

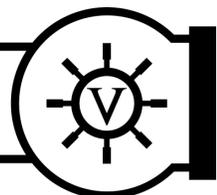
Out in the Cold

EsperDerek

Table of Contents

Out in the Cold	2
Lighting the Fire	13
Water, Food, Shelter, Companionship	26
Reaching Midnight	43

PONY FICTION VAULT



A cloudless, star-filled night. The moon hung low in the sky, bathing the small town of Ponyville in its shimmering light. It really was the perfect night... well, at least, if it weren't for the terrified screams of the small town's residents, and the terrifying roars of the creature pursuing them. The Ursa Min- the Ursa had returned, its shimmering, semi-translucent form crashing through the town with a vengeance. A sweep of its claw took off the roof of the bakery. Its roar toppled the dress shop, the elaborately-designed building rendered down to splinters and scrap. Ponies fled or cowered in their homes, hoping beyond hope for some sort of saviour to defeat this terrible beast.

It seemed that, perhaps, these cowards would be granted their wish. Four ponies stood before the ravaging, star-lit beast. Their leader, a purple-furred unicorn, her visage twisted by the arrogance that was present in the depths of her heart, took the lead, standing in front of the other three, who cowered and shook, trying to keep the terror that they were feeling from overwhelming them. They looked hopefully at their leader.

"Ah tried roping it, but it's too big!" cried the stupid orange hayseed.

"I tried flying at it, but I just bounced off!" whimpered the annoying blue pegasus.

"Please, Twilight, you have to do something!" sobbed the egotistical white unicorn. Twilight scowled at the three, and then turned her head towards the Ursa, an arrogant grin spreading. Her horn began to glimmer, her feet digging into the ground.

"Of course I will! I'm Twilight Sparkle, after all! I'll just do what I did before!" the arrogant pony called out, as her horn sparked brightly. Wind flowed around the ponies, carrying lulling music with it, designed to sate and stun the beast into a stupor. The three brightened, watching as the Ursa twisted and shudder, its eyes growing glassy.

"It's working!" they cried out in triumph!

Then the Ursa blinked. Its eyes narrowed, and with a sweep of its paw, sent Twilight sprawling, the light of her horn dying out! She groaned softly, putting a hoof to her head, trying to regain her senses. Her three friends widened their eyes... and then took off, fleeing in the opposite direction from the Ursa! The purple unicorn gasped, as her friends abandoned her to her no-doubt grisly fate.

"W-wait..." she whimpered, and another roar caused her head to turn. The Ursa was advancing on her. She let out a tiny whimper, tears springing from her eyes. Surely, her end was just seconds away, left behind by the people that she thought were her friends. She closed her eyes, about to accept her fate, feeling the air of the onrushing claw heading towards her...

The blow never landed. Twilight dared to open one eye, and let out a gasp! In between her and the Ursa was the most beautiful pony Twilight had ever seen, her pelt the vivid

blue of a beautiful night, her hair as silvery as starlight! Her horn was shimmering with power, far greater than Twilight had ever managed, as she held the Ursa in place with her great and powerful magic!

"Hold, Ursa! I, the Great and Powerful Trixie, shall not allow you to do any more damage to this town! I banish you back to the Everfree Forest, from whence you shall never return!" The heroic, darling, beautiful pony proclaimed, a smile of confidence playing on her face, adding to her beauty. She flicked her head as if she were shooing away a bug. In response, the Ursa went flying, its titanic form showing the surprise it was feeling as this small, yet potent unicorn sent it through the sky! That was the last one could make out of the beast, as it disappeared over the horizon. The Great and Powerful Trixie exhaled softly, and turned to look at the sprawled-out pony that she had just saved.

"There. It's a good thing that the Great and Powerful Trixie was just passing through, Twilight. Did you really think that the same trick would work twice? Silly foa-" The Great and Powerful Trixie's voice trailed off, as she faced the snuffling unicorn. Now that she was up close, she really was a beautiful pony, she had to admit. Not as beautiful as herself, of course, but close. So close. Trixie felt her heart starting to patter, and she tried not to let that red blush appear on her cheeks.

"Yo-you really are Great and Powerful..." the adorable Twilight admitted, her eyes depicting the heart that had so recently been broken in half. "My... my friends... they abandoned me..." she whimpered, tears leaking down her cheeks. Trixie smiled gently, and reached out, stroking the tears away with a hoof.

"It's alright. The Great and Pow... no, I'm here," the blue-pelted filly murmured, bringing her muzzle closer to Twilight's own. The pony shivers slightly from her proximity, her watery eyes looking hopefully at Trixie.

"Y-you won't leave me?" Twilight murmured. Trixie shook her head gently.

"You'll make a perfect assistant... no... partner for me. You could be the equal to the Great and Powerful Trixie," Trixie replied, playful and loving, and brought her muzzle forwards. Twilight didn't resist, and the two fillies pressed together in a desperate, loving kiss, their hooves starting to interlock, their hearts beating quicker, as one, and Twilight's hoof slowly started to slide further down, towards the warmest part of Trixie's body...

• • •

"*GWAH!*" Trixie bolted wide awake, panting furiously. She shivered, but it wasn't the cool of the night air that was causing it. She steeled herself, trying to force away the warmth that was still racing through her body, the heat between her legs, and to calm her heart, that was rampaging in her chest.

"Traitorous sub-conscious. That wasn't how that dream was supposed to go," Trixie murmured to herself, as she slowly forced herself to get to a sitting position. It was night

time, and the small fire that she had built for herself using her magic had apparently gone out hours ago. She tentatively flicked at the ashes, as if hoping it would somehow ignite again, but it was clear that wasn't going to happen. With a sigh, Trixie stood. It was clear that sleep was going to be an impossibility at this point. Not that she wanted to sleep, not if it meant going back to... to... her heart was beating harder again...

"No!" Trixie sternly ordered herself. The Great and Powerful Trixie was not *weak*. She wasn't attracted to *Twilight Sparkle*. She was the enemy, the one who had humiliated her in front of *everyone* in that flea-bitten little town. The one that had forced her to run away like a coward. To be attracted to her was completely... insane!

Not that running like she did had been her brightest move, The Great and Powerful Trixie had to admit. In her panic to save some sort of face after the defeat, she had left behind her admittedly wrecked trailer, and the contents therein. Sleeping on the hard ground, exposed to the elements, wasn't exactly what she could call fun, and it was starting to wear even on her beauty. Her hair was starting to lose its silvery sheen under the dirt and grime, and her pelt wasn't exactly prime. But there was no way she was going to go back to... to THAT PLACE, with her tail behind her legs. She would simply have to keep going, surely there would be some hamlet or village soon, and she would use her tricks to wow the locals, get a little money, and things would go back to normal. Everything was replaceable... well, almost everything.

Her magic books... and her hat and cloak. Losing those hurt. Just thinking about those made her want to turn around, was almost enough to swallow her pride and go back to Ponyville. Losing those felt like a betrayal, a betrayal to...

"No," Trixie repeated to herself, pushing down the sudden, but familiar pain that she was feeling. There was no point in wallowing in the past. She would simply have to move on. She was the Great and Powerful Trixie, after all, and there was no way she could be vanquished, least of all by herself. She forced herself back down into a lying position. Things would look better in the morning. She would feel like herself in the morning, The Great and Powerful Trixie. Until then, she would force herself to sleep, deny both the warmth of attraction and the pain and cold of loss access to her mind and body.

The Great and Powerful Trixie closed her eyes, and waited for morning to come.

• • •

Her hooves hurt. It was really amazing how much her hooves hurt. The rest of her wasn't exactly feeling great, or powerful, for that matter. The sun was beating down on her back, and there was this annoying fly that kept landing on her flank, no matter how much she tried to shoo it away. She had been walking for hours, forcing her body to keep moving, even through the lack of sleep. Trixie was determined to find some sort of shelter before night fell, or else she would be forced to confront another night of restless sleep on the hard ground.

Not for the first time, Trixie wished that she had managed to save the map she had in her trailer. The terrain, she swore, was the same that she had walked through yesterday, rolling hills punctuated with carefully managed forest. She felt like she had been walking around in circles. Trixie had left the road during her flight from Ponyville, to keep anyone from following her, but now she was regretting her choice. Even with her little magical trick to find north, she felt lost.

Her stomach grumbled. She'd had very little food over the past few days.

"I'm the Great and Powerful Trixie..." she murmured, like a mantra of encouragement. Yes, she would be fine. The Great and Powerful Trixie could take a little discomfort. She was strong, she'd had to be strong for years, ever since...

Before her thoughts drifted into the dark place again, Trixie crested a hill, and the sight before her banished the bad thoughts away from her mind. A small town, slightly smaller than Ponyville had been, but still big enough for what she needed, had become visible only about half a mile away. There was something oddly familiar about the village, but then, she had been through so many towns on her travels that she was used to the feeling of familiarity. A smile broke out across her face.

"Finally. The Great and Powerful Trixie succeeds! Time to put on a show..." She paused, and looked down at her dirty, road-worn body. "Maybe after a warm bath, some food, and a soft bed." Her spirits buoyed, The Great and Powerful Trixie cantered down the hill, merging with the road that lead into town.

• • •

The sun was starting to set in the sky as she made it the rest of the way to the town. She had to find an inn or something, and convince the matron to let her sleep there for a performance or something. Surely it wouldn't be that hard, not for someone of her talents.

But, the feeling of familiarity wouldn't shake from Trixie as she trotted through town. It was like her hooves knew where to go, her body instinctively guiding through the streets. It was beginning to disturb her a little. She was getting some odd looks, too. While she knew even in her dishevelled state she was still one of the most gorgeous ponies in all of Equestria, these looks were strange, as if Trixie was somehow familiar to them. Perhaps she HAD performed here, and they were shocked that such a marvellous creature could be reduced to that? Trixie, lost in thought, nearly rammed into an older pony, a white pelted mare, glasses perched on her face. She recovered, and scowled at the mare.

"Watch where you're walking! Don't you know who I am?" The Great and Powerful Trixie exclaimed in irritation, but the mare seemed not to notice, instead looking closely at the younger pony. "What are you looking at?"

"Trixie? Is that you? It IS you, isn't it! I'm your old school teacher, Belle Shower!" the mare exclaimed, and Trixie felt her heated anger instantly die, replaced with a sick coldness deep inside her. Her body quivered slightly, her pupils shrinking...

"Where have you been? We haven't seen you since -" Trixie couldn't hear anymore, she couldn't see anymore, she had to get out of here, the coldness was filling her from hooves to head, the pain lancing straight into her heart. Her hooves worked on their own, and before the mare could continue, Trixie took off, fleeing as if her life depended on it. She heard the ponies calling out after her, but she wouldn't stop. She wouldn't stop running until she was free from this place, the place she swore she'd never come back to, wouldn't stop until the pain and the cold went away, until all the memories fled from her, and she was The Great and Powerful Trixie again...

• • •

"So, Trixie, I believe it's your turn, why don't you give your report on what YOU want to be when you grow up?"

"Okay! Ahem... When I grow up, I want to be a magician, just like my mom! My mom is the greatest magician in all of Equestria! She's even performed in Canterlot for the Princess! She's my hero, and I'm going to perform with her when I'm old enough! Together, we'll be the Great and Powerful Trixie and..."

"Mom? What's wrong? Mom? Mommy?"

"She is very ill. We don't know what's wrong... The most we can do is make her as comfortable as possible..."

"I can't do magic as well as you can..."

"Nonsense. You're the Great and Powerful Trixie. You can do anything."

"I'm sorry, she's gone."

• • •

"G...gh..." Trixie's eyes, wet and red, slowly opened. She didn't know how long she had run, except that she ran until her body gave out, and she was pitched into those fitful dreams, the memories that she had buried so deeply forcing their way back out of the vaults and locks that she had built so carefully. The coldness was still flowing through her, despite her flight, the pain constricting her chest, feeling like her heart was being torn free..

"No... no... stop! STOP!" she whimpered, putting her hooves over her head, and trying to order herself to be calm, to ignore the pain, but her mind and heart were rebelling on her again.

"I'm the Great and Powerful Trixie... I-I don't... understand..." Tears ran unbidden down her cheeks. Why was this happening? She had put this behind her. She had been strong, she had always been strong, why wasn't she listening to herself now? She had been strong since the day...since the day she died, she had done exactly what she promised. She was supposed to be the Great and Powerful Trixie! She wowed audiences and...

And...

And was so lonely.

Trixie curled up on the cold ground that had been her bed for the night, weeping softly.

It was because she had lost them, wasn't it? The magic books, the hat and cloak... her mom's books, her mom's cloak and hat, it was because of that, that she had left them behind. Without them, she was just that lonely little filly who had lost her mom, but with them, she was the Great and Powerful Trixie, the showmare, the one who could be strong.

Trixie wiped away the tears, swallowed her thick tongue. Yes, if she could get those back, she wouldn't have to feel this again. She had a goal. She would return to Ponyville, and demand her belongings back. The pony forced herself to stand on legs that quivered, and looked around. She had collapsed near the edge of the Everfree Forest. Trixie felt a thrill of fortune. Not only had she avoided actually entering the forest in her panic, to get to back to Ponyville would be a simple matter of trailing along the edge of the forest. Yes, this was the path that she needed to take. She'd be back to normal once she got them back.

She started to trail along the forest, trying to ignore the little tiny bit of her, deep inside, that didn't believe that for a second.

• • •

It took her longer than she would have liked to reach Ponyville again. By the time the town and its outlying farms came into view, Trixie was nearly dead on her feet from exhaustion. She could barely sleep as it was; every time she laid down during the night, she was plagued by the dreams and emotions that she desperately was trying to deny, that she had always kept behind the barriers that surrounded her heart. The pain of her moms loss. Her attraction to fillies, and to Twilight, despite the fading anger she kept trying to nurse against her. She was even being assailed by guilt now, for treating ponies poorly, for humiliating them in front of everyone, just like she had been.

Days weren't much better, either. There was little to eat, and she was frightened to travel too far into the Everfree Forest to look. She managed to have enough water, but little else. There was nothing else to do but to keep putting one hoof in front of the other. Sometimes she walked well into the night, the physical activity - and the pain - helping to keep the emotions from overwhelming her.

