

# **TO LIVE IS HUMAN**

*The third story in the [Geoverse](#)*

by

**GeodesicDragon**

## CONTENTS

1. PROLOGUE.....	3
2. VIEWED FROM AFAR.....	9
3. FACTS OF LIFE.....	17
4. MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.....	23
5. REVELATIONS.....	32
6. A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.....	39
7. NEW LIFE, OLD TROUBLES.....	46
8. REACQUAINTED.....	54
9. EST ULTIO HUMANUM.....	60
10. EPILOGUE.....	61

## 1. PROLOGUE

As I stood rooted to the spot, I could feel the sweat pouring down my face. My nerves were on red alert, my heart was pounding in my chest like a sledgehammer, my throat felt dry and constricted, and my mind was racing like Pinkie does after she eats a lot sugar.

"Jeez, mate," a voice to my side said. "You need to relax."

"I'm getting married, John," I retorted. "Pardon me for thinking that the groom getting nervous was all part of the fun."

John sighed. "You're getting married to the mare of your dreams," he said. "She loves you, you love her, so get a hold of yourself!" He then slapped me, as if to ensure that I got the message.

I rubbed my cheek and smiled. "You're right," I said. "I don't know why I'm worried; this day is going to be perfect."

*This day is going to be perfect.* I repeated those words inside my head again and again, and I felt myself relaxing. I took a few deep breaths as a unicorn stallion and alicorn mare approached me.

"Geo." he extended a hoof and I shook it firmly. "John."

"Shining Armour," I replied. "Glad you could make it."

"It's my little sister's wedding, Geo." he chuckled. "I wouldn't miss it for the world." He sighed. "Seems like only yesterday I was telling her bedtime stories... why does life have to pass by so fast?"

"Beats me." I shrugged. "Best to enjoy it while we can, right?"

Shining patted my shoulder and entered the ballroom to mingle with the other guests, leaving me to wait for the others. While waiting, I looked around at the decorations Pinkie had put up.

There were purple balloons and the occasional pink streamer, to match the highlight in Twilight's mane and tail, all over the place. Pinkie had indeed gone with the 'everything must be purple' theme she mentioned at the party she threw when we first got together.

Speaking of Twilight... I hadn't seen her for a few days now; Equestrians shared the 'bride and groom must not see each other until the day of the wedding' rule that humans have on Earth, but that didn't make the separation any less painful. We had been apart once before, so neither of us were keen on the idea of being apart again, but we felt that we had to do our bit to keep tradition alive.

"Gentlemen," a commanding, yet gentle, voice said. We glanced upwards to see Princesses Celestia and Luna approaching.

"Your Highnesses." we spoke, and bowed, in unison.

"So, it's the big day at last." Celestia smiled. "It's been a long time coming, Geo, wouldn't you agree?"

I grinned and nodded. "Damn right I do," I replied. "I can't wait any longer; I've been wanting this for so long."

"Good, because we came to tell you that we are ready to begin the ceremony," Luna said. "Please, follow us."

Both Princesses trotted back into the hall, followed closely by John and I. As we walked, I took a few deep breaths.

And fought the urge to shout out in joy.

\*\*\*

The wedding march soon started, and the massive doors at the far end of the room swung open. The Cutie Mark Crusaders were first in, acting as flower fillies. Their grins were obvious, even through the basket of flowers each of them was holding.

Twilight soon followed, and I was transfixed. She was wearing what she called her 'Gala dress,' her mane had been styled into a fashion which rivalled even Rarity's, and she smelt of the lavender perfume I had got for her shortly after I got back.

As she stood by my side, my mouth was hanging open slightly.

"You look fantastic, Twi," I said.

Twilight blushed and smiled. "Thank you, Geo," she replied. "You look good in that suit; Rarity did a great job with it." She motioned for me to come down to her level. I obliged and she got up on her hind legs, placing her forehooves on my shoulders. "Although it goes without saying that it would look even better on the floor." She whispered, biting her lower lip and giving me a sultry grin.

"Funny you should mention that," I whispered back with an equally sultry grin. "I was just thinking the same thing about your dress."

Before we could continue, John coughed loudly. "I know what you're both thinking, but you can't do it here." he narrowed his eyes at us. "Wait for the honeymoon, all right?"

Twilight and I exchanged a sheepish glance while I stood up and she got back on all fours. "Right." we spoke together.

"Men, mares, and gentlecolts." Celestia's voice filled the room. "We are all gathered here today to join these two in matrimony."

John, in his capacity as my Best Man, stepped forward with the rings; one was on a chain, as it was to go around Twilight's neck, while the other was for my finger. I'd had them both made by Diamond Dust in Ponyville, two simple golden bands with a small amethyst embedded in the setting. Engraved on the inside of each ring were four words which had come to embody the relationship that Twilight and I shared: *My Heart Is Yours*.

Celestia levitated the rings with her magic and continued addressing everyone present. "The two of you have been through so much just to be together," she said. "The commitment you share with each other is wonderful, and your love is true and honest." She faced Twilight. "Twilight Sparkle, my faithful student and dear friend, do you take this human to be your husband?"

"Yes, I do." Twilight tried, and failed, to suppress a gleeful squeal.

Celestia smiled at her antics and turned to face me. "And do you, Geo, take this unicorn to be your wife?"

"What kind of question is that?" I replied. "Hell yes, I do."

"In that case..." Luna used her magic to put the rings on. "By the power invested by us as Princesses, we now pronounce the two of you to be married. May you both find everlasting love together."

With those words, I picked Twilight up and kissed her as passionately, and for as long, as I could.

The church exploded into cheering as we finally tore apart from each other, and I hoisted her onto my shoulders. As we began to leave the castle, I saw Twilight's parents, who each gave me an approving nod and smile, and her brother, who saluted.

I saw Ace, who was engrossed in conversation with Pinkie Pie. He saw me and waved, a gesture I returned with a nod.

Leaving the castle, I saw that a lot of ponies had turned up to offer their congratulations. This touched my heart; most of them hadn't even been invited to the ceremony to begin with.

"Wow," I said, as I looked at the sea of well-wishers. "You wouldn't see people doing this where I come from."

Twilight giggled and kissed the top of my head. "Welcome to Equestria, *husband*," she cooed in my ear.

I smiled and tilted my head so I could kiss her back.

At the bottom of the stairs leading up to the castle, a carriage was waiting to take us to our honeymoon in Fillydelphia. The chauffeur opened the door, offering his congratulations at the same time, and we paused so that Twilight could throw the bouquet, which – much to Rarity's displeasure – was caught by Pinkie Pie. We then got into the carriage and set off on our honeymoon.

"And so begins our new life," I said, as I stroked my wife's mane. She settled down on my chest and sighed contentedly.

"Here's to us spending eternity together," she replied.

The rest of the journey was spent in comfortable silence as we enjoyed both the scenery, and each others company.

\*\*\*

The trees swayed in the breeze as the group of men surveyed their surroundings with a wary eye.

"By all that is holy," one of them said. "I had my suspicions that that crackpot was up to something, but this just proves it."

"I would never have believed it, without seeing it for myself," said another. "I guess our agent was telling the truth after all."

"What are your orders, Prime Minister?" said the first man.

"Who knows what Doctor Sorou has uncovered?" the Prime Minister replied. "Until we know for certain who – or what – calls this place home, I am treating this new world as a potential threat to the safety and well-being of our country." He turned to the first man. "Graham, I want you to make a call to the Ministry of Defence... and tell them that I want to bring in the Army."

## 2. VIEWED FROM AFAR

The honeymoon was one of the best two weeks of my life; Fillydelphia really is a magnificent city. It was that good, in fact, Twilight and I spent the trip back to Ponyville planning our next trip to the city, so that we could see everything we'd missed.

The carriage pulled up outside the library, at which the chauffeur opened the door for us. I got out first and Twilight went to follow me, but I stopped her by picking her up and holding her in my arms. I turned to the chauffeur, who had just finished unloading our luggage, and took a bit pouch from my pocket.

"Here you are, buddy," I said to him, as I tossed the pouch in his direction. "You can keep the change."

He caught the pouch with a hoof, his eyes lighting up upon feeling the weight of it. "Thank you very much, sir, madam." he replied. "Good day to you, and my congratulations to you both once again."

"Thanks, you too." I watched him leave, smiled, and went over to the library door. "Now to carry my new wife over the threshold." I said proudly, as Twilight unlocked the door with her magic. I pushed the door open with a foot, carried her inside, then set her down on the couch and kissed her forehead.

"Now our new life can *truly* begin." I said.

Twilight smiled back at me and lay down on the couch, still exhausted after the long trip back from Fillydelphia.

I went outside to recover our luggage from the pavement, when I saw John jogging along the road. He saw me and came over.

"Geo!" he called. "You're back already?"

"I am indeed, John." I nodded. "Twilight and I couldn't exactly stay in Fillydelphia forever, despite both of us wanting to."

John put a hand up to my face. "Please," he begged. "Spare me the sordid details." I grinned and John removed his hand from my vision. "Pinkie is holding a party at Sugarcube Corner later." He said. "You and Twilight should attend, as long as you don't bore us all rigid with honeymoon photos or whatever."

I nodded. "Yeah, why not?" I shrugged. "It'll give us a chance to catch up with everypony. How are they, anyway?"

