

All the World's a Stage

by [Starry Tides](#)

Part 2

Trixie raced around her room, scooping objects up with her magic and glancing at them briefly before flinging them away, tossing a scant few onto her bed. Books and clothes flew around the young mare as she raided the bedroom, hunting down any item that might be of use in the journey ahead. A pair of purple saddle-bags lay on her covers, slowing being filled with a variety of Trixie's possessions. In went the hairbrush and mirror, out went the small stuffed bear that her grandmother had given her so long ago. Trixie scooped up a photograph of herself as a filly, just after the show that had sparked her Cutie Mark, smiling at the expression of pure joy on her younger self's face. A purple hat covered with blue and yellow stars sat lopsidedly on her head, obscuring part of her face. The matching cape couldn't be seen at the angle the picture was taken, but Trixie knew it was there. One didn't forget that itching garment so easily, but the young mare still smirked at the memory. Perhaps she should take her hat and cape with her; they had been a bit too large when her father had made them, but they should fit comfortably now. Sifting through the myriad of clothes in her wardrobe, Trixie finally managed to dig out the cape and pointed hat from where she had shoved them a few years ago.

As she packed her bags, the young mare couldn't stop her thoughts turning to things she didn't want them to linger on: namely, where she was going to go from here. She needed to go somewhere her mother couldn't find her, and that would mean leaving Canterlot at the very least. Trixie did have money of her own, accumulated after long hours of working to fill the void, but she wasn't sure just how far it would go.

"I'm not even sure this is a good idea," she muttered sullenly, pausing her packing for a moment. "At least I have a future here, even if it isn't one I want. If I leave, who knows what might happen?" Trixie frowned, her distaste for these thoughts evident. "Maybe Auntie Maple will take me in," she mused. Her aunt was a kind mare, with no husband or children, and she had always showered Trixie with affection on her rare visits to Canterlot. She lived all the way over in Trottingham, and though Trixie did have enough bits to get there, she wasn't entirely sure how to send a message. Maple was a bit out of the loop with technology, so really the only way was through the post, and Trixie might very well arrive before a letter did.

Trixie shook her head, glaring at the carpet. It wouldn't do to think this through too much, or she'd never get out of this suffocating house. The very air itself seemed to seep into her lungs, leaving her breathless and unable to escape. It followed her everywhere, until she couldn't remember what fresh, clean air was like. This insidious, dream-crushing poison permeated the very foundations of this place, and Trixie wouldn't let it invade her system any longer! She had to get out, and if she ended up in the gutter, so be it. She felt confident that her tenacity and intelligence could get her out of almost anything. Crushing creeping tendrils of doubt and uncertainty to the far corners of her mind, she held her head up high, trying to instill confidence in herself. With a flash of magenta magic, Trixie slung her saddlebags across her flanks, tossing her starry hat onto her head with a graceful flourish. Proud and confident, she marched out the door, ready for her new life.

The mare's head hung low, breathing quick and shallow, her hooves dragging on the grey cobblestones as she struggled to drag them forward. Her energy was flagging and she knew it, felt it in her bones, that inexorable pull of exhaustion wrapping around her until there was nothing left but the swaying grey in front of her tired, itching eyes. "I really shouldn't have left before sleeping," she groaned, feeling a rush of shame at her stupidity. Of *course* she would get tired, and of *course* it would be much worse after a night without sleep. However, Trixie had not expected to suffer so soon and so harshly. She wasn't even halfway to the small town named Ponyville where she planned to catch her train, but perhaps that was for the best. At least out here on the road she wouldn't have to pay for accommodation or risk the ire of the townsfolk for sleeping within city limits. All things told, Trixie would rather risk discomfort and save her bits than spend them on frivolities she could not afford. Looking up from the dark, blue-black shades of dirt and grass around her, she realised she had stopped moving. Trixie scowled at this realisation, for she'd not even noticed that she'd sat down. She felt a little nauseous, a tendril of creeping anxiety taking root in her chest, her breathing slightly laboured even though she was frozen still.

Now is not the time for second thoughts, she growled in her head, berating herself. If there was a way to physically beat the worries out of her mind, she would take it, and happily. Trixie sighed, a cloud of mist accompanying her exhale. The night air pressed in on her, chill and unforgiving, the crickets soft by the gurgling stream nearby. Sighing, Trixie shrugged her saddlebags off. "No sense in getting lost in the dark," she muttered, pulling a blanket out of the bags and settling down on the rough ground. She was asleep in moments.