Trixie was terrified to think of how bad she must have looked at this point.

"Almost... there..." Trixie murmured to herself. Part of her wanted to confront Twilight immediately and reclaim what belonged to her, but she saw the rows of apple trees in the farm not far from the town, and her stomach promptly rebelled over all else, rumbling deep inside her gut. She began to unsteadily make her way to the farm. Surely they wouldn't miss a few apples, she would pay them back as soon as she got the bits that she had left in her trailer. She wasn't picky, she approached the first tree she got to, looking up at the succulent apples.

"Just one... or two..." She concentrated, her horn wearily glowing, her underused magic flaring. Despite her lack of strength, two apples plucked themselves from the tree, and, nearly drooling from the reverie, Trixie gently lowered them to the ground. She stooped her head down, and bit into the first apple.

"What in tarnation are you doing!?"

Trixie squealed, hopping away from the apples. Her eyes wide, she looked in the direction of the voice. It was one of Twilight's friends, the orange one wearing the hat. She looked at Trixie in a mixture of anger, confusion, but mostly shock.

"Hey, aren't you Trixie? What happened to you?" she asked, taking a step towards the ragged blue unicorn. There was concern in her voice, but Trixie didn't hear it in her panic. Trixie let out an inarticulate whimper, and wheeled around, her legs digging into the ground.

"Hey, wait!" Trixie took off, her hooves pattering against the ground... and then buckled. Her body, worn out and weak, finally gave out on her, and she saw the ground rushing up towards her.

• • •

She was comfortable. That was the first thing that she noticed when she awoke. Her body had triumphed over her mind, and blessed her with a deep, dreamless sleep, and while she still felt terrible, it wasn't as bad as she had been. She slowly forced her eyes to open, getting an eyeful of pillow. She really WAS in a bed, a comfortable bed, the first time that she'd been in one for so very long. She snuggled into it, grateful for the warmth and softness, that momentarily blunted the cold that was still writhing deep inside. She laid like that for a few more moments, before deciding that she needed to know where she was. Slowly, she peeked her head up.

She was in a library, from the looks of the rows and rows of books. A bed in a library? The whole thing seemed absurd... but then, she couldn't complain. She half-thought of trying to sleep again, but she rejected the idea with a shiver. She didn't want to face the dreams again. It had only been exhaustion that had saved her from them this time, but now, no. She would get her books and hat and cloak, and then she would sleep soundly

again. She slipped out of the bed, and unsteadily landed on her hooves. She paused, noticing a mirror, and slowly walked towards it.

The sight of the haggard pony that looked back at her nearly sent her careening back underneath the sheets. Her hair had grown far too long, and it was worn and frizzed, the silver looking more like grey. Her eyes were red-rimmed and puffy. Her blue pelt was matted, there were obvious nicks and cuts all along her legs, and perhaps worst of all, she swore she could count her ribs. She blinked, trying not to cry. She noticed that someone had taken the time to clean her, but it had clearly been an awkward situation, with her being unconscious. Trixie exhaled softly. Once she was the Great and Powerful Trixie again, it was going to take a long time for her to recover physically, but she would. The Great and Powerful Trixie could do anything, do everything that Trixie couldn't. She trotted to the door of the room she had woken in, and peered out. She was definitely in a library, the room she was in an offshoot of the main library. She slipped out into the main room, walking slowly and carefully, and froze.

Sitting at a desk was her 'enemy', the lovely purple unicorn that had shown her up. Twilight Sparkle was reading a book, flipping the pages with her magic, and Trixie stood there, just watching, feeling her heart pattering fiercely in her chest, some of the... warmer... dreams that she had been having racing through her head. She tore her gaze away, shaking her head fiercely. She couldn't! She felt the warmth in her haunches, and the red starting to form in her cheeks.

Forcing her eyes away from Twilight, she instead turned to the desk that she was reading from. Carefully piled on the top of the desk were a small pile of carefully-maintained books... and a vivid, midnight-purple cloak, with a hat placed on top. Twilight had them! She was reading through her mother's books! She just had to reach out, and take them from her, and she could be Great again...

"Those are mine, Twilight Sparkle!" Trixie called out, and was almost horrified at how weak and raspy her voice was. Her enemy blinked, and turned around, concern etched in her face, the same sort of concern that Trixie had previously seen in that orange pony.

"Trixie, you're awake. Are you alright? What happened to you?" she asked, and Trixie shivered, almost backing up, as if the compassion in Twilight's voice was physically affecting her. The anger that had momentarily flared up inside Trixie nearly was extinguished, but she tried her best to fan it with the last scraps of her pride.

"What do you care? The G-Great and P-P-Powerful Tr-Trixie doesn't need y-your co-compassion!" She sounded so weak.

"I care because Applejack found you passed out and half-dead on her farm! And... I was concerned about you before. You ran away before we could talk..." She gestured with a hoof towards the pile of books on the desk. "I thought your name was familiar, and the books in your trailer surprised me, so I looked it up. I didn't know your mot-"

"Give those back to me!" Trixie cried out, her horn wearily sparking back to life. The books and clothes flew from the desk, the hat and cloak wrapping around her body, the books landing near her. She quivered softly, arching her back, puffing her chest out proudly.

She was the Great and Powerful Trixie again!

She didn't feel any different. In fact, wrapped in the outfit that her mother had worn, that she had inherited, all she could think of was how much she missed her. How much it still hurt when she thought about...

"T-Trixie? Are you crying?" Twilight gasped softly. The blue unicorn shook her head, but it was futile. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, dripping onto the floor of the library. So this was it. The Great and Powerful Trixie was gone. She had been fooling herself thinking that she could bring her back. All that was left was weak, lonely Trixie.

"Trixie? What's wrong? Oh, you silly pony, please tell me what's the matter..." Twilight slowly walked forwards, approaching the shaking unicorn. She reached out with a hoof, touching her comfortingly. Trixie felt the warmth, the concern, and the last bit of resistance broke. She launched herself at the surprised Twilight, the books at her feet being knocked over, the hat flying off her head, and began to sob fiercely, pressing her body against Twilight's. Twilight wrapped her hooves tenderly around the crying Trixie. It didn't matter just who this was, and the trouble she had caused for Twilight the first time they had met. She held Trixie tightly, whispering comforting noises to Trixie, as the cloak-clad unicorn sobbed, letting out the pain that had been tearing her insides apart.

Soon, the sobs quietened, and the tears started to slow, but Trixie didn't move, and Twilight didn't release her.

For the first time in a long time, Trixie truly felt warm.

Trixie didn't know how long the two stayed like that, but it felt like hours. She was pretty sure that she had fallen asleep for awhile, but surrounded by Twilight's warmth, the dreams hadn't come back. She was feeling lighter, now, as if a giant weight had been removed from her shoulders. Slowly, and with great reluctance, Trixie pulled away from Twilight, briefly looking ashamed.

"You must think I'm pathetic..." Trixie whispered, but Twilight shook her head gently.

"No, it's alright, Trixie. You've been through a lot, and needed to get it out. Everypony has to, sometimes. Are you going to be alright?" The tenderness in her voice was evident, and Trixie decided to be honest.

"I don't know. I don't know what to do now..." she admitted, both to herself and to Twilight. It was odd, though. It was... a liberating feeling. "I don't think I can be the Great

and Powerful Trixie again." Twilight smiled gently, and flicked her horn, the fallen hat raising off the floor, and gently landing on her head.

"I don't think it's right to ignore your gifts. You are a very talented pony, after all. Maybe it would be better to figure out what the Great and Powerful Trixie *should* be. I think Midnight would have preferred that." Trixie blinked in surprise, as Twilight continued. "I didn't realize that she was your mother..."

"Y-you know about her?" Trixie asked, slightly shocked, a faint blush on her cheeks. But she wasn't the only one, Twilight's cheeks turning slightly red.

"I got to see her when she performed in Canterlot, when I was a little filly. I had her picture up on my wall for ages..." Twilight's eyes turned to the floor, and she looked slightly downcast. "I was really sad when I heard what had happened. I think I cried for a week. It... I'm really sorry, Trixie. I can't imagine that must have been like."

Trixie snuffled slightly, tears leaking down her cheeks. But she was smiling, the good memories of her mother playing through her mind, the good times, her love and warmth...

"I... I miss her," she said, and then looked at Twilight. "But... f-for the first time in a long time... it doesn't hurt as much."

"Maybe you could tell me about her?" Twilight asked, tentatively, but hopefully.

"I think I would like that."

• • •

They spoke throughout Celestia's day, and even deep into Luna's night. It felt good to share the stories that she had hidden so deeply inside, for so long, to such an attentive listener. Sometimes they would burst out laughing, and sometimes Trixie would end up in Twilight's arms again, weeping softly, but it felt... right. They even began to speak of magic, reading through Midnight's books, Trixie describing effects that she had remembered. It had been far too long since she had actually read the books, instead of just possessing them. But being with Twilight, and the lightness that she was feeling for the first time, made her want to learn more, to truly become the Great and Powerful Trixie that her mother had seen in her, even when Trixie herself had misunderstood.

It was midnight when Trixie glanced out the window.

"I... should probably go... and get out of your hair. N-now that I have what I came for, I should leave..." she said with great reluctance. Twilight blinked, and shook her head fiercely.

"You don't have to, you know. In fact, you're still not healthy, you really shouldn't, but even still, why don't you stay? I-I mean, it would be nice to have a friend with the same

sort of interests. You could even be a research assistant... or partner, if you wanted." Trixie's heart pattered slightly, and she bit her lip, looking out the window.

"What about your friends? And the others? They're probably going to hate me for what I did last time I was here." Twilight smiled tenderly, and reached out, putting her hoof over Trixie's own, making the blue filly look at her.

"You don't give them, or you, enough credit. I've learned a lot about friendship being here, and one lesson that I've learned is that friendship... even more... can come even in the most unlikely of places..." She looked into Trixie's eyes gently. Trixie's heart was beating harder, and their muzzles were so close, all Trixie had to do was lean forwards... but she didn't think that she had the bravery to do it...

So Twilight did it instead.

Trixie's eyes flared wide open as their lips met, their bodies starting to press up against one another, Twilight's front legs resting around Trixie's neck. They stayed like that for what seemed like an eternity, until Twilight slowly pulled away, smiling softly at Trixie. Trixie shivered slightly, and then leaned herself tightly against Twilight, letting out a soft laugh.

"Alright, you win. I'll stay. Congratulations..." Trixie whispered softly, and Twilight tilted her head curiously.

"Congratulations?" Trixie smiled knowingly in response.

"You managed to truly defeat the Great and Powerful Trixie. You're the first to do so, save for herself."

The two ponies giggled softly, and then leaned in for another kiss, and Trixie knew that if ever she got cold again, there would be someone there to warm her.

A truly fine day was blessing the land of Equestria. Celestia's sun hung high in the sky, its light gently radiating down on her subjects. The cloud detail had cleared the sky of all but the smallest, puffiest of clouds, ensuring there was no chance for rain to ruin the day. All in all, it was the perfect summer day, ideal for young lovers to spend lazy hours showing each other their affections. It was unfortunate then that the newest couple in Ponyville was having the first disagreement of their burgeoning relationship.

"Do you *have* to tell her?" the blue-pelted pony begged her partner, as they lay side-by-side on the deck that was built in the upper level of Ponyville's library. Her lover, a fellow mare, her body clad in deep purples, exhaled softly, a quill and parchment hanging in the sky through her magic. This argument had been going on for quite awhile, and it was beginning to wear at her mood.

"Of *course* I have to tell her, Trixie. She's my mentor, she deserves to know about us," she stated, with finality. Perhaps even just a week ago, Trixie would refuse to back down, but things had changed, and she had learned something important: to know when to admit defeat.

"Alright, Twilight, you win," the unicorn conceded to her opponent, and Twilight smiled gently. She turned her eyes to the parchment hanging in the sky, and the quill began to do its work, following its owner's commands.

Dear Princess Celestia,

In the time I have spent here in Ponyville, I have learned a great deal about the nature and magic of friendship. Now, by chance, I have learned an important new lesson, one about feelings beyond friendship, the lesson of love. I have fallen for someone, Princess, and I seek your blessing of our relationship. Her name is Trixie, and she has grown very dear to me. Please, when you are not busy, I would invite you to meet with her. I look forwards to your response.

*Your Faithful Student,
Twilight Sparkle*

It had come as a bit of a shock to Trixie when she learned that the Princess was Twilight's teacher, and she was definitely worried about what she was going to think. But it was too late for complaints now, because with a final flourish Twilight signed the letter, and looked encouragingly at the sulking midnight-blue pony beside her.

"I'll just take this to Spike, so he can send it to the Princess. You'll see, Trixie, it will be okay." Trixie nodded weakly, and watched as Twilight stood up, and trotted into the library proper, leaving her alone. Trixie laid there on the deck, trying to convince herself that everything would be okay. The sun, previously so comfortable to her, seemed to be

getting even hotter, beating down on her laid-out form. The bright orb seemed to be hanging lower in the sky, large and red. The small, puffy clouds had dispersed.

"What's taking her so long?" Trixie muttered to herself. Perhaps it was her nerves, but it felt like Twilight had been gone for longer than she should have been. Her brow was starting to dampen with sweat, and she looked up at the sky. The shimmering orb looked even larger than it had a few moments ago.

In fact, as Trixie watched, she realized that it was moving right towards her.

Trixie let out a squeak of surprise, and quickly got to her feet. The sun really was getting closer and closer! She started to pant, feeling light headed, her eyes wide. The blazing sphere descended close enough that she could almost touch it, and then began to unfold, Trixie letting out a cry, cowering, as she was briefly blinded by the blaze!

"So, you are the mare deceiving my student!" a booming voice commanded, the voice of a goddess. Trixie forced one of her eyes open, to behold a shining cross between pegasus and unicorn, glowing with the brightness of a great and terrible desert sun, the leaves of the tree the library resided in starting to burst into flames!

"N-no! It's not like that!" Trixie protested, but the Goddess glared, the fire and light of a star piercing through the quivering unicorn. "I-I, we - I mean..." Trixie stuttered, any defence dying in her now-parched throat.