John smiled. "They're doing great," he said. "Fluttershy has lots of new baby critters to take care of, Applejack and I are working on harvesting the latest apple crop, Pinkie has gone party mad, Rainbow Dash is still trying to perfect her manoeuvres for the Wonderbolts, Rarity is working on a huge order for somepony named 'Sapphire Shores,' and Ace is still building his new lab."

"I'm sure I'll hear all about it at the party," I replied. "When is it?"

"Tomorrow at eight." John started jogging again. "See you there, Geo; don't be late, or I'll drink your share of the booze!"

"I'd like to see you try, mate!" I called after him. Taking the last of the bags inside, I closed the door and flopped onto the couch.

Twilight climbed onto my chest and nuzzled my chin. "Home at last," she said. "Now, what was that about a party?"

"It's just another Pinkie Pie party," I replied. "It's on tomorrow night at eight. Do you want to go?"

Twilight nodded and yawned. "Of course," she replied. "But I think you and I should get some rest first; it's been a long day."

With those words, she fell asleep, her head resting on mine. I soon followed suit and the two of us lay there on the couch, our breathing in harmony, locked in each others comforting embrace.

\*\*\*

"General Smith, our scouts have reported that there is a small town about five clicks to the north-west of our current position," the soldier said. "But we're not quite sure who – or *what* – lives there."

"What do you mean by 'not quite sure,' Captain Jones?" the General replied, narrowing his eyes. "*Somebody* has to live there."

Captain Jones rubbed the back of his head. "We didn't see any people, Sir, but we saw a lot of equine-looking creatures," he said hesitantly. "It could just be a farming community of some kind."

General Smith sighed. "Get the crabs to send a reconnaissance drone to the town," he ordered. "I want to know where the inhabitants are before we do anything else."

"Yes, General!" Captain Jones replied. He saluted stoically and ran out of the room, barking orders as he went.

General Smith turned around in his chair and looked out the window of his tent, where the portal still stood in the middle of the clearing. It was surrounded by heavily armed soldiers, all of whom were looking around warily with their fingers poised over the triggers of their weapons. As he watched, a small robot took off from a nearby tent and headed in the direction of the town. Smith smiled as he watched it leave, then leaned back in his chair.

"Soon we'll have some answers," he said to himself. "And then we'll find out what that crackpot doctor is *really* up to."

\*\*\*

I woke up to find Twilight sprawled across my chest, still deep in slumber. Her chest rose and fell with each breath, and a tiny smile was fixed on her lips. I looked at the clock; it read 7:30pm.

"Wow," I said quietly. "We must have been *exhausted*."

I gently hoisted Twilight off me and laid her on the couch, covering her with my jacket, then crossed over to the window.

Opening the blinds, I caught a glimpse of a small robot working its way around town. It hovered between buildings and darted down alleyways as the camera mounted on it spun around rapidly. Ignoring it, I closed the blinds and went upstairs to have a shower.

I came down a few minutes later, freshly dressed, to find Twilight looking out the window. I stood by her side and she pointed at the robot, which was still whizzing around Ponyville.

"Why is Ace still using his BIRDS?" she asked. "Surely he doesn't have a need to now that he's in Equestria?"

I shrugged. "Honestly, Twi?" I replied. "I don't know. Now come on, we're going to be late for this party."

Twilight looked at the clock and gasped. "Seven forty-five?!" She ran upstairs. "Let me get a quick shower first!"

I laughed and sat on the couch, my train of thought soon taking me back to the robot. The more I thought of it, the more I realised it didn't look anything like one of Ace's creations.

*Maybe its a new model? I thought. Then again, I know what the man is like; he'd eagerly tell me about his new inventions.*

I shook these thoughts out of my head as Twilight came back downstairs, looking fresh as a daisy. Grabbing my keys, I opened the library door and put her on my shoulders.

"Time for a party!" I said. "Shall we get going?"

Twilight nodded and we left the library, the door locking behind us.

\*\*\*

"I seriously cannot believe he just asked us that!" I seethed, throwing the contents of my glass down my neck. "What business is it of his what we get up to behind closed doors?!"

Twilight took my hand in a hoof and squeezed it, while John was doing his utmost to suppress a laugh.

"Relax," Twilight said. "I don't think Ace meant to cause offence."

"I know." I sighed. "It's just... I wasn't expecting that subject to be brought up; at least not for a while, and certainly not by *him*. Hell, I was expecting your mother to bug us about it again."

"What subject?" asked Twilight. "Foals?"

I coughed. "Yeah," I said flatly. "Foals."

I took another round of punch from the bowl and drank it in one go. The atmosphere around the table was as thick as treacle.

"I guess I should go talk to him and explain that I'm not pissed off about what he asked," I said eventually. "Besides, I need to ask him if that robot we saw in town earlier was one of his."

I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand and walked across the room to where Ace was standing with Pinkie Pie, a solemn expression on his face. As I approached, however, Pinkie suddenly grabbed him by the hand and swept him onto the dance floor. I decided not to butt in and returned to the punch bowl.

"That was quick." John raised an eyebrow.

"He was busy," I replied, nodding my head towards the two of them enjoying a dance. "I'll talk to him later."

I sat with Twilight and put an arm around her. "You and I need to talk," I said. "About what Ace mentioned." Her eyes widened as she turned to look at me. "Not now, though." I said with a sigh. "But as soon as we get home, we're going to discuss this."

Twilight nodded and put her head in my lap, allowing me to stroke her mane. As I did so, an all-too familiar feeling washed over me.

A feeling of nervous apprehension.

\*\*\*

As the video footage from the drone was played back to him, General Smith sat in his chair with a puzzled look on his face.

"Sentient *ponies*?" he repeated the words again and again, trying to comprehend what he was saying. "Are you insane, Jones?"

Captain Jones shook his head. "I couldn't believe it either, General, but the evidence is undeniable," he said, unable to keep the surprise out of his voice. "Hell, I actually took the drone around the town twice, just to make sure I wasn't seeing things."

The two of them sat in silence as the playback continued. Suddenly, Smith sat upright in his chair and pointed at the screen. "Pause!" he yelled. "What's that, right there?"

The picture showed a human leaving a structure which had been built into a tree, with one of the ponies at his side.

"It appears to be a human, Sir." Jones peered at the screen, studying the image carefully. "He's not our man from the Ministry, and I don't see any signs of coercion."

General Smith raised an eyebrow. "Coercion?" he asked. "From the looks of things, Captain, that man appears to be happy as Larry." He leaned back in his chair and sighed. "The Prime Minister was clearly over-reacting when he called us in." He said. "I will report to him that these creatures are not a threat, and simply wish to be left in peace... but only after I talk to that man."

"Yes, Sir." Captain Jones saluted. "We'll bring him in for you."

As Jones left the room, Smith stood up and walked over to the television, leaning closer to the still image it showed. "Whoever you are, I hope you're up for answering a few questions."

He moved away from the screen.

"Because the fate of this world depends on how you answer them."

### 3. FACTS OF LIFE

I pushed open the library door and held it as Twilight trotted inside, throwing herself onto the couch. I shut the door and began pacing around in front of her, twiddling my fingers as I did so. A brief period of uncomfortable silence followed, before Twilight spoke.

"So," she said, as her eyes followed me around the room. "You said you wanted to talk about the possibility of foals?"

I stopped pacing and looked straight into her eyes; the look on my face was one of sheer panic, as was normal when I was facing a situation like this, but Twilight's face showed nothing but the calm and caring demeanour I had fallen for all those months ago.

I sighed and sat by her side. "As I said earlier, I wasn't planning on having this conversation for a few months at least."

Twilight laid a hoof on my hand. "We've known each other for over a year now," she said. "You are my husband, and I like to think that I know you well enough to say you'd make a great father."

I smiled. "And you'd make a great mother," I replied. "But... in all honesty, Twi, it's what Ace said that's bugging me."

"You're worried about a pony/human hybrid," Twilight said bluntly.

I gave her a deadpan stare. "Yes, I am, as it happens."

Twilight looked at me and sighed. "You don't need to worry about that," she said, bringing me in for a hug.

I returned the hug. "Why not?"

"Think about it," she replied. "How many times have we had sex?"

I grinned. "Too many to count."

"Exactly." Twilight returned my grin with one of her own. "So, given how many times we've done it, how come I'm not pregnant?" I shrugged, and she laughed. "Because *our DNA is incompatible.*"

"So basically..." I put a hand on my chin. "We can fuck as often as we want, and you won't end up with a bun in the oven?" Twilight looked at me with a puzzled expression on her face. "It's one of the many phrases that humans use instead of the word 'pregnant.'"

"Ah, I see." Twilight smiled. "Well, Geo, that's exactly the point I was trying to make. Now, stop fretting and let's go to bed."

"You go ahead," I replied as I stood up. "I really need to find Ace."

Twilight nodded. "OK, I'll see you later, but don't take too long," she said, as I gave her a kiss and left the library.

As I walked along the road leading out of Ponyville towards Ace's laboratory, I felt as though I was walking on air. The talk I had had with Twilight made me feel happy about the fact I wouldn't be the father of a twisted pony/human hybrid.

However, my happy thoughts soon turned to ones of regret as I realised I would never have a child to call my own. I shook my head to clear my mind as Ace's laboratory came into view over the hill, spotting the man himself sitting on a chair outside. He saw me coming over the hill and raised a hand in greeting.

"Hey, Ace," I said as I approached. "We need to talk."

