

Chapter 3 - Of Books and Burritos

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain that rained from the heavens fell on my face and obscurified the single tear that fell from my eye. My reason to be - gone in an instant. I was so sad. I cried another single tear. Then, suddenly, from behind me came a familiar voice - a voice I couldn't believe was there but actually was!

"Reader Projection! I'm here for you!" it called. It wasn't. It couldn't be. I couldn't believe it. I turned around. It was! It could be!

"Oh, Unrealistic Fantasy! You're alive!" I called back ecstatically and joyfully. We rushed together into a passionate embrace, horns touching as we cried our thanks to dearest Celestia. A single moonbeam broke through the clouds, illuminating-

Blueblood snorted as he closed yet another book. The selection at Ponyville's only library was nothing short of atrocious. After the purple unicorn had left him alone earlier that morning, Blueblood had busied himself by sorting its catalogue into three categories. A small stack of books beside him represented works he was interested in reading, and a larger stack beside that was made up of books he had already read in one of Canterlot's many royal libraries. Apart from both of them, in the center of the one-room library, Blueblood had built a large and remarkably accurate scale model of Canterlot Castle out of the books he had skimmed briefly and judged to be complete garbage.

He rubbed his muzzle with one of his forehooves absentmindedly. *It's not so bad, I suppose*, he thought. *Even the worst of these sad excuses for literature is better than manual labor.* The librarian hadn't asked him to do much; she hadn't asked him to do anything at all, really, only to help anypony who came looking for books. Blueblood was not surprised in the least when this turned out to be almost nopony at all. He cast a critical eye over the bookshelves before resting his gaze on the small collection of worthwhile books he had set aside. Shrugging to himself, Blueblood levitated the topmost book, an encyclopedia of rare flora, over to his desk, opened it to a random page, and began to read.

Poison joke is a small blue flower that causes a unique biological reaction when applied externally to a pony's coat. Unlike most poisonous plants, poison joke does not cause rashes, sores, or other typical injuries. Instead, it plays what biologists are tentatively referring to as "pranks" on anypony that comes into contact with its toxins. These pranks vary wildly and appear to manifest in ways determined by the afflicted pony's personality. CAUTION: Though external exposure to poison joke is ultimately harmless, the plant acts as a powerful hallucinogen when ingested. Hallucinations caused by poison joke are extremely powerful, seem to be based on the afflicted pony's innermost thoughts, and are always unpleasant.

He was so focused on his reading that he didn't notice when someone opened the door on the other side of the room and entered the library. "Hey, Twilight," called a distinctly male voice

from behind the replica of Canterlot Castle. “I know you said to go have fun today and not to come back until at least six, but I need you to give me another moustache; the doughnut shop doesn’t card when-Oh, for crying out loud, Twilight, I thought we were done with this. Look, I know you get a little overexcited when you start researching architecture, but this is ridiculous. Do you have any idea how long it takes me to clean these things up? I swear, one more time and I’m telling everypony in Ponyville what you say about Isaac Neighton when you’re asleep, just you-” Blueblood coughed. “That-That wasn’t...You, uh, you’re not Twilight, are you?”

“Correct.”

Blueblood heard a groan from across the room. “Just promise you won’t-” the voice was cut short as a small purple dragon walked into Blueblood’s line of sight, then stopped abruptly. “What are *you* doing here?” Blueblood was not sure whether he was more surprised by the dragon itself or by the intense look in its eyes.

He raised an eyebrow. “I’m sorry, have we met? I’m fairly certain I would remember meeting a baby terra wyrm.”

The look of anger upon the dragon’s face disappeared, replaced by confusion. “Yeah, well, I-um...a what?”

“A land dragon,” said Blueblood enthusiastically. “Your species is quite rare, you know. And fascinating, I might add. You developed magical fire, such a complex mechanism with so many functions, with no clear environmental impetus; it’s nothing short of remarkable.”

“Well, yeah, I *am* pretty awesome, huh? Seri-” his eyes narrowed. “Wait a minute, flattery’s not gonna get you off the hook for what you did.”

