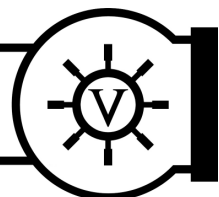


Simply Rarity

Somber

PONY FICTION VAULT



What does generosity mean to a unicorn with everything and nothing?

"Surprise!" Pinkie Pie yelled as she popped up in front of Rarity waving her hooves as more and more ponies filed into Sugarcube Corner. A massive banner that said 'Happy Birthday Twilight Sparkle!!!!' draped across the far wall proclaimed the event, and the balloons were a dead giveaway.

"It's only a surprise to any pony lacking a calendar, literacy, or sight, Pinkie Pie," Rarity said properly as she levitated the bright purple wrapped bundle to the stack of packages.

"Oh, yeah." Pinkie Pie rubbed her bright, curly mane before she grinned, "But surprises are funner!" Her grin was positively infectious, and Rarity simply sighed and gave in, smiling at her friend.

"Yes, Pinkie Pie. Surprises are more fun." Rarity didn't have the heart to correct or argue as she walked calmly over to the mare of honor and her friends, leaving Pinkie Pie to ambush another pony with her glee. "Twilight Sparkle. So sorry I'm late but I had to finish a dozen silk ball gowns for delivery this afternoon. Such a chore."

"Oh it's all right. I know how hard you work to meet your deadlines," Twilight Sparkle said brightly.

"Business has certainly been brisk. I don't know when I've ever enjoyed such a streak," Rarity said as she brushed her hoof off on her sleeve and casually examined her pony pedicure.

Applejack glanced over and gave an annoyed little grunt, "With all that business you must be rolling in the bits. You're the only dress maker in Ponyville and you're making all those fancy duds for rich folk in Canterlot and Manehattan."

"I... a lady does not discuss her finances, Applejack," Rarity said crossly.

"Yeah, but every pony knows how I sweat for my bits. So tell me, Rarity, how much do you bring in? A hundred bits? Two hundred? Three?" Applejack watched the Unicorn flush and stammer, taking a little bit of satisfaction in Rarity's discombobulation. "Shoot, you might be the richest pony in Ponyville."

Rarity flushed brightly. "I... I am not, Applejack!" But there were other ponies looking her way and the white Unicorn gave a harumph, nose in the air. "This discussion is over."

Applejack almost got another dig in when Fluttershy entered and Pinkie Pie started to bounce around the bakery. "Everyone's here! Everyone's here! Presents, pastries, and party games, oh my!" The pink pony grabbed Twilight Sparkle and pushed her towards the stack of presents on the table. "Open them. Open open open! Mine first!"

Twilight Sparkle smiled as she tore open one package after the other. A joke book of 101 magical pranks from Pinkie Pie. A box of candy apples from Applejack. A picture of Rainbow Dash signed, 'From Equestria's best and most awesome flyer.' "What?!" the pegasus retorted, hooves spread at the flat look given by her friends. A golden quill pot from the Princess. A small vial of perfume from Fluttershy. Something that might have been a Twilight Sparkle doll from the Cutie Mark Crusaders with the note 'No toymaker cutie marks.' Spike gave her one of his baby fangs which had fallen out a few weeks ago. And from Rarity...

"A book!" Twilight Sparkle said in glee, then frowned as she opened it up and flipped through the pages. "An empty book?"

"It's a journal," Rarity said brightly, flushing as she looked at her friend's incredulous looks. "You can write your thoughts down and... stuff."

"Pretty chintzy gift," Rainbow Dash said softly. She got a few glares, but more than a few ponies looking curiously at Rarity. "Well it is! I mean she could have gotten Twilight Sparkle a real gift instead of a two bit journal."

"Yeah. What? A dozen dresses doesn't clear enough to get her something nice?" Applejack taunted. But her smile disappeared as she saw Rarity wasn't angry by her nettling. She was crying! Applejack's grin quickly melted into concern, "Hey now... I..."

Rarity looked around at all the ponies staring at her before she pressed her lips together. "I'm very sorry," she said formally to Twilight Sparkle. "I'll try to get you something... better." And with that she turned on hoof and walked slowly for the exit. Head high, neck firm, ignore tears and no pony would dare bring them up. Just like Madam taught her. "If you'll excuse me, dresses don't make themselves."

"Rarity? Rarity!" Twilight Sparkle called after her but she disappeared.

"What is wrong with her?" Rainbow Dash asked as she fluttered in place. "Jeeze, I got to wonder how she's supposed to be the generous one?"

"That's not fair, Dash. Rarity donated a lot of her time and energy to us," Fluttershy said softly as she approached, "Remember all that work she did for our dresses for the Gala?"

"Yeah, which we paid her for. Remember us constantly telling her to keep it inside our budget?" Rainbow Dash asked with frown.

"Actually I remember a lot of singing about that," Pinkie Pie said.

