**Nightmare Night Equestria**

**Part 1 of ?**

By Doctor Mercurious

Canterlot was certainly very quiet from what he remembered of it; even in daylight its bright storied halls looked grey and dingy. Echoing footfalls had become strangely muted, and even the windows didn’t allow in as much light as they used to.

Of course, in his day he also would have been sacking the joint instead of co-ruling it but he wisely chose not to mention this to anyone.

Every morning, he attended to his duties: make sure Equestria’s sun was still burning, talk with the palace guards, have breakfast with Blackguards Spike and Rainbow Dash to go over any concerns, check the Flutterbat stations to restock any drained strawberries, and wrestle any paperwork into submission as well as dozens of other minutiae that Celestia used to tend to before her self-imposed exile.

Oh, and the occasional prank or two because he was still, well, *him.* But nothing too extreme.

When the sun went down, he stood outside the royal bedchamber just in case the Princesses live-dreamed another night-terror which was only waiting for nightfall to escape into the world and begin its reign of horror; wouldn’t do to increase the number of monsters running about. He gave the princesses twenty minutes for their toilette until he started knocking; even timed it on his pocket watch.

The thought of adhering to a *schedule* of all things would have sent the old him into an apoplectic fit. How *much* he’d changed.

There was a joke somewhere in that thought. A joke on *him,* of all beings.

Today, he did not have to knock. Luna/Moon opened their bedchamber door clad in a flowing raiment of starry night. Pale silver crowns be-glittered with shadow-diamonds perched on their foreheads. Only one of them was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, though. Moon’s head slumped against Luna’s own, her eyes half-closed. “Moon didn’t sleep well,” Luna murmured, giving her body-mate a peck on the muzzle. “She’s been up all night fretting over Twilight.”

He raised one eyebrow. “Really? I thought *she* was the one who suggested it was past time for the young unicorn to have her walkabout.”

“You know how protective she feels of our apprentice.” Luna lifted the hand on her side and rubbed the base of Moon’s horn. “Rise and shine, sleepyhead. It’s the Day Regent’s turn to sleep, after all.”

“Mm,” he agreed. “I’m overdue for my bedtime snuggle between the pages of a warm book and a good reading of the sheets. They’re cotton blend.” He gave them a manic grin. “It’s going to be a real mattress-turner.”

Moon opened her eyes, blinked and gave a creaky yawn. “It’s too early for my brain to handle you, Discord.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” the former Avatar of Chaos smirked. He gave each of them a sloppy kiss on the cheek. “Good night, your Majesties.”

Luna screwed up her face. “Ghhck!” She wiped at her cheek and gave him a long-suffering glare. “Good night.”

“You’re an old goat,” Moon replied, but fondly.

“Parts of me are, yes.” He did the macarena with his eyebrows. “Care to find out which parts?”

That did it. The princesses gave a dual squeak and fled, most likely for the throne room. Discord allowed himself a rumbling chuckle before porting to his quarters. He redecorated its interior every day and today’s theme had been ‘forest’; his rug was the softest grass ever, his bed a giant mushroom and a tree stump with drawers set into it served as his bureau. Oh, and a nearby tree had his balcony door set into it.

*I love my powers,* Discord grinned to himself*. I can be my own interior decorator and I’m not bound by the laws of reality.* He poofed away his official robes and was just about to head for his bathroom – and cast-iron tub with heated bubble-bath – when he heard a scratching on the balcony door.

Well, well. Now *this* was a surprise. He had a Flutterbat station on his balcony of course, but he’d never thought she’d *go* for it.

Very carefully, he opened the balcony door so as not to make any noise. Sure enough, a lemon-colored Pegasus with a pink mane crouched by a wicker table, gobbling up the strawberries. She’d been a real looker once but forced isolation and self-loathing takes its toll on even the prettiest of ponies; she was drawn, almost skeletal and her mane hung in knots.

Discord sank to his haunches and contemplated one of the most feared denizens of Equestria. Nightsteeds had started cropping up a few hundred years ago but people still weren’t used of them. All of the ponies so marked by their cutie-marks being in black-and-white had weird or unsettling abilities. Some were somewhat harmless but spooky like being semi-transparent; others, not so harmless.

His guest definitely fit the latter category.

Abruptly, the Pegasus stopped feeding. Her head snapped up, affixing Discord with a wild-eyed glowing red glare; she bared her fangs and mantled her bat-wings. Discord held up a hand. “I don’t want to hurt you,” he replied softly. “I just want to talk, Flutterbat.”