"I see." the nervous tone in his voice was obvious to both of us. "Is this about what I said at the party?"

"Yes," I replied. "It is."

Ace nodded. "Very well, Geo." he stood up and raised his arms. "Get it over with, please... anywhere but the face."

"I'm not going to hit you, Ace." I sighed. "I just came by to tell you that Twilight and I talked about it; she's assured me that our DNA is incompatible, so we don't need to use protection."

"And how can she be so sure?" Ace asked, lowering his arms.

"It's Twilight; she'll have read a book or ten," I said. "Remember, we're not the first humans to have lived in Equestria."

Ace chuckled. "That's a good point," he replied. "I'm going to assume that somepony studied the possibility of human/pony cross-breeding all those years ago, and came up with nothing."

"Yeah," I said, "that sounds about right."

"Well, if she says you have nothing to worry about, then I'm not going to argue with her." Ace held out his hand. "No hard feelings?"

I grinned and shook it. "Of course not," I said. "Thanks to you, I've discovered that Twilight and I can have as much sex as we want, and all without having to worry about bringing any weird hybrid types into the world." Ace smiled politely, and the two of us stood in silence for a while. "But enough about me and my sex life!" I said eventually. "How are you settling in, Ace?"

"I'm doing all right," he replied. "My new laboratory is nearly completed, and I'm thinking about renting Tiny out as a mobile DJ platform; Vinyl Scratch says he's awesome."

"Glad to hear it, mate," I said. "Remember, if you need any help, you know where to find me."

"Yes." a sly grin spread across Ace's face. "In Twilight's bed."

I chuckled. "Anyway, I've gotta go." I looked at my watch. "It's getting late, and I don't want Twilight to worry." Ace nodded, and I began jogging back to Ponyville. "I'll see you later, Ace!" I shouted.

As I ran, I heard rustling coming from the tree line; I slowed down to a walking pace and looked around. "Oh, boy," I muttered. "That had better not be a fucking manticore or some shit."

"You there!" a voice called from behind me. "Halt!"

I stopped in my tracks and turned to the source of the voice, a shocked expression appearing on my face as I saw who had spoke.

It was another human, but it wasn't John or Ace. He was wearing a khaki-coloured uniform with a Union Jack on the sleeve; I instantly recognised him as a British soldier.

"What the fuck?!" I said. "Who are you? What's going on? Why are you here? Actually, more to the point, *how* did you get here?"

"I am not at liberty to answer those questions, civilian," the soldier replied. "All you need to know is who I am; Captain Andrew Jones of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. I have been sent to bring you to my commanding officer, regarding a top-secret matter of national security."

"Why me?" I asked, dumbfounded. "What use would I be?"

Andrew sighed. "As hard as it is, I need you to trust me. The General has some questions for you regarding this world..."

"And?" I said, realising he had trailed off.

"And your association with one Doctor Ace Sorou."

"Ace?" I stood silently for a moment. "Very well," I said. "I'll come with you, but you'd better not take up too much of my time. My wife will kill me if I'm late getting home."

"I can't guarantee that we won't." he looked confused when I said 'wife,' but he quickly composed himself and snapped his fingers.

Two more soldiers stepped out of the trees; one of them grabbed my arms and handcuffed me, the other put a bag over my head.

"Hey!" I shouted. "What in the fuck is going on?!"

"For security reasons, we cannot allow you to know where you are going." I heard an engine rumbling, followed by the squealing of brakes. "Get him in the Jeep, and let's get out of here." Andrew ordered. "Hurry! Before we're spotted!" I was bundled into the back of the Jeep, the two soldiers on either side of me. "Drive."

The Jeep began moving, and once again I felt my nerves going. My palms were sweaty, my knees were weak, my arms were heavy, and my heart felt like it was going a hundred beats per minute. As the vehicle bounced along the road, a single thought came to mind.

*Yep, Twilight is gonna kill me.*

#### 4. MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Jeep ground to a halt, and the doors were yanked open from the outside. The soldier to my left got out, then helped me. The sweat was pouring from my brow, and I was on the verge of panicking. I had so many questions running through my mind.

*Why are they here? Did they find the portal? Why do they care about me being friends with Ace? What do they plan on doing in Equestria? What will happen to my friends?*

As I pondered the situation, a faint humming noise soon reached my ears. I listened to it for a moment, then smiled.

"Hey, Captain Jones?" I said. "You can take the bag off my head now; I know exactly where we are, so it isn't needed."

"Oh really?" Jones replied. "And where would that be?"

"We're in a forest clearing," I said smugly. "There is a portal here, and it happens to be the very one I used to get to this world."

There was a pause before he sighed and snapped his fingers. The bag was lifted off my head, exposing my eyes to the bright sunlight. I closed them to shield my vision and followed the Captain, opening them slowly so I could get used to the brightness.

We entered a small office, where a man wearing a typical officer's uniform sat behind a desk. A number of medals and ribbons were pinned across his chest. Another man, who was wearing a smart navy suit and flanked by a couple of guards, sat nearby.

As I was ushered into the room, the officer stood up. "Is this him?"

"Yes, General." Andrew saluted. "He did have a bag on his head, but he worked where we were shortly after we got here."

The general looked at me. "And how did you figure it out?" he said.

"As I said to the Captain, I've been here before," I replied. "That portal you're guarding is the same one I used to get here."

The general sat down. "Ah, right," he said, coughing slightly. "Okay, Captain, remove the cuffs and let our guest take a seat."

Jones did as he was asked, and the handcuffs were removed. I rubbed my wrists tenderly and sat in the only vacant seat. The office was modestly sized; as well as the desk, there was a large window on one wall, a potted plant in the corner, and a bookcase brimming with books about military history near the door.

"Captain Jones said you had questions for me," I said, as I put one leg over the other. "So, by all means, ask away."

"Very well," replied the General. "But first of all, some introductions are in order. I am General Graham Smith." He indicated the man in the suit. "And I assume you know who this gentleman is?"

I nodded. "How could I *not* recognise our *esteemed* Prime Minister, Peter Fielding?" I said sarcastically. "Am I right to assume that you royally fucked up the UK, so you're here to fuck up Equestria?"

"Far from it," Fielding replied. "I'm actually here, at General Smith's request, to see what's so special about this place."

"A lot is special about this place," I said matter-of-factly. "But enough about that; why is my being friends with Ace a problem?"

"We've been following the activities of Doctor Sorou for a while now," Fielding said, as he opened his suitcase. "The UK is very proud of its scientists, and the advancements they've made, but every now and again one of them does something suspicious."

He took a file from the suitcase and passed it to me. Flicking through it, I could see several surveillance reports, as well as photos of the laboratory. In one photo, John and I could be seen talking to each other, oblivious to the fact we were being watched.

"Suspicious things such as... what, exactly?" I checked.

"Applying for planning permission to build their very own nuclear reactor, for starters." Fielding smiled. I wanted to punch him.

"So you've been following him for how long, exactly?" I asked.

"We're asking the questions here, 'Geo.'" Smith said. "First of all, why did you go to Doctor Sorou in the first place?"

I fidgeted in the seat. "It's complicated," I said after a long pause. "You'd probably think I was crazy if I told you."

"You knew that Sorou was performing these kinds of experiments involving portals," Smith continued, glancing at another file on his desk. "Why did you want to come to 'Equestria?'"

"I said it's complicated." I looked down at the floor.

"Would it have anything to do with one... Twilight Sparkle?" Fielding asked, his smile turning into an uncharacteristic grin.

"Wait, what?!" I spluttered. "How much do you know about that?"

"We know all about the inhabitants of this world, Geo," Graham said. "We know that there are 'Earth' ponies, unicorns and pegasi on this world. We know that you've been here before, and we also know that you're actually married to this 'Twilight Sparkle!'"

The soldiers flanking me each suppressed a laugh.

"If you know all of this, then why the fuck do you need me?" I demanded, my eyes narrowing. "Sounds like a waste of time."

"I just wanted to see for myself if what our operative told us was true." Fielding replied. "And, judging by your reaction, it is."

"Operative?" I asked. "Wait, you've been *spying on me*?!"

"Oh yes," Smith said. "We've been watching you for a long time."

To say I was shocked would have been the understatement of the millennium. I sat in dumbfounded silence for a moment before finally managing to speak. "But why?" I asked. "What did I do that attracted the attention of the fucking government?"

"You got shot," Fielding replied. "Remember?"

I thought back to the night Derek shot me, and remembered Ace telling me that he had opened a portal on the street I was on.

"Bring in our operative, General," Fielding said. "I think it's high time for Geo here to learn the truth."

Smith stood up, went to the door, beckoned to someone who was waiting outside and returned to his desk.

"This 'operative' of yours had better be ready to explain themselves," I snarled. "I seriously can't believe this shit."

"You'd better believe it," a familiar voice said. "'Mate.'"

I turned around in the seat and froze. "John?!" I yelled. I turned around again. "What in the actual fuck is going on here?!"

"Calm down and I'll explain everything," John said.

I exhaled sharply and folded my arms as he began his story.