"I'm just saying that even if she's generous with her style and talent and stuff, that pony is seriously cheap when it comes to the cash. You can't tell me that she doesn't make enough with a dress of sapphires to pay all her bills and splurge on her friends occasionally!"

"At least she earns her money," Applejack countered. "When are you gonna pay your apple tab, Rainbow Dash?"

"Eh, when I make it big with the Wonderbolts, natch." Rainbow Dash replied, folding her hooves behind her head. Applejack just gave a little grunt and shake of her head.

Twilight Sparkle looked out the window and just frowned in concern.

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"That's very good, Diamond Tiara. You must keep your head high, but stable. That's it, Silver Spoon. Lift those hooves with each step," Rarity said as she watched the young fillies walking in careful circles with books balanced on their heads through her cleared off workspace. The pair screwed up their faces with concentration.

"What do we have to do this for? It's sooooo stupid!" Silver Spoon whined as she carefully stepped over rolls of cloth, tripping up enough for the book to tumble off her head. "Urrrgh!"

"Now now. Your parents want you to look like proper ladies. That requires focus and discipline," Rarity replied primly. She lifted the book with her magic to set atop her head and casually strolled over each roll. The book didn't quiver in the slightest as Rarity turned and gave a slow and graceful dance over the rolls of silk.

For a moment she could almost hear the music.

The door opened and admitted Twilight Sparkle. Rarity's hoof caught on a roll, and for a horrible second she was about to fall. Then she recovered with a tight twist, the book still balanced perfectly atop her purple curls. Even Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon looked impressed as she bowed her head without it shifting. "And THAT, ladies, is why you have to practice doing this. It is the first step towards grace."

After that she escorted the two fillies from Carousel Boutique and returned to Twilight Sparkle, she let out her breath and sighed in relief, "Thank you for saving me from that pair. Another comment about how something was 'stupid' and I'd have punted them."

"You're welcome, but why are you tutoring them in the first place? Doesn't Sweetie Belle... well... hate them?"

"She's with her friends tonight at Fluttershy's. I'm tutoring the pair as best as I'm able on dignity and proper gracefulness as high society requires," Rarity said with a sigh, "Personally I'd rather teach a diamond dog etiquette."

"Well why are you doing it then?" Twilight Sparkle asked softly.

Rarity's eyes darted about a moment as she fished for an excuse. "Well, it's not precisely a trouble. And there is some compensation from their parents."

"You're tutoring them for money?" Twilight Sparkle asked incredulously. Rarity's curls seemed to tighten before her eyes.

"Yes! Fine. I admit it. I'm passing on the skills I've learned for money. Twenty bits a night. Filthy lucre. There, happy?" she asked sharply as she stomped around the work shop and started to levitate the rolls of fabric back onto the shelves. "I'm sorry that my gift was so 'chintzy'. I'll get you something appropriate later."

"Rarity! The gift is fine," Twilight Sparkle said as she magically gripped a roll of purple cloth and interrupted Rarity's furious cleaning. Twilight walked around to look her in the eye and saw the pain and worry within. "I don't mind a journal." Rarity let go of the fabric with her magic, and Twilight Sparkle set it aside. Their eyes met, and Twilight Sparkle gave a gentle smile, "But clearly, something about this bothers you. Tell me."

Rarity backed away, her hooves tapping nervously beneath her. "Twilight Sparkle... It's not something I can talk about."

"You're not... broke, are you?" Twilight Sparkle asked as she looked around the store at all the fantastic fabrics.

"No!" It wasn't the volume of her rejection that made Twilight Sparkle retreat. In Rarity's eyes were a fear. A pain. Something that Twilight Sparkle had never seen before in the confident Rarity. For a moment Twilight Sparkle thought that the elegant white pony was going to do... something. Scream. Cry. But before her eyes Rarity recovered. It was as

if all she saw was brushed behind a veil and Rarity was once more simply Rarity. "No, Twilight Sparkle. I will never be like that again."

"Again?" Rarity closed her eyes and Twilight Sparkle knew the unicorn was kicking herself. "Please Rarity. You can talk with me about anything. We're friends... You know that, right?"

"Friends," Rarity said solemnly for a moment. Rarity looked at her friend and then turned away, "It's nothing. No matter at all!" She said firmly as she walked to the window to look out at the setting sun, her eyes distant. "It's in the past. It should stay there."

"But it's hurting you now, Rarity."

Rarity didn't answer that as she gazed out the window. "I can almost hear the music some nights. Badum ba-da-dum-dum..." She sang softly. "I can still see the ponies all in their fine dresses and coats dancing in neat rows. Elegant waltzes. Saucy tangos. Schottisches. Branles. Pavanés and Minuets. Elaborate dishes with an entire meal distilled to a single bite of exquisite flavor. And the gossip, oh the gossip! Unending and all so trivial but so tantalizingly vital." Blue eyes looked at her friend with a sad smile. "You haven't a clue what I'm talking about, do you?"

"Um... no. Not really." Twilight Sparkle said softly with a sheepish smile.