"Silence!" the goddess of the sun bellowed, causing the wood of the deck to start to splinter and smoulder. "I can see right through you, deceiver, trickster. I know of your crimes." Trixie whimpered, the heat starting to overwhelm her, and she weakly lifted her head, seeing that the Goddess was no longer alone. She was accompanied by twisted parodies of Twilight's friends. They stared down accusingly at Trixie, the angelic servants of a wrathful goddess.

"She humiliated us!" they cried as one, again and again, calling out Trixie's crimes and mistakes, exposing them out to dry and burn in the sun.

"I'm sorry!" Trixie begged, prostrating before them, begging for mercy. "Please, I know I made mistakes, but I want to make up for it! Please!" The Goddess that had appeared before Trixie looked scornfully down at her.

"For your crimes, for your deceit of my student, I condemn you!" the deity commanded, and began to blaze even brighter than before. So bright that Trixie couldn't see anything but light, and she let out a scream as her very being was overwhelmed and seared away...

•••

Trixie let out a soft groan as she opened her eyes. It was early in the morning, the sun shining through the window, accusingly washing over half-awake mare. She let out a

quiet moan, and forced herself up, careful not to disturb the two other occupants of the room. Spike, the baby dragon, was curled up in his basket, and Twilight was still asleep in the bed opposite to Trixie's. The unicorn felt her cheeks blush slightly as she watched Twilight sleep, her body rhythmically moving up and down in time with her breathing. She felt grateful that she hadn't woken them up as well.

Trixie laid back, chiding herself for her overactive imagination. She had been sleeping so well over the past week. Unlike the dreams that had been plaguing her before that fateful night, however, Trixie knew exactly the source and reason for this nightmare.

That day was the day that Twilight was going to introduce Trixie to her friends.

Trixie flicked her horn, and one of her mother's books floated off the bed stand next to her, opening up to the page that she had left marked. She could only hope that reading would ease her worry about what was going to happen that day. It wasn't like it was a true "introduction" to any of them. Throughout the week, Twilight's friends had been popping in and out of the library, to check in on her as she helped Trixie convalesce. Each time they had visited, however, Trixie tried to make herself as small as possible, barely responding to questions, and never making eye contact. Despite Twilight's reassurances, Trixie was still worried, and still felt guilty, about how she had treated everypony in Ponyville the last time she was there. Twilight had used the excuse that she was still feeling physically unwell, which was the truth admittedly, to excuse her lack of sociability.

They hadn't even come close to telling them about their relationship yet.

Trixie realized that she had read the same line in a particularly challenging invisibility spell about seven times, and gave up. She quietly slipped out of bed, and headed for the mirror. Trixie really was worried about how Twilight's friends would react to her, but it couldn't be delayed any longer. Twilight had insisted that the best thing for her now was to start moving and stop hiding in the library. Trixie herself had to admit that she really was feeling better, as the pony that peered back at her in the mirror proved. Her pelt had regained its sheen, and her hair, while still quite long, was back in order. The cuts and nicks on her legs had mostly healed, and she was gaining weight again, her ribs disappearing back into her body. It was really amazing how much of a difference that rest, comfort, and an attentive partner had made to her.

Trixie allowed herself a small blush, looking through at the red in her cheeks, and beyond that, the slumbering pony that was the cause of it. The best part of the past few days really had been Twilight. Their relationship at this point was less grand and romantic, and more comfortable and kind. It was tender kisses and soft caresses that made the recovering Trixie's body tingle with delight. There would be plenty of time for grand romantic gestures once Trixie was less Twilight's patient, and more her partner. For now, she was content to spent the evenings laying against that lovely mare, as they both read through Midnight's books, the heritage that Trixie had been gifted.

She only wished that she could figure out why Twilight had kissed her in the first place. Oh, she knew quite well why Trixie herself had reciprocated the kiss, having accepted the emotions that she had been denying since that night with the Ursa Minor, but Twilight's reasons were still a mystery to her. She wanted to know, but was terrified to ask, as if the act of doing so would break the spell that night had woven around them.

Twilight let out a soft groan, dispelling the self-examination that Trixie had been giving herself. She inhaled softly, and put on a brave smile, turning away from the mirror, and moving over to Twilight's bed, bending down to give her a soft, loving nuzzle.

"Good morning, Twilight..." she whispered into her ear, pressing fondly against her. "Today's the day, isn't it?"

"Trixie?" The purple unicorn blinked wearily, trying to clear the morning fuzz from her brain. "You don't normally wake up earlier than me." She slowly sat up, returning the gentle nuzzles Trixie was giving her, before looking at her with sudden concern. "Did you sleep alright? You didn't have more bad dreams, did you?"

"No, no, nothing of the sort." Trixie didn't see the need to concern Twilight with that silly dream. "I just woke up early because I'm excited, is all. Big day, go meet your friends, be all happy and nothing bad at all happening, right?" She probably was laying it on a bit thick, and it was clear from the expression on Twilight's face that she wasn't about to buy it for a second.

"Right, well..." She crawled out of bed. "If you're eager and ready, then why don't we get an early start? Applejack should be working in the fields right about now." Twilight said, looking out the window. Even if she wasn't buying Trixie's false enthusiasm, she wasn't about to let it stop her, either. She had carefully devised and scheduled this day so that they would catch each of her friends alone, allowing Trixie to meet and deal with them individually. Trixie had to admit, she was quite thankful that Twilight was such a capable planner. She briefly checked her hair, and headed towards the door.

"What about Spike?" Trixie asked, gesturing at the still-slumbering baby dragon.

"Oh, let him sleep. He's been working extra-hard lately with two ponies living here," Twilight replied, opening the door to the outside world, and waited for Trixie. "After you..."

As Trixie passed Twilight, her fellow unicorn leaned in and gave her a reassuring kiss on the cheek, that sent those familiar tingles shooting down her spine.

Maybe today wouldn't be that bad, after all.

• • •

Halfway to Sweet Apple Acres, Trixie's brief bout of optimism was nearly blown away from her by a streaking rainbow.

"Well, if it isn't the *Great and Powerful* Trixie!" Twilight winced slightly as Rainbow Dash proceeded to smash her carefully laid out schedule to pieces by descending down from the clouds to meet them. Rainbow Dash was supposed to be the last one they met with, after Trixie had gained some confidence and forgiveness by meeting with the others whose sense of pride - and reactions to that pride being wounded - wasn't as strong as Dashes.

"Hi, Rainbow Dash," Twilight said warningly, casting a slightly worried glance at Trixie, who had an unreadable expression on her face. Dash smirked playfully, looping circles around the two unicorns.

"Your friend take on any more Ursa Minors recently? Maybe that would explain why she's not looking so great and powerful anymore?" Dash continued to push at buttons, and Twilight bristled slightly.

"Dash -"

"You're absolutely right, Rainbow Dash," Trixie interrupted, causing the two ponies to blink in surprise, looking at her.

"Trixie?"

"I am?" Rainbow said in a confused voice, and Trixie continued.

"Oh, how could I be foolish enough to think that I, Trixie, could possibly match the awesomeness of you, Rainbow Dash?" she said in the same theatrical, but convincing, tone that she had taken on during her performance.

"Wait, are you serious? Are you making fun of me?" Rainbow Dash said, clearly looking confused at Trixie's words, an expression shared by Twilight's own. Trixie bowed her head lowly and humbly at Rainbow Dash.

"Of course not, Rainbow Dash. You really are the coolest pony in all of Equestria, and I should have never tried to match you. It was only my... my jealousy! Please, forgive me for trying to embarrass you!" Trixie exclaimed, throwing herself dramatically on the dirt.

"I... uhm... of course! I can see why you'd want to," Rainbow Dash said, her confusion turning into pride as her confidence was fed. "Well, everything turned out alright, so I **THINK** I can forgive you." She grinned brightly, her wings beating fiercer. "Your new friend is better than I thought, Twilight. I like her!"

Twilight, looking between the bowing Trixie and the pride-filled Dash, tried to think of what to say, and managed only to sputter out a couple of words.

"Thanks, Dash..."

"Well, I woke up early just to meet up with you two, I think it's time for a nap!" Dash exclaimed, and before the unicorns could bid their farewells, zipped off into the clouds. Twilight watched her go.

"Well, that wasn't too bad," Trixie said, and Twilight blinked, casting a glance at her as she picked herself up off the ground, dusting herself off and smiling.

"How did you..." Twilight had been so certain that this would be the hardest confrontation.

"It was appealing to her pride. I really do feel bad for what I did, but I knew that trying to apologize normally wouldn't work." Trixie kept smiling. "Fortunately, I have a lot of practice of bolstering someone's ego. I did it to myself all the time."

Twilight paused, and then giggled.

"You put on quite the act." Trixie puffed her chest out with pride, tapping it with a hoof.

"I was a showmare, remember? I thought about putting her name in lights, but that might have been a bit too much." Trixie started walking again, Twilight trotting alongside her, the two laughing with one another. Trixie had to admit, she felt not just happy, but confident in herself for the first time in a very long while.

• • •

The scenery graduated from town into farmland, brilliant rows of bright and shiny apple trees. Trixie felt her stomach gurgle slightly, remembering the last time that she had been here, and just how hungry she had been. They looked for Applejack, who had probably been the one who had visited Trixie as she recovered the most. She had brought her so many apple-based products that Trixie figured the vast majority of her weight gain was from apple crisps and apple pie.

It was only a short matter of time before they found Applejack, tending to a sickly-looking apple tree. She called out in greeting to the two.

"Hello, Applejack. What's wrong with the tree?" Twilight responded, as the two approached. Trixie looked up at the tree. It certainly didn't look very good, there was some sort of fungus or mold growing on the leaves, which were starting to wilt and turn brown.

"Ah don't rightly know, Twilight. It's been getting worse all week, and I'm afraid that it's going to spread to the others." Applejack sounded worried, and Twilight picked up a branch that had fallen from the crippled tree, examining the leaves. Trixie rubbed her hoof in the dirt. She knew next to nothing about farming or plants, but still felt the desire

to try and help. She really did owe Applejack an awful lot. However, Twilight's eyes suddenly sparked with recognition.

"I think I've seen this in one of my books..." She looked up at Applejack and Trixie. "I might be able to help you, I just have to go check something. Why don't you two stay here, there's no point for both of us to go back, Trixie."

"W-what?" Trixie replied. This wasn't part of the plan, Twilight was supposed to be with her as they did this!

"Oh, it'll be okay, Trixie," Twilight said, already getting ready to go. "I'll only be a few minutes, and it's Applejack, it'll be okay."

With that, Twilight ran off, leaving the two alone. Trixie looked at the earth pony, and Applejack looked back at the unicorn.

"So..."

"So..."

This wasn't going to do. Trixie took a deep breath and continued.

"Thank you... for helping me, Applejack," she said, lowering her head slightly. "I'm sorry for trying to steal from you... and hogtying you, too."

"Ah, it ain't nothing, Trixie," Applejack said, shaking her head. "Ya'll can hardly be blamed for doin' that when you were so hungry. Ah would have given you some for free if you had of asked."

Trixie blushed slightly, and looked hopefully up at Applejack.

"Besides, ah can hardly stay mad at someone whose makin' Twilight so happy." Trixie blinked, and that blush suddenly went from slight pink to blazing red. "Though, if you do anything to hurt her, ah'll be the first to run you outta Ponyville," the orange pony continued with a warning.

"Y-you... know?" Trixie squeaked out, her hoof embarrassingly kicking at the dirt underneath her.

"How could ah not? Ah saw the way you were lookin' at Twilight, sugarcube, and you've been the subject of all of Twilight's conversations all week. It don't take an expert to figure you two out."

"So... you're okay? With it?" Trixie asked cautiously, looking around for the fire and brimstone to start at any moment.

"As ah said, as long as you're makin' my friend happy, ah'm perfectly fine."

"T-thank you. That means a lot to me," Trixie said quietly, the embarrassment fading, and a smile spreading again. She really was a comfortable pony to be around. The conversation turned to the tree, Trixie making guesses at what could be wrong, and Applejack generally rejecting them. In a lull in the conversation, Trixie and decided to take a chance. She had to try to find out, and, looking up the tree, asked the question that had been nagging at the back of her mind.

"Why... why do you think she fell for me?" Applejack blinked at the question, and then tilted her head, a thoughtful look on her face.

"Ah don't rightly know." She saw Trixie's expression, and continued. "But what ah do know is that when ah found you, Twilight was the one who insisted on takin' care of you. An' she was the one who cleaned an' fed you when you were still sleepin'. Ah think she musta been having these feelings before now."

"Really?"

"As ah said, ah don't rightly know. Ah'm just guessing. But ah don't think that's yer problem, Trixie. Ah think yer afraid of bein' lost."

"Lost?" Trixie repeated, confused.

"From what Twilight has told me, things are a mite confusin' to you right now. Ah can't imagine what it must be like to be questionin' yourself like this. Ah think you're afraid a losin' Twilight 'cause that's the one thing you have right now that's certain," Applejack explained, and Trixie felt a slight chill down her spine.

"What... what would you do if you were me?"

"It's alla matter of figurin' out who you want ta be. Take me, ah'm an apple farmer, an' I'm happy at that. It's like findin' your cutie mark all over again, ain't it? Ah wouldn't worry, you'll find it. Anypony that coulda been through that much an' survived is stronger than even they know."

Trixie smiled sheepishly at the comment, and then nodded. She was about to say something when Applejack pointed behind her, and Trixie turned to look, only to see Twilight dashing back towards them, carrying a book with her magic.

"I figured it out! I figured it out! It was in Super Naturals," she called out, stopping in front of them, panting softly. She laid the book down on the ground. "Just mix these together, and apply it to the trunk. You can return the book when you're done with it of course." She smiled excitedly. "So is everything okay here?"

"Ah think so. Ah certainly don't have any problems with your taste, Twilight." Trixie blushed slightly and rubbed her head with a hoof.

"Applejack is nice... Thanks, again, for helping me," Trixie said.

"Mah pleasure, Trixie. Ah'm sure everything will work out alright." Trixie smiled at Applejack, and the two unicorns starting walking away.

"What did you two talk about?" Twilight asked with interest.

"Oh, well, just girl stuff," Trixie replied with a smile.

• • •

"Pinkie Pie, this is Trixie. Trixie, Pinkie Pie."

