**Seeing the Pattern 6**

 Lickity Split awoke with the warm, dull ache of post-mounting bliss. He was sore and still pretty frumpy in certain spots. His mane was disheveled, his mouth affixed in a rather content smile, and his muzzle pressed into a frizzy pink mane. Lifting his head slightly, he looked down at Pinkie Pie. Huh. Maybe her mane was fluffy like that from tossing and turning all night, and she styled it to hang limply when she took the time to? It would explain her strange mane day in and day out. He smiled lovingly, leaning down and nuzzling his lover. “Good morning, Pinkamina…” he whispered a little gutterally. His throat was sore from… well, last night’s activities. The pink mare, facing away from him in the way they’d spooned at the night’s end, gave a noticeable flinch. “Shh-shh, it’s just me…”

 Pinkie Pie’s eyes had shot open when the unfamiliar feeling of nuzzling had awoken her. Something warm and hard was pressed up against her back… The barrel-chest of a stallion, you pervert, not THAT. She looked down at her chest to see one of his hooves draped around her. Pinkie’s eyes slowly got wider and wider as her pupils turned into tiny pinpricks. Her mouth slowly came open into a silent expression of panic. Freezing in place, she just couldn’t get her body to do anything for the moment.

 “Mhmhm, it’s me. Promise.” Lickity Split said, leaning and rather romantically chewing on one of her ears. He may as well have pulled the string on a party popper. Pinkie Pie hit the ceiling with a screech of terror, bounced across the room like a super ball, then VANISHED into her own mirror like it was made of water! Lickity sat bolt up, staring in confusion. He shuddered at the lack of mare in the room, looking back and forth.

 Pinkie Pie suddenly POPPED up in the mirror again, this time with her party cannon on her shoulder like a bazooka. “What’choo-doing-in-my-room?!” she demanded so quickly he could barely understand her. “Speak-or-be-cannon’d!” it was like a high pitched typewriter and it sent his ears into a confused panic.

 “How did you get in the mirror?!” he said in horror, for suddenly the boundaries of reality and physics had been blown wide open for him. They stared at each other with the same expression for a long time. “Pinkamina what’s—?!”
 “AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!” Pinkie Pie opened fire like a screaming action movie stallion! A hailstorm of party supplies blasted out of the cannon, out of the mirror, across the room, and right into Lickity Split. The poor stallion didn’t even have time to scream before he was clobbered by a series of gifts, slapped around by streamers, then tied into a thousand multi-colored ribbons! Mummified until only his frightened eyes were showing, he teetered on the spot until he fell off the bed and to the floor with a painful bump. The pink mare kept the party cannon trained on her opponent, panting like she was having an attack of some sort. Veins in her eyes she leapt out of the mirror, bending the rules of reality in a kaleidoscope of chaos. Still pointing her shoulder-handled weapon at him, she circled the room slowly.

 The room had the rather guilty musk of passion to it. The sheets were rumpled and stained in a few small places. A picture frame had fallen from the nightstand, having struck a strange package of crackers she’d never seen before. She checked the window. Then the door. The door was locked. Finally, when she was sure that the strange stallion was going nowhere, Pinkie Pie checked herself. She whimpered a little. He’d taken advantage of her in her sleep! Her pupils dilated in panic and tears rushed up into her eyes. “Nuh! NUH!” she couldn’t even get a scream out for a few moments. When she finally did, the sonic blast of panicked-mare-sound sent a shockwave through the three story building that was Sugar Cube Corner. The building shuddered on its foundations.

 It took all of four seconds for Mr. and Mrs. Cake to come thundering down the stairs. When the door wouldn’t give, Mr. Cake’s adrenaline helped him buck the door down off its hinges. They rushed into the room, and their muzzle’s wrinkled at the smell of the place. They saw Pinkie Pie with the party cannon, the tied-up stallion cocoon, the rumpled bed, everything. The pink mare suddenly dropped her strange weapon, burst into sobs and rushed into Mrs. Cake’s arms.