"I'm talking about being rich. Fantastically wealthy. Of having so much that you could never want for a trifle." She then looked over to a small dusty chest and her horn glowed. The lock clicked, lid lifted, and Rarity lifted a dingy, battered book with her horn. It hovered in front of her as it turned over in the air. "I don't know why I held on to this. There's nothing in here that I want to remember," she said as she ran her hoof over the water stained cover. Gold fleck still clung to the corners, and there was a hint of lace still clutched to the edge. "I suppose that it's a part of me, no matter how much I dislike it. Here." She levitated the book to Twilight Sparkle. "It should answer your questions."

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Dear Journal,

I refuse to refer to this as a diary. Sunsparkle seemed to think this was an adequate gift for my birthday. From the teasing my guests gave her about purchasing me a 'diary' it's clear that a diary is something for common ponies. It was an adequate party with adequate cake and adequate presents and adequate music. Madam LeFleur told me that

adequate is a word that fancy ponies use all the time. This has been an adequate entry in an adequate journal.

Personally, I don't think there's much point to writing in this. Madam LeFleur will probably just make me walk with it on my head. Sooooo stupid.

~~Your owner Rarity.~~
~~The spectacular Rarity.~~
~~The one and only Rarity.~~
Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

We took a day trip down to the marketplace today, just mother and father and me. Apparently I am going to be having a little sister. This simply will not do and I informed mother and father of this immediately. I do not want a sister. If I'm Rarity then if I have a sister I'll be half as rare! Father and Mother seemed angry, but they didn't argue for a change. It seems as if they are trying to be very happy right now. I don't see why. I am quite unhappy with the whole arrangement!

Something simply must be done!

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Ooh I could just kick the cook, if it weren't so unlady like. My friends came over and she tried to serve us sugared grass instead of alfalfa. Can you imagine? She gave some lame excuse of not having any. Why doesn't she just go out and buy some more? It was a complete scandal and I know that Silvercrest and Opalescence will be reminding me of this faux pas forever!

In spite of that, we did have a delightful time playing Princesses and Prince. Silvercrest is still insisting that when we are grown, she'll be the one to marry Prince Blueblood. The nerve! Every pony knows that I'm destined to marry him. We also gave advice to Sunsparkle about how to handle boys. The silly dear needs to learn to flutter her lashes more.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Madam LeFleur had an argument with mother today about not being paid. I thought it rather silly. Mother is about to be another mother and is quite cross about most things. She even yelled at me for making too much noise practicing my dancing. Mother will simply pay Madam LeFleur later. I've been putting a lot of practice into Madam LeFleur's dancing and etiquette lessons. I've even been practicing my enunciation, which means speaking like a proper filly and not like some apple farming bumkin. According to Madam LeFleur, only the poorest and most slovenly ponies actually farm. Can you imagine getting dirty? I'd rather die.

I do hope mother and father stop arguing. It's quite trying some nights. Perhaps they'll stop once my new sister arrives.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

I know it hasn't been as long as before, but I have little else to do. My sister is here and her name is Unique. Can you imagine! They may as well have told me I'm common garbage. I adamantly insisted they send her back at once, but mother became very cross with me. Father became cross with her. She became cross with him. It all ended with the foal quite cross!

I hoped I might spend time with Silvercrest or Opalescence, but suddenly all my friends are quite busy! I can't quite put my horn on it, but it's like they're suddenly embarrassed to be my friends! I can't even manage three words to them before they have some excuse. Mother quite angrily said that we'd find some true friends!

I hope mother and father stop arguing soon. It makes my head hurt to hear them shouting at one another.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

I have never had a more miserable time in my life! I was secretly quite thrilled to learn that I wouldn't have to put up with Madam LeFleur's lessons on enunciation and elocution, but I found out that the cook and the cleaning ponies have left the house as well. There was no pony to draw my bath this morning, can you imagine?

Mother was quite beside herself. I told her that she should simply get a new cook and servants. For a moment I thought she was going to yell at me, but instead she began to weep. This will teach me to keep ~~my mouth shut~~ my opinions to myself. Mother and father have been trying to have their friends over every night, but the few that do visit are positively rude! They eat the food and then immediately leave. Father just stands there in the door, watching them go. I know mother is a terrible cook but there's no excuse for crude manners. He should but his hoof down and tell them not to be rude. That's what I'd do.

Silvercrest told me the nastiest lie yesterday night. She said that father and mother have no money. That we're poor and that's why all the servant ponies left and no one will be my friend anymore. I said that she was a horrible liar and a terrible friend. We can't be poor. We have a big house and I have all my dresses. I'm even going to the Grand Galloping Gala! Poor ponies don't go to that. Perhaps I'll meet a prince.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Everything's been so quiet. Father and mother don't argue any more. They don't do anything. Mother spends hours around Unique. Father just looks at papers for hours and hours on end. Mother doesn't have most of her fancy dresses or jewels any more. I loved her jewels. They were so bright and cheery. She said she was clearing out space, so I told her she could take my dresses too. She just looked at me and started to cry. I don't see what the bother is. I never see my ~~friends~~ former friends anymore and mother seems to need to get rid of things.

