here shortly. He should be waiting for you inside."

"A visitor?" Anon frowned. "I wasn't expecting any visitors."

"Well, he said he knew you. He knew your name and he knew how you looked."

"What about him? The man, what was his name?"

"Ummm... I believe he said he was a Jacob. Jacob Longfellow."

"Oh, why didn't you say so?" Anon smiled and headed for the stairs. "I'll go up and see him. Mistake, you wait here with the nice lady, alright? I'll be right back down."

Mistake raised an eyebrow with confusion, but nodded and sat down on one of the waiting benches. Anon gave her a quick nod and started up the stairs. "I'll be back in a second."

Anon crept up the stairs as silently as possible, keeping close to the side of the stairwell to avoid creaking the old wooden steps. Carefully, he peeked around the top of the stairwell. The hallway was empty, and silent, with no sign of the mysterious visitor to be seen. The door to his room was closed shut, supposedly with the man inside of it.

The issue was, Anonymous didn't know anyone named Jacob Longfellow. Which means he didn't know the person who met Mrs. Vasquez, and he didn't know the person now in his room. Any stranger that had his name and description was not someone that Anon trusted. Taking extra care not to make any noise, Anon walked down the hall and leaned up against his room door, pressing his ear against it to try and listen inside.

From within the room, Anon could hear someone moving around. He heard the sounds of drawers sliding open and shut, as if the stranger was looking around the room for something. Suddenly, the noises stopped, and Anon couldn't hear anything no matter how hard he strained his ears. Taking a deep breath to steady himself, Anon braced himself against the door. He counted to three in his head, and at the coming of the third number, he pushed the door open and barreled into the room with a charge.

The sudden attack startled and stunned the intruder, causing him to jump in surprise and stumble with the wallet he held in his hands: Anon's wallet. His face was hidden by his wide-brimmed hat and high-collared trenchcoat. The only parts of his head that were visible were his brown eyes, which locked with Anon's as they stared each other down. Anon cracked his neck and cleared his throat.

"I don't know who you are, or what you want, so-"

The man recovered from his shock quickly, dropping the wallet and pulling a revolver out of his coat. The iridescent white handle of the weapon shimmered as he raised it from his pocket and pointed it at Anon in one smooth motion, his hand steady.

"Woah, there, Dirty Harry, no need for that." Anon widened his eyes and slowly raised his arms in the air, taking a few steps back by instinct. "There's some cash in the wallet. Don't bother looking around the room for

valuables, I scopped the place out and the most expensive thing here is probably the soap in the bathroom."

"Where's the creature?" The man spoke with a raspy voice, in some thick accent Anon didn't recognize.

"Creature? What creature?"

"The little girl." The mysterious man cocked the hammer on his revolver. "Tell me. Now."

"Calm down." Anon stepped to the side, by the nightstand, and jerked a thumb at the door. "She's out there. In the hallway. What do you want with her?"

"Stand there and be silent." The man kept his weapon pointed in Anon's direction as he strode silently towards the door. As the man's head peeked out into the hallway, Anon moved his hands behind his back. One of them clenched tightly around the neck of the lamp that sat on the bedstand.

"You're lying. The girl isn't there." The man returned and stood a few feet away from Anon, gun pointed at his chest. "You will lead me to her. No games. If you lie to me again, or try and trick me, you get shot."

"Look, I'm sure we can talk about this. Maybe we ca-" Anon interrupted his own sentence as he swung the lamp from behind him, yanking its cord out of the socket and slamming it against the man's hand. The lamp shattered from the force, sending the gun flying out of the man's

grip and onto the bed. With an angry grunt, he followed it with a shove, pushing the man to the ground.

Anon followed the man to the ground and pinned him there, wrapping his hands around his throat. "Who are you? What do you want with us?"

Refusing to reply, the man shifted his weight and slammed Anon's head against the wall. With a powerful knee to the gut, he escaped from Anon's grasp, gasping for air. Anon desperately grabbed for a leg to bring the fight back down to the ground, only to gain a heavy kick to the face from the man's boot. He swore and reeled back, giving the man time to make his escape. Anon heard the window shatter from the other side of the room, and he could see the man climbing out as he recovered from the blow. The room was empty by the time he pushed himself up.

Anon staggered to his feet and wiped the blood from his face, glancing around the room. His wallet, nothing missing from it, sat on the floor. Whoever it was hadn't broken in to do an average robbery, if that wasn't already blatantly obvious. The pearl-handled revolver still sat on the bed, glimmering. Anon grabbed it and ran for the window, looking for his target. As he was expecting, he saw nothing: the man was already long gone. He sighed and lifted up his shirt, sliding the revolver into his pants. Once lowered back down, the shirt obscured the revolver from view once more.

Anon ran down the stairs, speed now more important to him than caution. Walking into the lobby with a brisk pace, he took a very confused Mistake by the

hand and led her towards the door. Mrs. Vasquez gasped as she saw the wound on his forehead.

"Is everything alright, Mr.-"

"We're checking out, Mrs. Vasquez."

"Oh, well, I need your signat-" The sound of the room key hitting her desk lifted her eyes from her paperwork. She glanced up to realize that she was speaking to an empty room.

"Who is she?" Misery stared into the green slime as Whistle shrugged.

"I dunno."

"Well she has to have a NAME, doesn't she?"

"Well, it's not as if we can ask her right now. Not when she's under all that slime."

"Then get her out." Misery poked at the mound, watching it jiggle. "Get some water, and give her some air. We need to have a chat."

"Pocket!" Whistle turned and screamed over her shoulder. "Get the bucket you found earlier! Fill it with water!"

"Jeez, you don't have to shout, I'm right here." Pocket grumbled and rubbed his ears, departing from the group that surrounded the ensnared woman.

"And how long has she been like this, again?" Star stared into the slime, taking in the woman's features.

"We got her right after she walked in, which was about thirty minutes ago. While you two were still out." Whistle pointed to both Misery and Star. "I sent Jet out to find you and let you know, but by the time he got off his butt and was ready to go, you guys had already come back on your own."

"But that still doesn't tell us why she came here. And you-" Misery pointed an accusatory finger at Whistle, "why didn't you make everyone hide? Didn't you say you saw her coming?"