\*\*\*

*I was just a rookie agent when I was assigned to the Ace Sorou case. We knew he was up to something, and my unit was hell-bent on finding out what. For weeks, we had picked up strange energy readings. We followed them, but found nothing. We were at our wit's end. Every lead we got turned out to be a waste of time.*

*Until that night on James Street, that is.*

*We had followed another energy reading to that street and took up position in one of the buildings nearby. After several hours, nothing happened; we assumed that the energy reading we'd received had been a load of crap, and prepared to leave.*

*But then, all of a sudden, you turned up. We thought that maybe you were an assistant of Ace's, who had been sent to check the results of the experiment, so we decided to watch you for a while.*

*Next thing we know, you're getting your ass kicked. Nice trick, by the way, playing dead; pity it didn't work, and you got shot.*

*"Shit," I said to my partner, Mick. "Should we do something?"*

*Mick shook his head. "We're undercover, John," he said quietly. "We can't afford to be seen, and besides... we're not armed."*

*We saw you fall to the ground as the car sped off. Suddenly, there was a bright flash of light underneath your body, and you vanished.*

*The portal had materialised before our very eyes and you were unfortunate enough to be underneath it.*

*A few minutes later, however, you reappeared. Mick and I called an ambulance and left to deliver our report. We quickly realised that you would have information for us, so I was assigned to gain your trust and find out what you had learned.*

**\*\*\***

*"And I think you know the rest."*

*I glared at him for a moment. "So our whole friendship was a lie?" I spat. "It meant nothing to you, and was just 'work?'"*

*John shrugged — and I screamed as I leapt off the seat and tackled him to the ground. Unfortunately, the two soldiers guarding me pulled me off before I could punch him.*

John stood up laughing as he dusted himself off. "I'm sorry I had to deceive you, Geo," he said. "But I had a job to do, and I was prepared to do whatever it took to get it done."

I fought back tears as I raised my voice to him. "You son of a bitch!" I shouted. "All my life, people have been taking me for granted. You came across as someone who genuinely wanted to be my friend, but instead you were just *using* me!"

John grinned. "Sounds about right."

"You bastard." I spat at his feet. "You twisted, conniving, lying bastard. And what about all that crap you spat on the way into town, about not having any friends, was that a lie as well?" John's face fell at these words, and I chuckled weakly. "That's what I thought. To me, our friendship was the best thing that had ever happened to me. But to you, it was merely a means to an end."

John held his arms out. "I-I... I never thought of it like that," he said. "I did consider you as a friend; you and I, we get on so well."

"You could have told me the truth, you know," I said quietly. "It's the fact I have to find out like this that annoys me."

John hung his head. "This was going to be my last mission as well," he said. "Once this was done, I was planning on retiring to Haiti and spending the rest of my life on the beach."

"And it didn't matter how many people you had to screw over first," I hissed. "Wait, people AND ponies."

John raised his head and looked at me. "Ponies?" he asked.

"Don't you see?" I sighed. "They think of you as a friend as well; Applejack has been singing your praises about all the work you're doing on the farm, Rainbow Dash has been going on and on about how you're a good running buddy, Rarity has been raving about your 'exquisite choice in fashion,' Fluttershy admires your love of animals, and Pinkie loves the fact you're as immature as she is."

John opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out.

"So not only have you lied to me, you've lied to the whole of Ponyville as well." I laughed bitterly. "How do you think they are going to react when they find out that their new 'friend' was just a government agent sent to spy on them?"

John thought for a moment. "Betrayed?" he said hesitantly.

I nodded. "You make me sick, and you make me ashamed to call myself a human," I said. "You're just as bad as Derek."

John's eyes narrowed. "NO!" he shouted. "I am NOTHING like him!"

I raised an eyebrow. "Oh really?" I replied. "When he ended up here in Equestria, he took what he wanted from the locals by force. You got what you wanted from me by being a deceitful bastard; when you think about it, you're not all that different." John slumped his shoulders and began to walk out the room, but I grabbed his arm and looked into his eyes. "I highly suggest that you don't go back to Ponyville, 'mate.'" I said, the venom in my voice causing him to flinch slightly. "Once everypony finds out what you've done, they won't be so pleased to see you around." I released his arm and he left the room dejectedly, after which I turned to the General and the Prime Minister. "You got what you wanted. Can I go now?"

Fielding and Smith looked at each other for a moment; Fielding nodded, and Smith turned to face me.

"Yes, you can go," he said. "Since Equestria clearly doesn't pose a threat to the security and well-being of the United Kingdom, we'll leave as soon as possible. We will remove every trace of our presence, and the Equestrians need never know we were here."

"It's a bit late for that."

## 5. REVELATIONS

All eyes were on the door at the sound of the stern and authoritative voice. I was expecting Princess Celestia to enter the room, but – to my surprise – it was Twilight who entered.

"I don't want to know who you people are," she said frankly. "But I *do* want to know what you are doing with my husband."

"Your... husband?" Smith asked, looking around the room.

I smiled and picked her up. "I'm fine, Twilight." I gave her a kiss. "They've finished questioning me; I was actually about to leave." Fielding and Smith were both looking at me with shocked expressions on their faces, but I ignored them. "Right, gentlemen." I said. "I trust you will make good on your promise to let me go?" Both men nodded, the shock still on their faces. "Right. Come on, Twilight, it's late, and I think we should go home."

At these words, Twilight's horn lit up, causing Graham and Peter to duck for cover. A flash of purple light later, and I found that we were both in the library. I reeled a bit from the sudden teleportation, and put her on the couch.

"Oh, sorry," she said softly. "I guess you've never been teleported before. Are you all right? Who were those people?"

I nodded. "I'll be fine." I said. "But before I tell you... how on Equestria did you know where to find me?"

Twilight smiled. "Well, I knew you were going to see Doctor Sorou, so I went to his lab." she replied. "On the way there, though, I found some strange tracks in the dirt and realised something might have happened to you; I followed them without hesitation."

"With no regard for what you might have been walking into?" I smiled and kissed her forehead. "That's my Twilight."

She blushed slightly. "I found the portal you used to get here, and saw all those soldiers around it," she continued. "My small size made it really easy for me to sneak in." I chuckled, only to stop when she gave me a serious look. "Now, can I ask *you* something?"

"Of course."

"I saw John, and he didn't look happy. What happened?"

"I'll tell you." I sighed. "But you're not going to like it..."

\*\*\*

Twilight listened in silence as I told her everything that happened during my 'interrogation.' By the time I was finished with the story, her expression had changed from shock to disgust.

"So John was just using you?!" she shouted.

I nodded. "Pretty much," I replied. "He was using me to get to Ace, and to find out what I knew regarding his portal experiments. He *claims* that our friendship was real, but how can I trust someone who has been spying on me for so long?" We sat in silence for a moment, but then I stood up. "Applejack needs to be told about this, so I'm going to go up and see her. Coming?"

Twilight shook her head. "No," she replied. "Ace said he wanted to speak to me; you go, and I'll see you later... just, be careful."

With that, I kissed her and left the library. I zipped my jacket up, put my hands in my pockets, and started walking towards Sweet Apple Acres. I hoped Applejack would still be awake, as I felt she deserved to know the truth about her 'star employee.'

As we approached the farmhouse, a loud voice cut through the air. "I was hopin' I'd see you!" Applejack opened the door to the farmhouse and ran out, a look of anger in her eyes. "You've got some nerve showin' yer face 'round here." She snapped. "Especially after what you've have been sayin' about John!"

"What the fuck are you talking ab—" I froze when I saw that John was standing on the porch with his arms folded, and a smug expression on his face. "What has he told you?" I asked.

Applejack continued glaring daggers at me. "Nuthin' much," she said. "Other than the fact y'all have been spreadin' lies about him."

I wasn't falling for the obvious trap, so I rolled my eyes and met Applejack's deadpan stare. "Lies such as...?" I checked.

"That he's a no-good spy," Applejack replied. "That he's been usin' ya ta get close to Ace's research, and that yer country's government has been watchin' ya fer weeks."

I snorted. "Oh, that?" I laughed. "It's all true."

"NO, IT AIN'T!" Applejack shouted.

I held my arms in front of me. "OK, Applejack." I said. "But let me ask you something." Her eyes narrowed further, but she gave me a reply by way of a single snort. "You're the Element of Honesty, so you of all ponies should know when someone is lying, correct?"

She looked at the ground and ran a hoof through the dirt. "Well, yeah," she said quietly. "But I don't see how that—"

"Right then." I pointed at John. "You go marching up to that slimy piece of shit, look into his eyes, and ask him if he's a spy."

Applejack slowly turned to face John; his smug grin had been replaced by a look of fear. Applejack began walking towards him, but he threw his arms into the air before she could speak.

"All right, all right!" he shouted. "It's true, all of it is true." His arms fell by his sides as he sat down on the porch.

Applejack's face fell, and she turned back to face me. "I.. I'm so sorry, Geo." she said. "But he was just so darn convincing when he were talkin' ta me, it was hard *not* to believe him."

John gave a hollow laugh. "Being convincing is all part of the job, sweetheart," he said. "And I'm damn good at my job."

"Don't you dare talk to me," Applejack hissed. "Yer nothin' but a twisted, no-good, lyin' snake, an' I want you outta here. NOW!"

John sighed. "At least let me explain myself," he pleaded.

Applejack looked at me, and I shrugged. "Fine," I said. "But not here, and not now." John looked at me blankly. "Come to the library at noon tomorrow." I said. "You're going to explain yourself to me, Twilight, Applejack and the others."

"But, the others don't know—" John started.

"They will know by tomorrow," I interrupted. "They're my friends; it's only fair that they know the truth."