“What I did?” Blueblood thought for a moment and sighed. “I suppose you’ll have to remind me; I’m quite at a loss.”

“You took advantage of the most beautiful pony in Equestria! You made her miserable on what should have been the best night of her life!”

Blueblood buried his face in his hoof. “Oh no, not *this* again. I had nothing to do with that, and don’t let anypony tell you otherwise. It’s vile slander and nothing more.”

“What? Of course you did, the only pony with her was-”

“Look, I’ll let you in on a secret. Security at the castle is bad. Not just bad, abysmal. We have guardsponies that sleep with their eyes open on duty. The fact of the matter is it would not have been difficult for some blackguard of a paparazzi to sneak into my room, set up some well-hidden recording equipment, and come back for it the next day.”

“I know all about the castle’s security, what does this have to do with-”

“I don’t know why the Grand Duchess of Trottingham thinks it was me, anyway. *I* certainly didn’t want anypony to see that video, my performance was...um...less than perfect.”

“That’s not what I’m talking about!” shouted the dragon.

Blueblood coughed. “Um, ah, yes, of course. What...um, what were you talking about?”

“The Grand Galloping Gala! You made it the worst night of Rarity’s life!”

“Rarity...” Blueblood trailed off, lost in thought, then shrugged. “I’m sorry, you’ll have to refresh my memory, which one was she? Every gala I have to deal with so many gold-digging trollops, they all sort of blend together, you understand.”

Veins began to pop out under the dragon’s purple scales. “Rarity’s *not* a tr...um, a troll...whatever you said! She doesn’t need your money, she’s got plenty, and even if she didn’t, she’s way too classy to be a gold digger. She’s the Element of Generosity, one of the best ponies I’ve ever met. She helped defeat Nightmare Moon *and* Discord! What have *you* ever done besides sit in a castle on your over-privileged flank, huh?” He emphasized this by jabbing a claw in Blueblood’s direction.

Blueblood scowled. “Oh, spare me. I know those stories. She cut off her tail and dug a boulder out of a rock wall. How heroic. Now, you ask, what have *I* done?” He could feel his jaw quivering as he spoke. “I wasn’t born in Canterlot, you impudent little brat. I’ve earned my place in the castle, don’t you *dare* question that.”

“Whatever, I’m done with this.” The dragon stomped upstairs, muttering to himself, some nonsense about how Blueblood would ‘get his.’ Blueblood, seething, turned back to his books. He attempted to go back to reading as he had been minutes ago but gave up after trying and failing to concentrate on the text for the fifth time. Once again, he surveyed the library, wondering how many bits had been wasted on terrible books. Suddenly, he had a magnificent, brilliant idea that was certain to improve the selection.

“No.”

“But-”

“*No.*”

“Whyever not?”

The librarian sighed. “The whole point of a library is that the books are *free*. You can’t charge ponies for,” she took a moment to reread the sign Blueblood had posted over the checkout counter, “bad taste and disrespect of culture.”

Blueblood attempted once again to explain his logic. “I really don’t see the problem. I don’t care if you slack-jawed hicks want to read tripe like,” he pulled a random book off the shelves, then rolled his eyes as he read the title, “The Lusty Argonian Mare, but there should be some consequences for having such a blatant disregard for what makes good literature. And with the increased funds you can purchase things actually worth reading. With any luck the improved selection in this athenaeum could make the barely-literate hoi polloi in this village slightly less ignorant in, oh, say, seventy years.”

The mare blinked, then caught sight of the open thesaurus on Blueblood’s desk. She shot him a disbelieving stare. Blueblood sniffed. “There are only so many ways to say, ‘filthy peasant,’ you know. One must keep up with his education.”

“Look. Prince Blueblood. I appreciate what you’re trying to do. Really. But this just isn’t how things work in Ponyville...or anywhere.” She paused. “I know you don’t like common ponies, but if you keep an open mind-”

Blueblood gave a derisive chuckle. “Please. Just yesterday I was humiliated by one of your friends, and I think the pink one wants to kill me. Even if not, keeping that beast of a pet is grossly irresponsible, to say the very least. The moral fortitude of you common ponies is clearly lacking.”