"We did hide!" Whistle raised her voice in her own defense. "Faith spotted her through the window and we all took a hiding spot. She only found us because Pocket decided he would practice his circus act."

"Hey!" Pocket strolled through the foyer with an empty bucket in his arms, heading for the bathroom. "It's not my fault the ceiling decided to fall apart when it did. And I didn't WANT to hide up there in the first place. Maybe if Faith didn't have such a giant butt I would have been able to squeeze under the table with her."

"Yeah, well-" Before Whistle could finish, Misery cut off their bickering with a sharp hiss.

"Were you all wearing your disguises? She didn't see any of us in our... normal form?"

"I... I'm pretty sure, yeah." Whistle nodded slowly.
"Everyone who was in sight was disguised, anyways. So everyone that mattered."

"So she doesn't know what we really are."

"To be fair, we don't really know what we are either."
Star shrugged. "You know, besides just weird."

Misery rolled her eyes. "Even if she doesn't know what we look like, she does know that we spit green slime that traps people. That should be enough to tip her off that we're not normal children."

"I need some help in here!" Pocket called out from the bathroom. "This thing is waaay too heavy when it's full."

Misery motioned for Star to help, and with a sigh, he left the group and headed for the bathroom. Protests of discomfort could be heard all throughout the church as Star discovered the smell inside, giving Whistle a fit of giggles. Misery watched anxiously as the two boys waddled out of the bathroom together, a bucket full of water between them. Both wore twisted, scrunched up faces as they tried to move as fast as possible away from the stench.

"Whoever was in that bathroom before we showed up, they left something of questionable origin in that toilet." Star dropped his side of the bucket slightly before Pocket let go of his, causing the water to slosh over the sides as the bucket landed at an uneven angle. "I think, at one point, it was organic. Now, I'm fairly sure if it falls under the category of 'unholy eldritch abomination'."

"Shut up and get to work. I want to talk to our visitor." Misery pointed at the woman frozen in time.

"Jeez, Mis, we were getting to it." Pocket grunted and grabbed hold of his side of the bucket once more. "Sleep on a pea last night, your highness? You seem cranky."

"Stop talking and lift, Pocket. This thing is heavy." Star huffed and lifted his side of the bucket with all of his strength. "We dump on the count of three, right?"

"Right."

"Right, then." Star cleared his throat. "One. Two..." The pair swung their arms back to build momentum. "Three!" With a heave, the boys threw the bucket forward, emptying the contents on the waiting face of the woman.

As soon as the water made contact, several children stepped forward to help clear the slime out of the way. Their fingers clawed at the viscous green compound as it started to dissolve, pulling it away from the woman's face. The layers started to fade away as the

water washed them down to the floor, and with a few more tugs from Misery, the final membrane broke away. The woman sputtered, emptying her mouth of both slime and water as she struggled for breath.

Misery leaned towards Star to whisper. "I know the bathroom was disgusting, but was that water clean?"

"Clean enough." Star shrugged.

As the woman spit out the remaining foreign material from her mouth, Misery folded her arms behind her back and leaned forward. "Name, lady?"

The woman blinked a few times, trying to get her eyes adjusted to the light. "W-what?"

"Name. Everyone's got one. I want yours."

"Uh... Molly." Molly gulped, still barely able to see anything. "Molly McKenzie."

"And who sent you here, Molly?"

"No one sent me."

"Answer me truthfully, or we put you back in there."

"I am! No one sent me." Molly repeated herself, louder the second time. "I was just jogging by like I do every day and I thought I heard some weird noises. So I came in to check it out."

Misery leaned closer and stared into Molly's eyes. They locked stares as they studied each other's faces, now that Molly's vision was finally whole. Misery nodded ever so slightly and let out a sigh, spinning around on her heel and walking away.

"She's free to go. Pocket, dig her out. Someone else help him."

Pocket groaned and picked up the empty bucket, heading back to the bathroom with a grimace. Star gaped at Misery with a look of disbelief before grabbing Pocket by the arm and motioning for him to stay where he was. "You can't be serious, Misery. We can't let her walk away now, she's seen way too much!"

"Yeah, and what is she going to do?" Misery spun around once more, giving Star a deadly glare. "Go home and talk about the bug people from Mars who trapped her in space-goo?" Misery motioned towards Molly, who was still snared chest-down in gel. "You'll be quiet about all this, won't you?"

"Girl, if you want privacy, you can have it. I'll shut my mouth and you won't see me ever again." Molly struggled around in her prison, trying to get her arms free. "I would make the mouth-lock motion, throw away the key thing, but you know. Still stuck in here."

"Even so." Star shook his head. "What if she's lying? She could be with the police. Or higher up in the government."

Maybe she's some kind of crazy UFO lady who thought she'd take a crack at alien hunting. Who's to say she won't lie about it now and come back with help later?"

"And are you suggesting we take her with us? You don't think she'll slow us down at all?"

"Well, I don't see anything wrong with just leaving her here. Someone has to come by eventually, and they'll take care of her."

"Star, we specifically chose this place BECAUSE people wouldn't come by on a regular basis."

"For the record, I would like to cast a vote against the 'staying here' thing. I enjoy moving." Molly spoke up. "And, uh, eating and drinking on a regular basis."

"Well, regardless of what we do with her in the end, we can't let her go now." Star shook his head stubbornly. "It's far too risky."

"I don't care." Misery crossed her arms. "I'm in charge. I make the decisions. And my decision has been made. She goes."

"I can't follow through with your decision if it puts us in a position of danger." Star crossed his own arms in return. "In fact, I say we take a vote for once. Who else here thinks letting her go is a bad idea?" Star turned around and held out his arms expectantly, trying to get a response from the small group of children.

Misery glared at everyone in the room. "No one raises their hand."

Whistle rubbed the back of her neck and awkwardly glanced between Star and Misery. Pocket stared forward in silence for a few moments before slowly raising his hand up to the sky. Several other children behind him glanced at each other before nodding and doing the same, raising their hands as well.

Whistle took a sharp breath and nudged her brother. "Pocket! Misery said-"

"I'm tired of listening to what Misery says." He tried his best to pretend like he didn't notice the burning stare aimed at him from Misery's direction. "It's a bad idea, I don't care how many times she tells us that it isn't."