I was wrong about the arguing. I'd rather hear mother and father yelling than all this quiet.

Thank you for listening to me, Journal.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Something is terribly wrong with father. I was playing with Unique in the ballroom and Unique was babbling and being generally agreeable. Then I spotted father watching us with a look most peculiar. I don't know quite how to put it into words. A statue? No. He was like... a ghost.

He walked in and Unique babbled at him for a bit. I suggested in passing that Unique was getting big enough for her first baby dress and asked him if we might go to market to shop for her. He looked as if he was in pain! Then he simply retreated to his study. He spends all his time there with those papers. Why would any pony write in red?

I will talk with mother about it tomorrow.

Simply Rarity.

~~Dear _____ Journal,
Terrible accident. Father fell out the third story window from his study~~

Dear Journal,

I'm sorry for crying on that last entry. I've been taking care of Unique while mother gets us ready to move to a smaller house. I thought I'd be mad, but taking care of her is better than thinking about what happened. Windows should stay locked. I spent time in the upstairs ball room going over the dances Madam LeFleur taught me, showing them to Unique. She simply sucks on her hoof, the silly thing.

Mother refuses to talk about father. ~~When I asked about the accident she hit me~~ I will simply not think about it. I won't be sad to leave this house. It doesn't feel like home any more. The rooms are all empty and echo when you walk past. I found one of my old cloaks in a cupboard. It still fits, though I stuck myself with a sewing needle left in the hem. I bundled it up into my saddle bag. It may come in useful.

Unique really isn't all that bad.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

This new house is certainly... cozy. I won't say its bad because when I did that mother wept for nearly an hour. I'm sharing a room with Unique and she's fussy, but I told her we simply must make the best of it. She simply babbled at me, but I think she understood. I've tried to make sure everything is neat and clean. Madam LeFleur said dirt was the mark of poor ponies. We might be in a small house but we're not that.

Mother is giving etiquette lessons to some of the fillies and colts in this neighborhood for money. She doesn't have very many students. The ponies in this neighborhood don't like us much. They call us 'snooty ponies'. I am not snooty. I know snooty. If I introduced them to Silvercrest they'd never call me snooty again.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

These common ponies are incomprehensible. They play in the street or empty lots with balls, sticks, and hoops. I've tried to be friendly, yet these children shy away from me with distrust. I try to discuss things like fancy dresses, balls, and dances and they simply look at me as if I'm babbling. I tried drawing in a filly with talk about the Grand Galloping Gala, but she was utterly disinterested! Doesn't she know *aprince* attends?

I've found that boys are much easier to confound with a bit of praise. A flutter of the eyes and a sweet smile and they've been generous enough to provide some assistance: milk for Unique, a few treats and trinkets, even some cloth that I've tried to turn into shawls for myself and Unique. Yet for some odd reason, they're always angry the next day. I think they're starting to avoid me.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

It's been terrible here. Everything is quiet again. Mother yelled at two of her students and now they've all quit. Mother cries all the time now. She tried working in some shop, but I guess being rich she doesn't know how to do anything. ~~I don't know how to do anything.~~

I went to my friends and asked them for help. They were all so terrible. They laughed at my scuffed up mane and my chipped hooves. Let them live where I do and see if they keep their manes nice and clean. Except I want to be clean. I want to be pretty. I hate it, but I want to be like them. Silvercrest said she'd pay me five bits to do something horrible. I suggested what she could do with her bits. The local ponies have quite the colorful vocabulary.

Sunsparkle gave me her mother of pearl mane comb. I told her that her journal was the best present I ever recieved.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Mother is gone all the time now. She leaves late and sometimes isn't back till dawn. She seems so sad. No. Not sad. Empty. She doesn't even want to see Unique. She brings us things to eat; usually wormy apples or foul lettuces. Unique and I walk all the way to the park to eat grass, but it's tough and makes my tummy ache. Unique needs milk; the grass makes her sick. The money from the comb is gone.

I take care of Mother and Unique now. I try to keep mother comfortable and Unique quiet. I'm trying to teach her how to walk with a book on her head, like Madam LeFleur taught me. I think I'll tuck a few strands of her mane here. When she's bored of that, I'll dance for her. She can't waltz, but I can't waltz well either. I made a horn puppet with that needle from my cloak. It makes her laugh.

I love her laugh.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Mother's been gone for three days. I've asked about her, but no pony knows where she went. Some mean colts said she'd left forever because she doesn't want us anymore.

She'll come home soon. We're out of everything but grass and a little milk.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

We don't have a house anymore! Some pony came while Unique and I were out looking for mother and threw everything in a pile outside the front door! Now it's all locked tight and what little we had is broken or taken. I'm so glad no one took you, Journal. I found Unique's horn puppet, my cloak, and some milk in a bottle.