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 A very confused, very bruised up Lickity Split hung upside down from a street lamp. The disorientation and blood rushing to his head didn’t help. He let out a muffled cry when Rainbow Dash turned in mid-air to buck him for the sixteenth time. “Mrrrm-hrm-hrm-hrmmmm!” he tried to cry for mercy, but the layers and layers of party ribbon wouldn’t allow it.

 “You can shut the buck up, you sicko!” Rainbow said, angry tears in her eyes. “I get to hover here and do whatever I want with you until the royal guards come to pick your sorry hide up!” she turned and did it again, and he came very close to passing out. The pain was too intense. He would no doubt have hoof-shaped bruises all over his body.

 The gathered crowd glared murder at the ribbon-cocooned stallion. How could Lickity Split have done such a thing, taking advantage of a poor mare like Pinkie Pie? The light of their lives, the bouncy party pony, who brought joy and laughter to everyone around her? He had to be a certain shade of evil to do such a thing! In a small town like Ponyville, word had travelled fast and it hadn’t taken Rainbow Dash long to get ahold of the confused stallion and start beating him into a pulp. Nopony stopped her.

The only reason the crowd hadn’t strung him up entirely yet was because Twilight Sparkle had written a letter to Princess Celestia, promising solar stallion guards to pick the criminal up. The answer had come pretty quickly, and Twilight had come back to report a group of said guards were coming to take him away.

Lickity Split peered around in pain and confusion. What was going on?! Why had Pinkamina reacted so violently?! Why was he being beaten and treated like a rapist! It was consensual! It was! She’d invited him in! He couldn’t tell anypony this under the layers and layers of ribbons that entrapped him, though. The defenses of the party cannon were impossible to break free from and the—URGH! Another angry buck caught Lickity in the belly and his eyes began to roll into his head from the agony.

“That’s enough, Rainbow Dash.” Applejack said darkly from the crowd below. “Ain’t no sense in him bein’ unconscious when the guards get here. They’ll want him alert when they throw him in a dungeon or somethin’, ah wager.” The angry cyan mare landed hard, snorting steam from her muzzle. “Right now Pinkie Pie needs us around.” They cantered quickly back into the Sugar Cube Corner bakery, where the others of the mane six had gathered. The crowd stayed, as though to make sure the rapist wouldn’t squirm away somehow when nopony was looking. Angry murmurs filled the street-corner.

Inside Sugar Cube Corner, Fluttershy had taken point and was cradling the weeping Pinkie Pie for the moment. Twilight Sparkle stood silent as the grave at the window, eyes trained towards Canterlot and occasionally over to the dangling stallion. Her face was a hardened mask. Rarity was stroking Pinkie Pie’s mane over and over, having not found a single comforting thing to say since she arrived. Rainbow Dash came at last, nuzzling Pinkie gingerly. Applejack looked at Fluttershy, hoping for any reported change. But no, nothing was different. It didn’t take an animal expert to know what had happened. They were only thankful that Pinkie Pie’s party cannon obeyed her whims and was able to capture her assailant. Now he would face justice. The obvious question, beyond why and such, was how Pinkie had seemingly slept through the entire assault. Though none of them dared ask it aloud, clearly there was that mystery to consider. Had he drugged her or something? They would have to leave that in the hooves of the solar stallions coming to get him.

There hadn’t been a reported case of sexual assault in a century, according to Twilight’s research. The last stallion to commit it had been executed by Princess Celestia herself. Though crimes like this one were rare amongst ponies, they were always dealt with by royalty and with swift and terrible vengeance. Having female rulers tended to come with things like that, truth be told. An assault on a mare’s body set BOTH princesses off in dark and terrible ways.

It was nearly an hour later when a group of four solar stallions arrived in full regalia. They pulled with them a chariot with a gilded cage on it. It didn’t take them long to identify their target. “Criminal scum.” One of them spat as they tossed Lickity Split roughly into the cage. He bounced twice, pained from all the abuse, and the door was shut in his face. His eyes appeared in a little slit, and they shut a little door over the slit too. Five heavy locks clicked into place, and he was sealed inside. He whimpered through the prison of ribbons and steel.