"Well, I'd say that's at least four or five votes against two, Misery." Star nodded. "I'm sure we can find some kind of compromise that will-"

"No." Misery growled. "There will be no compromise. There are no votes. There are no opinions." Misery stomped her foot and jabbed her finger at Star. "There is only me, my word, and the expectation that it is followed to the very letter." With each point she made, Misery drove her finger into his chest.

Star scowled and pushed her back, causing her to hiss in anger. "Well, I'm sorry I'm the one to tell you this, sis,

but I think we've all pretty much had enough of your poor decisions. We followed you because you had a plan. Now, your plan has been wasted. And we're going with Plan B."

Misery leaned forward and stuck her face directly into Star's, locking eyes with him in a mutual unwavering glare. The two opposing forces stood there in the center of the room in without a word as the seconds ticked by, each feeling like an hour. The other children, and one confused adult, watched with interest to see who would win the silent war. Molly coughed and cleared her throat from her position off to the side, trying to break apart the awkward encounter. Misery growled lightly and spun around on her heel, heading for the congregation room.

"If you want to be in charge, you're in charge." Misery stomped as she left the foyer behind her. "I expect a full route to Las Vegas by tomorrow morning, since you think you can handle it."

Star's expression softened. "Wait, Misery, hold on. That's not what I-" He tried to speak to his sister, but she had already left the room. "Ugh. Goddamnit."

Molly frowned slightly as she watched Misery leave. "You two need to have a talk. I used to fight with my brothers and sisters too. Talks solve everything."

Star sighed and stared at Molly for a few seconds, measuring the advice of a stranger. "Yeah. Maybe you're right. Pocket, keep an eye on... what was your name? Molly? Keep an eye on Molly while I talk with Misery."

Pocket nodded silently as Star stormed into the congregation room after Misery.

~

"Alright... I think... no, I still don't get it. Start over."
Mistake shook her head in confusion. "Someone tried to shoot you?"

"Jesus. This is the third time you've made me do this. You get the abridged version, this time." Anon honked at the car in front of him, which was driving too slow for his liking. "No. No one tried to shoot me. The man wasn't there to kill me. If he wanted to, he could have done it at any time. So, this is what happened: there was a man in the motel room wearing a trenchcoat and hat. He pointed a gun at me and asked me where you were. I lied and got in a fight with him, and he stunned me and escaped through the second story window. Then I came back downstairs and we left as soon as we could."

Luckily, after their morning visit, the mechanic had kicked himself into gear. The car was in working condition by the time they arrived, and with a considerably lighter wallet, the duo had taken to the road as soon as possible. Now they drove towards the outskirts of Tehachapi, finally back on their way to Vegas, and Mistake wanted to know what the rush was about.

"You said a guy in a trenchcoat? What's a trenchcoat?"

"It's like, uh... a big goofy mix between a jacket and a suit. Commonly worn by cartoon spies, and sometimes black leather variants make their way onto badass 90's movie anti-heroes."

"Oh!" Mistake grinned with pride as she remembered something. "I saw a guy like that too! At the diner. He stared at me for a little while. It was creepy."

"Yeah, I figured he had to have been following us for a while." Anon spun the wheel and stepped on the gas, pulling ahead of the car ahead of him. "And I'm pretty sure he knows what you are. What you REALLY are. He wanted you, specifically, he wasn't there just to steal my wallet."

"You think he might be a spy? For the government, or whatever?"

"I'm not one for conspiracy theories, mind you." Anon shrugged. "I did stick my did into some kind of alien, though, so I figure there must be some level of truth to them."

Mistake sighed deeply in thought. "So, you have nothing on this guy? No ID? No name? You said you were choking him, earlier, so you must have seen his face."

"Yeah, of course I saw his face." Anon nodded. "He... he had a..." Anon seemed disoriented as he tried to think of the man's face. "A... a big... fuck, it's gone. I can't remember anything about his face."

"So, what DO you remember about him?"

"Well, he had a really thick accent. I couldn't tell where it was from, though. Maybe some nordic dialect? Danish or Swedish or something. Oh, and he left this behind." Anon lifted his shirt slightly, putting the revolver in view. Mistake gasped and brought her hands up to her mouth as Anon let his shirt fall back down. "I know, I know. Guns can be scary. I promise, I'll never shoot it at someone. It's only there as a deterrent, to keep people from-"

"Can I shoot it? Please?" Mistake's shocked face transitioned to a wide grin in under a second. "Just at like, a rock or something. Not a person. Well, maybe a person. Just in the leg. A foot. A toe." Anon took his eyes off the road for a moment to give Mistake a troubled stare. "No? No shooting people? Not even if it's a bad guy? Alright, I'll still take the rock. But really, I want to shoot it."

Anon turned back to the road and kept driving. "Well, I was worried that the gun was going to scare you. Now I'm scared that the gun is going to end up in your hands somehow."

"That would be so awesome." Mistake stuck her tongue out and pretended to draw a revolver from an invisible holster at her hip, taking aim at the windshield. She made a series of banging noises and pretended to blow the smoke rising from her barrel, spinning her weapon and returning it back to her holster.

Anon shook his head. "You can get a gun when you're older. And living a few thousand miles away from me."

Mistake grinned and tipped her imaginary cowgirl hat, chewing on a piece of nonexistent straw.

~

"Misery? Hey, Misery? Sis? You in here?"

Star called out through the crowd, looking for the girl. The ancient congregation room was falling apart from the sudden unexpected use, with a hundred new occupants to harbor and no one to repair it to its previous condition. Walls peeled and ceilings began to buckle, their weight starting to finally outdo the supports holding them up. As children milled about and wrestled with each other, Star stroked a hand through his short black hair and sighed.

"Misery? Hello?" Star paused to poke one of his brothers, Trip, on the shoulder. "Hey, have you seen Misery?"

Trip frowned and pointed towards the stage. "Over by the podium, I think. She looked like something was wrong."

"Thanks." Star nodded and patted him on the back before heading for the podium he could see standing over the sea of his siblings.

