

## - Chapter 1.) The Great Secret? -

"Have you ever heard the tale of Lord Equestrius?" Twilight asked over a frosted glass of lemonade. She was within a small sun-light building, light reflected off the polished counters and a sassy yellow/gold mare stood across the counter, washing dishes.

The yellow-gold mare looked up. "Are you talking to me?"

"Of course silly." She looked around. "Besides the store is closed . . . no pony else is here." It was a quiet day in Ponyville, the civilians seemed concerned with everyday matters and the only pony to walk in, all day, was Twilight. A visit to her good friend Frosty beverage; a visit that would end with some book exchanging, or so Twilight hoped.

Frosty started to sweat. This sounded too familiar. A rant was brewing in that purple pony and, she would bet her left horseshoe, it had to do with some book no-pony had ever heard of, or worse, didn't care about.

Frosty tried to laugh convincingly "O-oh Twilight, I would love to hear all about it but . . ." She looked around, horse pellets, she hadn't thought that far ahead. "Well you see twilight . . . I, uh, have something, well something I forgot and I need to remember. Something important, yes. Do you have any idea what it might be?"

She hoped this would lead the pony away from her previous train of thought. This, was not the course it took. "Uh, alright. Well, you know what always helps me find a missing thought?" Twilight said, slightly confused but as determined as ever.

"Spike?" Frosty put forward quickly. Doing her best to avoid Twilight's eyes and clean the dishes; all the while attempting to come up with some plan to waylay the oncoming storm. If Twilight got that rant off . . .

"I suppose him too but what I was thinking: a good story! A story helps you relax and I found when relaxed it is much easier to collect my thoughts." Twilight smiled sheepishly "After all, Princess Celestia tells me I get far too stressed." An embarrassed hoof brushed against the underside of the bar.

"Right . . ." Frosty resigned herself, once twilight had her mind on a story all other pursuits came second, the storm was here. "Proceed."

Twilight must of summoned a book from her library, for it floated before her in a flash of purple magic, where no book ought to be.

"Take a look at this!" The book was titled: Ancient Myths and Tales, bound handsomely in ancient copper handling. Its refraction was dim, with

age no doubt, but the fine cover still caught the eye.

"Listen, Twilight." Frosty said shading her eyes. "I'd love to read that terribly thick, history lesson of a book, but I can't read as fast as you and might I remind you what happens every time you try to loan me a book?" Frosty's brows parted, she knew Twilight's game and she wasn't about to fall for it again.

Twilight started to speak but Frosty held up a dangerous hoof. "NO excuses twilight! Last time you "lent" me a book you were back everyday to see if I had finished it. Finished, Twilight!"

"Well . . ." Twilight began.

"You kept asking if I had spilled anything on the book or ruined it!" Frosty sighed. "I wouldn't mind borrowing a book Twilight but you just make it so difficult. Besides, I really don't want to read a history of ancient myths; myths that have no relevance to today's concerns! And all this just to find one tale you were interested in discussing." Frosty smiled, ears reared. "Not to be mean, Twilight and please don't take it personally but if you would just **TELL** me the story I wouldn't mind listening." Frosty paused, her hoof hovering over the towel and glass, eyes scanning Twilight's changing face and what she saw wasn't encouraging.

Twilight did take it personally, apparently. Her facial expression mirrored that of one who had just endured a personal insult. Her body tensed and those clear eyes were already watering over with tears.

"Oh, Twilight . . . I'm just saying . . ." Frosty hoofed her muzzle. "Wouldn't it be easier just to tell us these stories?"

Twilight stood carefully, slowly holding back those tears. She turned slowly away from the bar and frosty. Then charged out of Frosty's 'Sip and Drink Beverages Consortium'. Frosty hoofed herself before Twilight had even made it out the door. **Pulling her eyelids down to her muzzle and moaning in frustration. "Look what you did, Frosty! Good work, now Twilight's upset."**

"HEY, SPICY! I NEED YOUR HELP!"

A full grown Pegasus, stallion stepped out of the back room. Hair and wings red as chile and a thick orange felt with piercing green eyes. His backside shown his special talent related to curry. A stallion who favored a blood crimson beret poised artistically, when compared to bare mane.

"Hello there, Curry." Frosty let her voice melt seductively. She dared ask her favor, only after nuzzling into the stallion. "Hey . . . curry can you finish up the cleaning? I put twilight in an awful tizzy and I really have to help her out. Please?"

Spicy's face did not change from his previous state of indifference. "I'll take care of it."

"Please, my big hot bowl of . . ." She blinked "What was that?"

"I said yes, yes I'll clean the place for you. I've got nothing better to do . . . right now."

Well, his tone did not much please Frosty but she was willing to take her victories. Though she was suspicious as to curry's motives. Nothing was this easy with that Pegasus.

"All right . . . what is it going to cost me?"

This made him smile, his devilish smile, his eyes still squinted, seemingly half asleep. "Oh, nothing too costly, my dear. I just need some assistance making beverages for my curry-fest next week." He laughed. "Something, I am sure, a friend would love to assist with."

Frosty hoofed the ground. "Fine . . ."

