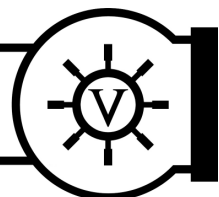


What Must Be Done

Vargras

PONY FICTION VAULT



For neophyte Ferous, it was the end of yet another shift. He had only been a member of the Royal Guard for less than a week, and already, he felt as if he was beginning to really fit in. This had been his dream since he was but a colt, and though it was a dream shared by others within Equestria, only a rare few ever managed to pass the admission process. It was something that made the young Ferous quite proud of himself, and his parents were just as proud and happy as he was.

The white stallion already had plans for the night—or he *did* have plans, at least. He was going to go out drinking with some friends, but that had since fallen through, and Ferous now found himself sluggishly making his way towards the exit. He wanted nothing more than to simply pack up and go home, but as he would soon discover, fate had something else in store for him that evening. As the neophyte walked along one of the walls of Canterlot, he spotted a figure off in the distance, and the silhouette made it rather easy to guess who it might be.

Upon one of the distant walls stood a member of the Night Guard, gazing out towards the horizon for any possible threats. The frill upon the helm made for a recognizable figure, but it was the purple armor that truly set the Night Guards apart from their peers. Unlike their counterparts within the Royal Guard, the Night Guard didn't sport the golden armor of Celestia, but instead wore something more befitting of the Princess of the Night. Ferous had heard hushed whispers about them, of course—not necessarily the Night Guard itself, but the ones who formed its ranks. The 'bat ponies', as they were often referred to.

To those not in the Night Guard, the entities known as oplitera, or 'bat ponies', were a complete mystery. Members of the Royal Guard knew that they served the Royal Sisters, and that was about all they *did* know—the public often knew even less, assuming they knew anything at all. At the very least, Ferous knew what they looked like, something greatly aided by the fact that their physical characteristics made them easily recognizable. A dark gray coat, fuzzy ears, and bat-like wings were usually dead giveaways, though the eyes and mane could often vary in color. Darker mane colors were the norm, and though the eyes of the Night Guard tended to gravitate towards brighter hues, they all shared one thing in common—slitted pupils, not unlike those of a cat. The very thought made the neophyte cringe somewhat, unable to think of how such a conglomeration of parts could still somehow be a pony.

He had heard the stories of what they often did during their spare time as well. Most of them spoke of the vile and wretched things the oplitera did, and those same tales often spoke of the dark rituals some of them would perform in worship to the Lady Luna. Ferous had always been rather skeptical of those stories—the few times he had seen the

Night Guard either in action or on-duty, they had always been the very embodiment of professionalism. Always on time, always in the know, always fully trained and fully prepared. In many ways, the Night Guard served as role models for some of the newer recruits of the Royal Guard, something that most of them would likely never admit.

The stallion looked further down the path he was on, and at the very end sat the exit. Perhaps it was his youth at play, but part of Feros didn't want to leave just yet, not after seeing the member of the Night Guard off in the distance. He had heard so much about them, and yet he had never really spoken to one—now seemed like the perfect opportunity to discover what was truth and what was fiction. With a renewed purpose for that night, Feros took a prompt turn to the right and began to tread down a different path, bringing himself closer and closer with each step.

As he steadily approached the Night Guard, the neophyte made a cursory inspection of the pony. Whoever it was, they seemed to be a textbook example of an opliptera. This particular guard had a stormy gray coat, and though he had a black tail, he was... apparently a she instead. Feros could make out the rounded muzzle of a mare from beneath the helmet, and she had the same yellow eyes that so many of them had. Before he could take another step forward, the mare spoke towards him, and without even moving her gaze. "Neophyte Feros, your shift was over roughly thirty-two minutes ago. What are you doing here?"

The white stallion blinked, slightly taken aback. "I... you know my name?"

"I'm a member of the Night Guard. Information and subterfuge are our weapons. It is my very *duty* to know anything and everypony that goes on within this city. Now I ask again, neophyte, what are you doing here?" The Night Guard barely turned her head, and she instead stared at him out of the corner of her eye. "This is the Eastern wall of Canterlot, and the exit lies on the Northern wall. I do hope you have some business with me, and if not, you're wasting my time."

"I do have some business with you, actually, miss... um..."

"Sergeant Noctis will suffice, neophyte."

Upon learning that she was a superior to him, Feros visibly cringed. "I'm s-sorry ma'am, didn't know you were a superior."