With a short hop, he found his way on top of the stage, glancing around. Most of his siblings were down below in the pews, leaving the stage nearly clear. A couple girls sat off to the side, one dangling her legs over the side of the stage and braiding the hair of the other sister who sat on the floor in front of her. Star was still unable to spot Misery. He sighed once more and leaned around the side of the podium, finally spotting her squatting in its shadow with her knees brought up to her face.

"Misery?"

"Go away."

Star crossed his arms and stood there for several moments. Misery didn't budge from her position.

"I just want to talk."

"And I said go away."

Star winced as he heard one of his brothers scream from the back of the room. "Could you have chosen a quieter place to mope, at least?"

"There is no quiet place in this church."

"Then give me a second to make one." Star sucked in a deep breath and turned to face the crowd in rear of him.

"Everyone! All'ya! Out! Go in the foyer or something. Meet our new guest."

A wave of disgruntled moans rose up from the crowd as they began their arduous task of standing up to leave, some of them tripping over the clutter piled up in the center of the room. Jet gave Star a nasty glare before being pulled away by the collar by another one of his brothers. He was the last one out the door before it swung shut behind the crowd, leaving the two siblings alone together in the first moment of silence either had experienced in a while.

Star sat down in front of Misery and crossed his legs, dropping his disguise as he did so. His human legs flashed with green flame for a moment before being replaced with a pair of holed chitinous appendages. He stared at her for a few moments, not receiving any response. Misery stared down into her lap, knees brought up to her forehead.

"Misery. Please."

A few more seconds passed. Suddenly, and without a word, Misery's form flashed with green flame as well, her disguise fading away instantaneously. Slowly, she lowered her knees away from her face and looked up at Star with a furrowed brow.

"What do you want?"

Star smiled, almost too small to be noticeable. "I just want to talk. And we should do it while we still can, we don't know how long this place is going to stay quiet."

Misery scooted across the floor and joined her brother's side, gazing out over the empty congregation room. The pile of collected trash blended in with the rest of the decayed interior, almost as if it were part of the same whole. Through years of abandonment and neglect, the junk in the church had formed a bond with the church itself. It didn't make it any more useful, though, and Misery sighed as she took in the sight.

"I don't know what I was expecting from all this... junk. I thought they might find something useful. But, again, guess it was just another one of my stupid ideas."

"Well, that's not entirely fair." Star shrugged. "We did use the bucket. And besides, it's not like they're doing anything anyways. Might as well put them to work."

"Yeah, I guess." Misery leaned forward, planting her head in her hands and her elbows in her lap. "It was still a bad idea, though, just like stealing the bus and just like trying to let Molly go. Maybe this whole thing was a bad idea from the start. You really should be in charge."

"Well, if coming out here to find mom was a bad idea, then I guess I'm guilty of thinking of it too. So I can't be in charge either." Star shrugged.

Misery arched an eyebrow. "No, but coming out here was my idea. I was the one that found her online. You helped, I guess, but it was my idea."

"Well, coming out to see mom, yeah. That was your idea. But I was thinking about running away long before you came up with this trip." Star scratched the base of his neck, looking down at the floor to avoid eye contact with Misery. "I... never really did intend on coming back home at the end of this."

"Really?" Misery sat up, no starting to get interested. "Where were you going to go?"

"Anywhere." Star stared up at the ceiling now, recalling past thoughts. "I just remember thinking to myself that anywhere was better than home. I was sick of being stuck in that house, in that town, with nothing to do. It was driving me mad." Star smiled weakly. "This is, in a strange way, the most fun I've had in years."

"What was your plan?"

"Get on a bus and go. Kinda like our plan now, but somehow even worse. I would have done it alone, though, I don't think I could have rallied the others to come with me even if I wanted to." Star eyed his sister before addressing her. "You're good at that, you know. Rallying them. They listen to you. They don't listen to me."

"Well, they used to listen to me." Misery grunted and flopped back onto the stage floor, staring up at the

window in the ceiling as dim rays of sunlight poured in. "It seems they've decided they like your leadership more than mine."

"They don't like my leadership, they like my ideas." Star corrected her. "There's a big difference. A leader pulls people together and keeps them together. That doesn't necessarily mean they know the right thing to do. Sometimes a leader needs advice from time to time so they stay on track. Sometimes someone with better ideas comes in and steals the audience, but then doesn't know what to do with them." Star shrugged. "People- and, whatever we are- are weird."

Misery stared at her brother for a long while, taking in his words. Finally, she sat up and brushed her hair to the side. "You're a smart one, Star. Smarter than me. I should have just brought you alone and left everyone else at home. You're worth more than all of them combined."

Star grinned. "Maybe we could still do that."

Misery raised an eyebrow and gestured for him to continue.

"Well, what if we just went to Vegas? Just us two? We could leave the rest of them here, and go off on our own."

Misery dwelled on it for a few seconds. "Do you think we could do that? Just leave them here? What if they got into trouble?" Misery rolled her eyes and corrected

herself. "Or, should I say, what will happen when they DO get into trouble?"

"We won't be gone for long. Just long enough to get to Vegas, find mother, get some answers, and then get back. Hit and run. We can tell the rest they have to stay here and watch Molly or something. Faith or Jet could probably wrangle them if they get out of control."

Misery nodded slowly. "That could work, actually. It'd make it much easier to use the trains, too. Two passengers are easier to sneak on than a hundred. And, it solves the Molly issue, or at least puts it on hold until after we already get back."

"Everyone wins."

"Everyone wins..."

Misery felt her mind begin to wander as she thought upon the option. She sat up and swept her eyes across the wreckage of what used to be a cheerful place of worship. She could almost see the ghosts of the past floating in between the pews as they talked amongst one another and waited for the service to start. She let her imagination run wild, bringing solidity to the shapes: soon she recognized them as people from home. Familiar faces sat in the front row, staring up at her as if she was the pastor on stage about to deliver her sermon. Her brothers and sisters, the old woman she had followed into church, even her father sat on the far end with a

bored look on his face. And for the first time since they had left, Misery felt homesick.

But something caught her attention out of the corner of her eye. Misery darted her head to look towards the back of the room. Leaning against the back wall, next to the door, was a dark feminine shape. A horn, crooked and jagged in places, extended from her forehead, and her hair dropped down to her waist. The shadows on her face seemed to shift around, never quite settling into a coherent image. Through the blurred essence, Misery could only see two things: a pair of bright green eyes, staring right back at her. Suddenly the feeling of homesickness was gone, and she only had one thought on her mind.