She drew back with a confused look. “No one ever wants to talk,” she told him in a soft, resigned tone.

“I’m not most people,” he replied. “I am curious why you’re feeding from my station, after all this time, however.”

Flutterbat fidgeted. “I-I thought that it being close you would make it more filling. I’m…” she lowered her head. “I’m getting Hungry again.”

*Oh,* he thought to himself*.* Flutterbat’s Nightsteed gift made her a vampire; not ‘looks like a vampire’, but an actual, fangs-and-glowing-eyes vampire. For some reason strawberries helped take the edge off her hunger for something a little closer to body-temperature but unfortunately, it wasn’t a permanent solution for her needs.

Which meant, on occasion, a pony would disappear and then they’d find said pony after a few days roughly two liters lighter and ten years older.

“We can’t have that,” he told her. Flutterbat was fairly powerful, but she was no match for him. He could obliterate her with a thought. Still though…that would be such a waste. “May I tell you a story? A true one?”

Flutterbat blinked at him slowly and climbed off the balcony railing, sitting cross-legged on the floor. “Okay,” she said softly, obviously confused.

Discord smiled at her. “Once upon a time there was a very dapper, intelligent, charismatic goat who happened to be an Avatar of Chaos. After several pranks that did in all fairness get completely out of hand, he was turned to stone.” Discord leaned forward. “Confidentially, between you and me, being turned to stone is rather relaxing. Boring, but relaxing.”

Flutterbat considered this. “I’d think I’d still feel Hunger,” she murmured.

“Probably,” he admitted. “In any case, one day he found himself released from his stone prison much to his surprise. Standing in front of him was one of the people who put him there except she wasn’t just one person any more. Needless to say, our dashing goat was thoroughly confused.”

“The Midnight Mares used to be just *the* Midnight Mare?” Flutterbat scratched her head. “Was she the first Nightsteed?”

“No, she – hm. You know, I’m not sure?” It would explain a lot if she was not just the cause, but the progenitor. Something to think on later. “Anyways, they offered this Goatly Paragon a job as the Day Regent, keeping the sun burning and all that. Needless to say he accepted it straight away, once he stopped gloating.”

Flutterbat frowned. “Why would he gloat?”

“Because he’d won, or at least thought he did,” Discord grinned. “Equestria had become far more interesting; more monsters, Nightsteeds, a general increase of fear and terror amongst the populace – why, truly, his previous defeat had meant nothing!”

She sidled closer. “Doesn’t sound like he won to me.”

“Oh, you *are* a smart one,” he agreed, smile evaporating. “When chaos is normal, what is the point of a rabble-rousing malcontent aiming for a thorough de-panting of the universe? When the weird is mundane, does that made the mundane weird? When the Avatar of Chaos isn’t even unique anymore, but expected???” He sighed “It was the greatest loss that he’d ever suffered.” Discord slumped. “I’d laugh, but bitter irony always did get lodged in my throat.”

Flutterbat lowered her head; Discord’s sharp ears heard her murmur, “I’d like to lose like that.”

Hm. Perhaps he was being a bit selfish. He was still having problems with this ‘empathy’ thing. “Still and all, I don’t have it nearly as bad as some ponies. Pinkie Pie, for example, is a carnivore and everyone’s always worried she’ll take a bite out of some pony. She tried opening a muffin stand and you wouldn’t believe the rumors!”

Flutterbat leaned forward, eyes intent. “Does she still live in town?”

“No, sad to say,” Discord sighed loudly. “She’s a rather sociable sort but she lives on the outskirts of town, by herself. She could surely use a friend. I worry about her so.”

“I could, um, check up on her for you. To see how she’s doing,” his guest offered, trying so terribly hard not to sound eager.

“Could you?” Discord gushed. “It would mean so terribly much.”

Flutterbat clambered to her hooves. “I will!” Then, much to his surprise, she lunged forward and gave him a big pony kiss on her cheek before throwing herself from the balcony with a joyful shriek.

Discord watched her go, rubbing his cheek. “Huh,” he mused. “Well now.” He carefully closed his balcony door and shook his head. “That was…interesting.”

A grin split his face. “That’s enough seriousness. Bubble bath time!” He snapped his fingers and suddenly his room was filled with suds.

Her Majesties did talk to him very sternly about also flooding the rest of the castle as well, but their expressions made it all worthwhile.