The gray mare sighed and briefly lowered her head. "...At ease, neophyte. I don't expect you to know everypony just yet, nor do I want you to feel as if myself or my comrades are here to judge your every move."

"R-right, then." The stallion relaxed as best he could, but he still found himself feeling rather nervous, simply from being in this mare's presence. "So, um..."

"Speak, Feros. If you have something you wish to say, say it. I *am* on-duty, after all."

The neophyte blinked, surprised at how direct the Night Guard was. "Well, uh... I was sorta curious."

"About?"

"...You."

Noctis briefly closed her eyes and shook her head before gazing back out towards the horizon. "Are you curious about *me* or curious about my *race*?"

After a bit of hesitation, Feros answered. "Your... your race, ma'am."

"Figured as much—the rookies usually are. I'll tell you what I tell everypony else that joins the Royal Guard. We serve the Royal Sisters, and we're on your side. That's it."

"That's... it?"

"Yes, and that's all you need to know." The mare shot him an irritated glance, then resumed her duties. "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to continue my watch."

The stallion awkwardly glanced around and pawed a hoof at stone beneath his hooves, then softly coughed. "I... actually wanted to know more about the bat ponies."

At that, Noctis let out a growl, and she quickly turned to face him. "We prefer the proper term 'opliptera', *neophyte*. I suggest you use it."

"I m-meant no offense, ma'am! I'm just... just curious is all!" Feros had already begun to nervously back away from the mare, but even now, he continued to speak. "I mean, I've heard the stories that the others tell. About... you know, your kind. But I just... I just wanted to know the truth."

“I pray you don’t shake nearly this much in battle.” Noctis backed away from him, and she faintly grinned at him, seemingly amused by his actions. “...You say you want to know the truth?”

“Y-yes, ma’am.”

Merely giving the neophyte a vague answer about the ‘truth’ had caused him to grin from ear to ear, and upon seeing it, the gray mare sighed. She had just added fuel to the fire, and she knew there was no way she would be rid of him now. “...I doubt you’ll leave until I tell you anyways. Come here and have a seat beside me—and quit your whimpering. It’s not like I’m going to tear out your throat or anything.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Feros eventually did as told, and he slowly made his way toward Noctis, taking a seat at her side.

“Just... call me Noctis. We don’t have much use for formality anyways.”

“...We?”

“The Night Guard. It’s... tradition, I suppose.” Noctis briefly glanced over towards the stallion, and she soon looked back out over the wall, her golden eyes scanning the horizon. “Pay attention, and I’ll tell you what I know.”

• • •

My father told me this story, you know. It’s been passed down from one generation to the next, to help us understand where we came from, what we are, and what our place in the world is. Just as my father told it to me, his father told it to him, as did his father, and so on. It’s the sort of thing we never really tell to outsiders, aside from those scholarly types, but... nopony really reads much anymore, so that hardly matters. I guess that’s why I’m telling you now.

It was over a thousand years ago, after the defeat of Discord but well before Lady Luna’s fall from grace. In our darkest hour, when Equestria was but a fledgling nation, the Royal Sisters arrived, and with them came salvation. They did something we never thought possible—they defeated Discord. To our ancestors, they may as well have been goddesses, and maybe they actually are. I can’t say for sure. But before I go any further, you need to understand something. In those days, after living their lives under Discord, our ancestors didn’t have much to live for. Life was spent solely fulfilling Discord’s every whim, to provide him with entertainment... and then the Royal Sisters arrived.

They were the paragons of everything right and proper within the world. Celestia, Daughter of Sol, played the role of peacemaker. Her very beauty and voice could calm the most savage of beasts and bring it to reason, and it was nigh impossible to ever anger her. Things that would have infuriated any other pony simply caused her to laugh and smile, as if it were no big deal at all. Should her attempts at negotiation fail, her power was often enough to make others see the error of their ways, but such a thing was rare. Instead, those duties were often left to her younger sister.

Luna, Daughter of Selene, was the bringer of war. She was as graceful as she was deadly, and Lady Luna soon proved herself to be a cunning tactician. Her battles were fought with ambushes, subterfuge, and infiltration—information was her weapon, and with it, she won wars before they could even start, simply because she knew what the enemy did not. Her wrath was a terrible thing indeed, the sort of fury that one only discussed in hushed whispers, out of both respect and fear. But as terrible as she may have been, she did indeed have a softer side. Just as she often strengthened her elder sibling, Lady Luna was tempered by Lady Celestia's mere presence, and together, the two of them ruled harmoniously.