"What are you?" The shadow whispered to her.

"Hey, Mis." Star shook Misery by the shoulder, breaking her concentration and causing the ghostly imaginings to disappear into the air. The shadowy figure in the back was the last to go, fading away with a hiss.

Misery sighed in disappointment and turned to her brother. "Yeah?"

"Let's go check the train schedules. We can probably get in and out of Vegas in a day, maybe two if we need the extra time to find mom."

"Good idea." Misery nodded. "I'd feel better if we brought Whistle along, too. She's been helpful so far."

"If you're bringing Whistle, I'm bringing Pocket."

"Fair enough."

The siblings stared into each other's eyes for a moment before nodding in unison. Star smiled, and Misery's lip twitched upwards for a brief moment.

~

"Are we there yet?"

"I'm going to start starving you of hugs if you ask that question again. I swear."

Mistake rolled her eyes and flopped back in her seat with an exaggerated sigh. "We've been driving forever. How far away is Vegas?"

Anon glanced at his phone. "Almost two hundred miles. Which is about two more hours, give or take. We left Mojave about a half hour ago."

"Why didn't we stop there?"

"Because we're already a day behind, Mistake. I promise we'll stop in Barstow, stretch our legs a bit and maybe get myself something to eat. Then it's just a straight drive up to Vegas."

Mistake scrunched up her face and crossed her arms. "Oh, alright. Fine. But that's gonna take ages."

"It'll go faster if you stop talking."

Mistake glanced at her father in disbelief. "Really?"

"No. But if you do manage to shut up for the rest of the drive you'll make me a proud father."

Mistake stuck her tongue out at him. "Well, you can be all anti-social like that if you want. But I know what DOES make time go faster! Games!"

"Oh, God, no."

"Oh, my, yes!" Mistake clapped her hands together, her mood instantly changed. "So, what do you want to play? 'I Spy'? 'I'm thinking of an animal'? Oh, we can play the story game!"

"I think I'm going to opt out and try and listen to some music instead." Anon reached forward and messed with the radio controls. After several minutes of cursing and fruitless fiddling, the only sound the radio would produce was a constant stream of static. Anon cursed one more time, for good measure, and shut it off again. "Fine. Whatever. What's the story game?"

"Oh, yeees, that one's fun." Mistake grinned wide. "Right, so, I start, and then it's your turn, and then it's my turn again. I start with a single sentence, and then you write the next sentence. And we keep going back and forth and

write the story together until we finish. Get it?" Anon nodded. "Alright, I'll start."

Mistake rubbed her chin, deep in thought, as she tumbled over her knowledge to find a suitable start for a story. Her foot tapped on the floor as she fell deep into her thoughts, leaving the real world behind as she delved into her imagination. Suddenly, she cried out in triumph and shot her hand in the air, startling Anon and causing the car to swerve slightly.

"Alright, I got it! Are you ready?"

"I've been ready."

"OK." Mistake cleared her throat. "Two cowboys sit across from each other in the dead of night, the only light coming from the stars above and the lively fire making waves of light on the sand between them." She smiled, proud of her work, and gestured for Anon to continue.

Anon nodded and cleared his own throat. "Ahem... the end."

Mistake's smile instantly dissipated and became a disappointed glare. "You did it wrong."

"I like to leave the rest of the story to the reader's imagination. Call it an open ending, if you will."

"It's still lame."

"You're lame."

"Your face is lame."

"Good thing you're my daughter and we have similar faces, then."

Mistake let her final retort die, feeling that it had already been bested. She stared out the window and watched the desert sands pass by, imposing her own imagination over it. Desperados rode alongside the car on horseback, dodging and weaving through the desert brush as they fled from the mob of greedy bounty hunters behind them. Suddenly she had the thought of something else to share with her father.

"Hey, dad! Want to guess what I found in my sock now?"

Anon reached over and turned the radio on, filling the car with static. He winced and put his hands back on the wheel.

Mistake covered her ears as her right eye twitched compulsively. "Dad, we already figured out the radio is broken. It's just static."

Anon turned up the volume and continued driving.

TSUNDERE RAINBOW DASH

- You are Anonymous, and Rainbow Dash hates your guts.
- For some reason, this afternoon she conscripted your help and dragged you down to the lake.
- "No! You're supposed to hold it the other way!"
- You look up at the hoop in your hands. After discerning that there is no possible other way to hold it, your gaze returns to Rainbow Dash at the edge of the lake.
- You think you feel your right eye twitch.
- "What other way is there to hold it?"
- "The other way!"
- You turn to face the lake, vaguely hoping that this appeases her bitchy nature.
- "That's better."
- Normally you would have said no, considering as Dash has done nothing but give you shit since you appeared in Equestria. However, Twilight, being so devoted to her friends and cute to the point where you could never say no to her, insists that you find some way to get along with the brash mare.
- Perhaps when pigs fly.
- Before you can ask her just what the hell you're doing out here she pushes off the ground and flies up into the sky.
- You let out a sigh and shake your head.
- It doesn't take a genius to figure out what the hoop is for now.
- Seconds later, and with no warning, she reappears from the clouds at a remarkable speed.

>You think you hear the sound barrier pop, and suddenly a rainbow is coming out of her ass.

>Just when it looks like she's about to hit the lake at the speed of a fighter jet, she pulls up with impossible precision and timing.

>Dash may be a bitch, but it's not like she wishes to physically harm you, and you've seen her showing off when she's flying.

>That's why, as she's coming right for you, you don't move an inch in the split second it takes for her to fly through the hoop.

>The sheer power of her flight blasts the hoop from your hands and causes you to land right on your rear end.

>As you're nursing your possibly shattered tail bone, you hear Dash land a few feet away from you, "HAHA that was frikkin' AWESOME! Did you see that Anon?!"

>You manage to force yourself to stand.

"Yeah, so awesome you almost broke my damn back."

>"Crap."

>In a surprise upset, Dash trots over to you with a frown on her face, "Do you need to go to the hospital? Did anything crack?"