Looking around at the brightly coloured buildings and cheerful inhabitants of Ponyville, Trixie couldn't help but feel a stab of jealousy. Canterlot was a beautiful place by anypony's standards, but the warm pastels of this little town were welcoming in a way that the grand city could never achieve. Conversations floated to her ears through the fresh air, sunlight beaming down from a sky dotted with puffy white clouds. As Trixie watched, a young pegasus with a golden-brown mane kicked at one of the clouds, triggering an explosion of fine mist that dissipated quickly in the heat. The sunshine was warm and comforting on her face, and she smiled, a happy sigh escaping her lips.

If she were to settle anywhere permanently, perhaps this would be a nice place, so long as it had something in the way of a local performance venue. Maybe she could even just get a holiday house here and come when she was taking breaks between shows. With a small smile, Trixie nodded happily, lost in her fantasy, barely noticing the other ponies milling around her. It was only when the crowd thickened to a nearly unbearable density that she noticed that she was in the middle of a marketplace. Grimacing, the young mare realised she would have to ask for directions to the train station, as she had no idea where she was going. While she didn't normally mind asking for help, today she just wanted to enjoy the warm, fresh air and bright

sunshine without having to deal with social interaction. However, it would be better to just get it over and done with, rather than milling around, waiting for someone to start talking to her, or something equally unlikely.

Just as that thought entered her mind, her stomach growled demandingly. Trixie hadn't even had breakfast that morning, as she was in a hurry to get moving again, but until that moment it had slipped her mind. Now she felt a voracious hunger worming its way into her gut, and she decided to stop for lunch. Trixie scanned the marketplace for a likely food stall, her eyes landing on a worn brown cart piled high with fresh apples and other apple-related foodstuffs. Her mouth watered as she took in the selection of apple pies, fritters, tarts, slices and other wonderful things. Smells from the cart drifted on the breeze to tickle her nose, her eyes going wide with delight. The young mare was positive that she'd never come across better smelling apple treats in her entire life.

With her eyes fixed on the display before her, she trotted up to the cart, not even bothering to glance at the pony behind the counter as she made her decisions. It was only as bits changed hooves that Trixie remembered she was meant to be asking for directions, and she paused, looking at the young mare behind the cart. She looked to be about Trixie's age, with an orange coat, blonde mane and a worn brown stetson perched on her head.

"Somethin' wrong, sugarcube?" she asked as Trixie paused, trying to form a coherent sentence in the wake of her stomach's latest demand for food.

"I don't suppose you could tell me how to get to the train station, could you?" she finally asked with an awkward smile. The young mare smiled back.

"Sure can. Just head on past town hall on the road to the east for five minutes and you'll be right there," she said, handing Trixie her change. "Town hall's that way," she added as an afterthought, indicating the direction with a wave of a hoof.

"Thankyou," Trixie said, "and thanks for the food. It smells delicious!" She didn't even give the orange pony time to answer, her mind set on finding her destination, along with a quiet place to eat. Hopefully there would be a table she could use at the station.

Trottingham was certainly...different...from Canterlot, and Trixie wasn't entirely sure it was a good change. The streets were crowded and narrow compared to the stately open roads of Canterlot, and the buildings were dark and grimy. She could see a pony dressed in rags wheeling a cart alongside him that was filled with all his worldly possessions. Many of the ponies looked run ragged, and the pegasi chose to brave the crowds rather than expend the energy to fly. Dotted here and there were stalls selling cheap, greasy food that was clearly inferior to the wholesome fare in Ponyville. Trixie's stomach rumbled, but she ignored it, not wanting to know just how bad the food actually was. She didn't think anything could quite compare to the heavenly apple fritter she had bought from that orange pony she had asked directions from.

Sighing, Trixie pushed through the crowds, hoping she could get some decent food when she arrived at Maple's apartment, but at this rate she would be lucky if she was there before sundown. She hadn't been to Maple's place in years, due to the length of the journey.

Her aunt usually came to Canterlot every second year or so on business, so they saw each other then. The last time she had been to Trottingham, she hadn't even been able to walk, let alone remember the place, so before sneaking out of the house she had looked up Maple's address and found a map, which was proving immensely useful.