After everything the Royal Sisters accomplished, the ponies of Equestria began to worship them as bonafide goddesses. It was something neither sister desired, but they could hardly stop such a thing. With every decree, every act, and every expansion of the kingdom, the populace grew more fanatical and zealous in their beliefs. To them, the Royal Sisters could do no wrong—under their rule, our ancestors were free to do as they wished, and they all managed to live peaceful and happy lives. No war. No famine. Not a problem or care in the world. And it was all because of the Sisters.

A century or so after the defeat of Discord and the ascension of the Royal Sisters to the throne, word began to spread of something strange in the world. On the very borders of Equestria, in a small town founded by pegasi, the citizens had found themselves stricken with a series of bizarre births. Instead of soft and colorful feathers, the foals were instead left with leathery wings. Instead of bright and smooth coats and manes, the foals were gifted with dark and dreary shades, their coats thick and coarse. Not even their eyes had been spared, and every child soon bore eyes not unlike that of a cat. The public caught wind of it, and cries of heresy began to spread like wildfire. To them, these creatures were abominations, and were an affront to the Royal Sisters. The only solution, in their eyes, was to cull the problem and destroy the very source of such wretched creatures—they sought to burn the town to the ground, and cut down any pony who resided there.

The Royal Sisters would have none of it, and indeed, they were *furious* that their own subjects would wish death upon their own kind. It was said that, on a rainy day, a large

crowd began to form near the town. Armed with torches and pitchforks, their intentions were already made clear, but just as they began their charge towards the town, the Sisters personally intervened and blocked the sole path into town. The crowd saw this as a sign that the Sisters supported their efforts, and they began to cheer, but Lady Celestia silenced them with a voice none thought possible of her. As the rain poured down around them and muddied the very ground beneath their hooves, the Daughter of Sol looked upon them all, and she soon made herself clear. “If you think of them as your misbegotten kind, then we shall be their mothers. If you seek to harm our children, then you shall know retribution.”

The crowd stood there, stunned that the very beings they worshiped as walking goddesses would willingly defend such vile creatures, but the Royal Sisters remained steadfast. Though many challenged them with words, all of them quickly backed down under the scrutiny of the Sisters, and none dared attempt to pass them. For hours they stood there, staring at the crowd, and neither side was willing to move. Lady Celestia and Lady Luna were fiercely determined to defend their wayward children, and one by one, the crowd began to disperse. Even as the crowd gradually thinned, they never moved from their places on the muddy road, their gazes harsh and unrelenting. Unable and unwilling to defy the Sisters themselves, the crowd admitted defeat and departed, and as they did, one of the pegasi from the very town they were defending cautiously approached the Royal Sisters.

She was naught but a tired mother, her nerves worn by everything that had happened thus far, and as she stepped towards the Royal Sisters, they instead bowed to her. The pegasus was shocked that such beings would willingly bow before her, and as Lady Celestia and Lady Luna rose once more, she peered up at them, a forlorn expression upon her face. “Why have you forsaken us? We do all that you say and we strive to do as you do, and yet we’ve been cursed. Why have you forsaken us?”

Lady Luna took a step toward the mare and lowered herself into the mud so that she was no longer above, but instead equals with the mother. With a voice as soft and serene as the night itself, she spoke. “Think of this not as a curse, but as a blessing in disguise. Just as they are your children, so too shall you and your fellows be ours. Though others may see you and the others as lost causes, my sister and I know better. Come with us to Canterlot, and we shall show you the love and acceptance that you and your children rightfully deserve.”

• • •

“So it was just... an accident?”

Noctis grimaced slightly and stared off towards some distant object on the horizon. “If one can manage to ‘accidentally’ birth an entire generation of my kind, yes.”

“But... how?” Ferous appeared lost in thought, and the stallion soon looked up to face the Night Guard. “That doesn’t seem possible.”

“Your guess is as good as mine. They didn’t know then, they still don’t know now.”

“So nopony knows what caused it?”

“No. We sure didn’t ask for it, but... we’re stuck with it now.”

The stallion sighed and began to reach over to place a hoof upon Noctis’ shoulder. “I’m—”

“I don’t need your pity, nor do I want it. I’m not done anyways.” The gray mare was quick to brush away his hoof, and she shot him an irritated glance before continuing. “Now, as I was saying...”