"Ooh, does this mean that we can have a party?"

"I... guess?"

"YAY! You're the best, Trixie!"

The rest of the schedule went about as well as Twilight had planned. Pinkie Pie was just happy to have an excuse to throw a party, although Twilight had extorted a promise that Pinkie would hold it anywhere but the library. Fluttershy was just as her name suggested. The conversation had very few words, but she seemed happy enough.

Rarity was a little tougher, still decidedly peeved over the fact Trixie had turned her hair that horrible shade of green.

"It took me four hours to fix!" she had complained, and it had taken the promise that Trixie would buy a dress when she came around to making some money to finally placate her.

All throughout the day, Trixie was distracted. It wasn't that Twilight's other friends weren't nice, she was actually quite thrilled at the idea of having them as friends for her own. She had rarely stayed in one place in one time during the days after Midnight's death, never really spending enough time to bond with anypony. But she kept going back to her conversation with Applejack earlier in the day. Trixie had to admit to herself it was the truth. So what could she do about it? One thing she knew was certain was that she wanted to be was with Twilight, but her life had to be more than that.

What did she want to be?

Well, that answer was obvious, wasn't it? Twilight herself had told her as such on that night, and the happenings of the day had confirmed it. Trixie knew exactly what she wanted to be, she only had to have the bravery to go ahead with it.

As the two headed towards the library, Trixie stopped in her tracks. Twilight realized that she was no longer walking beside her, and turned.

"Trixie? Are you okay? I know it's been a long day, and with Pinkie Pie planning that party for tonight, I thought you might need to rest a bit." Twilight said, concern in her voice. Trixie shook her head and smiled.

"No, I'm okay. There's something that I need to go and do before the party, I'll meet you there, okay?"

"Are you sure?"

"There's only one thing I'm more positive on, and she's standing right in front of me. But I need to go spread my metaphorical wings and be on my own for a bit, alright?" Twilight tapped her hoof, clearly uncertain, but then nodded softly. Trixie bent forwards, and gently kissed her on the lips.

"It'll be okay, you'll see." With that, she was gone.

• • •

To say that Twilight was distracted for the rest of the day was an understatement. When you spent over a week taking care of someone, it's only natural to worry about them when they leave. That only gets worse when you have personal feelings for them.

All that equalled to the fact that Twilight had worn a groove in the library's floor with her pacing. Even with Spike trying to comfort her, she was still nervous, especially as the sun dipped into the horizon, and the time of the party came about with no word from Trixie. Her nerves got even worse as they made their way to the party, and there was still no sign from Trixie.

Pinkie Pie had opted for a party in the outdoors, around the central building. Twilight wondered if it was Pinkie's doing, or just the nature of irony, that meant Trixie was going to make her second impression in the same place as she had her first. A crowd had already gathered, including all of her friends, the party already in full swing. Pinkie Pie bounded up to her.

"Twilight, Twilight! I got everyone to come, and got streamers and balloons and everything's ready!" She looked around curiously, even peeking under Twilight's legs, as if the blue unicorn would be hiding underneath her. "Where is she? We can't have a party without the guest of honour!"

"I don't know. She said she had something she needed to do, I haven't seen her since this afternoon," Twilight said, the rest of them walking up to her.

"Ah'm sure it'll be okay, Twilight," Applejack said comfortingly.

"I don't know, she was acting a little strange earlier, I'm worri-"

Before Twilight could continue, the center of the square suddenly exploded in fireworks, causing surprised ponies to turn their attention in that direction. They were met with a magically enhanced voice echoing out over them.

"Come one, come all, come and witness the amazing magic of the Great and Powerful Trixie!"

"Oh no..." Twilight whispered, a chill running down her spine, and quickly began pushing her way to the front, followed by her friends. She got to the edge just in time to see, in a flash of smoke and sparkles, Trixie appear clad in her cloak and hat, a brilliant, theatrical smile on her face.

"Watch in amazement as The Great and Powerful Trixie performs incredible feats of pony magic!" More sparks and fireworks, and Twilight's head lowered slightly, her body trembling gently. She didn't know what to say. She had reverted back this quickly?

"Hey, she's doin' it again!" Rainbow Dash protested, pointing over at the cloak-clad unicorn.

"Twilight, ah'm sorry..." Applejack apologized, before glaring fiercely at Trixie. The magician pony's front hooves were waving, and a bouquet of flowers appeared before her. With a flourish, The Great and Powerful Trixie swept them up, then brought them around, and with a final gesture, offered them to Twilight. She raised her head slightly, looking up in Trixie's eyes, and gently took the flowers. The chill she had felt was gone, as she realized that everything was going to be okay.

"Now, let the Great and Powerful Trixie tell to all the tale of the most beautiful, and magical unicorn in all of Equestria! Together with her brave friends, they faced danger and death in their quest to bring dawn to the endless night, and freed the Princess of the Moon from the bonds of hatred that trapped her!" Trixie exclaimed, removing the hat from her head, her horn glowing brilliantly. As everypony watched, enthralled, a panorama painted itself onto the fabric of reality.

One side depicted six brave ponies, their leader, a beautiful purple unicorn, at the head. On the other, the dangers that they faced. As Trixie began to weave her story, the panorama shifted in design in time with her, showing how each threat was faced and defeated with courage and friendship, punctuated by additional effects from the storyteller.

Trixie looked out at the sea of those in the audience, her eyes coming to rest at the six who had made their way to the front. Their eyes were wide as they beheld the spectacle of their own story, and the praise Trixie bestowed on them. Twilight was holding the flowers that Trixie had created, and no one but Trixie saw the love on her face.

This is what she wanted, what she was. Just because she had gotten it wrong the first time, didn't mean that she wasn't allowed to try again. Her dream wouldn't die unless she let it die. She wanted to be a storyteller, a magician, like her mother, to weave dreams and reality to create happiness for people.

So, just as the audience had lost themselves in watching, The Great and Powerful Trixie lost herself in the weaving of the performance, creating a seemingly endless moment in time.

• • •

The crescent moon was high in the sky when the party finally broke up. Soon, there were only two ponies left enjoying the night sky, and each other's company. Twilight, still holding those flowers, and Trixie, clad in her star-filled outfit, leaned against one another.

"So what did you think of the show?" the performer asked her most important audience, who sniffed the flowers with an embarrassed, but very happy expression.

"I loved it... but between the flowers and your praise, I think half of Equestria knows about us now." Twilight said with a soft laugh.

"Well, I decided that now was the time for grand and romantic," Trixie admitted, leaning in and kissing the her lovely audience member. The kiss lingered for a moment, before Twilight pulled gently away to admit something.

"When you first started, I thought you had gone back to before. I was worried... I shouldn't have doubted you."

"Well, I can see why, so I'm not angry. You told me that night that I should find out what the Great and Powerful Trixie should be, and today Applejack said much the same thing," Trixie said, wistfully looking up at the skies. "I knew what I wanted to be, though. I was just afraid to go for it."

"And now?"

"Not anymore. I'm not afraid anymore. I know this is right," Trixie murmured, nuzzling Twilight's neck lovingly. "So, I'm also not going to be afraid to ask this question."

"What question?" Twilight asked, in between the soft, happy noises coming from her throat at the nuzzling.

"Twilight... that night... why did you kiss me?" Trixie said slowly, with a little trepidation. Twilight blinked, and then smiled, gently pulling away from Trixie to look her eye to eye.

"There aren't many unicorns whose special talent is magic, you know," she started, and Trixie nodded, listening. "When I first saw you, I thought you were amazing. Here was another pony whose special talent was magic, she seemed to be so brilliant at it, and she was so beautiful too..." Trixie blushed, and then let out a soft laugh.

"I'm sure embarrassing your friends, and then the deal with the Ursa Minor didn't exactly help with your image of me, though."

"Well, no, but it was still there, deep inside. When Applejack found you, I knew that I wanted to help you," Twilight said, and leaned her head against Trixie's, their horns touching gently, both of them starting to gently glow from the touch. "When you woke up, I was surprised and honoured that you laid your heart out to me as you did. I realized, during that time, that you had the same feelings towards me. It was etched on your face, and those emotions I felt the first time I saw you came rushing back. Maybe it was a bit rash, but it felt like the right thing to do at the time."

"And now?" Trixie asked, parroting Twilight.

"It definitely was the right thing to do," Twilight finished, and smiled. Trixie blinked away the tears that had formed in her eyes, and the two looked upwards, the crescent moon warmly shining down on the two lovers.

"I think you should tell her." Trixie broke the silence once again.

"Who?"

"Your mentor, Princess Celestia. It wouldn't be right to keep this from her."

"Really? Are you sure?" Trixie nodded at Twilight. "Alright. In the morning. But for now, the evening should be ours, don't you think?"

The two ponies stood, and started walking for home. When the morning came, they would have to face the bustle of real life.

But, for now, their world consisted only of each other.

It was Twilight, and she was lonely.

Which, the studious pony admitted to herself, wasn't exactly fair of her to feel so possessive of her companion. In the few days after the splash Trixie had made in her reintroduction party, the magical blue unicorn and her act had become the hit of the town. She was performing every night at the center of town to throngs of over-awed ponies. Twilight had to admit that Trixie really was in her element on stage, and was happy that she was blooming brilliantly.

The after-performance parties didn't hurt, either.

Twilight had been there for every performance that Trixie had put on, and had the numerous bundles of flowers to prove it. Their relationship was the worst-kept secret in Ponyville, as Twilight was sure that everypony at this point had some idea that the two young unicorns had fallen for one another. Her friends certainly knew at this point, because apparently she was pretty bad at keeping secrets herself. Even *Pinkie Pie* had guessed what was going on between the two of them.

Tonight was different, unfortunately. A problem in Twilight's studies had arisen, forcing her to spend a late, quiet night in the library deciphering ancient texts and magical formulas. Trixie had assured her that she would be fine, that she had distracted Twilight from her studies so much in the past few weeks that she knew that Twilight had to catch up.

She felt a brief gust chill her flanks, and she looked up curiously at a window that she was certain that she had closed earlier in the night. A quick flick with her horn settled that, and she turned back to her studies.

As Twilight poured carefully over a fifth, fiftieth, or five hundredth (she had lost count) tome, she had to admit that she had grown to enjoy the distractions. Not just Trixie, all of her friends were busy with their lives, or attending the performance. Even Spike had gone off on some fool's errand to try to catch the attention of Rarity. It wasn't that she disliked studying now, in fact it was the enjoyment that she got through reading and acquiring information that had been distracting her from how quiet the library was, and this challenge was particularly interesting. But, it was the times when she turned away from the book, and took a break from her studies, was she distinctly aware of just how alone she was feeling.

At one moment, she swore she felt something tracing along her back, in a way that she had learned in recent days that she very much liked, but when she turned, there wasn't anypony there. Twilight shook her head slightly, and turned back to the book. She was very close to cracking this problem, and she could report her results back to Princess Celestia. Perhaps she would also give another prod towards her mentor about Trixie, as well. The Princess hadn't responded from the missive they had sent the day after the

party, and it was beginning to worry Twilight a little. She tried to console herself that the duties of a Princess were very important, but Celestia usually got back to her quicker than this.

Twilight was interrupted from her studies by a light tracing along a particularly ticklish spot on her side, another discovery she had made in the past couple of days. She let out a gasp, and then looked around. There wasn't still wasn't anypony there, but that trace suddenly turned into urgent tickling! Twilight's eyes widened, and she started to let loose with gales of laughter. The purple-pelted unicorn felt her legs start to give out on her, from the ticklish stimulation.

"W-who is doing this!?" Twilight exclaimed, between gasps and laughter. Finally, her legs gave up the ghost, and she felt her body fall to the floor, the slight pain quickly washed away by the tickling. She shuddered and writhed in laughter, as the tickling finally died down, and she felt a hoof press against her side, a familiar blue unicorn manifesting into vision, clad in that spectacular hat and cloak, a look of triumph on her face.

"Finally, the Great and Powerful Trixie has triumphed over her mortal enemy!" she exalted, her free hoof tapping her chest with mock pride. Twilight caught her breath, and then looked up at her partner.

"You shouldn't claim victory before the enemy is defeated, Trixie." Her horn glowed brightly, and Trixie let out a gasp, her cheeks reddening, and nearly fell over, releasing Twilight from the floor.

"Hey, that wasn't fair!" Trixie protested, a slight smile tickling on her flushed face. Twilight giggled softly, and then paused for a moment, as something came to her.

"Hey, you figured it out!" Twilight exclaimed, and Trixie's smile widened into one of true pride. Trixie had been spending the past couple of days trying to master one of the hardest spells in her inherited spell books, one even Twilight hadn't been able to successfully cast yet. It was a true invisibility spell, one that didn't just block the unicorn from sight, but blocked the noises they made and their scent as well.

"I figured it out last night, but I decided to wait until now to show it to you." Trixie grinned playfully, and kissed Twilight on the cheek. Twilight shifted slightly, turning that kiss into one on the lips, the two unicorns moving closer to one another...

Their momentary reverie was interrupted by the library door opening, and a disgusted voice calling out.

"Ugh, are you doing that again? I think I'm going to be sick," the baby dragon who had just opened the door protested, and the two lovers released, embarrassed at the interruption.

"Spike, how about some privacy?" Trixie protested.

"Hey, I live here too, before you got here, and I don't want to see yo-HURGH!" Spike was interrupted from his rant by his swelling cheeks, his hands going to his throat. Twilight rolled her eyes.

"Really, Spike? Don't be gross," Twilight said, as Spike opened his mouth, but instead of what the dragon had suggested would come from him, a green, sparkling mist shot out, and assembled into a regal scroll. Twilight blinked, and quickly took the scroll. "It's from Princess Celestia!"

"Really? See what it says!" Trixie replied, as Twilight was already unraveling the scroll, and began to read out loud.

My Faithful Student,

Please forgive me for the lateness of this reply. It has taken several days for me to decide on how to respond to this news. You must understand that I only want the best for you, Twilight, my dearest student. For that sake, I cannot in good faith give my approval for thi-

"What?" Trixie gasped, and even Spike looked surprised. Twilight felt her voice start to tremble, but managed to keep reading.