John nodded and hung his head as Applejack addressed him.

"I'll let ya stay tonight," she said. "But, unless ya can give us a good reason for yer actions, it's probably gonna be the last time." John slumped his shoulders, going back into the farmhouse as Applejack turned to face me. "What're you gonna do?" she asked.

"I'll give him one chance to regain our trust," I said.

"And if he doesn't manage it?" Applejack asked. "What then?"

I shrugged. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," I replied. "In the meantime, I'll get going. G'night, AJ."

"G'night Geo," she replied. "I'll see y'all tomorrow."

With that, I turned and started walking down the road leading back into Ponyville. My mind was filled with memories of the time John and I had spent together; to find that it those memories were created under false pretences brought tears to my eyes, but I dashed them off as the library came into view.

I found Ace there, talking to Twilight about something. I was too tired to listen, so I indicated to her that I was going to bed. She nodded and I went upstairs, throwing myself onto the bed.

As sleep claimed me, my thoughts drifted to the upcoming meeting. I knew that John would try his best to explain why he did what he did, but I also knew that whatever he said wouldn't work.

It's really easy to betray your friends, but it's even harder to forgive them — and John would have to do something amazing to regain even a *fraction* of the confidence I had lost in him.

## 6. A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN

As the clock ticked away, the hands indicating 11:55am, I was sitting in the library's living room. I had just finished explaining to the others what I had learnt about John, and – as I expected – they were not happy about in the slightest. Hell, Rainbow Dash even went so far as threaten to knock some of his teeth out.

"I know what he's done is awful, but I still think that he has the opportunity to explain himself," I said. "Everyone deserves a second chance, after all, but whether we accept it or not is down to John, and how he presents himself when he—" There was a dull knock on the door. "Speak of the devil."

I went over to the door and yanked it open to find John standing there. He peered over my shoulder, noticing with concern the stern looks plastered on everyone's faces; even Fluttershy had one.

"You said noon, yet you started without me," he grumbled, pushing past me into the middle of the room. "What, you figured you'd turn them all against me first and *then* let me try to explain myself?"

"They had to know," I replied. "All I've told them is what I learned at my little meeting with your superiors."

John looked around at the occupants of the room. "I've thought long and hard about what I'm going to say," he said. "So... here goes." He took a deep breath. "I know that what I did is inexcusable, and I don't expect you all to forgive me immediately. At first, I was doing what I was doing because I was ordered to; as time passed by, though, I came to realise that I genuinely respected each and every one of you. Every one of you has done something which helped me realise my mistake, as I will explain."

We all watched him as he continued talking, none of us wanting to interrupt what was clearly a well-planned speech.

"Rainbow Dash, I respect you because, like me, you're loyal to the end," he continued. "I thought that serving my country made me loyal, but you showed me that friends matter just as much."

He looked at Fluttershy. "Fluttershy, I respect you because of your caring nature; I cared about only myself, yet seeing you in action with your animal friends – as well as your pony friends – has made me realise that I do have something else worth caring for: friends."

Fluttershy smiled as John addressed Rarity. "I never used to give a damn about being generous to others, because I only looked out for numero uno. However, in the short time I've been here, Rarity, I have seen you drop everything to help your friends; if that means putting your clients at the bottom of your list of priorities, so be it."

Rarity's expression softened, and John turned his attention towards Applejack. "Applejack, I respect you because of your honesty. Now, I know that means nothing coming from a lying snake like me, but it's true. You also helped me out when I first got here by giving me a job and a place to live, and you showed me that I don't need to lie any more. As such, I owe you a lot more than just my respect."

Applejack nodded as John moved on. "Pinkie Pie, I respect you because... well, you're you. You remind me of when I was a child: carefree and full of life, not giving two shits about what happens."

Pinkie developed a grin that threatened to split her face in half, as John looked at her. "Geo, I respect you because of what you've been through to find happiness. You may think our friendship is fake, but the memories I have are real, and I'll remember them forever. I don't know *how* I'll convince you of this, but I promise you that I will do something to make you trust me again."

I rolled my eyes; Twilight saw and nudged me as John spoke to her. "Twilight, I respect you because you're Geo's wife, and also because of your spirit and your determination. You have characteristics about you that would put some people to shame... people like me."

Twilight looked at me, and then back to John, before sighing. He didn't respond as he reached the last person in the room. "And you, Ace. I respect you because, if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have come here in the first place. I know I was spying on you, trying to learn your secrets, but I thought I was doing so for the good of the country. Hell, I've got it all figured out now: the only secrets you have... are on how to be a good gamer."

Ace chuckled. "You got that right," he said smugly.

"Well, that's that." John let out a long breath. "I've said my peace, so I'll leave what happens next up to all of you; whatever you decide, I will go with it. No arguments."

I motioned for everyone to come together in a huddle, which they did. Turning away from John, we dropped our voices to a whisper.

"Do any of you buy what he's saying?" I asked.

"I watched him carefully while he was talking, fer any sign that he was lyin' again," Applejack said. "I couldn't see anything, but I still can't be sure; ya gotta admit, though, he *sounded* sincere."

"*Sounding* sincere and *being* sincere are two different things, AJ," Rainbow Dash replied. "Look, I say we give him a second chance, like Geo said. We'll forgive him, just this once; if he does something like this again... well, hopefully it won't come to that."

"Sounds good to me." Twilight nodded. "What about you, everypony, do you agree that we should give him another chance?"

"Yes." was the universal response, at which we broke off from the huddle and looked at John. Sweat was trickling down his brow, he was absent-mindedly chewing his fingernails, and the concerned look he had been wearing earlier was back.

"We've decided that we're ready to forgive you." John's face lit up, but I raised a finger. "But if you fuck up again, that's it. So I hope for your sake that everything you said was true."

John nodded. "Every. Fucking. Word." he said sharply. "I promise you that I will redeem myself, one way or another."

He opened his arms for a hug; Pinkie Pie was first to accept his invitation, followed by the others, while Ace and I shook his hand. I noticed that Twilight was looking somewhat flustered, but I put it down to the stress we'd endured over the last twenty-four hours.

"Now then," Rarity said. "Let us never speak of this again."

We all nodded, as Pinkie Pie pulled out her Party Cannon. "John's our friend again, so it's party time!" she fired the cannon, sending a burst of confetti, balloons and streamers all over the library.

"That's a great idea, Pinkie." Twilight smiled politely. "Help yourselves to snacks, and I'll be right back; I need to use the little fillies room." With that, she beat a hasty retreat upstairs.

Pinkie pulled some punch from another unknown place and set them down on the table. It wasn't long before we were all chatting away, as if the events of the last few days had never happened.

Ten minutes later, I went into the kitchen to get some food, only to notice that Twilight hadn't returned yet. Shrugging, I grabbed a few ciders from the fridge and took them into the living room, where I placed them on the table and looked around in a futile attempt to spot her. Realising she must still be in the bathroom, I went upstairs to look for her. As I reached the top, I heard what sounded like faint sobbing coming from the bathroom. Wondering what was going on, I walked quietly to the door and pushed it open.

As the door swung open, Twilight gasped; she was sitting on the edge of the bathtub, her eyes red and puffy. She quickly hid something behind her back as I walked in.

"Twilight?" I asked, concerned. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing, Geo," she replied, avoiding my gaze.

"Twilight, whenever I lie to someone, I also avoid looking at them." I folded my arms. "Now tell me what's wrong."

"I can't," she said. "Because you'll probably hate me."

"I could never hate you!" I was shocked that she could even suggest such a thing. "I'll love you no matter what happens!"

Twilight let out a small chuckle and raised her head, her lavender eyes connecting with my blue. "Are you sure about that?" I nodded. "Good. Because it turns out that..."

"That what?" I asked. "Come on, Twi, you can tell me."

Twilight sighed. "It turns out that I'm pretty good at baking, since... well, I've apparently got a bun in the oven."

She removed her hooves from behind her back to reveal what she had been hiding: a pregnancy test. *A positive pregnancy test.*

A moment of silence followed, during which I slid weakly down the door frame onto the floor. "So what do we do now?" I asked.

"I need to get a scan," Twilight replied. "I've been feeling the symptoms for a while now – at least a month – but I was only able to get a pregnancy test the other day, when a temporary assistant was working in the pharmacy." She gave me a small smile. "I didn't want somepony I knew to see me buying the test."

"That's understandable," I said. "We'll go to the hospital first thing in the morning to see Doctor Haywick, all right?"

"Okay." Twilight nodded. "But you do realise that me carrying a hybrid is a possibility we need to consider, right?"

"I do, but now is not the time for worrying about that." I walked over to Twilight and sat by her side, putting one arm around her shoulders, and the other across her stomach. "A life is a life." I said gently. "No matter what you're carrying, it is still my child, and I'll make damn sure to give it the best life I can."

She smiled, giving me a hug while I kissed the top of her head. We sat in silence for a few minutes before Pinkie Pie walked in.

"There you two are!" she said, somewhat sternly. "For a moment, I thought you two had walked out on my par—" She let out a gasp; I followed her gaze and saw that she was looking at the pregnancy test I was still holding in my hand. "You're with foal?!"

Twilight nodded. "Yes, Pinkie," she replied. "I'm pregnant."

Pinkie nearly exploded with delight as she shot forward and hugged both of us. "I'm going to be an auntie!" she squealed.

