

Chapter Five—Twilight's challenge

I think everyone that ended up going to the haunted house Luna and I set up stayed inside their houses for quite a while after they escaped. Given how badly we scared most of them, I felt bad for whoever had to wash their sheets.

Thankfully, no one that I was really close with went through that hellish gauntlet, so no one knew who their beloved traitor was. Since everyone working at the house was in a disguise of some sort, I think all of us escaped any manner of reprisal.

Not that I think the ponies would actually do something like that, mind. All of them seemed rather docile in the haunted house and getting revenge doesn't seem a very pony-like thing to do. Most of them seem too peaceful to do something like that.

Anyway, a few days after that, Twilight called on me for a favor. "I have been... *called out*," she said distastefully. "A unicorn magician that came into town a few months before you arrived got a poor showing here, and I showed her up rather badly on accident. She quickly left town and has apparently spent the last several months learning new spells in order to take me on in a magical contest."

"So?" I asked. "Slap the bitch around a few times. It'll be fun."

She frowned in distaste. "That's the... basic idea, but with less violence. I just want you to help me trounce her worse than she ever has been, enough to make sure she leaves me alone after this."

"Psh. Boring. But whatever. I don't know why you need me, though."

"The rules of her little contest specify that we can only use things that we have magicked or enchanted," she explained. "The easy loophole in there means that I can use you, since I summoned you here."

"And you really think she doesn't know I'm here, or that you'll try to use me? If I was going to challenge someone that beat me before, I'd make sure to know all their tricks. Do some research and spying, you know?"

"She might, but what can she really do to counter you? Included in her contest rules is that no pony is to be hurt."

"Yeah, there's your problem right there," I said with a nod. "No *pony* is to be hurt."

"I'm sure even Trixie isn't mean enough to hurt another sentient being on purpose."

"I hope you're right. It's my life on the line here." *And maybe yours, if Luna finds out you got one of her friends killed.*

"Of course, I won't let you go into it without every protection I can give you. I also won't let you go into it looking like... that."

"What's wrong with the way I look?" I asked. My beard was getting ragged as fuck and my hair was really starting to become a bit like a jewfro. My hair, you see, is really, really curly and when it grows long it grows *out*, not down. I'm not much a fan of how I looked at the

moment, personally, but I don't see why it mattered for Twilight.

She pointed to a body length mirror that was conveniently located in the main room of the library and said, "Look there and you'll see the problem." *Ouch*. "And as much as I don't want to sound like Rarity, I don't really know if I want you going while wearing your normal clothing. I don't suppose you had Rarity make you anything fancy?"

"Not aside from my Halloween costume, no."

"It's Nightmare Night, Nav. And I suppose there isn't really time to worry about dressing you nicely. This time. But after this, we really need to get a nice suit commissioned for you on the off chance that you ever have to meet Princess Celestia."

"Ugh. I hate fancy clothing. Can't I just lie and tell her this stuff is considered fancy for humans? I'm sure she'd buy it."

"Somehow I doubt that," Twilight answered. "But we can deal with it later."

I sighed and rolled my eyes before asking, "So what do you propose to do about the rest of my... problematic appearance?"

"We do have a barber here and I suppose he can figure out how to cut that ragged thing on your face off. Your mane, I'll leave up to you. Either get it straightened or shortened, I suppose. If those are common styles for humans, at least." *Not even married yet and I'm already being told how to dress.*

"Mane? That's called hair. But whatever. I'll probably just have it straightened. The beard... Well, it does get hot. Since you asked so *kindly*, I can change myself up a little." I didn't tell her that we called pulling your hair back like that a ponytail, because she'd probably give me one of *those* looks and tell me to stop being stupid.

So she took me to the barber. I shit you not, the entire shop was set up like you'd expect in a show coming out of the 1950's. Even the barber looked like he belonged in one of those shows, being black and white himself. It was... disconcerting.

"Oh hello, Ms. Twilight. How can I help you today?" the fellow asked.

"Hello, Mr. Thompson. Navarone here needs a shave. And if you can, he also needs his... hair... straightened."

"I don't know about dealing with hair, but if you mean that mop on the top of his head, I can straighten it out right quick. Getting rid of that stuff on his face might take a bit longer."

"Like I have a choice in the matter," I muttered. "Whatever, Mr. Barber-man. Tell me where to sit so we can begin this farce."

When he pulled out the sheep shears I almost said fuck it. With a pitying look at me, though, he replaced them with a razor. How he was able to hold it with his hooves, though, I don't know, and I saw him do it. *This world, man, it doesn't make sense sometimes.* Anyway, he removed the scrabble from my face and it instantly felt fifteen degrees cooler in the room.

His method for straightening my hair definitely made sure I was awake and it made Twilight giggle: he dunked my head into a sink full of really, really cold water, and then pulled all the hair back and put it into what I call a ponytail and what they apparently call normal.

It was not amusing.

"Well, that was amusing," Twilight said as we were leaving. The barber was smiling at our backs as we walked away, my hair still dripping.

"If I had known you thought getting dunked in cold water was amusing, I would have found better ways to wake you up in the past," I coldly answered, not liking the autumn chill on my wet hair.

"I don't think it would be too amusing if it happened to me, I mean," she answered with a smile. "But it's funny when it happens to you."

"Of course." *Women.*

Pinkie Pie just happened to be waltzing by at that moment. And I do mean waltzing: It looked like she was dancing past. Knowing her, I wouldn't be too surprised if she was. When she saw me she stopped, and exclaimed, "Navi! What happened to your head? It... shrank!" Several nearby ponies turned at her outburst, but seeing it was just Pinkie Pie, they shook their heads and went on.

"Not my name. And Twilight here seems to think we're married and can dictate how I dress and style myself. I was stupid enough to give in just once and now she's refusing to ever take no for an answer."