I cannot in good faith give my approval for this relationship. I have dispatched a team to collect you and Trixie. They will bring you to Canterlot, where we will discuss this matter further. They will arrive in the morning.

*Yours Truly,
Princess Celestia*

Twilight blinked, realizing that tears were starting to drip from her eyes. This wasn't the response that she was expecting from her teacher. She looked up slightly, trying to figure out what to say to Trixie, only to see her kicking herself in the shin slightly.

"Ow," Trixie murmured slightly, and then scowled to herself. "I guess it isn't a dream this time, after all."

It was going to be a long night.

• • •

Indeed, the night passed with little peace, and almost no sleep for the two lovers. It was only until after midnight that Twilight, worried and feeling more than a little betrayed, had finally managed to fitfully get some sleep at Trixie's insistence. Trixie herself had managed to catch a few hours of sleep, but woke an hour or so before sunrise. The

unicorn spent the night looking out at the window, towards the horizon, until she saw the appearance of the first sliver of the sun her of the coming day.

At this moment, she had never more hated the sun. Trixie had always preferred the moon, which she supposed was fitting, considering her cutie mark. But this was more personal than that. She had been spending the night trying to think of why Celestia would have rejected her. Had the Princess been aware of her past behavior and actions, and wouldn't accept her because of that? She had to admit to herself that perhaps that was the reason. Twilight was the Princess's star pupil, after all.

She could see the carriage that was sent for them in the distance, following the sun. It would only be a little while longer, but she wanted Twilight to get as much sleep as she could manage.

It just didn't fit from what Twilight had told her, and what little she could recall from what her mother had told her after her numerous trips to perform at the courts of Canterlot. Midnight had told her that she seemed to be a kind, humorous person, had spoken with great fondness towards Celestia. Most of all, this line of thought frightened Trixie, because that meant that the reason must be personal for the Princess.

She cast a glance at Twilight, watched her twitch and squirm in her sleep, and narrowed her eyes slightly. Princess Celestia had hurt Twilight, even unintentionally, with her words. Even taking their relationship out of the equation, Trixie owed Twilight a great deal, for healing her when she was sick, helping her rediscover herself. She wasn't going to walk away from that. She wasn't going to walk away from her. No matter what a Princess might think.

Time had flown as quickly as that golden, pegasus-manned carriage. They were flying over Applejack's farm. Trixie exhaled softly, and stood, to go and wake Twilight. It was time to face the light.

• • •

They spent the ride in the carriage in relative silence. Since the letter had come late in the day, and they had to leave so early, there was no time to tell their friends what had happened, and so had left Spike behind to inform them. Twilight was reading to try to calm her nerves, and Trixie had never actually flown before, so she was doing her best to keep her breakfast in her stomach. Slowly they began to approach the mountainside city, and Trixie inhaled softly. She'd never actually been to Canterlot before, and the idea slightly frightened her. She was supposed to go with her mom on her next performance there, but she had gotten sick before that could happen. Trixie had chosen to wear her hat and cloak, hoping that Princess Celestia would perhaps recognize it, but now she was worried it would just look tacky.

The carriage shifted, and that caught the attention of Twilight, who looked out, over the city.

"We're almost there," she remarked, the steadiness in her voice distinctly forced. Trixie took a deep breath, and dared to look out the carriage, trying to keep from turning too green. Indeed, the blessed ground was rapidly rising to meet them, the pegasi preparing to make a landing in one of the castle's courtyard. She was going to be never more thankful to touch the ground again, and swore that she would walk down the mountain when it came time to leave.

"I don't think I'm ready for this," Twilight admitted, and Trixie had to agree. The bravery she had mustered during the night had vanished, replaced by queasiness and the sick feeling of anticipation. The carriage touched on the ground, and Trixie disembarked gratefully. If it weren't such an important situation, she would be kissing the ground. Twilight followed after her, and they were approached by two young unicorns, who bowed slightly in greeting.

"The Princess sends her greetings, and wishes to see you immediately," one of the handmaidens said to the two, and Trixie and Twilight looked at each other.

"I guess we're going to get this over with immediately," Trixie observed, and Twilight nodded in agreement. The handmaidens beckoned them to follow, and the visitors did as they were asked.

Even in her wildest dreams, Trixie never believed the castle was quite this large, or this busy. The halls were filled with ponies going about the business of the day, occasionally glancing at the small group. Every once in awhile, Twilight would exchange greetings with people that she recognized, but Twilight admitted to Trixie as they walked that she herself barely knew anypony in Canterlot. She had spent so much time in her studies that, apart from Princess Celestia and Spike, she hadn't made any personal relationships with other ponies until she was sent to Ponyville. Trixie, too, was garnering attention, and did her best to put on her bravest face, trotting along clad in her hat and robe.

Every once in awhile, she swore she heard people speaking her mother's name under their breath.

It came to a surprise to Trixie that they hadn't been lead to the throne room, but rather found themselves at what Twilight recognized as the doors to Princess Celestia's personal chambers.

"I thought this would be more formal," she said softly in Twilight's ear. The purple unicorn shook her head softly, but before she could reply, the handmaidens turned to them.

"The Princess is waiting for you, please go in." They opened the doors to the chambers. Trixie and Twilight looked at each other, and Twilight reached out, rubbing one of Trixie's front hooves with her own, seeing the blue unicorn's trepidation. Steeling her nerves, Trixie and Twilight stepped through the doors.

• • •

Princess Celestia was more beautiful than Trixie had been picturing. Her pelt was white as pure snow, her wings and horn delicate but strong, and her mane and tail shimmered in the air softly. As the two entered, Princess Celestia rose from the seat she had been lounging on, and walked towards them. She was... much larger than Trixie had been anticipating as well, towering over the two unicorns. She smiled softly at Twilight, and the two pressed their heads together fondly, like a mother hugging her child.

That was when Trixie truly realized that this wasn't a matter of royalty disapproving of her subject's choice in mates.

"Princess Celestia..." Twilight said softly, her voice both grateful to see Celestia, and questioningly.

"Twilight Sparkle, my faithful student. Thank you for coming so promptly. I apologize for the trouble that I have caused you," the Princess said, her voice as light as the sun.

"I just don't understand, Princess, why?" Twilight asked, almost begged. Princess Celestia smiled comfortingly.

"All in due time, Twilight. I must greet our other guest, after all." She turned to look at Trixie, and Trixie felt her knees quiver, and she struggled to bow without falling over.

"Princess Celestia, I am the Gr... I am Trixie," she said, and chanced looking up at Princess Celestia's face. For the briefest moments, her expression had seemed to change, turning to one of recognition, and sadness. Trixie wondered over this change, until it vanished, turning back to that smile.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Trixie. Please forgive me for the trouble I am causing you, as well." Her voice was gentle, leaving Trixie just to wonder why on Equestria things were unraveling like this. She slowly and unsteadily got to her feet, and Twilight found her voice first.

"Please, Princess, why can't you approve? I thought you would be happy for me..." Twilight asked, her voice unable to disguise the hurt she was feeling.

"Tell me, Twilight, how long have you been researching the magic of friendship?" Celestia replied a question with a different question. Trixie frowned slightly, trying to figure out where this was going, and even Twilight sounded confused at the seeming change in direction.

"You know it's been a few months, Princess, since I started," Twilight said, her head tilting. Celestia nodded softly, and looked at the two ponies.

"You have just answered your own question, my beloved student."

"What? I don't understand!" Trixie exclaimed, and then immediately clapped her hooves over her mouth, as if the Princess would reduce her to ash for questioning her. Instead, Celestia smiled sympathetically at her.

"You are so early in your studies on learning friendship, my dear Twilight, so inexperienced with others still."

"I don't understand, Princess..." Twilight replied, and Celestia continued.

"Love... Love is a far more advanced magic, advanced and potentially dangerous. One that can backfire on you far too easily, leave you open for people to hurt you grievously. You're still so inexperienced, that I'm afraid you could be misused." Trixie blinked, feeling a surprising surge of anger rush through her, returning the bravery that she had lost earlier.

"I wouldn't hurt Twilight!" she protested, her pelt bristling, her voice raising in the anger she felt. "I won't take advantage of her! I owe her!"

"You cannot promise that," Celestia replied, her voice even but firm. "Even if your words are true, which I believe they are, you can still hurt her without even meaning or wanting to." She looked at Twilight, who looked confused, trying to process what Princess Celestia was telling her.

"But... what's wrong with finding out?" Twilight asked, softly. Celestia reached out, gently stroking her cheek with a hoof.

"I just think you should take this step by step... I do not want to see you get hurt. Please, at least take some time here, and think on my words." Trixie bit her lip slightly, looking between the two. Celestia turned, looking at Trixie. "My dear Trixie, you are a performer, are you not?" Trixie blinked, and fumbled for her words.

"Y-yes. I-I've only just really started doing it right, though. I mean, I've been performing every night for Ponyville recently."

"How would you like to perform for the court?" Trixie and Twilight gasped slightly, Trixie's eyes widening. "If you would be willing, I would like you to perform at dawn, so both my sister Luna and I can both view it. I assume that would give you enough time to prepare?"

Trixie felt conflicting emotions. On one hand, to perform for both Princess Celestia, and the returned Princess Luna, as well as the rest of Canterlot's Court, was a desire she had harbored ever since she was a child, and heard the stories her mother told her of her performances. On the other hand, Trixie knew why Celestia was offering this. It would occupy Trixie's time and effort for the day and night, and give Twilight time alone to think on Celestia's words without her input. She took a moment, and then opened her mouth, about to refuse...

"I think you should do it, Trixie," she was beaten to the punch by Twilight.

"W-what?"

"You can't turn down this opportunity, Trixie, no matter what you're thinking..." Twilight said, and Trixie was about to protest, until she met Twilight's eyes. She realized that she truly meant it, she wanted to allow Trixie her chance to follow that dream...

"Alright... I would be honored to perform for you and your sister, Princess," Trixie murmured softly, and gently bowed, still feeling the twisting in her gut. Celestia smiled softly, and nodded.

"I have set up a guest room for you to prepare, Trixie. Now, it has been a long time since I have visited with Twilight, would you allow us some time alone?"

She couldn't refuse, no matter how much she wanted. She closed her eyes, refused to let tears leak down her cheeks, and then gave a single nod. She turned to go, casting a final glance to Twilight, and headed out of the room.

• • •

As day slowly turned to night, Trixie's fears were proven right. She and Twilight had not been able to see each other throughout the day, save for at dinner, which ended up being a stately affair that had allowed Trixie no time to speak with her. Trixie had to admit to herself that Celestia's words did have some truth to them, and she had spoken them with conviction. While Trixie tried to convince herself that it was still worth it, the idea that she might somehow hurt Twilight still hung heavily in her heart.

Trixie scrunched up another ball of paper viciously, throwing it fiercely against the wall, to join the other failed plans that she had been trying to generate for this performance. How could she be expected to come up with a performance worthy of Canterlot, and the Princesses, while she was in this mood? Not only was there the intense possibility of losing Twilight, along with the fretful thought that Celestia might be right, but now Trixie was going to become a laughing stock in front of all of Canterlot.

Trixie looked out the window in frustration, and realized with a chill down her spine that it was getting to be the middle of the night. She was running out of time. She put her hooves on her head, groaning loudly.

"Twilight..." she murmured to herself. She had to see her, even for a few moments. Trixie thought for a moment, and then was struck by inspiration. She *had* a way she could see her. Her eyes closed, and her horn began to glow. She felt the magic start to wrap around her body, obscuring her from view, blunting the noises her hooves and breath would make, and masked the scent her body would give off. Her mother's invisibility spell, that she had so recently managed to master, would come finally come in handy for more than just appearing and disappearing on stage, and playing around with Twilight. Thus

cloaked, she slipped out of her room, and started to run, unseen and unheard by the few night guards still on duty.

About half an hour later, and several twists and turns later, Trixie had to admit that she had perhaps not thought this out fully. The castle was extremely unfamiliar to her, and she wasn't completely sure just where Twilight's room, or more likely the library, was. Not only that, she had become so lost that she wasn't sure just how to get back to her room. She was just about to give in, reappear and ask for help from a guard, when she turned a corner, and realized where she was.

She had managed to stumble back upon the doors of Princess Celestia's personal chambers. Which was a bit of a relief, because she could retrace her steps from there. However, as she looked, she realized that neither guard nor handmaiden seemed to be present. While she couldn't be sure of Canterlot protocol, that seemed odd to her. So odd that her curiosity was piqued. Perhaps, at least, Twilight might be there, and Trixie might have been able to intercept her after she left Celestia's side. She slowly approached the door, and heard soft noises coming from the room within. Confident in her mother's spell, and driven by the need to hear what was going on inside the room, she got as close to the door as she dared, straining her ears to try to pick up the noise that had been just tantalizing out of the reach of ineligibility.

Her eyes widened when she heard soft weeping coming from inside. It wasn't coming from Twilight, but the Princess. Trixie let out a soft gasp, realizing she was intruding on a private moment that she was never supposed to hear. Her stomach looped with guilt and shock, and she felt her hooves working to move her away from the door. She could still hear that soft weeping ringing in her ears, and she turned quickly, scampering away desperately from the door, and the sobbing Princess therein.

It took her the time it took to reach her guest room to calm her beating heart. She opened the door, slipping inside, and closing it behind her. She rested her head on the door, her eyes closed, trying to forget what she heard.

"Oh, hello. I'm glad you're back, I was afraid that you had left for good." Trixie's eyes widened, not just because there was someone in the room with her. It was because she hadn't canceled the invisibility spell yet. Slowly, frightfully, Trixie turned to face the pony who could pierce through the veil she had cast over herself.

She was smaller, though still taller than Trixie, and her colors were a deep dark blue, her cutie mark black like the night sky, with a moon shining in that darkness. There was no mistaking the familiar resemblance.

It was Princess Luna, the newly returned sister of Celestia.

"Oh, right, you're wondering. Well, I recognize that spell. I made it to play pranks on Celestia when we were children. Which should make you wonder how you came in

possession of the spell." The Princess of the Moon smiled, her eyes sparkling with a surprising amount of mischief. "You've been getting into trouble, haven't you, Trixie?"

There wasn't any point in holding the spell anymore, and it was starting to get tiring. Trixie dispelled the invisibility, blushing slightly.