“Make sure he goes right to Princess Celestia.” Twilight said with authority she never exerted. The guards regarded her with stony nods. This was a dark day indeed for Ponyville. With their burden collected, the solar stallion guards got into their yokes and took wing, taking off for Canterlot. The lavender mare returned to her friends, hoping to come up with some way to pick up the pieces and help Pinkie Pie. Poor Pinkie Pie. The pink mare had cried herself out and had fallen unconscious in the gentle hooves of Fluttershy. Her mane had gone limp and stringy.

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 Luna and Celestia both stood at the entrance to the palace dungeon. So few ponies were ever put there, it was like going back in time. Equestria was in a golden age of peace and prosperity, so it was quite a sickly feeling both princesses received when they’d received word about what had happened. The criminal had been placed in the lowest reaches of the dungeon, far from both the sun and moon, awaiting their interrogation. Celestia had halted her daily court, eager to study the vermin and learn from him what sort of evil had sprung from his heart. She looked over at her sister, who was clenching and unclenching her teeth over and over again. “Remember, Luna—”

 “No killing him with my thoughts, yes, we remember.” The princess of the night said tersely. She was out for blood. As a goddess of night, fertility and death the sudden clashing of all things she was in charge of made her so angry she was ready to collapse the caves of the dungeons down upon the stallion within. “We shall examine the vermin and then execute him with extreme prejudice!” she promised with venom, the free-flow of anger sending angry shimmers through her starry mane. A few stars went super-nova, angry little bursts of magic in the infinity that was her hair.

 Celestia frowned gently at her sister, but said nothing. The sisters left their guards behind and descended into darkness. None entered that didn’t have to. After many winding passages down into the cavernous deep, they found a long hallway of cells. In the furthest one, deep in the cold darkness, was a whimpering stallion. The sun princess gave a raised eyebrow when she saw him wrapped snugly in brightly colored ribbon. With a flick of her magic she snapped them, freeing him. They fell in a mess around him like confetti. He gasped aloud, coughing heavily. She winced at his appearance. He was covered with hoof-shaped bruises, and one of his eyes was swollen. The banana split on his flank even had a nasty purple bruise on it.

 “Rise, monster! FACE YOUR DOOM WITH DIGNITY!” Luna roared, ready to tear the bars from the cell door and rip the stallion in half. The Royal Canterlot voice boomed like a crack of thunder. He flinched visibly and moaned in pain.

 “Luna.” Celestia said gently, putting a hoof on her shoulder. Luna looked over at her sister, a quivering ball of rage. They turned when the stallion rose, trembling, to his feet. He hacked, spittle hanging unceremoniously from his muzzle as he staggered to the cellar door. He looked up at them with uncomprehending eyes. Then he sank to all four knees in a bow. “They told me you are called Lickity Split.” Celestia said serenely, though her tone was not a happy one. His head bobbed weakly, for he could not find his voice. “They also tell me you took advantage of a young mare in her sleep. Is this true?” His head flopped back and forth weakly. “No?” she said, a little surprised. “The evidence is rather stacked against you, I am afraid.” There was no malice in Celestia’s tone, merely stating facts. “Can you tell me what happened?”

 Lickity Split worked his muzzle a few times, his forehead pressed against the cool metal of the prison bars. “She let me in.” he whispered gutterally. “Wanted my company. Wanted me.” His bloodshot eye looked up at both princesses from where he knelt weakly.

 “LIAR!” Luna concussed the cavern with her voice, and the stallion whinnied in throat-ripping pain as he tumbled end-over-end away from the door. Celestia made no move to stop her. If Luna was to be the fury of the two sisters, then… the sun princess would not stop her. “Your seed swims in her like a plague! Her bed sullied by your lust! She has no memory of permission!”

 “Not a rapist.” He moaned from where he lay in a pile of hooves and pain.

 “Lickity Split. You say she let you in. What did she say?” Celestia said, at least wanting to listen to his story before Luna broke the door down and ate him or something. Her sister was passionate when it came to such terrible topics. While it took a goddess to trump a goddess, it would be a century of mistrust if one stood in the way of another when it came to passing judgment. If Luna suddenly decided to make the stallion’s head explode, Celestia could not remedy it.