Curry smiled and laughed. Contrary to character, his laugh was a chirping of harmonious melody, a laugh some would call: Kind. "Very good, my dear, now it would be best if you left. Twilight sure is down." He laughed again, getting out the bucket and mop.

"Tsk." Frosty let out. "All right, I'm off, take care of the place."

Curry was not listening, he was already getting what he bargained for. With a sigh, Frosty left her beverage hub to find that crazy Twilight Sparkle.

Twilight had been running some time now. "What did other pony's know about the magic of reading? If only they would just spend some time and understand. The tale was never as wondrous in a re-telling."

"Whooooa-hoold it! Hold up there sugar cube." Applejack was standing in her apple orchard.

"Oh, Applejack, my friend. . ."

"What's gotcher mane in a twist, twi?" She stopped her apple-bucking.

"It is just, no pony really appreciates reading around here apple-jack." She stopped, realizing how nonsensical that sounded.

"What, in Equestria, are you talking about? Even Rainbow has been appreciating books since her little, uh-huh, wing accident."

Twilight started to blush. Yes, she knew. "AHH! I just get frustrated Apple-jack. I was trying to show Frosty Beverage an interesting myth I just read."

"Lemme guess. She didn't wanta read the book you brought." Applejack moved over to sit with Twilight.

"Well, not quite. I guess I am too impatient when it comes to stories. Anytime I loan Frosty Beverage a book I never give her enough time to finish it.

"Heh, sounds like a good message for Princess Celestia." Applejack poked her in the back.

"Ha, ha I guess I learned something today." She smiled.

"Twilight! Twilight!" It was Frosty.

"Oh, hey Frosty."

"Howdy partner."

"Sorry about running off Frosty, I can understand your feelings. I can be a bit of an impatient foal when it comes to a good book. I should not expect you to be as interested in what I like, as I am." Twilight preached dutifully.

Frosty panted but attempted a smile. "Well . . . Glad . . . You're . . . feeling better. Whooo. I . . . I didn't mean to upset you . . . you know?"

"I know frosty, I am sorry I put you through so much trouble."

Frosty grinned "Well, I know what you can do to make up for it."

Both Applejack and Twilight frowned. "That seems a little preemptive don't chya think?" Applejack pondered.

"Well . . . I suppose I can assist with a small task." Twilight smiled.

"Heh but I have a letter to Princess Celestia I will have to write later."

Frosty waved a hoof through the air. "Well, you know that thing I was telling you I had to do?" She paused letting her grin morph to a sneer. "I sort-of remembered what it was. Spicy Curry needed me to help make beverages for his . . ."

"CUUURY-FEST!" Applejack hollered. Earning her amused glances from both Twilight and Frosty beverage.

Applejack just shrugged. "Who doesn't love a pippin hot bowl a' curry?"

"Did I hear curry?" With the voice came a shockingly pink figure. One Pinky Pie popped out from behind a tree.

"Oh apples and barrels! I forgot you were here Pinky Pie." Applejack said

"No biggie, I found the BEST apples for my new Apple Scrumptiouses." Pinky replied

"What? What did you say Pinkie?" Twilight said.

"Did I hear curry?" Pinkie questioned with twisted neck.

"No, although that does not make sense either . . ."

Frosty intervened, "How do you hear curry?"

"Well, have you ever listened to curry? You can hear it just fine but you have to listen. Jeeze." She gestured to her ears, making a questioning face and wagging her tongue.

"No, nooooo!" Twilight said "Pinky did you say Apple Scrumptious . . . es?"

"Yes, Twilight! My Apple Scrumptious is DEEEE-licious! I only use the best apples and freshest baked bread! Tastes like a fresh baked dessert put right in your mouth." She imitated the consumption of one of the treats.

"But you said Scrumptiouses, Scrumptiouses pinky?"

"Well yeah, Twilight! Plural form, it's proper grammar, ya know! Sheesh! What's up with you ponies today?" She rolled a hoof.

"Wahhhhhh." Pinky took a great breath, looking surprised, shocked and possibly happy?

The other ponies traced her eyes to the hill on the road no-pony used anymore. Well no-pony, save those few ponies coming along it at the moment. They came via coach and although the group was a distance away the two drawing the carriage appeared to have wings. So, why did they come along the old road and not through the sky? Only those insane incomers could tell.

"Wahhhhh-AT? NEW PONIES? I think you all know what this means." Pinkie pulled them all into a strangling hug. "PARTY!"

"Party." They all said along with her.

Pinky was approximately twenty steps ahead in the party process. Dancing full vigor, hoofs a flailing dervish of party mania. "Woooohooo! You can be sure this is going to be a PAAR-TAAY!"

"Pinky." Twilight caught one of her hooves. "We do not even know these ponies, they might not be stopping in Pony-ville."

"Ah Twilight, why would you say a thing like that? Don't you want to party with new ponies?" She moved into Twilight's face with big eyes.

"Don't you WANT to make new friends?"

"I dunno there, Pinkie Pie. Seems to be something a mite strange about that there procession. Don't you think that shrouding on the coach looks a tad like a royal signet?" Applejack looked concerned.