"Yeah, that does sound about right for Twilight..." Pinkie Pie said. "Give her an inch and suddenly she demands you dispose of everypony in the room and hide their bodies in the pitch black night..." *Sometimes I really, really wonder about Pinkie Pie.*

"I'm standing right here, you know!" Twilight said, getting annoyed.

"Yeah, I know," I said. "We were just in the barber shop together, remember?"

"Yeah, Twilight, we're not *blind*," Pinkie Pie added.

Faced by a dual front of immaturity, Twilight just gave up with an, "Ugh."

Seeing an opportunity to perhaps cause Twilight more embarrassment, I asked, "So, Pinkie, do you waltz? I saw you dancing by and that's what it looked like to me."

"YOU KNOW ABOUT WALTZING!" she yelled while grabbing me hurriedly and shaking me for emphasis. "None of the ponies here had ever heard about it before! I can't believe it took a human to finally find me a partner! Why didn't you ever mention it before?" Her tirade complete, she stopped shaking me and just looked at me with her large blue eyes, practically daring me to say something contrary.

"Well..." I started. Her eyes suddenly got more intensive and her grip got considerably tighter. "I was never very good at it, and it has been years since I actually did it last." Her grip was actually starting to hurt now and I was wondering how the hell she was doing that with no fingers. "Uh, Pinkie Pie?"

Just as suddenly, she released me, smiled, stepped back, and said "I'll reteach you soon!" With that, she bounced off. I immediately found myself fearing for my life and looked at Twilight imploringly.

"Don't look at me. You did this one to yourself," she said, starting to walk back to the

library. *Damn her for being right.* I began walking with her.

“So when is this little showdown of yours set to happen?” I asked, trying to get my mind off the horror of Pinkie. “And... where, I guess?”

“The when is three days. We leave tomorrow. The where... Well, let’s just say there’s more than one reason I’m bringing you along. It’s to be in an abandoned castle a day’s walk away. She told me to come alone, but I don’t think you count, since you’re one of the things I magicked into being. I would bring Spike, since I technically magicked him to life as well, but I don’t think he’d be very useful in something like this.”

My mind picked the words ‘abandoned castle’ out instantly. “This sounds exactly like a trap.”

“Yes, it does. But I let all my friends know I’m going and when to expect me back. And, as I said, I’m bringing you with me. Besides, we’re going prepared. I remember you mentioning and describing to me how a weapon in your world worked, something called a crossbow. I had one made, as well as fifty bolts. It’s a small thing, but it should be enough of a surprise against her if she tries to pull anything. Or, more likely, we run into anything on the way. I can’t use it, of course, but you can.”

“Oh, hell yes. I’ve wanted to get my hands on one of those for years! How did you know how to make it, though? And... when did you make it? Didn’t you only hear about this competition thing, like, yesterday?”

“I had it made for you a few days ago because I knew you needed a steady source of... protein. Beans can only get you so much. I understand that your body needs it. This way you can go hunting to find some yourself, because buying it would be both difficult and expensive. You’ll just have to ask Fluttershy where it’s safe to go, or else risk the Everfree.”

“Fucking awesome. You don’t know how tired I am of eating eggs, beans, and cheese.”

“Yes I do. You always complain about it. But making it wasn’t that difficult, once you explained the basic concept. It’s admittedly fairly primitive compared to the ones you described, but I was able to test it enough to know that it fires.”

“If it shoots straight and doesn’t kick like a bull, I don’t care. And I’m really glad to see you finally trust me. I’ll be sure not to use it on someone unless they really deserve it.”

“To you, deserving it might mean them looking at you funny.”

“That’s deserving it, not *really* deserving it. Big difference.”

She rolled her eyes and said, “Oh, and it’s *not* to be used against Trixie unless she actually starts becoming dangerous.”

“Just take all the fun out of it... Fine.”

When she did show me the crossbow, I found myself somewhat disappointed. It was a pain to crank back and the aim was a bit off. If I had gotten it sooner, I could have learned how to shoot it. As it was, I could only use it to ward off any far away threats and hope they were dead before they got within knife range, and then actually knife them if they weren’t.

Still, with some practice I could probably hunt with it. That definitely counted for something. I would still have to remember how to skin animals and what was safe to eat, but it was better than not having meat at all.

She also pulled out two brown cloaks, one for her and one for me. It was at that point that I started to feel a bit like Van Hellsing. I'm honestly not sure why she wanted us to go cloaked, but this was her show and I was just following the lead.

Rarity couldn't make me new shoes to replace the ragged and cold ones I had before we left, but promised that a pair would be done by the time we got back. So I just went with what I had and hoped they wouldn't fall apart across the terrain we had to cover. If I learned anything from my time in Equestria, it's that the Chinese slaves making our shoes need to be whipped harder so their products don't suck as bad.

Anyway, the night passed and we left early in the morning. Applebloom saw us walking through the fields and asked if she could get the gang together to see if they could earn their spectator cutie marks, but we gently rebuked her and continued on our way.

I did make a request to stop off at Applejack's barn to pick something up, just in case. Twilight was curious, but I didn't offer any information so she dropped it. That something, of course, was some nice and flammable alcohol.

After seeing that there was no lasting effect on Dash, I talked to Applejack and told her that she was free to start making the stuff as long as she kept her operation small and personal. That way I could get a cut and she could use some for whatever she needed. Everybody won.

"So," I asked a few hours later, "what does a magic competition usually involve?" We hadn't been traveling that much in silence, since Twilight took pains to show off what she knew by talking about the various things we passed.

"Normally, they don't happen. And normally I wouldn't agree to participate in one. But... well, let's just say that she put forward a good argument as to why I should. But to actually answer your question, on the rare occasions they do happen, a certain number of bouts are staged, and whoever wins the majority of the bouts wins. Basic rules are that anything goes, but she knew I wouldn't accept that so she added that nothing can be done to harm the other contestant. And since it might be a trap, we're going to be protected by as many charms as I can cast."

"That's comforting, I suppose. What if it's not actually a trap and you tire yourself out casting protection spells?"