We're staying with Stone Walker, one of the ponies whose foal took lessons from mother. Unique and I don't really have a room, but there's a niche in the corner of the basement we're staying in. I tried to clean it as best I could. I think that Stone Walker didn't understand why I simply had to clean up her basement. I'd clean up the rest of the house if she liked, but she has so many children that they would just mess everything up.

Unique said 'Warity'. ~~I've never cried so much in my life.~~ I was quite touched.

Simply Rarity.

Dear Journal,

Stone Walker threw us out of her home. I told her how her husband kept brushing against my flank. She called me a horrible liar and said I was just like mother. I cried and beat my hooves on the door but she never opened it. I don't think any pony here will take us in. I don't know what to do.

I went to my friends again. I'll do all the horrible things Silvercrest wants. I couldn't get in though. The servants all pretended not to know me, even though I called them by name. Even Sundancer's family wouldn't help, but their cook did give me three bottles of milk for Unique and some honey muffins for me. Then I was told to never come back. I don't think I could bear to.

I hope I can find some ink.

Just Rarity.

Dear Journal,

We're staying at a place called a shelter. It's not more than a big empty room with dirty hay on the floor, but it's warm and dry. There's so many ponies here just like us. Old, young, Unicorn, Pegasus, Earth, but we're all dirty. Sometimes there's clean water for a bath. The ponies that keep the shelter are so very kind. But I can tell they want to take Unique away. They say they can find us a new home with good parents, but they could find a home for Unique faster alone. I can't lose Unique.

I try and fix whatever I can with my needle. There are so many clothes with rips and tears that every pony needs something sewn. I try and make it look pretty. Everything might be dirty, but it doesn't have to be ugly too. It makes them smile when they see something pretty added to it.

Just Rarity.

Dear Journal,

We left the shelter. Some ponies said I had to give up Unique. She's too young to be with me, and I'm too young to care for her. I'll care for her! I'll do everything I can for her. I had to kick and bite when they tried to separate us. I don't think they expected me to put up a fight, but I did.

I don't know what we'll do, but I won't let anything happen to Unique.

Just Rarity.

Dear Journal,

The little bottle of ink from the shelter is almost empty. I added water to what remains for this entry. Unique and I were attacked, and not by some stranger. They were boys from the neighborhood we used to live in! They *knew* us! They tried to take Unique's cloak not because they needed it, but because they could!

Never have I been so outraged! I kicked, bit, shoved, and called them the most polysyllabic insults I could think of at the time. They fled, I think, more afraid that I fought at all than any damage I actually caused. Unique was *quite* impressed.

Just Rarity.

Dear journal,

Sorry to use charcoal, but it's free. Unique and I walk around all the time. It's all there is to do. If we're not walking, soon the horrible feelings inside build up and I want to cry. I can't cry. I can't. If I cry then Unique will too and she's trying so very hard not to cry. We're both so filthy. We can't keep clean. We try, Journal. We try so hard!

I have to find some milk for Unique. She still can't handle grass.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

We can't stay here any longer. We simply can't. It's not about money any more. It's us.

Unique found three bits in the gutter. Filthy. Dirty. But it was money. I went straight to a milk vendor to purchase three bottles. He told us to leave. We weren't begging. We showed him the money! Still he refused and insisted we go. He was embarrassed to sell to two filthy young ponies! We went to three others before we found a vendor willing to sell two bottles to us.

But it's more than that. I fear that we're becoming invisible. Ponies simply don't look at us any more. They see, but their eyes are fixed. They talk louder when they pass, as if afraid we might ask them for help. Those ponies who do see are even worse. They glare as if sure we'll take something! And worst of all... ponies who think we're funny. Like we chose to be like this. Like we want to be like this.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

We're not in town anymore. No pony likes us there anyway. We're outside town where there's far more grass than in the park, even if it's all yellow. We stopped by a farm and the cows were very nice. They gave Unique all the milk she could drink.

I wonder what happened to mother. Did she have an accident, like father? I sometimes tell Unique that mother was whisked away by an evil witch and that someday she'll come back. It doesn't feel like a lie. I want it to be true so much, and it makes Unique happy. I tell her we're going to look for mother and it makes her smile.

I want to stay at the farm, but I know the look the farmers gave us. It's the same look.

Still, Unique and I are full and the fallen leaves are far more comfortable than I'd ever imagined. Even the moon and stars are so much lovelier than in town.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

For the first time in months I feel clean. It's the warmest day we've felt thus far, and Unique and I found a stream in which to bathe. I know we're still a sight. I look at mud and my stomach simply clenches. I think I might have an allergy to dirt. Can you imagine anything so silly?

I miss mother and father so much.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

I've been told this road leads to another town. I told Unique that mother's probably there waiting for her. She doesn't like walking. I keep reminding myself she's a new sister. I carry her as best I can. I took apart the horn puppet to patch up my cloak and stuff it with leaves. I even sewed on some particularly pretty acorns. Unique was so happy. She called herself a princess.

She should be a Princess.