 The stallion worked his muzzle a few times from where he lay on his side, staring at the princesses with a sideways view. “Sh-she said… ‘I don’t wanna be alone tonight. Stay with me. Just for tonight.’” He quoted rather bashfully. It had been an intimate moment, but he’d been forced to divulge it. A tear crept from his good eye.

 Both Princesses regarded each other. The stallion was either an excellent actor or there was some sliver of truth to his words. “We do not like it, Tia.” Luna said angrily, scuffing her hooves back and forth. “We should execute him in the Canterlot plaza. Show Equestria what becomes of such filth!” her anger was hot and heady, one of her hooves scraping at the ground over and over.

 “Could read my mind.” The stallion whispered. Both goddesses’ heads snapped in his direction. “Could.” He whispered from where he lay. They both wore a genuinely startled expression on their muzzles. Equestrian Covenant Law number one, no alicorn shall break into the minds of anypony without their explicit permission, for the mind is the last mortal sanctuary from the gods. Both sisters knew it, sometimes regretted it, but they’d promised it to the mortal races at the beginning of Ponydom. Their thoughts were their own, never to be pried upon without explicit permission.

 “You would bow to a mind-reading? Give up your ultimate privacy?” Luna almost pressed her head between the bars with interest. Now they were getting somewhere! Lickity Split nodded quietly, just trying to lay there and breathe. The prison door sprang open by alicorn magic, and both goddesses approached.

 “You know what you suggest.” Celestia whispered in a motherly way. “Everything in your mind, no matter how private or embarrassing or trivial, will be ours to pick through.” The stallion looked up at the two of them, nodding slowly.

 “I love Pinkamina.” He whispered huskily. “We… were together. Last night.” He closed his eyes to focus away the pain. “Read my mind.” He said with a certain firmness neither goddess had heard in a long time.

 “You have waived your right to mental privacy!” Luna said officially, reaching out with a powerful hoof and pressing it to one of his temples. Celestia reached, much more gently, placing a dainty hoof on the other side of Lickity Split’s head. Magic far greater than Equestria had seen in a long time ignited colorfully. They delved into his thoughts, his memories, and secrets. The sister’s closed their eyes, flicking through his foal-hood, past his high school years and into the more adult days. His father’s death. Moving to Ponyville. Opening his own ice cream parlor. More memories flicked by like a movie in fast forward. “Ah.” Luna said, for they’d seen a flash of Pinkie Pie. He’d caught her eyeballing him one day and skittering away with red cheeks. Then, another day when he’d been eyeballing her back. It was a rather stereotypical mare-next-door sort of puppy love.

 Celestia peered intently at his feelings and thoughts in those days. Rather normal flicks of affection, want, and heady smiling. Not knowing how to approach her. They went further forward and closer to present day. The tornado. The furious kiss. The potato chips. Luna saw herself threatening Pinkie Pie from a different point of view. Then, more angry kissing and finally they arrived in the proper time frame. Powerful magicks surged back and forth through the poor stallion’s mind. The goddesses focused intently on his memories of last night. He squirmed miserably as they watched the entire thing. The sex, the kissing, the shrieking, the heady dance of quiet lust they’d enjoyed for just one night. Then, when his memories started again it was with a screaming Pinkie Pie who seemed to panic at the sight of him. The party cannon, and so on.

 Both goddesses severed the connection, and Lickity Split lay there gasping as the magic flooded out of his body. As an earth pony, he wasn’t used to the power flowing through him. He rested while the princesses considered what they’d seen. “Consensual.” Celestia said, turning to her sister.

 Luna was flushed in angry embarrassment. “He speaks the truth.”

 “What does this mean, though?” Celestia said quietly.

 “It means his accuser will take his place on the chopping block.” Luna said savagely. She turned and, with a flick of god-like magic, healed Lickity Split’s body entirely. How? Shut up, she’s a goddess. He gave a heady gasp, sitting up. “We do not take kindly to honest ponies being framed for such travesties.” She pulled him to his feet by magic, setting him firmly on his hooves. “Pinkie Pie will pay with her head for her lies!” Luna swore angrily.