"Protection spells are never a waste. And you haven't met Trixie. Last I saw, she was barely able to do anything other than impress foals. A few months can't make somepony completely amazing."

"Well, that's comforting. I still say it's a waste of time. Anyway, what's the plan?"

"You're my trump card. She probably won't know what to make of you, so that'll hopefully put her off guard. If you can get close enough to her and get on her back, we pretty

much have her beaten.”

“So my job in this is to get in a rodeo match. How fun.”

“I knew you’d think so!” *It’s hard to tell when they’re ignoring sarcasm or just don’t hear it.*

Let me tell you, that was a cold, cold night, sleeping on the ground, outside, without a beard. I was tempted to bury my face in Twilight’s mane and dare her to say anything, but I didn’t figure she would much like that.

The next morning, we continued on our way and finally saw the castle looming on the horizon. We ducked behind a little hill to plan our next move.

“So, trap?” I asked.

“Maybe. I mean, Trixie didn’t really seem like the most well-rounded pony, but that doesn’t necessarily mean she’s out to get me.”

“Eh. If it is, my money is on the two portcullises dropping as soon as we get inside the gate, trapping us between them. Can you cast an illusion of us and make us invisible? We can go before the illusion and have them follow us in, so that she thinks she has us trapped when in actuality we’re inside the castle.”

“Why don’t we just cast the illusion, see if what you say is true, and then leave if it is?”

“Didn’t you say she had a good reason to get you out here? I figure if we walked this far, we might as well see this through.”

She blushed slightly at the mention of her reason, and that really got me wondering, but I didn’t say anything. She agreed to the plan and we proceeded on our way to the meeting invisibly, followed by two illusionary doppelgangers.

To no one’s surprise, the gates did crash down with our fakes caught between them. We heard laughter from one of the halls and decided to watch and see rather than investigate. After all, maybe she was just pulling a prank?

The blue mare didn’t take long to reveal herself, dressed in a ridiculous starred pointy hat and a purple cape, and started on a long and dreadfully boring monologue about how Twilight Sparkle had ruined this and that. All of it was in third person, which was really fucking annoying. Trixie didn’t look too surprised to see an illusion of me standing next to Twilight.

She ended her tirade with, “And so Trixie brought you here to show you up, once and for all! What do you have to say to that, *Twilight Sparkle*?”

“You’re doing a poor job of it so far,” Twilight answered from next to me, dispelling both the illusion and the invisibility field.

Trixie jumped in surprise and let out a startled noise when she saw us, but recomposed herself quickly. “Well well well. It seems you *do* have *some* tricks up your sleeve. But Trixie will show you all the Trix of the Trade!”

Twilight and I just stared at her in silence for a few seconds before I face-palmed. “Did you *really* just say that?” I sighed.

“What?” Twilight said. “I don’t—Ooooh. That’s... *awful*. Did you just come up with that now? You *couldn’t* have prepared it.”

Now the mare was blushing in either anger or embarrassment, not sure which. “Trixie shouldn’t expect two simpletons like you to understand excellent wordplay when they hear it!”

“Ugh. Silly pony. Tricks are for kids!” I blankly said, faking any kind of enthusiasm. “Twilight, why don’t you show her some real magic, eh?” That statement had a bit more life in it. There’s just no reason to encourage awful puns, especially not in Ponyland.

Trixie snorted and broke in before Twilight could respond. “Allowing your familiar to speak to you like that?” she said. “Just what Trixie expected from somepony like *you*. Trixie has a bit more control over hers.”

“...You summoned a familiar?” Twilight asked, a tinge of horror in her voice.

That didn’t sound good to me. “The fuck is a—holy *shit*!”

As I started speaking, Trixie’s horn lit up and in a flash of light, some... *thing* appeared. It had the base body of a wolf, but it was so much of a chimera that it was hard to tell what else it had. There were random tufts of fur all over its body, making the thing look like it had a constant case of a bad hair day. Its front two legs were bird-like talons and its back two were lion’s legs, ending in paws. The tail was long and narrow, though knotted in random places. And as it stared at me with fiery eyes, an extremely long and thin tongue slithered out of its dog-like face to taste the air.

“You summoned an *alphyn*?” Twilight squeaked, staring at it in shock.

“Of course! Nothing but the *best* for Trixie, unlike your flimsy ape thing,” she mocked.

“Hey, at least I’m not as ugly as that thing,” I shot back.

The alphyn snarled and surged forward, but Trixie hissed, making it slink back, glaring at me. Twilight sighed and said, “I should mention, Nav, that alphyns are sapient and can talk.”

“Trixie just isn’t going to let her familiar control her, unlike *you*,” Trixie stated smugly.

“At least I’m not stupid enough to summon a familiar!” Twilight shot back.

“To be fair,” I broke in, “you *were* stupid enough to summon me instead.”

Twilight glared at me while Trixie laughed. “Not even your pet is on your side! This competition truly will be easy.”

“And I’m not a pet, either,” I said.

“Well, legally—” Twilight started before being cut off by the blue cunt.

“Enough talk! Trixie didn’t spend months preparing to listen to you two quabble.”

“It’s not quabbling,” I said. “It’s *arguing*. Get it right.”

“Trixie is going to *enjoy* watching her familiar beat you,” Trixie growled.

“Which would be against the rules,” Twilight said. “Nopony is to be hurt.”

“No *pony* is to be hurt,” Trixie said with a smirk.

“See! That’s exactly what I said!”

Twilight rolled her eyes and said, “Either amend it or we’re leaving. I’m not going to let Nav get hurt.”

“Oh? Is your precious pet more important than the possible prize?”

“I don’t want any of my friends to get hurt. If that means I lose out, I lose out.”

“Tch. *Fine*. Hear that, Phinny?” she said to the ugly thing standing next to her. “Be gentle.” The thing glared at her with all the hate it could possibly pool into its heart before turning that hatred back to me. “Now can we finally start?”