"I was looking for Twilight."

"Of course you were." Luna chuckled softly, looking Trixie up and down. "You know, I can see the resemblance. I can see why you would bring her pain."

"What do you mean?" Trixie questioned that enigmatic statement.

"It's no matter, yet. I just wanted to talk to you, personally. I hope you don't mind, but I've been watching your shows from afar."

"Y-you have? What did you think?" Trixie worried, trying to think back. She had used the Elements of Harmony story that Twilight had told her a couple of times, but she was pretty sure she had treated Luna fairly. At least, she hoped.

"I think you're brilliant!" Luna said, clapping her hooves together, almost like an enthusiastic fan. "Of course, I haven't been able to see many shows in the past 1000 years or so, and there weren't many before then, so maybe I can't be too good a judge, but you're wonderful!"

Trixie blinked, honestly shocked.

"Plus, you do your shows during the night, and out in the open, where I can actually see them! It's great!" Luna exclaimed, a bright smile on her face. "That's why I want to help you with your new act."

"Pardon?" Luna waved a hoof towards the large pile of crumpled papers that lay on the floor.

"You seem to be having trouble, and I would hardly want your first performance in Canterlot to be a failure. I happen to know a story that you can use, that might just be of help you. If you're smart enough to use it properly, of course." There was that smile again, as if Luna knew the mysteries of the universe.

Which, Trixie thought, might be entirely possible.

"Well, alright. It's not like I have any other ideas, and I'm running out of time in any case," Trixie said, and listened attentively as Luna began to speak, thankful for the distraction from her problems with Twilight, the weeping from Celestia she had heard, and the nerves that she was feeling.

Once Princess Luna was finished, however...

"W-why are you telling me this?" Trixie whispered, feeling the tears running unbidden down her cheeks. Her heart hurt, beating painfully in her chest.

"Because it's important, and because I think that you'll be able to use it." Luna smiled sadly. "Because Celestia is my sister, and I hurt her so badly myself. I want to help her. Not just her, but Twilight as well, for freeing me from the hatred that was bound me. I want them both to be happy, and I think Twilight will be happy with you. Finally, because if anyone were to tell this story, it *should* be you."

Trixie nodded weakly. It was true. She slowly stood, and despite the tears still leaking down her cheeks, strength returned to her eyes.

"I know what to do."

"Great!" Luna exclaimed, clapping her hooves again. "I look forward to it. It should be an interesting performance, that's for sure."

"Thank you... thank you for helping me, telling me this."

"You're welcome. The night favors lovers, anyway," Luna said, as she left the room with all the grace of the stars.

Trixie closed the door. She had a lot to prepare, needed to be well-rested for this special performance, and so very little time to do either in.

• • •

Dawn was coming, that moment in time where day and night intermingled. The crowd had assembled in the main courtyard, a stage carefully set up for the star of the show, who was currently relying once again on her mother's invisibility spell to hide her from view as she looked out on the crowd. Front and center were the two Princesses, and Twilight. Luna had an eager smile in anticipation and knowing. Celestia was showing no signs of the weeping that Trixie now knew the reasons for, but instead the benevolent smile she was famous for. Twilight's face was conflicted from what Trixie could tell, and it was fair of her to be in the situation she had been put in. Maybe this would tip the scales. As the sun made the sky behind the stage turn red, she began.

With a spectacular explosion, Trixie dropped the invisibility spell, appearing as smoke cleared!

"Come one and all, for I am the Great and Powerful Trixie, here to delight you all with magic and tale!" the blue unicorn exclaimed in that magically-enhanced stage voice, the crowd gasping in delight. She could see Twilight perking up, and the two Princesses watching attentively.

"For her first performance here in Canterlot, the Great and Powerful Trixie has wracked her brain, for not any simple tale or trick will do for the auspicious audience before her. But, as if the moon herself has inspired her, Trixie has divined of a story that can only fit this time, and this place. I call this tale: The Sage and the Storyteller!" The crowd watched in awe, as Trixie threw her arms up, fireworks exploding forth, painting the red sky with deep blue flashes. Even the two Princesses became rapt in her words. Twilight looked at Trixie in confusion, as if trying to figure out what she was about to do.

It was now or never. She could only hope, as she made her magic write the tale in pictures upon the sky, that the Canterlot dungeons were clean.

"Once upon a time, there was a Sage, whose wisdom and kindness lit the land she ruled like a star. She had seen many suns, and dedicated her days to helping those ponies that believed in her, and in turn, they praised her for her compassion and strength.

"But the Sage was lonely. All knew of her as the Sage, but not the mare who lie beneath, who still grieved over what she had lost through her many years. Her only solace was her Pupil, who had been granted to her when the Pupil was still a child, and who the Sage loved as if she were her own.

"One day, in the Sage's court, a beautiful Storyteller appeared before them. Mischievous and kind at heart, and skilled in the arts of magic, the Storyteller's words colored the sky, and pierced to the hearts of all those that listened.

"But the Storyteller, too, was lonely. The mare behind the Storyteller had lost her mate in a terrible accident, and her soul still ached from the loss. Her only solace was her Daughter, whom she had been blessed with before her mate's tragic death.

"As the Storyteller regaled the Sage's court with story and song, she caught the attention of the Sage. After the performance, the Sage approached the Storyteller, to give thanks for the joy that she had given her audience. But the Storyteller was perceptive, and the Sage was wise, and by chance they found the lonely mares hidden behind their masks. They spoke well into the night, telling their lives, losses, and love, forging the links of the friendship that would follow."

Princess Celestia's face was unreadable, and Trixie felt her heart pounding. She controlled the fear, calling upon the true bravery that she had learned from Twilight and her friends.

"The Storyteller lived far from the Sage, but after that night, the Sage insisted that the Storyteller perform for her and her court again. So the Storyteller became a regular fixture at the court, entertaining the crowds that followed the Sage, and after each performance, the mares would talk to each other, deep into the night.

"Things would change on the fourth performance. A regular part of the Storyteller's act was to create flowers with her magic, and offer them to a member of her attentive

audience. But this time, to the Sage's surprise, as the flowers appeared, the Storyteller offered them to her. The Sage looked from the flowers to her, and saw not the Storyteller, but the mare, and knew that things would be forever changed if she accepted them.

"It took but a moment, but the mare reached out, and took the flowers. In that instance, they were no longer Sage and Storyteller, but two mares who dared to follow their hearts."

Trixie could feel the wetness starting to build under her eyes, but let them alone. The tears were appropriate. Celestia surely had to know by now.

"Life and responsibility could not be denied for long. The Sage had her duties, and the Storyteller had her work. However, once a month, the Sage and Storyteller would meet under the stars and ever-watching moon, and be as one.

"It was the eighth such lovers' dalliance when the Sage had come up with a solution. She would invite the Storyteller to move to her court, and perform only for them. The Storyteller had gained such renown that such a move would be unsurprising. The Sage believed in the idea, for not only would the Storyteller be close, her Pupil would have a companion, to teach the magic of Friendship to her. The Storyteller desired the idea, for not only would she be with the Sage, her Daughter would have the chance for the proper training for the magical ability that she was starting to blossom into. Thus, under the stars and moon, the two mares made a pact. The next time the Storyteller would visit the court, one month from that night, she would bring her Daughter with her, and the visit would be forever.

"However, Life can be unfair, no matter who you are."

Trixie took off that hat, her head lowering, her eyes closing. The crowd was silent, rapt in attention, so Trixie could just hear the soft breathing coming from the main target of her tale.

"A month passed, and the Storyteller, nor her Daughter, arrived. The Sage began to worry, for the Storyteller had never been late before. So worried, in fact, the Sage left her court, traveling to the small village that the Storyteller and her Daughter had lived. There, she learned that her fears were both well-founded, and far too late.

"For, dear listeners, in the month that has passed, the Storyteller had fallen to an illness that no pony magic could touch, one that had wasted her flesh and spirit, withering the once vital mare to a shell of what she had been, before taking her life just days before the Sage arrived. Grief-stricken, the Sage attempted to find the Daughter, in hopes of honoring the spirit of her lost love, but the Daughter, her mind poisoned by grief and pain, had fled to the far reaches of the land.

"Thus, in one terrible moment, the Sage felt she had failed the Storyteller, the Daughter, and her own Pupil."

Weeping. She couldn't tell whose it was. It might have been her own. Things were coming to a climax, and she couldn't afford to falter here. She raised her head, that hat being pulled back on.

"But our story does not end here. The years passed, and the Sage's pain scarred over, as she threw herself into the love of her subjects, the love of her Pupil. She was even blessed with the rebirth of her Sister, who she had long thought lost.

"One day, the Sage received a letter from her Pupil, who had grown into a beautiful young mare. In that letter, the Pupil revealed that she had fallen in love, but the Sage's blood chilled when she realized that the Pupil had become united with the Daughter, who the Pupil had helped come to her senses. Shock tore open the scars that she thought had healed, and she took desperate action.

"She desired only to protect her beloved Pupil from the pain that she had felt, so long ago, when she denied them, and none could blame her, for love can bring pain. But what she forgot was the joy of those monthly dalliances, the comfort of being with the one who understands the deepest reaches in your heart. The pleasure of a lover's caress, the thrill of a tender kiss. How these things were worth the possibility of pain.

"She forgot, too, that she could cause pain to her Pupil through her actions, even when she meant well."

This was the moment.

"Thus, it's fallen upon the Daughter to *remind her of what she's forgotten!*"

The crowd gasped, as the Great and Powerful Trixie swept her hoof across them, pointing to the center, where Princess Celestia was. Celestia sat there, Trixie trying to decipher the expression on her face, looking for some sign that she had pierced through to her heart. Princess Luna looked between the two, a hopeful look on her face. Twilight...

Where was Twilight? Trixie's pointing hoof wavered slightly, but that lapse was only for a moment, as there was a brilliant flash beside her, Celestia's apprentice appearing next to her. The scales had been tipped.

"Please, Princess, let me experience this for myself! I'm willing to take the risk, it's worth it!" Twilight exclaimed, and Trixie could feel the warmth of her body pressing slightly against her own. "When I'm with her, I can feel this warmth and strength deep inside me, when we touch, I feel this tingle... I know I want to be with her!" The two young mares on stage looked across the shocked, silent audience, towards the Princess that they had poured their hearts out to.

Tears welled in her eyes, but Princess Celestia smiled, a soft, happy, nostalgic smile, and closed her eyes. She bowed her head, and spoke.

"I think you know how this story should end." Trixie smiled, and then turned to Twilight.

"Swayed by the pleas of her Pupil, and the Daughter, the Sage remembered the joys of love, and allowed them to pursue their hearts." Trixie's hooves met Twilight's own, and they looked into each others' eyes.

"And so, at the dawn of a new day, the Pupil and the Daughter leaned forwards, and met with a gentle kiss."

As the sun breached into the sky behind them, they did just that.

• • •

"It's a shame that you cannot stay longer, Twilight," Princess Celestia said, as the two Princesses and the two lovers watched the carriage that would take Twilight and Trixie back to Ponyville. The purple unicorn smiled, looking up at Celestia.

"We left so suddenly, that I'm sure our friends are worried about us. Besides, Ponyville is my home now."

"Also, we left Spike alone, and he's sure to get into trouble without Twilight," Trixie said, and the four ponies chuckled to each other. Trixie turned to the smaller, night-colored Princess, who was looking very tired. It was very late for her, after all. Trixie bowed softly to her.

"Thank you, Princess Luna," Trixie said, the gratitude clear in her voice. "It would have not been a successful performance without you."

"Yes, I do wonder where you learned that story, dear sister," Celestia said, looking down at her younger sister. Luna smiled mischievously back at her.

"You should not have spent so much time talking to the moon over the years, if you didn't want me to know, sister," Luna said, the joy apparent in her voice. "Plus, you can't tell me that it didn't turn out as it should have."

Princess Celestia closed her eyes, and allowed herself to have that same nostalgic smile cross her lips.

"I suppose you're right," she admitted, and Luna turned back to the bowing Trixie.

"Now, my faithful pupil -" Luna started.

"*Faithful pupil?*" Celestia, Twilight, and Trixie interrupted in varying tones of amusement and surprise. Luna huffed playfully.

"Well, why not? You have Twilight as your student, why can't I have one? I did help her, after all! Besides, look!" Princess Luna poked Trixie's cutie mark with a hoof. "She's got my moon on her flank! It's clearly meant to be!" The three chuckled softly, and then Trixie nodded.

"I guess even the Great and Powerful Trixie cannot argue with that. Very well, I'll be your pupil," Trixie gave in, smiling.

"Of course you will! Now, I expect lots and lots of letters, you know! I want to know all about your studies and your performances!" The Princess of the Moon exalted in her triumph. "Now, my faithful pupil, I put a book in your bag that will be useful to you with your studies. Be sure to tell me how it helps you!"

Trixie rubbed her head, chuckling softly. Princess Celestia turned to Twilight, gently nuzzling her student.

"I have something for you too, Twilight Sparkle." One of the Princess's handmaidens stepped forwards, and gave Twilight a bound scroll. Twilight blinked, holding it in the air with her magic.

"A letter?"

"Only open it when you are on your way home," Celestia said, and stepped back. It was time to go. Trixie and Twilight clambered onto the carriage, and then waved to the Princesses.

"I'll write to you soon, Princess Celestia! Thank you!" Twilight called out.

"So long, Twilight Sparkle and Trixie!" Celestia said, and then paused for a moment. "And Trixie? Your mother would be proud of you." Trixie felt her cheeks heat red, and rubbed her eyes for a moment.

"Thank you, Princess... that means a lot to me."

With their final farewells done, the carriage took off, climbing high into the sky.

It was about an hour into the flight that Trixie remembered her promise to herself that she would walk down the mountain, rather than fly. Her stomach was doing loops, and she looked over at Twilight, who was busy reading a book that she had gotten from the library during their time in Canterlot, desperate for a distraction.

"I think you should open the letter, Twilight."

"You think?"

"She did say you could open it in the air, and please, I'm desperate to try and find something to keep me from losing my lunch." Twilight nodded softly. She broke the seal, and unraveled the letter, beginning to read.