"A WHAT?" Pinkie asked.

"A signet, Pinkie." Twilight said. "A signet is a picture noble's or royalty use to show their name in a more . . . colorful fashion. Basically, instead of writing their name across their coach, they show their signet

instead. It was made famous by . . ." She trailed off, remembering today's lesson.

"Well, don't it?" Applejack reinserted.

"What kind of royal signet would be coming from the old road? No pony lives out there, at least no pony with anything to do with royalty." Frosty looked worried now, too.

"Wait, WAIT!" Twilight shouted. "I think I recognize that symbol from somewhere! I know that signet!"

A purple aura surrounded the friends and before them lay Ancient Myths and Tails. Soon the pages were flying past the pony's eyes, as a magical breeze rushed the words to the, Twilight proclaimed, similar signet.

"What is that, twi? A Phoenix? An ICE Phoenix? Moon and Sun? Whoieeee, that's some fancy etching and I'm sure the Princesses would be upset to see that like, around now-a-days. Troddin' on some-ponies hooves if you catch my meaning?" Applejack was enthusiastic  
The other ponies did not seem to be.

"Yes, I believe that to be a phoenix too but, as you pointed out, a blue bird would generally indicate some essential difference between phoenix and another species."

The carriage was much closer than before, those drawing the coach were moving at "break-neck" pace. Now the ponies could make out the horses at front. They were alicorns!

The group let out a collective gasp.

"Wh-what is this?" Twilight asked "The only alicorns I have EVER seen are the Princesses. No doubt whoever is RIDING behind those sirs is royalty indeed."

The alicorns had fine, glittering armor that appeared made of steel dyed bone-white. This close up the ponies could tell the coach did, indeed, hang the colors, as shown in the book.

Frosty spoke up "Okay ponies, I am going to run into town and alert every pony. These ponies could be really dangerous! Maybe we can even get a message off to the Princess." Frosty started to dash away.

"Wait! Frosty!" Twilight was not so sure that was the best course to take. "We do not know anything about them!"

She might not have even spoke. Frosty was galloping back to Pony-ville, full speed.vPinkie was dancing with excitement. "DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS TWILIGHT?" She grabbed that purple unicorns face. "We're going to get to meet some ponies no-ponies know! We've got to make them feel welcome!" She gasped. "Maybe they'll stay!"

She gasped again. "Then we could be good friends, forever!"

Twilight pushed pinkie off. "Pinkie Pie, these ponies could be dangerous. Nobility we do not know, who knows they might be here to declare war!" Twilight was quickly on and past losing her composure, she was headed fast on the track to crazy town.

"Now calm down, Twi. Calm down. There are only three, maybe four of them, that doesn't look like much of an army does it?" Applejack said.

"That is because it is a surprise invasion." Twilight's mane was frizzing with her nervous tension and hairs were coming loose. "Yes, that is it! They send a small group to greet us and inform us we are all neighbors now! Than right when we least expect it . . ." She was standing in Applejack's face. "BAM!" She shouted hitting her front hooves together. "They have their Pegasus squad fly in while we are distracted and BAP!" She threw her hooves to the air falling over backwards. "Just like that they have taken over Equestria! It is a brilliant plan!" Covering her face with her hooves.

"BAM, BAP?" Pinkie asked

"Yep." Twilight replied nodding toward Pinkie. "BAM, BAP! Equestria's finished!"

"I don't know Twi, that seems a tad unrealistic."

Pinkie began to cry and Twilight moved over to cry with her. The carriage pulled up just then and a couple bemused alicorns looked at the trio of sad ponies. "Uh-hem, excuse us, dear mares but would you mind reassuring us that the path we take is the path to Canterlot?" A pearl white guard questioned.

Pinkie was done crying, she was a-gape at the two alicorns, Twilight was doing her best to imitate a smile, with horrific results, the sides of her mouth twitched, constant and her smile was far too large.

The alicorns noticed this and backed a few steps back. "Hii!" Twilight said. "So you are looking for Canterlot are you?" She was moving closer and the alicorns looked worried, backing up a little more.

"What tis this? Canterlot?" A voice echoed forth from the coach. "Nay, my dear guardians. We head to have our rest at Pony-ville. A short delay in the schedule is a necessity. His Eminence will have to re-aquatint himself with the land hereabouts. I plan to relieve His Majesty of any and all pains possible. I shall introduce mineself to these citizens of the Equestrian Kingdom.

An inquiring face leaned from the window, a face shrouded in lush purple robes. His eyes sparkled at the sight of the three ponies and he exited the

coach.

He was an earth pony and when he pushed back his hood the group could see he had several scars, battle scars from the look of them. Still his face shown with a radiant sense one would call: Goodwill. His entire self spoke of a kindly nature and he leaned against the coach with hooves crossed. He was not a particularly tall stallion and he only came up to the carriage door, about as tall as the girls.

"Well, well. A fine day's greeting, yo . . ." He stopped than began again "Hello there! My name's Grendin Arin Von Ranqueter but most people call me Arin and I would be hono . . . Please call me Arin."

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