“Yes, yes. What manner of competition did you have in mind?” Twilight asked. “There are several types and—”

“Each of us brought a pet along, so we can have a few fun little bouts,” Trixie said with an unnerving smile. “But they can have their fun *after* we have ours.” *See, that makes it sound perverted.*

“So, what, we compete?” Twilight asked. “What are we doing?”

“A magic competition, of course!” Trixie said, glaring at Twilight. “The last pony standing wins.”

“See, that makes it sound like someone’s gonna get hurt,” I said, crossing my arms.

“Silence, ape!” Trixie shot back. “Your betters are speaking.”

“On second thought, I agree with her rules,” I said. “Kick her fucking ass, Twilight.”

“As much as I dislike violence, I’m starting to agree. Very well, Trixie. So where are we doing this?”

“Trixie and her familiar have cleared this courtyard to use it for these bouts, so that is where we shall compete. And of course, you and Trixie will go first! You two, wait against the wall!” Trixie’s horn lit up, shoving me and the wolf thing toward the wall. I took the hint and shrugged, walking that way. The alphyn seemed more reluctant to go, but followed anyway.

“So how’s this gonna work?” Twilight asked as we walked away.

I didn’t pay attention to Trixie’s answer because, truth be told, I was tired of that blueberry cunt. “So is Phinny your real name?” I asked the alphyn.

“It is not,” it—he, it sounded like—growled. “And if you say it again, I will disembowel you where you stand.”

“...Alright. So what is your name, then?”

“My kind do not use names,” he contemptuously answered.

“That’s gotta get confusing. How do you know who’s talking to who?”

“We rarely talk.” Twilight and Trixie were squaring off at this point, each walking to one side of the ‘arena’.

“Bet that makes it easier... You know, I get the feeling that you don’t want to be here.”

“I don’t.” Twilight’s horn lit up and a small shield expanded around her.

“Why not leave, then? Or rip that cunt’s throat out?” Trixie smirked at Twilight’s shield and her horn lit up as well. Stormclouds appeared out of nowhere.

“If only. A deal was made with my kind long ago. I follow the tenets of that deal.” Twilight seemed to be holding on the defensive, not making any more moves past the shield conjuring. The stormclouds covered the sky above the arena.

“So you guys work as familiars? What do you get out of it?” Twilight finally seemed to be tired of waiting. Her horn lit up again and a beam of purple light shot out at Trixie.

“We get what we can take.” Lightning struck Twilight’s shield before the beam could hit Trixie, surprising both me and Twilight. The beam of light she was casting dispelled in her shock before it could hit Trixie. The alphyn didn’t react and Trixie began to laugh as more bolts rained down.

“W-what you can take?” I said, trying not to let my shock show. “What does that mean?” Twilight seemed to recover from the initial surprise and shrunk her shield so it covered less area. Then she teleported, leaving the shield in place.

“The deal is that if the spellcaster makes a mistake, we take advantage of it.” Trixie began looking frantically around the arena for Twilight before her horn stopped glowing, allowing the lightning to cease. She began to slowly walk towards the shield, casting her eyes around.

“What can you do with that advantage? Steal things? Hurt others?” Trixie was slowly approaching the shield, starting to look angry. She yelled something that I couldn’t hear over the rumblings in the sky.

“Whatever we can. There are many choices when it comes to mistakes a caster can make.” Trixie finally made it to the shield and lightly kicked it with one of her legs. As soon as she touched it, her eyes went wide and she was pulled inside of it.

“Do you guys kill, or just torment? Seems like a bad idea to do something too bad, if you want people to keep summoning you.” Twilight reappeared just outside of the bubble, smiling in at Trixie. Trixie’s horn lit up and the purple shield changed to blue. Twilight frowned.

“We do not kill. We *take*.” The newly blue bubble exploded outward, cracking the walls behind it and throwing Twilight halfway across the courtyard before something pulled her out of the air. Trixie’s horn was still in its nightlight form and the rope that snatched Twilight had the same aura around it. *Interesting*.

“Hm. Take? Like, spellbooks or something?” The rope that grabbed Twilight split in two, wrapping around her front and back legs. She recovered while it was tying her.

“No. We take casters. If possible, of course. If not them, whatever we can.” Twilight’s horn lit up and the ropes dissolved away from her, but something new entered the fray.

“Why? What do you do with them?” What looked like a doorframe flew across the courtyard, surrounded by Trixie’s aura. Twilight saw it coming and her horn lit up as well.

“Enslave them. Magic is useful.” The frame stopped right in front of Twilight, half held in a blue aura and half held in a purple aura. I was too busy watching it to see what Trixie was doing.

“How do you keep them enslaved? Can’t they just escape? Or do damage?” A blue hoof suddenly shot out of the door, slapping Twilight across the face. When I looked back over to Trixie, she had one of her legs shoved through her hat, flailing it around.

“When we pull them with us, they are bound as we were to follow every command given. We do not make the same mistakes they do.” When Twilight realized what happened, she leaned

back and her horn lit even brighter, wrapping around Trixie's hoof. The blue mare had a moment to look surprised before she was ripped through her hat and out of the door.

"So they have to do whatever you tell them?" Twilight grinned and tried to return the slap to Trixie's face, but Trixie grabbed Twilight's hoof and used that to pull her in for a very painful looking headbutt.

"Yes." You ever see two unicorns butt heads? I couldn't believe it happened without anyone getting gored. Twilight went down hard and Trixie fell back, heavily dazed.

"And you want to do that to Trixie?" It took her a good moment to recover, but Trixie finally shook herself and smiled victoriously, Twilight still not moving.

"More than anything," he growled.

"Looks like round one is over," I said. He didn't reply.

Trixie's horn lit up and wrapped around Twilight and she began to drag her over our way. "See that, ape? Trixie beat your precious unicorn!" With that, she unceremoniously tossed Twilight my way, thankfully not doing any damage to her.