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Over the next few centuries, my ancestors gradually settled into life within Canterlot. They thought at first that, perhaps, it was nothing more than a fluke, and that maybe the births would never happen again. Of course, all that changed with the second generation... and the third... and the fourth. By the point, my fore-fathers had largely accepted their fate. It was a difficult time for them—they weren’t quite ponies anymore, but they weren’t ‘monsters’ either. They were, for lack of a better word, lost. They had no purpose.

And then Lady Luna began to see our kind in another light. Though she and Lady Celestia had always loved us and viewed us as their children, it was the Daughter of Selene who took a special interest in us. She began to see us in a new way, and it was then that she realized she could give my kind a renewed purpose within life. It was often jokingly mentioned that Luna never stopped scheming, but... looking back on it, I think it was true. She saw what we were capable of, and of the gifts our new form granted us. Our beloved Lady Luna, always with a plan.

She brought the latest generation of oplitera to her sister one night, and she excitedly chattered away and told her elder sibling of her plans for us. The Daughter of Sol listened intently, nodding repeatedly throughout the entire conversation, and at the end, both she and the Daughter of Selene looked upon my fore-fathers, smiles upon their faces. Our

gifts allowed for things never thought possible of ponies as a whole, and it made us uniquely suited for the very same tactics Lady Luna would often employ. It was there, and that very same night, that the first generation of the Night Guard began.

For once in their brief and miserable existence, my ancestors were... happy. They had a purpose in their lives then, a way to properly repay the Royal Sisters for all that they had done. As the population of oplitera grew, so too did the ranks of the Night Guard, and Lady Luna looked upon us with pride and joy. We may have been the misbegotten children of both Sisters, but first and foremost, we were *hers*. It was often during the nights, *her* nights, that my kind could be themselves. Under the cover of nightfall, we didn't have to face the scrutiny of others. We ceased to be 'abominations', and instead, we were what we used to be—ponies. Happy, healthy ponies.

As the years passed ever onwards, the Royal Sisters continued to keep watch over us, and slowly but surely, the citizens of Equestria began to accept us. Some even embraced us. Our performances in battle became the stuff of legends, and soon, the Night Guard became the very thing every military regiment strove to become. Tales of our valor simply helped our image even further, and it seemed like at long last, we would finally be allowed to rejoin our brethren underneath the sunlit skies of Equestria.

And then came Lady Luna's fall from grace. As time went on, our Lady's mood continued to sour, and she began to slowly change. Gone were the masterful tactics and element of surprise—instead, the Daughter of Selene began to use brute force above all else, and she started to become distant and spiteful. Battles were no longer fought and won for the sake of Equestria, but rather for her sake. It soon became obvious that this was certainly *not* a change for the better, and many of my fore-fathers would often speak to Lady Celestia in private, expressing how concerned they were about Luna's slow and steady decline. True to her very nature, the Daughter of Sol would listen intently—though they may have been siblings, they had been steadily growing further apart over the years. We, on the other hand, were Lady Luna's children. We were closest to her, and so we heard and saw far more than Celestia ever did.

Such news did nothing but put Lady Celestia into a depression—the thought of losing her only sister hurt her terribly, and she spent many a day and night searching for a way to make amends, some way to bring her sister back. But by that point, the Sisters simply couldn't see eye-to-eye, and things eventually reached a boiling point. As the story goes, Lady Luna refused to lower the moon one night. Despite Celestia's pleas, the Daughter of Selene continued to refuse to lower the moon, and it soon became evident that this was our beloved Lady Luna no longer.

Instead, my fore-fathers found themselves confronted with the twisted image of their surrogate mother, an entity known nowadays as Nightmare Moon. She was a wicked and vile creature who spat lies and other venomous words, and her every action was a very challenge to Lady Celestia. For the longest time, the Daughter of Sol refused to attack her own sister—or what was left of her, at least. She held out hope that there was some way to reason with her or redeem her, but every attempt ended in failure. So long as Nightmare Moon wandered the earth, Celestia was unable to lower the moon and end the Endless Night, and so she continued to bide her time.