>You look at her like she just grew an extra head.

>"Uh... I mean... idiot! You were probably holding it too low or something! I'll take you to see the nurse."

>You hold up a hand.

"I'm fine, it's not the first time I've fallen on my ass."

>She smirks, "I bet not."

>You just sigh and shake your head. Dash has been like this since your arrival, calling you monkey and saying a bunch of unsavory things.

>For the past few months, however, she's been behaving pretty strangely. Today, for example, when she invited you out to help her do her little trick.

>Oh well, it doesn't stop her from being a bitch.

>After a quick and obligatory goodbye you see that the sun is going down and decide that it's time to get drunk.

>You lean over the bar and knock on it, getting the attention of the old grey stallion behind it. He frowns at you, "Anon, the usual?"

>You only nod, and he dips under the bar before returning with the neck of a bottle in his teeth.

>After you plant a few bits on the counter, you crack open the bottle of Applejack Daniels and take a long swig.

>You don't notice Applejack herself slide into the stool next to you, "Mighty fine evenin' Anon."

>All you manage is a grunt of acknowledgement.

>You don't have anything against Applejack; you just don't know her that well, and southern drawl isn't your favorite accent.

>Judging by the way she's talking, though, she's a friendly mare, so you might as well give her the time of day.

>"I was talkin' to Rainbow earlier."

>Another swig of the bottle.

"Yeah? And?"

>Applejack laughs and shakes her head, "She was a might worried she'd knocked your rocker."

>Now that's funny. You can't help but laugh under your breath at that one.

"I didn't take you for a jokester Applejack. Dash worried about me? That'll be the day."

>Applejack doesn't say anything for a few seconds. Then, a grin slowly spreads across her face, "You're a bit thick ain't ya?"

>You raise an eyebrow.

"Excuse me?"

>"It's pretty obvious Rainbow has a thing for ya, Anon."

"Right, and I'm a ballet dancer."

>Her grin falls, and she frowns in frustration, "I'm serious. Last time I saw a girl like her act like she does the stallion she was after didn't know what hit him."

"And what parallel universe do you live in? She's treated me like crap since day one. I mean, if that's how you guys court I'd rather stay single the rest of my life."

>"Alright, alright. I'll give ya that one, but that doesn't mean she don't like you."

>Yet another swig. At this rate you'll actually start listening to her wild fantasies.

"I guess I should give you the benefit of the doubt. All of you are pretty close. I'm still taking what you're saying with a grain of salt though. Dash has been nothing but trouble for me, and I doubt that's going to change any time soon."

>"Ha. Alright, tell you what Anon; From the way she's been talkin' I give it a few days at most before she talks to you about it."

"I haven't been here long enough to consider an interspecies romance."

>"Then let's make it interestin'."

>Oh?

"Alright... I'm listening."

>"If I'm right, then you gotta help us out on the orchard for two months. Apple buckin' season is coming up. We'll pay ya, but you gotta pull your weight."

"Deal, and if I win..."

>What would you be able to get out of Applejack? You don't know much about her, but you could probably press her buttons if you tried hard enough.

>Wait, you know the perfect thing.

"You get to cook me breakfast and dinner every day for the same two months."

>You think you see a glimmer of worry on her face, but it vanishes in an instant, "Alright, deal."

"Starting tomorrow."

>"And no later!"

>She holds her hoof out to you, and you grasp it in your hand, giving a firm shake.

>You've never been a morning person, that much has always been clear to you.

>Trying to get up in the morning, especially early, is probably some form of torture some higher being laughs at you for.

>Stumbling out of bed and grumbling like a monstrosity from a Tolkien novel, you barely see Rainbow Dash in the doorway of your room.

>You also seem to have slept in your underwear last night, and mister woody feels rather confined at the moment.

>Dash's face goes a deep shade of red, and she fixes you with a glare, "Put that thing away!"

"It is away."

>She scoffs, "Whatever. Breakfast is ready."

"... Excuse me?"

>"I said breakfast is ready. Do I have to say it again to get through that thick monkey-brain of yours?"

"Bitch."

>"Idiot."

"Cunt."

>"Blind retard!"

"What are you even doing in my house? How did you get in?"

>"You left the door unlocked, and I came here to cook your lazy butt breakfast."

"Why are you cooking for me again?"

>The blush deepens, "Just because. Are you gonna come downstairs and eat it, or are you gonna let it get cold?"

"Alright already. Fuck, just let me get dressed."

>With a final huff, Dash pulls away from the door and trots back downstairs.

>It isn't until your head is a bit clearer that what Applejack said last night starts to nag at you.

>She said that Dash likes you.

>Now here is Dash... cooking you breakfast.

>Come to think of it, with how she's been acting these past few months...

>No.

>Nope.

>Absolutely not.

>There is no way that is even accurate in the slightest sense...

>You know, she just takes you out to see her new tricks, bugs you all the time despite her apparent hatred, flips back and forth more than a bipolar psychotic girlfriend on anti-depressants, and now she's cooking you breakfast.

>Mother of God.
>"Hurry up Anon!"
>You manage to haphazardly dress yourself before going downstairs.
>Then, as you approach ground floor the scent hits your nose.
>Salty, meaty.
>Then you hear the sizzling.
>You round the corner of your stairwell and peek into the kitchen. There's Dash, setting a second plate onto the table.
>You see it, calling to you in all its glory.
"Is that..."
>You can only describe the look Dash is giving you right now as the most smug grin on the face of the planet, and frankly, you don't really care.
>That's bacon on that plate!
>With all the excitement of a child on Christmas morning, you sit your happy ass down in that chair.
>Dash sits across from you, her own plate consisting of toast and some hay.
>You gaze down at the plate in wonder, admiring the morsel of bacon and eggs.
"How did you even..."
>"Get it? A while back me and an old friend had a falling out. A few days ago she came back to say she was sorry, and I asked a little favor."
>You scarf down that bacon so fast you're surprised it doesn't give you an immediate heart attack. You chase it with the eggs and orange juice kindly provided alongside it.