"What, you want a fucking medal?" I answered as I knelt down, checking on her.
Breathing fine. In pain and out of it, but she'll be fine.

"It's your turn to face Trixie!" she said.

"I hope you have some patience then, because I ain't going nowhere without making sure Twilight's okay."

"Psh. She's breathing. That means she'll be fine."

I carefully rolled Twilight onto her back, lightly tapping against her face. "You in there?" I quietly said, looking down at her.

It took her a few seconds to open a set of confused eyes. "What... hap—Ooh, my head..." One of her hooves lifted up to feel the area where Trixie slapped her shit.

"Trixie beat you!" the blueberry bitch happily called, making Twilight wince from the noise.

I reached down to Twilight's belly and began gently rubbing it, since I know most ponies like it when I do that for some reason. "Relax, Twilight. She's just a lot more hard-headed than you. Of course her headbutt did more damage."

"Twilight just isn't as good as Trixie," the mare haughtily said.

"If you don't stop being a bitch, I will reach across this unicorn and slap a ho," I said.

"Trixie is no dog, ape! Trixie will have you know—" Before she could react, I leaned over Twilight and pimp slapped Trixie across the face. She was too shocked to even react.

"You said it was our turn next, right?" I asked, standing up and rolling my shoulders. "Let's fucking go."

"Trixie will make you pay for that!"

"Make my day," I replied, walking past her.

"Having the chance to lose to Trixie should make your whole life, ape!" she replied strutting off to her side of the arena.

As I faced her down from the other side, I realized I had no idea how I was going to fight someone with fucking magic. *Maybe shoulda thought about that before I pissed her off. Heh, oops.*

While I was waiting for her to give the signal to start, I went ahead and loaded up the crossbow, not that I honestly expected it to do me much good, especially since Twilight didn't seem to realize the difference between broadhead bolts and practice bolts. Though to be fair, I didn't really want to kill Trixie. But I wouldn't complain if I put an extra breathing hole in her. After all, 'if she's still breathing, she'll be okay'.

Fucking bitch.

"Trixie trusts that you are ready?" she called across the field.

"Bring it!" I called back.

"Trixie shall go easy on you. It isn't *your* fault you were born to be so inferior, after all." I ignored that and did a quick scan of the arena ground. Aside from the open door frame and a few bounds of rope lying around in various places, it was empty of any manner of advantages.

The frame gave me a few interesting ideas. If it was still connected to Trixie's hat, all I had to do was get to it and I had a straight gate to her head. And then... I smiled, thinking of my lighter and some alcohol.

She seemed content to watch me slowly amble forward, since I wasn't really making any sudden movements or giving any indication that I was thinking about heading toward the door. Her horn didn't bother lighting up, since she thought I would be an easy target.

It didn't take her long to get bored, though. Finally, Trixie's magic snatched one of the loops of rope and it started shooting toward me. I quickly slung the crossbow and pulled out my knife, suddenly thankful of all the time I spent dealing with rope on a farm. She tried wrapping it around my off arm, but I was able to pull back enough to use the serrations to tear through the relatively flimsy rope.

With it shortened, she tried going after the arm that had the knife, thinking it an easier target. She was wrong. I grabbed it with my offhand and reversed my grip on the knife, cutting through the rope even as she tried to wrap the remnants around both of my arms to cinch them in place.

The rope was now about half its original size, too short to be of use. She just tried to entangle it around my legs, but I stomped it flat and marched on, leaving it in the dust of the eroded courtyard.

"So you're smarter than Trixie thought!" she said with a small grin. "Maybe this actually *will* be interesting."

And maybe your daddy didn't molest you, but I'm starting to think he should have. I began to change my angle as I went, subtly heading toward the door. The crossbow was still sheathed and my knife was out, ready for more rope. She didn't disappoint in that department, sending three of them at me at once. *Thank God I'm not a Japanese schoolgirl!*

When I saw them coming for me, I began running. "Ooh, Trixie loves it when they run!

But Trixie will drag you back and make you forget *all* about your precious *Twilight Sparkle!*”

Oh God, what?! That thought was punctuated by one of the ropes latching around one of my legs. I dragged it with me for a few steps before it jerked back, knocking me down to the dirt. When I hit, I instantly dropped the knife, sending it skittering away from me. And it sounded and felt like the crossbow shot itself.

When a few seconds passed and I didn't get trussed up for her sick BDSM fantasies, I hesitantly looked up. Trixie's mouth was gaping and one of her hooves was pressing against her ear. When she brought it back down, I saw that there was some blood and a hole in her ear, presumably from the crossbow bolt.

As she screamed in rage, I jumped back to my feet, wincing at the pain in my skinned hands and legs. The rumblings in the clouds started up again and I knew I had a very short amount of time before lightning started falling to vaporize me. Thankfully, I landed very close to the door.

Here's hoping this pays off. I quickly dug through my pockets, pulling out the bottle of booze and my lighter. Since both hands were full, I just bit the cork and ripped it out, spitting it to the side. That done, I shook the bottle toward the open door, hoping my gamble paid off.

When I heard Trixie's squawk of surprise and didn't see any fall on the ground, I knew I had this in the bag. I turned to her with a grin, flipping open my trusty zippo. “You know, I did think your voice was hot.” That said, I cranked the wheel, lighting it up. “Let's make the same true for the rest of you.” And then I thrust the lighter through the portal.

Nothing happened for a moment and Trixie just stared at me in confusion. Then smoke began coming out from under her hat. It didn't take her long at that point to realize she was on fucking fire. Then the screaming began. She started flailing around, beating at her hat and trying to get the flames to stop.

I calmly walked up to her as she was doing that. Since she was a little distracted, she didn't pay me any mind. When I got right in front of her, I punched that bitch straight in the nose, dropping her like my ISP used to do to me all the time. With her out for the count, I simply pulled off her hat and kicked dirt onto her hair until it was out.