The very act of Luna's betrayal managed to cause a rift within the Night Guard, and it split the opliptera firmly into two groups. On one side were the loyalists, ponies who felt that despite serving Lady Luna, they also served the throne and Equestria. These individuals quickly rallied behind Celestia, in an effort to oppose Nightmare Moon and the fledgling forces she had gathered. On the opposite side were the rebels, individuals who had placed their loyalty and faith solely in Lady Luna. Some of them were misguided individuals, convinced that they knew of a way to redeem the Daughter of Selene. Others felt that the Royal Sisters hadn't done enough for our kind, and so they sought reparations of their own. Whatever the reason, it tore the Night Guard right down the middle, and my ancestors soon found themselves in a civil war with one another. At the time, they didn't know how long such a war would last. They didn't know it would only take a few short months.

No matter how strong a pony's resolve might be, they all have a breaking point, and Lady Celestia soon reached hers. A few months or so after the Endless Night had begun, a young father arrived in Canterlot, bearing a grisly package. Within a cloth bundle upon his back was the emaciated corpse of his only child—his wife had evidently died during the first month. Finally faced with the grim prospect of the deaths of her children, Celestia flew into a rage, gathered the Elements of Harmony, and directed them at her own sister. The Elements were never meant to be used by a single bearer, however, and instead of removing the corruption from her younger sister, the Daughter of Sol instead imprisoned Lady Luna within the moon. For how long, nopony knew, not even Lady Celestia.

After the banishment of Nightmare Moon, Lady Celestia evidently became... different. She still kept her warm and loving personality, but in private, ponies would sometimes report of how cold and distant she felt. The loss of her only sister, something she had fought so hard to prevent, had been caused solely by her in the end, and the Daughter of Sol did her best to pick up the pieces and retain a semblance of normalcy. What was left of the Night Guard soon rallied behind Lady Celestia once more, and though they did

everything they could to help her, my ancestors soon saw just how quickly things could change.

Nightmare Moon's attempted coup had also revealed that several opliptera had assisted her, something that infuriated the public. Celestia, in her depression, couldn't defend us, and so we were left to fend for ourselves... for what little good it did. All of my ancestors, regardless of who they had sided with during the Endless Night, found themselves stripped of their position and exiled from Canterlot. In retrospect, it seems like a cruel, yet fitting punishment.

For betraying our oaths and duties to the Royal Sisters and Equestria, we would share a fate with our surrogate mother, and so the opliptera began their long and lonely exile.

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"I don't understand."

"What's not to understand, Feros?"

The stallion appeared troubled, and simply stared off into space. "I mean, I know your people became divided, but... why were all of you punished? The loyalists came to Equestria's defense, and they aided Princess Celestia in her hour of need. Didn't... didn't the public realize that?"

"They didn't care." Noctis sighed and carefully readjusted her helm. "We... hadn't exactly been popular to begin with. Our presence had always been barely tolerated, but to many of them, we were still aberrations. Impure. Unfit for existence. All they needed was an excuse to be rid of us, and... well..."

"They got one."

"That they did."

"So... what happened next?" Feros turned to face the Night Guard, and he could make out a faint scowl upon her face.

"Well..."

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Shunned by the very beings they had always served to protect, my ancestors fell into despair. With Lady Luna gone and Lady Celestia in a deep depression, we became orphans once more, and my people were reduced to little more than nomads. They roamed from town to town, searching for anypony willing to help them, but they never found it. They were cursed and spat upon, sometimes beaten and battered. As sad as it may be, it wasn't uncommon for one of us to disappear during the night, only to wind up in a nearby town square, a noose around the neck and all the life gone from them.

We became the most hated beings in all of Equestria, when our only crime was simply being alive. We were blamed with corrupting Lady Luna and causing the coup. We were blamed for the Endless Night, and all manner of other crimes. We became little more than scapegoats and examples. My people were used to threaten young foals into behaving, and to show others what happened when one strayed from the path of righteousness. The public no longer sought to simply exile us—they wanted to forget us entirely. We gradually became little more than folktales, and like our beloved Lady Luna, we soon faded from the realm of truth and became nothing more than fiction.

As the world sought to forget us, some of my ancestors couldn't bear such a burden any longer. Many grew angry and vengeful, and rightfully so—everything we had ever done had been for the benefit of the Royal Sisters and of Equestria, and instead we had found ourselves punished and scorned by the public. In time, the opliptera became a battered and broken people, and my people began to turn away from the guidance of the Royal Sisters. Some began to use their gifts for darker purposes, becoming little more than thieves and common criminals, and we began to deserve the very same reputation we had already been given.