To my Faithful Student,

Sometimes, the teacher must learn a lesson herself. I can only hope that you can forgive a silly foal for the mistakes that even one who has seen many years can make. Thankfully, my brilliant pupil, and her equally brilliant partner, was there to help her see the light again. I wish you and Trixie all the happiness in the world.

*Yours With Love,
Princess Celestia*

"Well, this is a reverse of the usual," Twilight observed, a bright smile on her face. Trixie stood up, and shifted to press next to Twilight, nuzzling her tenderly, her stomach not feeling so bad now. Twilight rolled up the letter, putting it away. "Have you looked through the book that Princess Luna gave you?" Trixie blinked, and shook her head. Her horn glowed, and her bag opened, a red-covered book floating over to the entwined lovers.

"No, I haven't. Why don't we take a look..." Her horn moved, and they began to flick through the book, skimming the contents therein. It only took a few moments for both Trixie and Twilight's cheeks to turn blazing red. "P-Princess Luna has a naughtier mind than I thought she did."

"Y-yeah.."

"How on Equestria am I going to write letters to her about this?!" Trixie protested to Twilight. Thankfully, the awkward moment was interrupted by one of the pegasus pilots calling back at them.

"Madams, we're almost at Ponyville." The two picked themselves off the bottom of the carriage, and looked out. Sure enough, the small town was rapidly approaching, and as Trixie watched, she felt the queasiness she was feeling dissipate. She glanced over at Twilight, who was looking out for her friends, for their friends, and gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek. They were going home, the first true home that Trixie had known of for a long time. There were friends waiting for her, and the pony she loved was at her side. Perhaps Princess Celestia was right. Her mother would truly be proud of her.

As the carriage descended homeward, Trixie looked forwards to a future that was as bright and warm as the sun that was behind them.

Part 1: Dawn

The rays of the sun flowed down on the small town of Ponyville, as the morning entered into full blossom. Ponies of all stripes were slowly starting to rouse from their slumbers, and in the tree-building that was Ponyville's library, the Great and Powerful Trixie was one of them.

Trixie let out a happy little moan, as she slowly drifted into the waking world, for she felt the comfortable weight of a lovely pony nuzzled up against her back, cuddled close to her, the pony's warm breath teasing nicely against the back of her neck. Trixie kept her eyes closed, just soaking in the physical sensations, a smile spreading across her face. It was time to face another lovely day.

It had been months since Trixie's rather... spectacular Canterlot performance, and to say that life was going well for her would be an understatement. The last time she had been this honestly happy was when her mother was still alive, back when she was just a little filly. Her performances brought in packed houses every night, as word of her performance at Canterlot had spread. She was even getting offers to perform in other cities, but she had yet to take any of them up on their offer. She had to admit that she was a little reluctant to leave Ponyville, because it felt, well, like *home*. The first true home that she had in so very long. All of her friends were here, the friends that she had never had before. Of course, she seemed to be getting involved in more adventures than ever before, but it was worth it. Especially considering the pony snuggled up against her back, who was the largest reason for her happiness. The relationship between Trixie and Twilight was coming into its own ever since Celestia gave her blessings, and Trixie now was having a hard time to believe that she had ever tried to deny what she felt for the studious pony.

Trixie smiled blissfully, and her ears twitched, as she heard sudden clattering in the room. She slowly opened her eyes, about to scold Spike gently about making noise so early in the morning. She blinked wearily, and confusion spread across her face, as she saw Twilight standing in front of the bedroom mirror, combing at the bed hair that she really did have a cute tendency to get. Trixie frowned. That couldn't be right, Twilight should still be in bed, she could feel her weight against her. Trixie blinked a couple of times, trying to coat the fuzz out of her eyes, and then gave herself a sharp poke to one of her forelegs, to ensure that she wasn't dreaming one of the dreams her overactive subconscious had a tendency to give her.

Thus, she determined that a) she was awake, and thus this wasn't a dream, and b) Trixie wasn't seeing things, it really was Twilight was standing at the mirror. The unicorn's head tilted slightly, as if seeing something in the mirror, and glanced back at Trixie. She seemed to have an odd blush on her face, the one Trixie recognized from whenever she gave Twilight flowers during her performances.

"T-Twilight?" Trixie murmured, confused and sleepy. She lifted her head slightly, feeling the other "Twilight" nuzzle against her, trying to keep Trixie from moving so much.

"Good morning, Great and Powerful Trixie," Twilight said, her formally arrogant nickname now Twilight's pet name for the blue unicorn. "You look as confused as I was when I woke up. Well, here..." Twilight walked over to the bed, gently nudging Trixie, getting the confused magician to crane her head, to look behind her as best she could. Her eyes widened.

The pony snuggled against her back, breathing so nicely against her neck, was a cute, midnight blue pony, her horn nestled against the pillow, her wings wrapped against Trixie. She was slumbering deeply, a pony whose day was night, and night was day.

And that was when Trixie remembered last night.

• • •

"That was another great show, oh Great and Powerful Trixie!" Twilight said as the two mares trotted home. Trixie's hat was perched on her head, and yet another bunch of flowers was being carried. "Although, you keep giving me flowers, I think there's getting to be an awful lot of jealous ponies in Ponyville." Trixie puffed up her chest with pride.

"Well, of course. I am the most beautiful pony in all of Equestria, after all," Trixie said, jokingly prideful. "There are only a few select ponies that could possibly match her enough to be her mate." She pressed up against Twilight, their muzzles meeting, starting to kiss with one another, as they reached the door to the library.

"Is Trixie getting an ego again?" Twilight murmured, their horns caressing one another, their magic starting to sparkle, caressing and stroking over each others' bodies, starting to reach the secret areas that they had discovered on each other. So involved with one another, they didn't notice that the door to the library, that had been locked when they left, no longer was.

"Maybe... maybe I need to be taught another lesson..." Trixie said with a giggle. They slipped into the library, their bodies growing warmer, their breathing heavier...

"I'm sorry, am I interrupting something?" a playful voice called out. With loud gasps, the two unicorns tore themselves away from each other. Brilliant red blushes washed over their faces, and they looked at the pony that had intruded on them.

"P-Princess Luna?!" Trixie gasped, looking at the Princess of the Moon, who had settled on a seat, clearly have been waiting for them. A book was perched on the table next to her. She frowned slightly.

"I believe that's 'teacher' to you. Or 'beloved teacher' works just as well," Luna gently scolded her 'student'. Twilight stepped forward.

"What has brought you to Ponyville, Princess? We weren't aware that you were going to visit..."

"That's because this is a surprise visit, Twilight, dear. I've come because I need to scold my student, she's been very bad." Trixie blinked, and looked very confused.

"What are you talking about, ah, teacher? I've sent you **more** letters than Twilight sends Celestia, because you've been insisting," she protested. Luna simply lifted the book that was on the table. The two ponies squirmed, their embarrassment growing, as they recognized the distinct cover of the book.

"I gave you this, and expected you to bring me your findings on it. You haven't done that yet, Trixie..." Princess Luna scolded, but there was an odd look in her eyes. Trixie, in her embarrassment, was having a hard time placing it.

"T-teacher, that book... you can't be serious, w-what you want is incredibly private! You can't expect me to wr-write about things like that. I mean, its between Twilight and me..." Trixie squirmed hard, not noticing that Twilight was looking at Luna's expression with interest.

"But, I'm your teacher..." Luna said, and her head seemed to be tilting down slightly, and Trixie recognized that her eyes were growing downcast. Trixie blinked in surprise.

"Teacher?"

"I'm sorry..." Princess Luna whispered softly. "This was foolish of me." Her body shifted, starting to stand.

"You want to know what it's like," Twilight announced, interrupting the conversation between teacher and student. "You've never experienced it before, have you? Not just *that*... but the feelings that go along with it." Luna shifted from hoof to hoof, and Trixie looked concernedly at her teacher.

"...No..." Luna finally managed to whisper out.

"Would you like to?" Those words got both Luna and Trixie just looking at Twilight.

"T-Twilight?" Trixie questioned, and Twilight looked at her mate gently.

"If it weren't for her, we probably wouldn't have the happiness we have now, right?" she reasoned. "So... why can't we share it with her, even for only a night, so she knows what it is?" Trixie closed her eyes, and then smiled softly. It was true, they owed the Princess of the Moon a great deal. Not only for their happiness, but how Trixie learned of her mother's own, a story that had been lost. She just nodded softly, smiling at Twilight.

"Trixie? T-Twilight?" Luna murmured, her eyes wide. She let out a gasp, as the two unicorns' horns glowed, and their magic wrapped around the Princess, drawing her close to their warm bodies, their heads nuzzling at the shocked, shivering Luna, who pressed against them, the two lovers beginning to teach the lonely Princess.

The Book got a lot of use that night.

• • •

"I can barely believe that we did that." Trixie let out a soft, embarrassed groan, as she remembered their actions of the previous night. She looked at Twilight, slowly trying to extract herself from the cuddling, slumbering Luna.

"She just looked so lonely at that point. It sort of reminded me of you, Trixie, when you came back to Ponyville," Twilight said, laughing softly. "Besides... it wasn't bad, was it?" Trixie paused for a moment, thinking, and then shook her head, a smile spreading across her face.

"No, it really wasn't..." Trixie shifted slightly, and winced, as the Princess cuddled against her moved just enough to start to wake her. Princess Luna let out a soft groan, her body beginning to move. Her head raised slightly, her eyes blearily looking out into the bright room.

"Who's waking me..." She let out a gasp, as the Princess realized where she was, who she was with, and what they had done. "Ohmygoshohmygoshohmygosh..."

"Rainbow Dash did that when she met the Wonderbolts for the first time," Twilight pointed out, clearly amused. Trixie grinned at her flushed teacher.

"Was that enough of a report for you, my beloved teacher?" the blue unicorn said teasingly, nuzzling at her. Luna let out a happy whimper, and nodded fiercely. Trixie grinned with pride, finally having an advantage over the mischievous Princess of the Moon.

"Than-thank you." A brilliant smile spread across her face, and the tired Luna quivered with delight as Twilight joined in, rubbing at the other side of her face. "I-I don't expect this again. I just wanted to know what it was like, just this once..."

"Oh, silly Luna... I'm sure there are plenty of ponies who would like to be with you. You'll find someone just for you..." Twilight reassured the pony. Luna nodded, her smile bright across her face, and laid back, her eyes starting to close, as the sleepiness started to claim her again.

"Thank you..." she murmured, as Trixie pulled out of the bed, looking down at the slumbering Princess. She chuckled softly, and then looked at Twilight.

"So, are you going to write to Princess Celestia about this?" Twilight blinked, and shook her head fiercely.

"N-no, I think she can stay in the dark about this one... as you said last night, this sort of thing is incredibly private, right?"

"Chicken."

"Yes, absolutely." The two ponies laughed together, as they left to face their day, leaving the sleeping Princess to her happy dreams.

Part 2: Noon

Trixie hated doctors. She hated clinics, hospitals, waiting rooms, and hospital beds. The smell of disinfectant and the sterilized, blank walls. She hated everything to do with the medical profession. She had ever since spending long, long hours with her dying mother, as doctors and nurses fruitlessly pursued treatment after treatment, trying-and failing-to discover the source of the disease that wasted away at her, sapping her spirit and ravaging her body. She never, ever wanted to deal with the medical profession again, to the point where, during her convalescence, when one of her wounds wasn't healing right, and Twilight had suggested taking her to the hospital, she nearly had a panic attack at the thought.

So, if Trixie hated dealing with anything medical so much, why was she spending a fine mid-day sitting in Ponyville's clinic, getting poked and prodded by an unfamiliar nurse, as opposed to having lunch with her girlfriend, having adventures with her friends, or even just working on her show?

The guilt-trip of her love, of course.

It had been a few weeks since Twilight and Trixie's little... encounter... with Princess Luna. Luna had left in the evening, and ever since then, the two unicorns had been getting almost constant letters from her. The experience that she had with the two seemed to have broken a barrier for Luna, as she actively wrote about her social experiences, and her romantic attempts. She had even asked the two for advice, which was rather hard, considering both Twilight and Trixie had, in truth, little experience in the world of dating and romance, apart from what had brought them together. In return, however, Luna had been progressing as an actual teacher, giving Trixie eager advice on her magic and performances, which Trixie quite happily embraced.

Apart from the shift in Princess Luna, life had been progressing normally. Well, as normal as one gets in the town of Ponyville. But over the past few weeks, Trixie had been feeling... well, not quite right. Actually, she had been feeling ill. At first she put it down to a simple bug, but hadn't let up for a few weeks now. Her stomach often rebelled at her, especially when eating some foods with strong aromas. She was feeling incredibly worn out, to the point where she actually had to cancel one of her shows, which was the first

time since her coming-back party that she had done such a thing. But what scared her the worst was the dizzy spells, because she vividly remembered one of Midnight's first symptoms was the same thing. It was when Trixie admitted this to Twilight was when the purple pony had finally put her hoof down, and insisted that she go to the clinic. Trixie had tried to protest, but she wasn't having any of it, and the unicorn could be spectacularly stubborn when she wanted to be.

Trixie just wished that her appointment hadn't coincided with a conference that Twilight had to attend about her research.

Trixie's attention was caught as the white pony, her flank emblazoned with a distinct red cross, finally stopped examining her. She indicated Trixie should sit down, and the worried unicorn gratefully did, sitting on the other side of the desk, the pony who had been examining her having the oddest look on her face...

"Well, Miss Trixie, I believe congratulations are in order," she began. Trixie blinked.

"Congratulations? Wait, there's nothing wrong with me? Then why am I feeling like this?"

"I can assure you, while the symptoms might seem a little frightening, the cause is much more benign. Miss Trixie, you're with foal. Congratulations," the nurse offered, smiling happily. Trixie looked at her, baffled and sceptical.

"I think I want another opinion."

"May I ask why?"

"Because... because I can't possibly be like that! It's impossible!" Trixie protested. The nurse reached out, and gently touched her hoof.

"Now, now, I know you're scared, but it's a joyous occasion. Who is the stallion, may I ask?"

"No... no, you don't understand, it's *impossible*," Trixie protested. It was the nurse's turn to look confused. Unbelievable, had she found the only person in Ponyville that didn't know? "Have you been to one of my shows?"