Trixie now had a new bald spot on her head where the fur and hair had both been burned off. There was no real permanent damage since most of the fire was from the alcohol and the hat that was now destroyed, but she wasn't going to be winning any beauty contests for a while. Then I just left her there and walked over to where the knife fell, picking it up and closing it.

Twilight was sitting up and had apparently been watching the affair, so I walked to her next. The alphyen was sitting next to her, saying nothing. “So now what?” I asked.

“Well, the competition isn't really over,” Twilight said. “Right now it's a tie and everypony still hasn't fought.”

“So? Trixie's out cold,” I said. “I say we loot whatever prize it was she would give you and just leave.”

“That's stealing!”

“And it’s hidden well,” the alphyn added. “I am unable to tell you where.”

“Wait, you’re still here?” Twilight asked. “Shouldn’t you be helping her?”

“Why? I was given no order.”

“...Oh right, familiar,” Twilight sighed, lying back. “Celestia, my head is killing me!”

“Now you know how the rest of us feel whenever we look at it,” I said, sitting next to her and putting my hand on her belly again.

“That was... really mean,” she sighed as I began rubbing again.

“Mating ritual?” the alphyn asked, sounding bored.

Twilight immediately turned bright red and tried to push my hand away, but she was still fairly weak from getting wrecked. “Nah,” I answered. “Just a way to help her relax.” Try as she might, I didn’t stop. After a few seconds of struggling, she just sighed, falling back.

“We really should be helping Trixie, you know,” Twilight said after a minute or so of silence.

“Why? She smells like burnt hair. No way do I want to go over there.”

“You’re the one that lit her on fire!”

“Well, maybe she shouldn’t have been such a bitch.”

“You keep saying that word,” the alphyn said. “What does it mean to you?”

“It’s a pretty big insult where I come from,” I replied with a shrug. “Not the worst, but effective. If you’d prefer, I can use other words.”

“Insults matter little to me.”

“Besides,” I added, “I only punched Trixie in the face. She should be up again soonish. I’m not exactly the model of strength, especially compared to you damn ponies.” Sure, I had stamina and height over them, but they had strength and weight. Fucking mini-horses, man.

After a few more seconds, Twilight sighed again before sitting up. “As reprehensible as Trixie is, I still can’t let her just lie over there until she wakes up.” After struggling to stand for a few seconds, she shrugged. “But I also don’t have to get up to get her.” With that, her horn lit up and lifted Trixie up.

“You know,” I said, “she *dragged* you over here.” Trixie stopped moving. “And then tossed you at me.” Trixie hit the ground with a nice thud and the purple aura around her surrounded her tail. Then she started to drag across the ground. “Hey, do you see any patches of glass?” Twilight didn’t respond.

Soon enough, Trixie was lying in front of us instead of well away from us. “How long should we wait before healing her?” Twilight asked.

“...If you can heal, why don’t you just heal yourself?” I asked.

“Because your belly rubs feel really, really good,” she answered, blushing slightly and smiling.

“You know you could ask for one at any time, right?” I said, pulling my hand back. “I know all you ponies are tummy sluts.”

Twilight snorted at that and looked over to Trixie. “Would you ever give *her* one?”

“Whoa now. I said you guys are sluts, not me. My hands are pure.” She rolled her eyes. “Anyway, shouldn’t you be healing yourself and then her?”

“I suppose...” Her horn lit up and encased her body in an aura before receding back. “Much better.” She was finally able to hop up, though she wobbled on her hooves for a moment, as if dizzy. “She really does have a hard head,” she sighed, walking over to Trixie’s limp form. “But now it’s a hard head with a little less of a mane...” she added with a giggle.

“Oh man, do you have a mirror?” I asked. “We could do one of those really funny reveals where we all try not to say anything before pointing to the mirror. Then she looks and screams.”

“If only... Sadly, there wasn’t exactly space to bring a mirror in our cloaks.” Twilight’s horn lit up again and she touched it to Trixie’s forehead. The aura slowly traversed her body before sucking back into Twilight.

The blue whore on the ground shifted. “Ooh, my head,” she groaned, falling out of third person. “What happened?” she asked, slowly standing up.

“Welcome to the wonderful world of You’re Bald!” I happily called, lifting both arms widely as if to congratulate her.

Her mouth dropped as Twilight tried to fight back the giggles. Eventually she said, “Trixie is *WHAT?! Phinny*, is Trixie bald?!”

“Partially.”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN, PARTIALLY?!”

“You have a large bald spot now.”

Trixie collapsed right back to the ground, feeling all around her head with her hooves until she found the very noticeable spot missing a lot of hair. “Trixie’s... Trixie’s MANE!” Her sorrow lasted for all of a few seconds before it turned to rage. “THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT, APE!” she yelled, surging back to her feet. “I’LL END YOU!” She pounced at me, but Twilight’s magic stopped her.

“Now now, Trixie, you already had your turn against Nav,” she cheerfully said. “And you lost... *fire* and square!”

At that point, Trixie couldn’t tell who she should be glaring at. I knew, though. “Twilight, that was almost as bad as her tricks pun earlier. Everyone here is a little bit more humorless for having heard it and you should be ashamed.”

“Worth it,” she replied with a shrug and a smirk.

“Trixie despises you *all*,” she hissed at us. “Phinny, it is your turn to fight Navarone. Teach him a lesson!”

I took one look at the alphyn that quickly stood to his feet. “Hm. Hey, can you do anything weird other than look cool?”

“I am one of our kind that can breathe fire,” he immediately replied, sending a lick of flame to the ground to prove it.

“You know what, nah,” I said, shaking my head. “You win. I ain’t fighting that shit. I don’t want to be like little miss crispy over here.”

“TRIXIE WILL KILL YOU!” she screamed, struggling to get at me again through Twilight’s continued hold.

“You sure, Nav?” Twilight asked. “I mean, you beat Trixie. Alphyns are strong, but not invincible.”