Some of us held on, however. We knew that one day, we would be vindicated, if only we could hold on. In our darkest hour, when the light from our lives had all but faded, we continued to hold on to the teachings of Lady Celestia and Lady Luna, our beloved rulers and mothers. Children were taught to be virtuous and to be proud of their heritage. They were taught to treat their fellows with kindness and respect, even if it wasn't expected to be returned. Most important, however, was that the teachings of the Night Guard continued to live on. Our Lady Luna had taught us well, and so too would we teach our foals. We told them of tactics, subterfuge, and the element of surprise. We told them of how information was their greatest weapon, and of how to use the shadows to their advantage. Such a thing wasn't selfish of us—we had no intentions of ever retaliating against the other ponies of Equestria, and we were simply preserving our history. Instead, the teachings of the Night Guard helped foster cooperation and further enforced the teachings of the Royal Sisters.

Slowly but surely, we became a united people once more, and as far as Equestria was concerned, we no longer existed. And in a way, we were happy with that. We were no longer wanted dead, nor were we hated. We were simply nothing more than bedtime stories, nothing but text upon a page, and so we remained in the shadows. My ancestors knew that one day, Lady Luna would return, and that one day, Equestria might be ready for us. Until that day came, however, we would watch and wait.

And then, on the longest day of the thousandth year, she returned to us. Six young mares became the new Bearers of the Elements of Harmony, and with their love for one another fresh in their hearts, they cleansed the corruption of Nightmare Moon from the Daughter of Selene. After a thousand years, our beloved Lady Luna had finally been redeemed, but we still stayed within the darkness. We didn't know if she would even remember us or want us back, but... she did. Not long after her return, she came to us one night, wondering what had ever befallen her children. When asked how she managed to find us, her reply was simple enough. "Mother's intuition."

We told her of all that had happened. How we had aided Equestria and her sister, only to be cast out and forgotten by the people. How our lives had been reduced to thievery and ruin, because nopony was willing to show us mercy and kindness. How we had stayed true to her and Lady Celestia's teachings, so that we still had a brief glimmer of hope within our hearts. Upon hearing the last of our tale, the Daughter of Selene nodded slowly. She knew of no way to ever make amends for what she had done to the kingdom, to her sister, or to us, but she instead did the only thing she could think of—she offered us a place within Canterlot, and a place at her side once more.

We accepted.

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"That... wasn't too long ago at all. Just a year or so."

"Mhm."

"And how have things been since then?"

Noctis lowered her head slightly and turned to face the neophyte. "Better... somewhat. We still aren't exactly trusted, and many of us simply stay to the shadows—life is easier that way. Despite all that, however, we've managed to make some progress. We're related by blood to the pegasi, so we've been in... talks."

"Any luck?"

“They aren’t exactly ready to openly accept us just yet, but they’re at least willing to admit that we’re related. I think they’re leaving it at ‘distant relatives’ for the time being.”

“What would you even get out of that?” Ferous turned and briefly stared at Noctis before breaking his gaze. “Being accepted by the pegasi, I mean.”

“Well... a home, for starters. We’ve always sorta been pegasi, in a way—the open skies, the freedom of flight. And Canterlot is nice and all, but it’s just... not *us*, you know?” Noctis removed her helm and shook out her mane, a faint smile upon her face as she gazed out toward the horizon. “I know it sounds silly, but... just the idea of being able to return to our true home within my lifetime... kinda makes me giddy. That doesn’t sound weird or anything, right?”

“Not at all, Noctis.” The stallion stared out toward the horizon with her, and he briefly smiled as well, though his expression soon became more serious. “I um... wanted to thank you. For listening to me and telling me about your people. It was... enlightening.”

“You’re welcome, Ferous, but... before you go...” Noctis’ smile slowly disappeared, and the mare continued to look out past the walls of Canterlot. “Despite everything we, as a race, have endured, we continue to serve. Do you know why?”

“...Well, no.”

“We serve because the Royal Sisters have always treated us as their children, when no others would. We serve because we have endured time and time again, just as the Royal Sisters have. We serve because we are willing to do what others will not.”

“And... what is it that you do?”

Upon hearing that, the Night Guard’s expression turned rather somber, and rather than face the stallion, she simply stared at the horizon. With a hint of sadness in her voice, she spoke one last time.

“What must be done.”