I read about how I felt about her before. She's a Princess. She's sweet and kind and wonderful and I'm not.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

It's snowing again. It never snowed like this before. It's so beautiful and Unique is entranced. We danced together as it fell upon us, like a ball for only the two of us. She's Princess Unique. I'm Princess Rarity. Our hooves leave tracks across the still woods. She's so very happy. It's getting cold though as we only have one cloak. We both try to fit under it as we make our way through the snow.

I hope we find someplace warm soon. Unique is cold from our dancing.

Rarity.

der dary

unique

Dear Diary,

I was found in the woods and taken to a farm. I wish they hadn't. I wish they'd left me with her. They keep trying to feed me apples and clean me up but it doesn't matter. One of the girls here keeps trying to be nice. I don't deserve her being nice to me. I call her stupid hateful things, like I'm Silvercrest. Her parents know I don't mean it, but I think she's mad with me. Her red brother is quiet. He leaves me alone. I think he understands.

I can't stay here. I don't deserve to stay here, but they won't let me go till spring. I still have my needle. I'll sew some things up for them. I can do that at least.

~~I miss Unique I miss mother and father I hate being here I hate being alone I hate the pity and the looks and the crying I hate the kindness that I don't deserve I hate myself for being here when unique isn't I hate~~

Dear Diary,

I'm in this new place, Ponyville. It's much smaller than where we used to live. Every pony is nice to me because they know what happened to Unique. They try and give me things, but I won't take them. I told them my name is Silvercrest. My mane is filthy and tangled and dirty. I hate it. It's what I deserve. I don't think I can stay here. I don't think I can stay anywhere.

Rarity
Silvercrest.

Dear Diary,

I have a job. There's a seamstress here who makes a living mending clothes. A widow named Thimble. She's heard I'm good with a needle and so I'm helping her. She has a room. I told her that I'd pay to stay there. I won't let her just let me stay. I won't. So I sew up simple things and she lets me stay.

I keep thinking about what happened. Everything that's happened. I think about throwing this journal away. Even burning it. But I can't. But I also can't stop thinking about it!

I told her a little about me. She said that it was silly to give up my name. That I was a Rarity. That no pony my age had been through what I had and kept going. It made me feel better. She's going to let me practice with her sewing machine.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

I met Silvercrest and Sunsparkle today.

Silvercrest's family were passing through on their way to the Grand Galloping Gala when Silvercrest ripped the hideous pink thing she called a ball room dress. She resembled a fat pig with green ribbons. Pink and lime green? How did she ever think that would look good? I felt so bad for Sunsparkle, stuck with Silvercrest as she whined about how unfair it was her dress had ripped.

A dress. A ripped dress was unfair. I had to focus or I feared I would scream and throttle her!

Sunsparkle's own garb was decent enough. It was so hard for me to mention that with just a few less ribbons it could be so much more. Silvercrest was, of course, rude while Thimble sewed up the tear. How could I know proper pony fashion? A few ribbons less though made such a difference. A braid in her mane that pulled her hair out of her eyes and emphasized her throat helped wonderfully.

When they were leaving, I thanked her for her comb. She had no idea what I was talking about. Still, I hope she has a good time at the Gala. Maybe she'll meet a prince.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Thimble asked to adopt me. I'm not sure how to feel. I know she cares for me. ~~She pities me.~~ I think she might even love me a little. Yet when I think of family, a gulf opens wide inside me. I remember mother and father yelling. I remember father's ~~suicide~~ accident. Snow. It hurts. And I'm afraid that if I accept then somehow I'll make the bad things that happened to me happen to her.

It's silly, but I am so afraid.

Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Thimble is going to have a baby. I'm going to have to take over most of the chores running the shop. There's so much to remember! Still, I've figured out the sewing machine.

Misses Muffin wants a wedding dress made. She's marrying Mr. Cake in their very bakery. It was supposed to be just a simple affair. White with white. It took so long for me to mention, in passing, that perhaps she might like a new dress. Something... better. I never expected her to agree! Now I have to design an entire dress!

Yet, despite everything I have to admit I'm excited! I've never done anything like it before. Even Thimble's never designed an entire dress, but when I close my eyes I can almost see it. And it's strange but when I focus on doing this... I don't think about... other things.

Oh what have I gotten myself into?

Miss Rarity.

Dear Diary,

The dress was an utter disaster. The hem was uneven and the embroidery was simply awful. I nearly tore the whole thing to pieces. Somehow Miss Muffin adored the ghastly thing! It was so hard, but I had to concentrate! I had to focus on every little detail. That's how I know it was terrible.

She paid me twenty bits for it.

I've never actually earned money before. Money. It should have been important to me but when it jingled in my hoof it seems... stupid. I know that's silly. Money's the most important things in the world. If we'd had money ~~father wouldn't have killed~~ many troubles could have been avoided. I tried to give it to Thimble, but she said I'd all ready paid my rent and it'd been all my work. I'd earned that money.