“Twilight, I am wearing clothing. Clothing is fucking flammable. I don’t want to get lit on fire. I’m here as a favor for you. I’m not getting anything out of this. Because of that, I’m not going to get lit on fire for it. Now that you’re done underestimating our pretty little blueberry here, we can wrap this up quickly by you clonking their heads together and calling it a day. So yeah, I’m not fighting him. He wins.”

Twilight shrugged and said, “Fair enough.”

“WHAT?!” Trixie yelled. “Burn him anyway!”

Twilight teleported Trixie between me and the alphyn, facing her. “*That* goes against our agreement. And since Navarone is an endangered species, hurting him is a very serious crime. If you’ll recall, I’m the princess’s personal student. All I have to do is send her a quick letter and she’ll be here in a flash. So I suggest you remember that before you start telling your illegal familiar to start throwing around fire.”

“Illegal?” the alphyn asked, tilting his head.

“What do you mean, *endangered*?” I demanded.

“...P-Princess?” Trixie gasped.

“Oh yeah,” Twilight said to the alphyn. “Regular alphyns are discouraged from being summoned, as anypony that’s ever studied magic knows. But greater alphyns that can breathe fire have been illegal for some time now. They’re way too cunning and dangerous to be risked.”

“This is news,” he replied, sitting on his haunches “Bad news. But it explains much.”

“And yes, Trixie,” Twilight said with a hint of smugness, turning to her. “I am Princess Celestia’s personal student. I assumed you would have known.”

“N-nopony ever said! How was I supposed to know?!”

Twilight shrugged before finally turning to me. “Yes, Navarone. As the only one of your kind, you are endangered. Well, technically extinct since you can’t reproduce, but the point remains. Just a technicality, of course. Though since you’re an invasive species, I think the laws would probably be waived in many cases to count as simple assault rather than attacking an endangered species.”

“Huh. Wonder if I can twist Luna’s arm into getting that invasive species thing taken off.”

“Like a princess would listen to *you*,” Trixie haughtily mocked, trying to regain her color after learning just who she challenged.

“Luna probably would,” Twilight replied. “Nav’s one of her best friends, after all.” And that got Trixie’s mouth to drop yet again. “But the competition isn’t over, I suppose. The alphyn and I still have to fight.”

“And he’ll win, too!” Trixie asserted vehemently, finding her voice again.

The alphyn just snorted as it started walking to its place in the arena. “Now you two play

nice,” Twilight said, setting Trixie down. “The princesses would be quite upset if something were to happen to Nav, Trixie. And *I* would be upset if something happened to Trixie, Nav.”

“Trixie will tolerate this ape. For now. But she won’t like it!”

“I’ll think about it,” I answered with a shrug. “You have fun, now!”

“Oh, don’t worry,” she said, walking to her spot. “This won’t take long.”

Trixie smirked as Twilight walked off. “Overconfident whorse!” she muttered darkly.

“You know, you really should try being more pleasant.”

“Trixie doesn’t need your advice, ape!” Twilight was still slowly making her way to the spot.

“I bet a hug would make you feel better. Or maybe a nice belly rub?”

“If you touch Trixie, she will remove your filthy paws.”

“Ooh, into the kinky stuff. Maybe you’d like a spanking instead?”

“Trixie will hurt you if you do not stop TALKING!”

“Mm, I bet you’d love being a bottom, too. Shame you’re too ugly with all that hair gone.” When I said that, her teeth started grinding so hard I thought they might break. Twilight finally got across from the alphyn.

“At least this will be over soon,” she forced out through clenched teeth. “Then Trixie will claim you as a prize and teach you proper manners!”

“Like hell you will. There’d be a knife through your spine as soon as you turned your back on me. Or maybe I’d just hold it against your throat and toy with you for a little while, teach you who the real master is.”

She snorted derisively as the alphyn began charging Twilight, who didn’t move. “Trixie underestimated you once. She will *not* do so again. And she *will* teach you a lesson, ape!”

“Not like that’ll happen anyway. You’re just pissy because Twilight’s so much better than you are.” The alphyn was getting close. Twilight was just grinning as her horn lit up. “Better *and* prettier.” Not that I could really tell. They all looked like horses. “Especially since you’re half bald, now. I bet you’ll have to practically beg stallions to service you, though I can’t imagine any would have anyway, with your shitty attitude.”

“THAT’S IT!” She launched herself off the ground toward me, forgetting she could even do magic. I casually stepped aside, slapping her flank as she surged past me. I could faintly see Twilight casting some spell at the alphyn in the background, making him disappear. As soon as he vanished, Trixie collapsed and Twilight began walking back toward us.

“How did she get over there?” Twilight asked, looking at Trixie, who was struggling to stand.

“Eh, she tried pouncing at me. Then you cast the spell and she collapsed.”

“Oh. I just dispelled her familiar. Since a unicorn has to create a form of magical bond when they summon one, it drains the unicorn when the familiar is dispelled or killed.”

“It took... Trixie MONTHS... to summon it!” she groaned, forcing herself up.

“And one spell to dispel it,” I said with a smile. “I guess that makes Twilight your better at

yet another thing.”

“Nav, please...” Twilight said, putting a hoof on my arm. I just shrugged as she walked closer to Trixie. “This competition is over, Trixie. It was a tie. You get nothing, I get nothing. Are you happy now?”

“Not until Trixie beats you!” she growled, her eyes narrowing in anger.

“Your familiar is gone,” Twilight said. “And you can’t summon it again for at least a full day. Nav and I aren’t sticking around that long. In fact, we’ll probably be leaving in just a few minutes. If you want to come with us, I’m sure I can find a spell to get your hair back.”

“Trixie doesn’t need your charity! And this competition is *not* over! Trixie has a tiebreaker planned!”

Twilight sighed, her shoulders and head drooping slightly. “Trixie, please. There’s no need for this. There’s not even anypony here to see it!”

“Trixie will not lose! Not again!”