"What in tarnation is goin' on in here?" Applejack asked. I looked over Pinkie's shoulder to see the rest of the group at the bathroom door. "Has the party moved in here or something?"

"Twilight's pregnant!" Pinkie said. "Ooh, this calls for a huge party, which I am gonna plan right now! Bye!" She shot out of the room; the library door slammed shut a few seconds later.

"Wait a minute." Ace scratched his head. "I thought you said pony and human DNA was incompatible?"

Twilight smiled. "It turns out that I was wrong." she giggled.

"Well then," Ace said, beaming from ear to ear. "Let me be the first to offer you both my most sincere congratulations!"

Everyone filed into the bathroom; the ponies gave Twilight a hug, while the men slapped each other on the back and shook hands. Despite the celebrations, I only had one thing on my mind.

*The future of my unborn child.*

## 7. NEW LIFE, OLD TROUBLES

"So much for not coming back." The voice of the doctor drew the attention of Twilight and I to the door of the hospital room we were in. "When you were discharged, Geo, didn't I tell you to be careful?" The smile on his face betrayed his stern demeanour.

"Actually, Doctor Haywick, you didn't tell me that." I smiled and pointed at Twilight, who was sitting on the bed. "Besides, it's not me who needs your expertise this time; it's her."

Haywick looked at Twilight, who grinned sheepishly. "Well then," he said. "What seems to be the problem?"

"I'm pregnant," Twilight replied giddily. "I've known for about a month now, and... well... we want to know if I'm carrying a hybrid."

Haywick's smile vanished, replaced by a slight frown. "As you wish," he replied. "Although I must point out that the possibility of a hybrid being born without magical interference is extremely low." The top of his horn lit up and he gently placed it on Twilight's stomach, concentrated for a moment, then looked up. "You're not carrying a hybrid." He said at last, to which Twilight and I both let out a sigh of relief. "Would you like to know what you're carrying instead, or would you rather leave it as a surprise?"

"We'll leave it for now," I replied.

"All right then," Haywick said. "If there's nothing else, I shall return to my rounds and leave you two alone." He went towards the door, stopping just short. "Oh, and congratulations."

He walked out the room and closed the door, leaving Twilight and I to ourselves. I sat down next to her, making sure to put my arm gently around her, and we both smiled.

"That's a huge load off my mind, Twi," I said. "If it – our son – isn't a hybrid, I'm guessing he'll be a unicorn."

"Yes, *she* will be a unicorn." Twilight stuck her tongue out at me, then got off the bed. "Come on, let's go and tell everypony we're expecting a normal foal. I'm sure they'll love the news."

"John will," I replied. "I know that for a fact."

"Why?" Twilight raised an eyebrow at me.

I paused for a moment, then chuckled sheepishly. "Well, it's just... he kinda bet me fifty bits the kid wouldn't be a hybrid." I shrugged. "I guess he knew something I didn't, for a change."

Twilight rolled her eyes and giggled as she walked out the room. I rubbed the back of my head and followed her.

\*\*\*

"So, if you're not expecting a hybrid, what *are* you expecting?" Rarity asked. "A unicorn or an Earth pony?"

"The foal will no doubt be a unicorn," I replied. "But we don't know whether it'll be a colt or a filly; it's more surprising that way."

Pinkie Pie squealed in delight. "Who *cares* what they're expecting?!" she cried. "I'll have a new foal to play with! Ooh, I can arrange a play date with Pound and Pumpkin! It'll be so much fun!"

I laughed at Pinkie's enthusiasm. "I've seen how you are with Pound and Pumpkin," I told her. "You'll make a great auntie."

Pinkie's smile grew wider and she squealed again before bounding around the room, much to the amusement of her friends.

\*\*\*

The time ticked by slowly as my friends and I enjoyed ourselves. To add to the celebration of Twilight and I's bundle of joy, Ace and Pinkie finally realised they loved each other; I had seen the signs for months, so it was good to see them together at last.

"I knew it!" I yelled, as Pinkie nuzzled Ace's chest after smothering him in kisses. "I knew this was going to happen!"

There was a knock at the door, and I opened to find Twilight's parents and brother standing on the doorstep.

"Hello, Night Light, Velvet." I bumped Shining Armour's forehoof with my fist. "What's up, brother-in-law?"

"Hi, Geo," Shining Armour replied. "We heard the news, of course, and we're here to celebrate." A goofy grin appeared on his face. "I still can't that I'm gonna be an uncle; I was sure that I'd be the first of Twiley and I to provide our folks with grandkids."

I chuckled. "Sorry we beat you to it, mate, but maybe you can try and get your own back by drinking me under the table?" I folded my arms. "'Try' being the key word, of course."

Shining grinned. "You're on."

I grinned back and stood aside to let them all in, Velvet pushing past the two stallions to get in first. "Twilight, your family's here!"

"Mum, Dad, Shiny!" she came over and embraced her family in a group hug; I laughed at how some of my mannerisms had rubbed off on her, since she didn't say 'Mom' like she normally would.

"Hey, Twiley." Shining gave his sister a hug. "Pinkie Pie invited us." He thought for a moment. "Oh, I almost forgot to mention that Cadence couldn't be here due to being on royal business. However, she asked to pass on her congratulations as well."

"We're going to be grandparents!" Night Light said. "You've made your mother and I prouder than ever, Twilight."

Twilight blushed. "Thanks, dad," she said.

"I always knew you were the right one for our Twilight, Geo," Velvet said. "I trust you'll take care of her, and your foal?"

"Of course I will, Velvet," I replied. "I will take care of my beautiful wife and our darling child, no matter what may come."

Velvet smiled, and both parents went to join the party. Shining Armour stayed behind and waited until they were out of earshot before he addressed me in a hushed tone.

"I understand there were more humans here recently?" he said.

My eyes widened. "How did you know that?" I asked.

"Doctor Sorou captured a Diamond Dog near town the other day, so I ordered regular patrols near town," he replied. "One of those patrols happened to see the humans."

"I can assure you, Shining, that they mean no harm," I replied. "In fact, they should be in the process of leaving."

"Yes, my guardsponies did say that they were packing up," Shining said. "But the question is, why were they here to begin with?"

I told Shining everything about why the military was in Equestria, although I neglected to tell him what I'd learnt about John being a spy because I wasn't sure how he'd react.

"Okay," he said once I'd finished. "If you say they're leaving, then I believe you. However, I will continue sending patrols to check on them until we're absolutely certain that they've all gone."

I nodded. "Of course," I replied. "Now come on, let's enjoy the party." I raised my voice. "John, get the cider; I'm going to show little Shiny here how a true stallion handles his liquor!"

Shining rolled his eyes and went over to the drinks table; before I could follow him, there was another another knock at the door. I cursed under my breath and opened it, only to get a face full of white and dark blue, at which I looked up to see Celestia and Luna looking down at me with huge grins on their faces.

"Ahh, Princesses!" I said loudly, the music and chatter stopping as all eyes turned to the door. "What brings you here?"

"Why, the party, of course," Luna replied. "Twilight Sparkle is a good friend of ours, so it would be rude of us not to join her in celebrating her good news. That, and we were invited."

I smiled. "Pinkie Pie?" I asked, to which they nodded. "Of course." I stood aside. "Well then, by all means, please come in."

As both Princesses entered the room, everyone present bowed. It wasn't long before Luna was strutting her stuff on the dance floor, while Celestia was talking to Twilight and I.

"Captain Armour told me that more humans were discovered in the Everfree Forest," she said. "Tell me, what has become of them?"

"They should be gone by now," I replied. "They wanted to talk to me about a few things, such as how I knew Ace, and what I had to do with his research into inter-dimensional travel."

"Nothing else?" Celestia replied.

"That's all," I said. "They should be gone by now, in fact; Shining Armour said he'd send another patrol out, so we'll see."

Celestia smiled. "Well then," she said. "As long as that's dealt with, I have nothing to worry about... other than Twilight here."

Twilight hugged her mentor tightly.

"You let me worry about Twilight," I said, stroking her mane.

"Have you thought about names yet?" Celestia enquired.

Twilight and I exchanged a glance. "Not yet, Princess Celestia," Twilight replied. "It's still a little bit early for that."

"I understand," Celestia replied. "If either of you need any help at all, then you know where to find me. And don't forget that I'm not the only one; you have a multitude of friends and family who, I'm sure, would be more than happy to offer their assistance."

With a final nod from us, Celestia joined Luna on the dance floor.

\*\*\*

Hours later, the party had ended and everyone had gone home. Twilight and I sat on the library's balcony, watching as Luna's moon made its gradual ascent into the sky. A shooting star streaked across the sky, and I felt Twilight tense up. I looked at her to see that she was crossing her hooves, had her eyes shut tight, and was mouthing something incomprehensible under her breath.

"Making a wish?" I asked her, to which she nodded. "What was it?"

"If I tell you, it won't come true," she replied.

I chuckled and kissed her softly, turning to watch the star making its way across the sky; I crossed my fingers, closed my eyes, and made a wish of my own. "I wish to be a good father."

I felt something poke me, and I opened my eyes to find that Twilight had jabbed me in the side with a hoof. "You'll be a great dad," she said. "What have I told you about doubting yourself?"

As I looked into her eyes, I saw them glistening in the moonlight. I held her close and smiled. "Not to do it," I replied. "But you have agree that a little bit of extra strength wouldn't hurt, right?"