Mother and Father would have spent it. I would have spent it. Money was for spending, yet... I'll save it. Perhaps something important will come up.

Tailor Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Thimble had her baby! She's... everything. Everything precious and delicate and sweet. I said she should be named Sweetie Belle. She looks just like her mother with her pink mane, but Thimble says she looks like me. I couldn't say who she really looks like. I cried so much once I was back in my room. It hurt so much. But I'm still going to make her a horn puppet. I focus on every stitch, so I don't think about the old memories.

It hurts to be a big sister again, but that's what I'll be for her.

I have to.

Sister Rarity.

Dear Diary,

I've used up so many of your pages that I'm nearly out. I never thought I'd ever fill this to the very end. It makes me sad; isn't that silly?

Thimble is making me go to school. It seems silly given that I've all ready been tutored adequately in enunciation and elocution. No, it's not silly. It's scary. I've been on my own for so long that the idea of being around other ponies scares me. I don't want to make friends like Silvercrest again, and I know there are ponies like her. Maybe not as rich, but every bit as mean.

Still, if I must, I'll wash as well as I can. I want to look clean and neat. I bought a roll of fabric from Thimble and made myself a dress. It's simple enough. I try to brush up on everything that Madam LeFleur taught me.

Who knows, it may be okay.

Nervous Rarity.

Dear Diary,

!! HATE!! APPLEJACK!!!

I was at school and it was... well... not so bad. Not so bad, that is, till an Earth Pony named Applejack asked me if I wanted to 'play'. Applejack doesn't play. She mucks around in mud puddles, kicks apples to splatter other ponies with sticky pulp, and wrestles. My dress is RUINED FOREVER! I called her a barbaric filthophile. She laughed and said I talked funny. Funny!

I think... I think she might be her. That one pony I met over the winter. She doesn't seem to recognize me, though.

Well. Dress aside... it wasn't all bad. ~~Perhaps I'll make friends with Applejack in time and teach her how to be a proper lady.~~ Never mind. Some ponies are incapable of cleanliness.

Clean Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Boys are terribly silly ponies, aren't they? Apparently I'm quite a popular topic for them as they do whatever boys do. I remember everything that Madam LeFleur told me and they find simple manners and grace quite fetching. Yet, I'm far more careful this time. I remember what happened before, and keep them at a hoof distance. Politely. Like a lady.

It's been so long, I'm surprised that I remember how.

Lady Rarity.

Dear Diary,

The school is holding a play about the seasons. I don't really want to participate. I'm not an actress. However, I have to admit their costumes are... well... lacking. All right, they're terrible. But they don't have to be. Perhaps I can help sew something new. It has to be more than good though. I want it to be spectacular!

Fidgeting Rarity

Dear Diary,

I GOT MY CUTIEMARK TODAY! What happened was

Dear Diary,

I can't believe I was so excited I spilled ink all over the page. I'll write the details later.

I saw a homeless pony. He was older than me, but not full grown. Ponyville doesn't have a lot of homeless ponies, they're mostly just passing through on their way to somewhere else. He had... well... that look. That empty eyed look that made him painful to look at. Was I ever as dirty as that? Did I ever smell like that? I did. I know I did.

I made him a blanket and used some of my money to buy him something to eat and an old brush. He looked at me like I was a ghost or something. He started to cry. I know it's hard for boys to cry, so I left him alone after that. I hope he finds somewhere to belong.

I am so lucky. Thimble has given me... no, not given. I have to remember that. What she gave me was an opportunity. Just like I gave that pony an opportunity. I hope he makes it.

Happily Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Thimble is remarrying. I feel quite overwhelmed. The loss of her husband and... my loss... helped us stay together. Now she's moving on with her life. I should be happy for her. I should.

I'm not. I feel... terrified.

Only Thimble knows what I've been through and she says I'm strong, but I don't feel strong. I'm afraid that without her I'll fall apart again. She simply tells me to make some friends and to simply continue doing what I've been doing: living. It sounds so simple, so why am I so afraid?

Cowardly Rarity,

Dear Diary,

I'm alone again. Thimble and Sweetie Belle have left and I'm left in this great building. Thimble wants to sell it to me, but right now I can't think of sewing. I can't think of anything.

No, that's not true. I keep thinking of Unique. I keep thinking of father lying in the courtyard. I keep thinking of the last day I saw mother leave that filthy little house.

I don't want to be alone. I'm sorry. I'll write when I'm less troubled.

Rarity

Dear Diary,

Sweetie Belle has returned. Thimble has said that she found Canterlot a fine city, but overwhelming for the young pony. Apparently Sweetie Belle was quite inconsolable. The simple solution is for her to stay with me until she's older and decides where she wants to live.

I didn't know what else I could say besides yes. Yet as I think about it, I think it the right decision. I can't let what happened to Unique happen to Sweetie Belle. I have to focus and force these maudlin ideas from my head. And oddly enough, I can. In caring for Sweetie Belle I can care for myself as well.

Is that courage?

Ambivalent Rarity.