“You didn’t even *lose* the first time! I was just saving the town!”

“Prepare yourself, Twilight! Trixie has been practicing this spell for ages!”

Twilight sighed, backing up to me and bringing up a shield. “Go for it,” she replied, bored. Quieter, she muttered, “Not like it’ll matter.”

“Mock Trixie all you want, *Sparkle*! But Trixie did something you could never do! She made her own spell!”

“You what?! Are you MAD?!” Twilight was either horrified or shocked, I don’t know.

“What’s the big deal?” I asked as Trixie cackled and began charging her horn.

“Experimenting with new magic is dangerous!” Twilight answered, pulling me back.

“There’s no telling what it could do! And if somepony like *Trixie* did it, it might not even be finished!”

“Eh, what’s the worst that could happen?” I said, waving a hand.

I would soon come to regret saying that.

“Spell my name in the skies,” Trixie called out, her voice becoming more of a rumble.

“Hear my name in their cries!” I could practically feel the magic in the air, as a whistling wind began to pick up. “Surround my form with all the lights!” Arcane symbols began to appear in the air, tearing out of the immaterium to bring power to this new spell. “As I bring the crowd true delights!” Trixie’s horn was as bright as the sun, but I couldn’t look away. It was as though I was drawn to her... “Show them all I’m the best.” The rustling wind was now roaring. I began to hear whispers in it, dark things speaking a language that sounded familiar but was unrecognizable. “And nothing like all the rest!” And just like that, there was immediate silence, the wind stopping.

“Oh Celestia, she miscounted the syllables!” Twilight screamed.

The last thing I saw was the look of absolute horror on Trixie’s face as she realized what she had done. Then there was an explosion of light and sound and I went down hard.

A note from your friend Discord...

Imagine my surprise when I saw such an explosion of raw chaos caused by such intense ambition. Let me tell you, I was quite surprised. It has been so long since any of the ponies had failed so spectacularly in making their own spell. Though to be fair, it had been quite a while since any of them even *tried* making spells.

But when I saw how badly this Trixie messed up, and took the time to study just *why* she did, I decided an... intervention of sorts was in order.

So I showed my true form in the arena, stopping time at the precise moment of the explosion, before it could do too much more to Trixie aside from almost completely obliterating her horn. Since there weren't many safe havens for me left in the overworld, I took her to a special place that was set up under the Everfree forest, a fastness of chaotic power that Celestia never found.

"Hm... To do this the easy way or the fun way," I mused aloud, setting the still-frozen Trixie on the floor of the ever-changing cavern. "Well, the deal says no trickery, so I suppose I'll have to do it the easy way. No disguises this time..." Though scaring her with an alphyn *would* be fun...

But no matter. I stepped out of the light for a moment, disappearing from view, and snapped my fingers to wake Trixie up. She jerked free, flinching away from the expected pain that never came, though she had to feel that she didn't have a horn anymore. "W-where is Trixie?" she fearfully asked, looking around. "And... WHY CAN'T TRIXIE DO MAGIC?!" One of her hooves lifted to her head, feeling around for a horn that was no longer there. "Oh Celestia..." she whispered, her eyes going wide.

"I'm afraid you made quite a large mistake, my dear," I said, not stepping out of the darkness.

"Who's there?" she demanded. "Trixie orders you to show yourself!"

"Oh, and I *would* obey, but I fear I would give you quite a fright. Needless to say, it was I who saved you, though I fear that I did so a second too late."

"What do you mean?"

"Your horn, your magic... They have both left you, Trixie." She flinched back, closing her eyes. "But I can change that."

Her eyes both jerked open in wonder. "You can?" she asked, overjoyed. Remembering herself and her haughty attitude, she added, "Do it!"

"Now why should I go and do that? What would *I* get out of it, after all? And of course, what's to stop you from making the same mistake again?"

"If you will not help Trixie, she'll find somepony who will!"

Oh, *'somepony'*. How I despise Celestia for doing that. "Who's to say I won't help you? You just have to make it worth my while. And of course, you needn't worry that I won't do the same for you. With my offer comes as well the offer of training, to show you how to truly overpower Twilight Sparkle and show her who the master of true magic is."

"...Trixie is no student!"

"Yes, and Trixie is also a loser, who lost to Twilight twice in a row. What does she have

that you do not?"

"Trixie doesn't need to hear this!"

"Oh, but you do. Twilight has a *teacher*, Trixie. A pony that knows more about magic than you ever will... without help. And once again, I can be that help you need. For a price."

She grit her teeth and turned away.

"Or I could return you to your existence of suffering, missing a horn and certain to be arrested for performing illegal magic. Oh, you would have some minute satisfaction from watching Twilight and her human suffering from the effects of your miscast spell, but they will be fixed and you would suffer all the worse for it. Instead, I offer you my assistance. Choose."

"...Trixie is listening," she answered without turning around.

In my dark corner, I smiled. "First, introductions are in order," I said, stepping from the shadows. She turned to face me and gasped in horror at my chimeric form. "I am Discord, Lord of Chaos," I said with an overly theatrical bow.

"What... what *are* you?" she whispered, stepping back.

"I am a monster, a villain, and the one that will teach you how to defeat Twilight Sparkle. But first, your horn..." She flinched back as I lifted my talons, but was too afraid to say a word as I brought them to her head.

With but a thought, I restored her pointless horn, though I added a small bit of flair to it. Instead of her normal spiralled horn, chunks of the original hung above her head, as though trapped in a lava lamp shaped like a horn.

"What... what did you do to Trixie's horn?" she asked, going crosseyed to look at it.

"Just giving you my mark," I replied with a smile. "It won't be the only change, though the others will be more gradual. And now we begin your true training, Trixie Lulamoon."

"...Trixie is ready, Discord," she slowly answered, not quite sure what to think.

My smile deepened, since I knew that I had won. *Oh my, what fun we will have together, you and I. What fun indeed...*