"Oh, yes! You really are spectacular. My own fillies love you," the nurse exclaimed. "But I don't see how that explains that you can't be with foal."

"Do you know who always gets the flowers in my show?"

"Oh, yes, Twilight Sparkle! She was such a great help during the 'Baked Bads' incident," the nurse pony said in recognition. "She always has this cute look on her face when you give her those flowers, like... oh..." Comprehension spread across her face.

"Yeah."

"But..." The nurse tilted her head, and the look on her face clearly showed that she thought Trixie was hiding something. "Oh, dear, if you cheated on Twilight with a stallion, you're just going to have to..."

"I didn't cheat on Twilight!" Trixie yelled, starting to breathe heavily. "I haven't even ever been with a stallion!"

Three giggling, playing ponies, heady with desire.

"H-hey, Twilight, check this spell out."

"Oh?"

"Ever wonder how the other side lives?"

A flash of magic.

"Oh Celestia."

• • •

Twilight sighed softly, as she opened the door to the library. That meeting had taken far too long, and she had missed Trixie's appointment. It had been on her mind all day, that worry in the pit of her stomach that something terrible was wrong. She knew Trixie's mother had died of some terrible ailment, and the sheer thought of the same thing happening to the blue unicorn made her innards twist in fear.

As Twilight stepped into the library, she knew something was wrong right away. The shades to each window had been closed, casting the library into darkness. She trotted slowly, a curious expression on her face.

"Trixie? Spike?" she called out.

"Twilight, over here!" Spike's voice called out from the back of the room. Tripping over a stool in the darkness, Twilight winced slightly, wringing her leg out, before finally meeting the baby dragon near a table.

"Spike, what's going on? Why is it so dark in here?"

"I don't know, ask your girlfriend," Spike said in irritation. "It's been like this since I got home too."

"Trixie? Where is she?" In response to that question, Spike simply pointed under the table. Twilight frowned, and knelt down, peering under it. Twilight gasped. The blue

unicorn was curled up, hiding underneath the table. She looked very pale, and her body was quivering with fright. That worry in the pit of Twilight's stomach suddenly filled her entire body.

"H-hi, Twilight..." The magical pony began, almost cowering from Twilight. "N-nice day, huh?"

"W-what did the doctor say?" Twilight asked, her head sticking in under the table, trying to nuzzle at the frightened Trixie.

"Well, it's good news. I'm not sick," Trixie whispered, and that got Twilight very confused. She looked baffled at Trixie, trying to parse how the good news that she had gotten from the doctor would somehow equal hiding underneath a table, doing her best Fluttershy impression.

"Not sick? Well, that's great! But... then why are you hiding?" Trixie sank even deeper, and looked nervously away from Twilight.

"Well, you see... I'm... pregnant."

"What?"

"I'm pregnant," Trixie repeated, acting more and more like the custard-pelted pegasus. Twilight sighed, putting a hoof to her head.

"Didn't quite catch that." Trixie's eye twitched softly, and took in a deep breath.

"I'M PREGNANT!" she yelled, her eyes wide. Twilight gasped softly. Spike's eyes widen, and he looked at an invisible watch.

"Well, look at the time, I wonder what AppleBloomisdoingI'mgoingbyenow!" With that, the dragon boy fled from the awkward scene.

"What? But, that's..." Twilight said, her brain trying to process the information.

"Remember the night with Luna? The spell I cast on you?"

Suddenly hiding underneath the table was looking like an appetizing option.

"Y-you mean... I'm..." Twilight sputtered, and Trixie reached out with a hoof, stroking along one of her forelegs.

"Congratulations, dad." Twilight shivered, and felt a little dizzy. But it was odd, while the fear and shock was certainly raging through her, there was another emotion, a happiness that burned deep within her. She slipped under the table, snuggling up against the

quivering blue unicorn, nuzzling against her. They laid like that, together, quiet, for a long time. It was Twilight that finally broke the silence.

"What do you think about all this, Trixie?" Twilight whispered softly, and a slight smile spread across her face. The surprising happiness was starting to beat the fear. "I know it's completely unexpected, but it's not *bad*, is it?" Trixie looked silently into space for a moment.

"I'm scared..." she finally admitted.

"Well, it's okay to be scared, I'm scared too, but..."

"N-no! It's not like that. Not at all..." Trixie said, and turned to look Twilight in the eye. Twilight could see the instinctual fear in her love's eyes. "What if... what if I die? What if we both die? What if sh-she or he is left all alone?"

Twilight closed her eyes, getting the idea. But she shook her head hard.

"If something happens, by some terrible chance we both are lost, she won't be all alone. I promise."

"What do you mean?" Trixie said, unbelieving, but Twilight kissed Trixie's cheek lovingly.

"If we're both gone, she'll still have all our friends. There will still be the Princesses, and everypony else in Ponyville." She smiled. "She'll be surrounded by people who love and care for her, I promise." Trixie looked down for a moment, and then raised her head, hope starting to dawn in her eyes. She nodded softly, rubbing the tears out of her eyes, and leaned tightly against Twilight.

"Well, the Great and Powerful Trixie won't die anyways. Now, she just has a better reason no to." Trixie grinned weakly at Twilight, and the two mares started to giggle with delight. They slowly began to extract themselves out from the table, Trixie standing unsteadily, but looking much better.

"I think we scared Spike there," Trixie commented, as she pulled open the blinds, sunlight filling the room once again.

"Oh, he'll get over it. We should go out to celebrate. This is something TO celebrate, right?" Twilight asked tentatively. Trixie stopped for a moment, and then a bright smile spread across her face. She nodded firmly.

"Absolutely." Trixie's horn glowed, and the front door opened. The two unicorns started to leave... only to come nose to nose with a pink-pelted earth pony, her eyes starry.

"You're pregnant! Oh my, this calls for a party! I have to get streamers and cupcakes! Ooh, have you decided on a name yet? 'Pinkie Pie' is a great name! You should name her after me! Oh, oh, oh, there needs to be cake at the party and I need to get some balloons and... I can can be 'Auntie Pinkie'! It'll be great!" Pinkie Pie continued on like this, and Twilight grinned, looking at Trixie.

"You see? She won't be short of people who love her."

"She may get *too much* love around Pinkie Pie," Trixie replied, returning the grin as well. They laughed together, as they stepped out into the afternoon sun.

Part 3: Evening

The sun was starting to dip in the sky, and it was packing down time for Apple Farms stall in Ponyville's marketplace. It was going a little quicker this time than normal, however, as magic grasped hold of the baskets of apples, starting to load them onto the wagon.

"Really, sugarcube, are you sure you're up ta this?" The cowboy hat wearing pony asked. "Ah wouldn't want to hear scoldin' from Twilight 'bout me pushin' you so hard when you're so close to... ya know."

Trixie, Applejack's companion, let out a soft sigh, and looked at Applejack.

"What Twilight doesn't know about won't hurt her. Besides, I'm not able to perform, and I'm bored! I have to do *something*."

"Ah never really took you for a workin' pony, though."

"Who do you think pulled my cart when I was travelling? The Great and Powerful Trixie wasn't a stranger to hard work, she just didn't like it very much," Trixie muttered softly, as she loaded another basket onto the wagon. "Besides, it's not like I'm incapable of doing a little magic in my state."

The Great and Powerful Trixie was just feeling Great and Big right now. Nine months of pregnancy would do that. She winced, as a pang of pain and pressure ran through her body, not for the first time today. Applejack glanced at the wincing Trixie, and then glared at her sternly.

"Alright, darlin', that's enough now. You go an' sit down." Trixie was about to protest, but her body was screaming that would be a very good idea right now. She trotted over, sinking gratefully into a patch of grass, and watched as Applejack continued to set down. Her front hoof instinctively moved to her swollen body, and her eyes closed. Perhaps the most frustrating part of her entire situation was how occasionally useless that she felt. She had been forced to give up performing a couple of months ago, when the effort, both

physical and magical, had grown too much for her to manage. Twilight had assured her that her main job was taking care of the foal inside her, but it was still frustrating.

Trixie smiled slightly, as she felt the foal inside her shift. She had to admit that the rest of it had been worth it. While she still occasionally had a pang of that old fear, the excitement and... love... that she felt towards the pony inside her seemed to be overwhelming everything else. Also, being waited over, mouth over hoof, by Twilight wasn't exactly terrible either, even if the purple pony was getting a little overprotective as the months went on. The sheer amount of books that Twilight had collected on the subject of pregnancy and parenthood was truly stunning, and Trixie had caught her on more than one occasion reading deep into the night. Trixie winced as another pang rocked through her, centred on her lower body. It had been going on all afternoon, but they seemed to be coming quicker and quicker, almost like...

Oh dear.

"A-Applejack?" Trixie called out, and the orange pony looked at the settled blue unicorn, whose eyes were wide with shock.

"What's wrong, sugarcube?"

"I think I need to go to the clinic... I think it might... you know, be time."

"Oh, horse apples."

• • •

"Dear Princess Celestia, I have... No... Dear Princess Celestia, I am writing to report my latest findings on the... no, that's... agh!" Twilight crumpled up the scroll, and tossed it hard against the wall. She slumped, her head hitting her writing table. She could barely concentrate on her studies for the past few weeks, and it was getting worse with every day of anticipation. She was just thankful that Princess Celestia seemed to understand the situation, although there was that letter gently scolding the two for not being more careful with magic of that nature. They still hadn't told Celestia about the third partner in that fateful night, but it was beginning to dawn on Twilight that Celestia probably had guessed by now. Twilight groaned softly, putting her hooves over her head, trying to enjoy the brief moment of silence.

That was immediately interrupted by a spectacular crash behind her. She bolted straight up, and looked behind her. A rainbow-maned pegasus had flown through the open window, and managed to crash herself into one of the bookshelves, scattering books everywhere. Twilight scowled.

"Rainbow Dash! What are you doing? I just sorted through those!" Twilight exclaimed in exasperation, starting to pick up the books. Dash bolted up, and flew to Twilight,

grabbing a hold of her and starting to pull her off the ground! Twilight yelped, letting go of the books, and squirming in Dashes grip. "Dash!"

"There's no time! Stop struggling, or I'm going to crash again!" Dash protested, as they zipped out of the window, Twilight's legs kicking as she was rather frighteningly high off the ground.

"Dash, what are you doing, let me go!" Twilight realized the ramifications of what she just said. "Let me go ON THE GROUND!"

"Applejack told me to get you to the clinic as quickly as possible! Trixie's having the kid!" Dash said, her forelegs hooking tightly around Twilight, keeping the unicorn tightly in place. Twilight's eyes widened.

"Go faster!"

"Heh, I thought you'd never ask!"

One very short, but very stomach-churning trip later, Twilight was bursting through the doors of the clinic, and immediately confronted the rather surprised receptionist. Dash trotted in after her, rather surprised at Twilight's land speed when she was motivated.

"Where is Trixie? Has she had the foal yet? Tell me!" The receptionist coughed slightly, and regained her composure.

"You must be Twilight. She only really just started having noticeable contractions, it's still going to be several hours yet. If you'll follow me..."

"Oh... right, of course. I knew that." Twilight blushed, looking embarrassed, as she began to follow the receptionist. She DID know that, but she had let her panic and excitement momentarily get a hold of her senses. It was only a few moments until she arrived at Trixie's bedside, who still had Applejack beside her, comfortingly. As soon as Twilight got there, the two unicorns embraced, and Trixie blushed slightly.

"So, are you ready for this?" Trixie murmured, looking lovingly at Twilight. Her body shivered, as another contraction raced through her.

"No, absolutely not." Twilight laughed.

"Hey, you're not the one who's going to be *doing* this!" Trixie scolded, and then put on a face of mock arrogance. "Of course, it falls to the Great and Powerful Trixie to be doing all the hard work. Just more proof of her innate superiority over the accursed Twilight Sparkle!" Twilight rolled her eyes.

"Can we call it even for the whole Ursa Minor thing?" she asked, kissing at Trixie's cheek.

"Yes... well... the Great and Powerful Trixie is willing to accept that compromise. Just as long as Twilight Sparkle doesn't leave her side throughout any of this..." Trixie smiled gently. "Or ever, for that matter." Twilight nodded, resting her head against Trixie's.

"I think that's a fair deal."

• • •

"THIS ISN'T A FAIR DEAL AT ALL!" Trixie screamed, her eyes wide. It had been several tiring, contraction-filled hours, the evening lapsing deep into Luna's night. But it was close now, very close. "I want more benefits on my side! Ahh-ah-ah... oh Celestiaaaa!"

"Just a little more, Trixie! You can do it! You're the Great and Powerful Trixie, remember? This isn't anything!" Twilight encouraged, staying close to the panting blue unicorn. The nurse was giving directions, but those were lost, background noise.

"I want... dinner every night for a year! And... and... aahh! And hoof rubs whenever I ask for them! GAAHH! Forget it! I'll face the Ursa Minor! You can have this foal now!" Trixie let out another squeal, clenching her eyes shut. She could feel it, just a little more...

A cry pierced the room, a young voice making its first noise, mingling with the chime of a distant clock. Twilight's eyes widened, as the nurse pony began to clean a small, squirming form.

"It's a filly... congratulations," the nurse said as she wrapped the small form in a blanket, tenderly giving it to Twilight. Trixie, despite her exhaustion, slowly pushed herself up, leaning against Twilight and peered down at the blanket.

Two cute, lavender eyes peered back up at them, a light purple muzzle making soft, squeaking, happy noises as she beheld her parents for the first time. Trixie rubbed her eyes, barely believing, tears of happiness streaming down her cheeks. She looked over at Twilight, who had much the same expression.

"So... what should her name be?" Trixie whispered, her breathing deep, as she tried to recover from the exhaustion that seeped through her body, tempered only by the love that had ignited through her. Her own little family...

"Well, it's obvious, isn't it?" Twilight returned. "There's only one name that would fit."

"Which is..." Trixie asked, as Twilight slid slightly into the small bed with her, that young foal snuggled between them.

"Midnight. Her name is Midnight."

Trixie's face lit up, and she nodded softly, pressing herself tightly against her strange, but beautiful family, the door bursting open as their friends rushed to congratulate them, and their new happiness.

"I think that's perfect."