Dear Diary,

Thimble is getting married and moving to Canterlot. I was happy, but I admit to being nervous. She's helped so much, and even now she's still helping. She sold me her tailoring shop. From now on this business is mine, for the price of designing her wedding dress

and two dresses for Sweetie Belle and myself. I know it's a token, but it's still a part of her promise.

Looking at the shop, I just have pictures of how it could be. I'll move the workshop upstairs and turn the ground floor into a boutique! I'll design clothes for every pony for a hundred miles. My talent for fashion has also been assisted by a knack for locating gemstones. Certainly extraction is a problem, but I'll figure something out!

And I've also decided something else. I've decided what to do with my money from the shop. Some of it will go to paying the bills and buying materials, certainly. Some of it I will save for Sweetie Belle. One day she will know what she wants to do with her life, and when she does I will do all I can to help her as Thimble helped me.

But the rest I'm going to give away. There are so many ponies across Equestria who are poor and hurting. I could horde the bits and perhaps someday even have the lifestyle mother and father enjoyed, but I don't want it. I'll use my excess to buy winter cloaks, food, milk, and help fund shelters across Equestria. I don't want to be rich again. I've been rich. If I can help other ponies from poverty, I will.

Sincerely Rarity.

Dearest Diary,

This is your final page. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that my greatest friend would ever be a book of my own writing. I know how vain that sounds, but it's true. At the very worst times, and the very best, you've been with me. You're proof of all that I've gone through.

I don't imagine I'll ever share you with another. Not even Sweetie Belle. So if any pony is reading this, then I can only say that you are the greatest of my friends. I hope that in reading this, you understand a little bit about me. If I seem reluctant to discuss my past, or evade questions about my relationship to Sweetie Belle, or act odd about money; you can now understand why.

And so, I can only hope that you will also understand to never discuss it with me. The memories are too raw to speak of. I don't want praise for my generosity or charity. I don't deserve praise. Had I been truly generous I would have let the shelter take Unique away. What I do to help others is my repayment for all the help that's been given to me. If at

times I seem reluctant to waste money, please understand that there are many ponies who will never realize how wealthy they truly are to those who have nothing.

So, mysterious reader, thank you for taking this time and making the effort to understand a pony undeserving of your friendship.

Sincerely,
Rarity.

surely,

simply,

• • •

Twilight Sparkle stared down at that final page. Framing it were two lengths of silky soft mane, one a delicate blue violet similar to Rarity's, but not, and the other a soft pink and purple. Twilight Sparkle ran her hoof along both strands, touching the two sisters in Rarity's life. Slowly she closed the book, levitated it, and brought it to her lips. She kissed it softly and then set it aside. She'd make sure it returned to its owner.

In the dark evening light she looked towards her bag and her horn glowed. The flap lifted and she drew out the simple blank journal. She opened it up in front of her, turning to the very first page. Magic lifted her pen and with the softest of smiles began to write.

Dear Diary,

Today was my birthday, and I got many wonderful gifts from my friends. One friend, however, gave me far more than simple presents. First, she gave me you. Secondly, she gave me a story that she's never shared with another. And third, she gave me an appreciation for just what generosity truly means. Thanks to her I appreciate all I have all the more, and hope that one day I can be as caring a soul as she.

Sincerely,
Twilight Sparkle.

surely,

simply,

• • •

In the late night Rarity's sewing machine softly purred. The blankets were simple, but when winter came they would be comfortable, durable, and most importantly warm. Mrs. Cake had collected all the left over pastries from Pinkie Pie's party and sent them in a basket. They'd reach their destination a bit stale, but still edible. And while no pony in

the shelter would know who 'parkle' was on the birthday cake, that wouldn't stop them from appreciating it. Maybe they'd think that 'parkle' sent the money along with the package. Maybe not. All that mattered was that some pony would be helped.

She hoped it wasn't a mistake to give out that book, but she thought she could trust Twilight Sparkle. On this, at least, she wouldn't blab her secrets. Sweetie Belle would be back tomorrow. She had to be careful. She wanted to give her sister everything; the whole world if she could, but Rarity knew what came of that. You couldn't give everything you wanted. Not even love, or it would hurt.

She gazed out the window, singing softly under her voice, "Badum ba-da-dum-dum..." As she sang she remembered the dance with her sister in the empty ball room. Hoof in hoof, whirling gaily, like they never would again save for that one last time...

Slowly she lifted the lid of the chest and reached down. The leaves were terribly brittle stuffed within the faded red winter coat. There were so many stains and splotches it was hard to make out the original color. Her hoof softly nudged a dry acorn still tied to the edge. Gently, as gently as she'd stroked her sisters' manes when they were foals, she ran her hoof over the garment. Then she closed the lid with a sigh.

Someday she might give it to Sweetie Belle, or, perish the thought, a child of her own. It was everything she would ever be. Would ever hope to be. And so she adjusted her glasses, wiped away any lingering tears, and continued her work; being all that she was.

Simply Rarity.