Twilight smiled back and we sat in silence. And at that moment in time, I couldn't have wished for anything better.

\*\*\*

The two Royal Guards entered the clearing and looked around; other than the portal humming away in the centre, the area appeared to show no signs of having been occupied.

"Looks like the humans have left," said one. "And look, they were even nice enough to clean up the mess they made."

"That was good of them," the other replied. "Come on, let's report back to Captain Shining Armour and give him the good news."

As the guards turned and walked back towards Ponyville, neither of them heard a voice on the breeze, full of contempt and anger.

"Pony bastards..."

## 8. REACQUAINTED

The weeks turned into months, and Twilight and I grew closer together; we were eagerly awaiting the arrival of our foal, and Twilight's twice-monthly check-ups had reassured the two of us that he – or indeed she – was as healthy as they could be.

Twilight and I were stocking up on all sorts of baby goods in preparation for our bundle of joy: toys, nappies, dummies, a crib, more toys, a baby monitor, blankets, bottles... the list went on. As any parent will tell you, all that stuff does not come cheap so, with that in mind, I decided to get a proper job. After all, Twilight had learned everything she could from me about humans; John was no help, and Ace was busy with his own work. I put the word out that I was looking for a job, and was soon offered one – as a bouncer, of all things – by none other than Vinyl Scratch.

Twilight worried about me for the first week I was working; I managed to get her to relax by telling her that the job was the easiest money I had ever made, and the money was good.

"I'm as tall as Princess Celestia," I told her. "As such, I never have any trouble with drunk and/or abusive clubbers."

"Well, okay," she replied. "If you're sure."

And that was that; I carried on working, with every spare bit I earned going towards the foal. I worked during the night, meaning that I was free to spend the daylight hours with my wife and friends, enjoying life for all that it was worth.

\*\*\*

"Twilight?" I called up the stairs.

"Yes?"

"Vinyl wants to see me, so we can discuss my hours for next week," I said. "Will you be all right on your own for a while?"

"I'll be okay," she replied. "I'll invite the girls over for a chat, and try to refrain from hitting Rainbow Dash with something when she makes the now inevitable 'house' or 'hippo' joke."

"All right." I chuckled. "I'll see you later, Twi. Love you!"

"Love you too!"

I stepped out onto the streets of Ponyville, taking in a lungful of cool crisp air. The sun hung lazily in the sky, the market traders were out in force and school was out for the day. After admiring the sights, I put my hands in my pockets and started walking to the club. Vinyl was waiting for me outside, wearing her usual goggles; she raised a hoof in greeting as I approached.

"Hey boss,"

Vinyl nudged me with a hoof. "Don't call me that, Geo," she said sternly. "I hate it when you do. Call me 'Vinyl,' for Celestia's sake!"

"Sure thing, *boss*," I replied mockingly.

Vinyl rolled her eyes and led the way into the club. Even after a few months of working here, I still found the eerie quiet of the place during the day to be strange. It was much different when it was packed with ponies eager to bust a move... or somepony's face.

We entered Vinyl's office and sat down at her desk, where she produced a piece of paper. "Right, your hours," she said. "I've made a few changes to your schedule for next week."

I sat down on the chair in front of the desk and made a pyramid with my fingers. "Changes such as... what, exactly?"

Vinyl put the rota on the desk and jabbed at it with a hoof.

"I'm giving you Monday off for Twilight's next check-up, so you can come in on Tuesday. And I *know* I said you could have Wednesday off, but I actually need you because it's the Nightmare Night party. In return, you can have Thursday off instead; after that, you'll be back to your normal working hours."

She pushed the paper over to me and I read it, then gave her a thumbs up. "Suits me, Vinyl." I stood up.

"It had better suit you, bub." Vinyl shot me a sly wink. "Anywa, that's all; get outta here and tend to that wife of yours."

We both grinned at each other as I left the office, tucking the paper into my pocket. Stepping back onto the Ponyville streets, I caught sight of John walking along the road. I called out to him and he stopped, looked around, then walked over when he saw it was me.

"Hey, Geo," he said. "I thought it was your day off?"

"It is, but Vinyl wanted to discuss my hours for next week," I replied. "Twilight is having a 'girly thing' back at the library, so I was looking for something to do. Fancy joining me?"

"Yeah, sure," John said. "But, er..." He looked around furtively. "I was kinda wanting to talk to you privately first."

I wasn't sure what to make of this; part of me still didn't trust him after the whole 'being a spy' revelation, but it was also my idea to give him a second chance. The least I could was follow it.

"Sure thing," I said. "But where?"

"I know a place," he replied. "Follow me."

I nodded, following him as he walked down the winding streets, onto a path leading past Fluttershy's house, and into the Everfree Forest. We came to rest in a forest clearing. I laughed inwardly to myself; I seemed to spend a lot of time in such clearings.

"So," I said. "What did you want to talk to me about?"

John took a deep breath and let it out. "First of all, I want you to promise that you won't laugh at me," he replied, to which I nodded. "Right, okay, here goes. Over the last few months, I've been working my butt off at the farm to thank Applejack for giving me a second chance. That has meant spending a lot of time working alongside her, getting to know her, and..." He paused for a moment. "Falling head over heels in love with her."

It took me a moment to realise what he'd said; when I did, I smiled. "Why would I laugh at that?" I asked, sounding bemused.

John threw his arms up. "Hello?!" he said loudly. "She's the freakin' *Element of Honesty*, and I'm a no-good, two-faced, lying bastard."

"No," I said. "You *used to be* a no-good, two-faced, lying bastard."

"I still did it," John said flatly.

I sighed. "Okay, fine, you're in love with AJ," I said. "But what exactly do you love about her?"

John smiled contentedly and leaned against a tree. "She makes me laugh, she's strong, she's a hard worker, she listens to my problems, and I get on well with her family." he blushed. "She is also really attractive with her hat off and her mane down."

"That all sounds very exact," I replied. "And what's stopping you from telling her all of this this?"

"My nerves." I slapped him as hard as I could upon hearing those words. "Hey!" He shouted. "What the fuck was that for?"

"Slapping me at my wedding, for starters." I smirked. "And also because you need to stop fretting and tell her how you feel about her. Ask her out; the worst she can do is turn you down."

"But when you told Twilight you loved her, you nearly died." I grimaced, and John's eyes widened. "Shit, sorry."

"No, it's fine," I replied. "You're right, I *did* nearly die. But I'm here now, am I not? Alive and kicking, married with a foal on the way... you can have all that too, if you want." John nodded, and I continued. "Has AJ given you any signs that she feels the same way about you as you do her?" I asked.

"I could be mistaken, but she has started walking with a bit more 'sway' lately, if you know what I mean," John replied. "She has also taken to flicking me with her tail whenever I make a lewd joke."

I raised an eyebrow. "I think those are clear enough signals."

"You're right, Geo. I need to tell her, and I need to do it soon. You have Twilight, Ace has Pinkie... now I need somepony to love."

I patted him on the shoulder. "Attaboy." I said, ruffling his hair for the hell of it. "Now, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to tell AJ I love her."

"I can't hear you!" I said. "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!"

"I'M GOING TO TELL APPLEJACK I LOVE HER!" he roared, with enough force to send the local bird population flying.

We both cheered and gave each other a high five. But, as our enthusiasm died down, dull clapping could be heard.

"How positively sickening," a voice said, full of venom. "You two make me ashamed to call myself human."

John and I looked around. "Who the fuck is that?" John hissed.

"I don't know," I replied. "But their voice sounds familiar."

"Of course my voice is familiar, you dense prick!" A figure emerged from the tree line, wearing a blue t-shirt with matching blue trousers. "After all, you heard enough of it at my trial."

I narrowed my eyes and glared at him.

"Derek," I snarled. "How wonderful to see you again."

"Wait a minute," John said. "*This* is Derek?!" I nodded. "The guy who shot you and left you to die in the street?"

"Yep," I replied. "That's him."

"Oh, shit." John walked over to Derek, who seemed unphased by his presence. There was a pause before he spoke again, during which Derek glared at him. When he did finally speak, I was shocked. "Well, this is one reunion I had hoped to avoid..."

"Brother."

## 9. EST ULTIO HUMANUM

John and Derek continued to stare at each other, while I stood nearby with a dumbfounded look on my face; the revelation that the two of them were related had knocked me for six.

"I just... I can't... how do..." I shook my head to clear out the cobwebs that had gathered. "You're *brothers*?!"

John nodded. "Unfortunately, yes," he replied. "We used to be close, but Derek didn't approve when I said that I was joining MI6. Our parents were really happy for me, but—"

"Of *course* they were fucking happy," Derek interrupted. "Their darling little boy had done them proud once more."

John sighed. "Whereas *you* had just let them down for the millionth time after being caught shoplifting again," he retorted.

"The only time they cared was when I did something wrong."

"Then maybe, you should have done some good in your miserable life," John snarled. "Instead of settling on petty crime."

"Fuck you," Derek snapped. "Fucking goody two-shoes."

"Enough!" I shouted, at which both siblings looked at me. After a while, Derek folded his arms and grinned.

"I suppose you're wondering how, and why, I'm here?" he said.

"I am, yes," I replied. "Because the last time I saw you, you were being hauled off to jail after nearly killing me."

"Not jail," Derek said. "I was sent to a supposedly secure mental health unit, but I was able to steal some poor saps security card and uniform." He laughed. "I used them to walk straight out the front door without anyone giving me a second glance."