Trotting obliviously down the street, Trixie didn't even notice the gaunt pony with the stained coat creeping up behind her. Lost in her own thoughts, she didn't see the soft white glow around her saddlebags, and didn't so much as twitch when they shifted oddly. She did, however, notice when their weight was removed completely. Whipping around, Trixie caught sight of a pale grey stallion galloping for dear life through the press of ponies, every ounce of energy being expended in a frantic effort to get away. Screaming every oath she knew, the young mare gave chase, shoving the crowd apart with enraged bursts of telekinesis, but it made no difference. The stallion obviously knew the city far better than her, and within moments she lost him. Two purple bits of material flew through the air to land at her hooves; her hat and cape, which had come free from the bags in all the commotion. She gingerly picked them up and dusted them off as carefully as if they were her own foals.

Exhausted from the chase, she teetered into a nearby alley and collapsed against the cobbled street, angry tears streaming down her face, blurring her vision into a hazy mess. She wanted to scream until she was hoarse, but knew it would achieve nothing but discomfort and the acquisition of strange stares. The entirety of her belongings were in those bags, including all the bits she had managed to save, and now she was stranded in a strange city without anything but her wits, a slightly battered map and her aunt's address. Trixie didn't know a single soul, and none of these ponies would give a flying feather if she curled up and died right in that alley. They would go on with their lives without a second thought to the grief-stricken blue mare that they had passed by.

Trixie had never felt so insignificant, teetering there on the edge of paralyzing terror. A million questions flooded her mind, all bearing the prefix of 'what if', and she could answer none of them. The young mare was suddenly painfully aware that she had no plan and no way to get home if Maple could not or would not help her. With no money she couldn't catch a train back to Canterlot, and her knowledge of the city was severely lacking. Squashing the unknowns in the back of her mind, she scrambled to her hooves, fueled with burning determination. Her eyes were red and puffy, and the skin of her cheeks felt stretched and strained, but there was purpose in her stride. Maple's apartment was only a few blocks away from where the chase had taken her, and she could easily make it before sundown if she kept up a reasonable pace.

A tentative smile graced Trixie's face as she came within sight of the apartment building where her aunt lived. It was becoming more difficult to see in the dying light, and if she had stayed out any longer then she would likely have gotten lost, but she had made it! A rush of pride and exhilaration swept through her body as she trotted up the three stone steps and into the lobby. Maple would give her a place to stay as she struggled to stand on her own four hooves for the first time in her life, and Trixie would be just fine with her assistance. Her imagination wandered off in its own direction as she walked up the stairwell to the third floor. In

Trixie's mind, she could see a shining future on the stage, and rising renown in Canterlot. She would be the pony everypony would talk about - the amazing mare whose talent was matched only by her beauty and presence on stage. She would be practically rolling in bits and following her dreams all the while, happy at last, and free from her mother's dictatorship.

With a happy sigh, Trixie reached the door emblazoned with a metallic three-oh-six and rapped a hoof against it. There was a rustle of movement from the other side of the simple white wood before it was flung open by an old stallion that was most certainly *not* Maple. This stranger was pot-bellied and greying, with a thunderous scowl on his craggy features, the shadow of stubble not making him seem any more inviting. Trixie reeled back in fright as he lurched towards her, filling the doorway.

"What?" It was just a single word, but carried with it untold menace. The young mare flinched, frantically attempting to gather her wits.

"I'm sorry," she squeaked, "I must have the wrong address." She was just beginning to turn away when the deep voice of the strange stallion halted her attempt at escape.

"You looking for Maple, kid?" he asked with an exasperated sigh. Trixie merely nodded, hoping she didn't look as scared as she felt. "She's gone. Now beat it." With that, the door slammed shut, leaving Trixie alone in the suddenly uninviting and sterile hallway.

"Wait!" she cried, "Where has she gone?" There was no response.

As the sun crept below the horizon and bloodied the sky, a powder blue young mare crept through the streets and alleys of Trottingham, the entirety of her worldly possessions perched on her head and draped over her back. In the twilight gloom she curled up in the corner of a narrow dead-end street, not giving a thought to the filthy cobblestones. Her eyes itched, but stubbornly stayed dry as she collapsed, exhausted, and fell into a deep slumber. She would tackle tomorrow when it came. As the bloody light died away, so did her certainty about seeing next week, let alone the shining future on the stage that had seemed so certain.

Author's Note: I am so sorry for taking so long to write this! Real life caught up with me. Also, if anyone would be willing to give me a hand with proof-reading, it would be deeply appreciated. Email me at starry.tides@gmail.com.

- Starry