>You think you hear Dash laughing, but you don't really care.
>It's been so long since you've had real meat.
>So long that it's literally the best bacon you've ever had the privilege of eating.
>"She had to show me how to cook it. It smells kind of weird."
>You don't know how to show any appreciation to her. Maybe you can start with something simple.
"Thanks Dash... really."
>As quick as a light, her face goes red again, "Don't get any funny ideas. I just owed you something for helping me out all the time."
>You know alarm bells should be going off in your head, but at the moment you don't really care.

>It's been a day since then. Dash dragged you to the lake as her same brash self, and displayed a few new tricks for you...
>Ahem... for her, you were just lucky enough to be there and witness it.
>Yesterday went without incident.
>As in literally nothing of note happened.
>In fact, brewing your morning coffee in the kitchen, you can't help but be a little worried.
>You've gotten almost used to being around Dash so often, and now that she's absent it feels kind of weird.
>You don't have work at the bakery with Pinkie today, so it's an ample opportunity to sit at home and appreciate the rare silence.
>Still, Dash's absence nags at you.

>At least you know what it is that's missing, and you're not just flailing around with no clue on what to do.

>The real question is when the hell did you start missing Dash when she's gone.

>When you first arrived in Equestria, any day lacking her presence was a Godsend.

>There is one possibility, but even thinking about it makes you miserable.

>Have things really reached that point?

>Are you so desperate that the girl who treats you like shit is the one you go for?

>What about Twilight? She's cute enough, and she's smart. A bit on the wobbly side as far as sanity goes, but an absolute joy to hang out with.

>Pinkie is interesting. She's not exactly your boss, and you doubt Sugar Cube Corner has strict employee contracts forbidding after-work trysts behind the shop. She's goofy and weird, but that's what makes her so fun.

>Anyone but Dash, really.

>You're so absorbed in thought you don't even hear the knock at your door.

>A few seconds pass, and this time it's a pounding, like the royal guard have come for your illegal salt brick stash.

>You let out a sigh and rise from the dining table, leaving your precious coffee as you go to answer the door.

>Opening it, you're not the least bit surprised to find Rainbow Dash standing there, a scowl on her face.

>"Why are you so slow? Were you asleep or something?"

"I'm not asleep twenty-four seven, and in case you haven't noticed I'm fully dressed."

➤ "I'm surprised you managed without me," she says with a smirk, walking past you and flicking her tail in what you can only presume is teasing on her part.

➤ Trying to ignore how hot it's getting, you close the door behind her.

"If you keep barging into my home I might call the cops."

➤ "Ha, good luck. There are never any guards in Ponyville."

She trots around your living room, examining your tall book shelf and the fire place. "You're almost as much of an egghead as Twilight."

"As far as I know you're no better in that department."

➤ "Tch."

➤ If that's all she's going to give you in response you might as well call it quits now.

"You're kind of late for cooking me breakfast and waking me up with a kiss."

➤ Ha, now you're not the only one blushing!

➤ She turns to you and glares.

➤ "Wh... what the hay is that supposed to mean?! I only came over because I need to show you something."

"Down at the lake I presume?"

➤ "Yeah!"

"Why don't we stay here today? It's comfortable, and I need a break from getting water splashed on me."

➤ "That's..." She looks away, a frown on her face.

"I have the new Daring Do."

➤ It's like you flipped a switch.

➤ Her face lights up in utter joy, "You do?!"

"Yeah. I checked it out from the library yesterday."

➤ Her excitement quickly changes to anger.

>"That was you?! I spent the whole day looking for that book! Twilight was too buried in an experiment to tell me who checked it out!

"Oh, that's why you disappeared yesterday? I was getting kind of worried."

>"W... worried? Why would you be worried?"

"Well, considering that you usually barge into my house and drag me off by the collar I thought something happened. I was about to visit you today to see if something was wrong. Don't ask me why I was going to, not even I'm sure."

>Dash's gaze falls to the floor, and she scuffs the ground with her hoof, "I guess it's... kind of nice that you were worried about me."

>You laugh.

"Do you have some kind of disease that makes it impossible for you to be nice?"

>"What? No! It's just... dammit..."

>It doesn't take a genius to see she's having trouble communicating her thoughts.

"I remember when I was in third grade, and there was this girl I liked."

>Dash looks up, her gaze locking with yours.

"I was just a little kid. I said she had cooties all the time, and I even pushed her around every now and again. I don't know what it was that made me do that."

>She sighs and shakes her head, "Come on. It's not like I like you or anything. That's stupid... right?"

"You tell me."

>She goes silent, a frown on her face as she falls into deep thought.

>"When you first got here I was scared of you."

"What?"

>"Shut up, don't make me repeat any of this. I didn't know how to react to you. Then Twilight started shoving us together, and I figured I'd just play along."

"Hmm."

>You honestly don't know what to say about all this. It's a rather strange situation.

>Dash looks up at you, her face not in some permanent scowl, nor in minor annoyance. You've seen that wide-eyed look a couple of times in your own world, "When did I stop hating you?" she asks softly.

>Before you have time to answer she's on top of you and you're on the floor, your tailbone in slight pain.

>But that's okay, because her lips are on yours, and the pain is a bit more temporary.

>After a few seconds she pulls away, face flush.

>You open your mouth and promptly get a hoof shoved into it, "Shut up. Don't ruin the moment, idiot."

>She leans down to kiss you again, but all you can think about is that you're Applejack's slave for the next couple of months.

>Fucking Applejack.

DASH'S KRUSTY KUNT FLAKES

"Rainbow Dash needs to wash her cunt more often", you think to yourself, while you watch her sleep with her legs spread wide ", but then she wouldn't be my Dash anymore".

Rainbow was raised by her father. You don't know what happened to her mother, but you didn't care either. Obviously she never got the talk. The first time she got her period, she thought she's going to die. She also never learned how to wash herself down there.

Dash always thought, and still thinks, her yeast infection is the natural state of things. The constant itching has plagued her for years, but she thought it was common, and never mentioned it to her friends. Every time she dips down to take a piss you can smell her cunt. Smells like rancid slim jims.

The girls noticed it too, but none of them ever talked to Dash about it. They usually talk behind her back. "What a dyke". "Her girlfriend must love it".

You don't mind it and Dash.. Dash just itches.

Occasionally she rubs her vag against tree bark, which is accompanied by her gentle moans.