"That seems highly clichéd, but whatever." I shrugged. "Now how in the hell did you end up back here of all places?"

"I was on an industrial estate when I came across an old warehouse," Derek explained. "It looked to be a good place to crash for the night, so I went inside. Imagine my surprise when I find a fucking *portal* in the downstairs room!"

John and I looked at each other. "Ace..." we muttered in unison.

"Is that who built it?" the faintest trace of a smile appeared on Derek's face. "Must remember and thank them at some point. Anyway, I relished the thought of hiding in a whole new universe; when I realised it was this shithole again, I decided to go back."

"Let me guess," I said. "You were just about to do that, when all of a sudden the army turned up and fortified the portal?"

Derek nodded. "I honestly thought they were looking for me, so I hid," he said. "I was going to wait until they were gone, but then I saw them dragging your worthless carcass in."

"I had a bag over my head," I said. "How did you know it was me?"

"You didn't have it on for very long, though," Derek replied. "Once they took it off, I suddenly had a good reason to stay."

"Well then, thanks for the story," I said. "So what are you going to do then? Are you going to try and kill me again?" Derek nodded, and I laughed. "Okay then, but at least I'll go out knowing why you're so angry." He looked at me blankly; I took advantage of his confusion to continue talking. "I can tell from the way you and John were speaking to each other earlier that you blame your parents for everything that's gone wrong in your life, yet you simply can't accept the fact that they're not the ones to blame." I pointed at him. "Everything that's gone wrong in your life is down to *you*."

As the last word left my lips, Derek's face turned red. "I've told you already that you're not my fucking therapist!" he shouted.

"No, I'm not," I replied. "I'm simply a better person than you."

Derek stomped over to a tree and snapped a branch off it; the splintered end looked extremely sharp. He gripped his makeshift spear in both hands and started advancing on me.

But then, John stood in front of me. "Derek, don't!" he said. "Geo's wrong; our parents *are* at fault. You did everything you could to please them, yet they threw it back at you so they could dote on me instead. I stood in the way of your progress." He pointed at me. "Geo is nothing." He continued. "I took everything you could have ever had from you and rubbed my success in your face. If anyone is more deserving of your anger, it's me."

Derek seemed to agree with this, and lunged at his brother with the spear. John dodged the blow, grabbed the weapon with both hands, then headbutted Derek and wrestled the spear from him, throwing it onto the ground a few feet away from me.

I watched in silent horror as Derek flailed around wildly, swinging his fists while roaring like a trapped animal. John dodged or blocked most of his blows, his MI6 training clearly giving him the advantage, then retaliated by launching a flurry of blows into Derek's chest. The blows were enough to send Derek reeling, but then John made a mistake — he hesitated.

Derek seized his moment and wrapped his arms around John's waist, sending them both crashing to the ground. John put up his arms to protect his face, which allowed Derek to begin pummeling at his chest; when John put his arms over his chest instead, Derek punched him repeatedly in the face.

I stood motionless, paralysed with fear over what might happen. I saw the spear lying on the ground and picked it up. And then, summoning all of my courage, I swung it over my shoulder and brought it down with all the might I could muster.

The weapon connected with the top of Derek's head with a sickening *crack*, which was enough to make him cease his attack on John. With a roar of pain, he leapt to his feet and charged me.

Instinctively, I swung the spear around again, this time hitting him in the side of the head. There was another dull *crack*, and he dropped to his knees. He tried grabbing the weapon from me using both hands; the strength I had built up during my time working at the club failed in the face of his primal fury, and he succeeded.

Immediately and without even thinking, I kicked him in the face as hard as I could. Blood, spittle and teeth flew from his jaw as he fell face first onto the ground, unmoving. The spear clattered to the ground, and the clearing was deathly quiet.

Panting furiously, I went over to John. "Fuck me, that was scary." I was still shaking slightly. "Are you okay, mate?"

John coughed, a thin trail of blood escaping from his mouth. "I'm fine," he said, wiping the blood away. "To be honest, I think we should be more worried about Derek."

"I'm sorry, for hitting him like that," I said. "I just... acted."

"He was trying to kill me," John replied. "You did what you had to do in order to save my arse." He looked me in the eyes. "I swear, I had no idea it was him who nearly killed you. I'm so sorry."

"Don't worry about it. I helped him to his feet. "It's over now."

Just then, Shining Armour entered the clearing with a squad of guards. "Fluttershy called us about a lot of screaming," he said, the urgency in his voice apparent. "What in Tartarus happened?"

"Ask him," I said, pointing at Derek. "He tried to kill us."

"I see," Shining replied. He motioned to his guards and they picked Derek up. "Come on, John, you need to get yourself checked out."

John nodded and prepared to follow Shining; before he could go, I put a hand on his shoulder. "Thank you, John," I said. "Thank you for choosing me over your own brother."

"Derek is no family of mine, not now." John smiled. "I've got all the family I want right here." He took a step forward before stopping and turning to face me. "But at least this proves something."

"What?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"It proves that our friendship is real," he replied. "I wouldn't take a beating like that for just anyone, you know."

My eyes misted over. "Our friendship was always real, I said.

John smiled and we set off after Shining Armour, with Derek still slumped over the backs of two guards.

Looking at John in that moment, I felt proud to call him my friend.

Revenge is human, but friendship is eternal.

And I wouldn't have it any other way.

## 10. EPILOGUE

I grit my teeth as Twilight crushed my hand with her magic, her screams echoing down the corridor. Several weeks had passed since the incident with Derek in the Everfree, and I had tried to put it to the back of my mind; Twilight helped matters by going into labour.

*Just... breathe through the pain!* I thought. *Holy fuck, this hurts!*

"Come on, Twilight, you're nearly there," Doctor Haywick said gently. "A couple more pushes should do it."

Twilight's eyes nearly popped out her head as she screamed again. I felt the bones in my hand cracking as her hoof crushed it. Ignoring yet another bolt of agony, I looked down towards Haywick; his horn was glowing softly as he concentrated.

"You did this to me, Geo!" Twilight shouted. "Damn you!"

"We did this, Twilight," I replied. "I seem to remember you having as much of a part in the whole process as I did!"

"You son of a—" Twilight was interrupted by another scream escaping her; she fell back onto the bed, exhausted, and then there was nothing but silence in the room.

A silence which was finally broken by a crying foal, who was picked up by Haywick.

"It's a unicorn colt!" he placed the foal on Twilight's chest and she nuzzled him. "Well done, Twilight, you must be so proud."

"Well done indeed." I kissed her forehead and looked at the foal she cradled in her arms. "Hey there, little guy, welcome to the world."

The foal gave me a smile I thought for sure would tear my heart in two. Twilight kissed him gently and placed him in the nearby cot.

Next to his sister.

"Two unicorn foals." Haywick chuckled. "You'll certainly have your work cut out when their magic begins to manifest."

"We'll cope," I said.

Haywick nodded. "I have no doubts that you won't," he replied. "Anyway, my work here is done; I shall leave the four of you in peace." He went to the door. "Congratulations."

"Thanks, Doctor." Twilight and I spoke in unison.

Haywick left the room, leaving us alone with our children. We both looked at them as they took a nap, taking after me already.

"They're precious," Twilight said. "I love them already." She looked at me. "Sorry I yelled at you, Geo; it was the hormones talking."

"Don't worry about it," I replied. "I'd have probably said the same, if not worse, had the situation been reversed."

She giggled and nuzzled me. "Probably."

There was a knock at the door and Shining Armour entered. He had a huge smile on his face as he went and gave his sister a huge hug.

"Hey, Twiley," he said gently. "Congratulations." He looked at the foals. "Wait a minute, I thought you were only expecting one?"

I grinned. "We kept that well hidden, didn't we?"

"You sure did," Shining replied. "I guess you found out they were twins when you went for your first prenatal check-up, rather than your 'holy crap, it might be a hybrid' check?"

"Yes." Twilight rolled her eyes. "We were just as surprised as anypony else, but we felt that we deserved at least *one* secret."

"Fair enough, Twiley, fair enough." Shining chuckled, then looked at the clock; when he saw the time, his face fell. "Damn it. Sorry Geo, but we need to head back up to Canterlot."

"Already?" Twilight asked. "Oh come on, Shiny, don't do this; at least let him spend some time with the foals first."

"It's all right, Twilight," I said reassuringly, as Shining put a set of manacles around my wrists. "I'll be fine, I promise."

Twilight sighed. "I don't see why you got punished," she said bitterly. "You were only protecting your friend."

"I know," I replied. "But since Derek was attacking John and not me, that's why I got charged with culpable homicide."

"But Derek wasn't even an Equestrian citizen!" Twilight spat.

I kissed the top of her forehead. "I still took a life on Equestrian soil, Twi," I said. "But don't fret; I'll be back in no time at all."

Twilight kissed my cheek and nuzzled my face. "I waited for you once, so I think I can do it again," she whispered "I love you."

"I love you too," I replied, as Shining Armour took my arm and led me out of the room. When Twilight disappeared from view, I sighed and looked at him. "I took a life to protect those I cared about. And you know something, Shining Armour?"

"What's that, Geo?" he replied.

"I would do it again in a fucking heartbeat."

With those words Shining Armour led me outside, the hospital doors slamming shut with an echo that rang through the halls.