"Poor, 'lazy' Dash", still thinking to yourself as you're watching Rainbow Dash letting it dry out in the sun.

You could tell Rainbow the truth, fix this, and make everything better, but you always had this stinky girl

fetish and you love stinky infected Dash, her feta cheese, and how she needs you to itch her. You love to guide your hand down her body to her marehood, moving your fingers around her rotten pussy, getting your fingers all nasty, slimy and stinky covered in flakes of skin, rot and puss.

But that's only half of the fun. You also love the embarrassed look on Dashie's face, her trying to hold back her moans as you stroke over her vagina and the moans, that escape her mouth every once in a while. And every time you finish she thanks you so dearly. You always answer with a kiss on her forehead.

"I love you, Dash".

Like every night you get to spear that puss pussy like lancing a boil, slamming balls deep in the slimy ichor constantly exuding from her swollen, chapped lips. Every time you thrust into her, you can hear the cracking of her crusty kunt flakes, which makes your dick even harder. For Dash it's more than just sex, it's a cure of the itching for a brief respite. It feels so great she doesn't even realize you came inside her. She blushes deeply as she notices the mixture of blood and cum dripping out of her vagina. Every time you come inside of Rainbow she chides you about not being ready to be a mother. Little does she know, that she'll never be. The infections are so deeply rooted at this point you know she's infertile. Her rotten vagina, infected to the womb with fuzzy mold, will never grow anything, but spores. But she doesn't know, she thinks she is normal.

As you wipe the black scab flakes and pink yellow puss cum off, Dash pees a light pink stream.

Safe in the knowledge that tomorrow will be another day with your dirty Rainbow Dash, you fall asleep idly scratching the puss pot, her head lightly resting on your chest.

THE ADVENTURES OF TRACY CAGE AND THE NEVER ENDING RIDE VOL.1

CHAPTER ONE

Our story begins with Tracy waking up in a field covered in blood and semen. She seems to have forgotten what she did last night.

She finds a dildo and shoves it up her ass.

She continues walking with the dildo in her ass until she finds another dildo. She shoves it in her lose mare pussy.

She then proclaims "OP IS A HUGE FAGGOT"

And then she discovers her goal in life. Which is to fuck every nor/mlp/erson in the ass.

She wonders how she will accomplish this noble goal.

She will accomplish this goal by checking these dubs.



After checking them she continues on her quest.

Welcome back, Yami.

She is on her way to pOnyville when she stops and clops off behind a tree.

What?

The tree is actually that ent dude from Lord of the Rings because he is cool

Patrick Bateman pops out of her ass and tell her to check em.

She told him to check it when she shit on him.

He say with a tears of joy in his eye
"that's my fetish"

Leaving behind the shit covered dubs man she walks into a local bookstore where she spies a copy of Daring Do and The Jungle of Terror.

She proceeds to wipe her ass with the book.

She then rapes the clerk and mutilates his genitalia.

Upon raping the clerk she pulls the dildo from her ass and shoves it down the clerks throat killing him.

Then she fucks his dead body.

She fucked him so hard he turned into Gaben.

http://www.listenonrepeat.com/watch/?v=y2-O_2u0A4Y
this video is perfect for your children, mothers

>rape >rape >rape >rape >rape

Go away MXleo no one wants you

She couldn't believe what was happening, aliens were invading equestria

When the aliens landed she proceeded to rape the first one and called it a struggle snuggle

She became a hero

She proceeded to rape the rest. She then raped moot. And came on his upper lip while he said "me sooo horny"

She looked at her crotch and discovered a dick was growing but also the dick looked like Master Chief

She then demanded he let her ride him to pOnyville

And smacked him on the ass while putting his dick in his own ass.

He was a winged faggot who took her to the highest mountain in equestria

Daring Do and The Jungle of Terror

Chapter One

Daring Do inhaled a breath of the sticky jungle air, placing one hoof in front of the other as she trudged through the Jungle of Terror, her hooves dragging through the endless mud.

Only it wasn't mud, it was an entire field full of semen. All of a sudden, a pack of wild niggers jumped out.

"OOGA BOOGA, WHERE THE WHITE FILLIES AT?" they

shouted

Finally she saw it, the ancient temple that must be home to the

treasure the old mare at the tavern had mentioned.

Daring Do tried to remain calm, lest she falter on her quest for

the golden dildo.

Daring was quick to fly away, because she's a fucking pegasus

The master chief came in and deliverd a pack of Doritos brand

corn chips™ and Mountain dew™.

Daring pulled her anti-nigger rifle out of her ass and shot the

nigger menace to death.

"Go away, MXleo1, no one wants you."

Then

Here, alone in the wilderness, free of the reins of restrictive,

civilized behavior, I, Daring Do, feel no shame in admitting I am a cum hungry slut and the pretense of hunting for ancient treasure, the lie I used to misappropriate the funds necessary to facilitate my travel to this ancient, wicked place in search of the fountain of eternal semen, the only resevoir of such perverted decadence that could ever sate my endlessly unquenchable desire in either my mouth or, dare I say, nethers for untold gallons of the pearly white substance in such great quantity that no one stallion could ever please me."What the fuck is is with all the bull shit around here, I just want to get fucked by a gold dildo, is that so much to ask?"

"Get out of here, stalker"

"Holy shit I'm dying here."

Finally she reached the base of the temple, which had several

rotting corpses strewn about.

She immediately fucks each and every single one.

If only there were such a treasure in the country of my birth, but

nay, for such a tool that could bring a mare to such heights of

exuberance that defy any tongue in this earth the ability to describe

them, such a sinful device that would be worth far more than it's

weight in gold, the leaden weight of a lover without the crushingly

unbearable load of society's disapproval of such a soiree without the

commitment of matrimony, truly this ancient civilization
that was
struck down by the divine is the home of my soul, for I
fear my lusts
betray me as a devil in disguise and I should do well to
isolate
myself in the furthest, darkest corners of the world as
monsters like I
are wont to do.
"Alright, enough fucking around!"
I put on my jacket and safari hat
A dark sensation swept over Daring. Her ears twitch
slightly at a
faint yet close sound.
She sighs, almost resignedly.
"Rape Snakes. It had to be Rape Snakes."