She pressed on regardless. “Okay, so we all got off to a bad start. But give them another chance. I talked with both of them today; Applejack’s really sorry and Pinkie...well, she doesn’t

want to kill anypony, I know that at least.”

“My every interaction with you rabble has been marked by unpleasantness. Why should I subject myself to you further?”

“For one thing, it’s what the princess wants.”

“The princess. Indeed.” Blueblood stared down at the floor. *Why is learning to cope with all this so blasted important to her? There’s no reason for it, unless...no. No. She wouldn’t. She can’t. Even the princess can’t undo a cutie mark.*

The purple mare cleared her throat, and Blueblood lifted his head up to look at her. “And also because half the problem is your attitude. We’re not out to get you, you know. All you have to do is kill your negativity. Maybe you could try thinking of cute little bunnies or something; that always makes me feel better.” Blueblood grunted in reply. “Are you even listening to me?”

Blueblood’s head, which had again drifted towards the floor, jerked upright. “Of...of course. Kill bunnies; think negative thoughts, I’ve got it.”

“Do you *want* to stay here forever?”

“You know the answer to that. You, and that ill-mannered dragon slave of yours, and the rest of this wretched town.”

“Well then you could help yourself by-wait, Dragon? You met Spike?” The librarian groaned and stamped a hoof. “Six o’clock. I told him six o’clock. How hard is it to come home at six o’clock? I should deal with this, just take your pay and leave early today. Tomorrow you’ll be helping Fluttershy. Ask Pinkie where to find her. And for the love of Celestia, be careful; she’s sensitive.”

Before Blueblood could reply, she had hoofed him a small bag of bits and pushed him out the door. He shrugged. *Some luck at last. Now I don’t have to hurry to my dinner engagement with the Spoons and the Tiaras.*

A few hours later, Blueblood sat in what he had been assured was the finest Mexicoltan

restaurant in Ponyville. Something about the atmosphere of El Caballo con Hambre, however, made him feel uncomfortable and more than a little out of place. He was unable to put his hoof on what exactly it was until their waiter approached the table, dressed in a giant taco suit. “Bienvenuto al Caballo con Hombre,” said the adolescent colt, his voice cracking. “Can I start you folks off with some drinks?”

Emerald Tiara spoke first. “I’ll have a dandelion maregarita.”

“That sounds lovely. Bring one for me too,” said Golden Spoon.

The waiter gave a quick nod. “And for you gentleponies?”

“I’d like a mug of Dos Equines,” said Onyx Tiara.

“And I as well,” said Platinum Spoon.

Blueblood frowned. “Just water.”

“And for the girls?” asked the waiter.

“We both want iced tea,” said Diamond Tiara. Silver Spoon nodded her assent.

“Great. If there’s nothing else, I’ll go back to the kitchen and get those drinks started.” Onyx and Emerald nudged their daughter.

“Actually,” said Diamond Tiara, “it’s our birthday.”

The waiter smiled. “Oh, well congratulations to you and your friend. I’ll make sure to tell the chefs.”

“Oh, not just us two. It’s all of our birthdays.” Onyx, Emerald, Platinum, and Golden all beamed at the little filly.

“...All of your birthdays?” asked the waiter, his face falling.

Blueblood cleared his throat. “Ah, no. It’s not my birthday.”

“Right, then. Six birthdays. I’ll get your drinks and tell the cooks about your free desserts.” said the waiter in a flat tone.

After he left, Emerald Tiara turned to Blueblood. “You should have just gone along with it. I mean, we can afford to pay, but free is free, am I right?”

“The Prince of Equestria shall not impugn his honor by telling untruths, not for anything, and especially not for something so insignificant as a free dessert.” The others looked at him strangely.

“That’s admirable, I suppose,” said Onyx after a long silence. “Tell us, did you learn that honesty from the princess? It must be incredible living right at the seat of royal power.” Everypony’s eyes lit up at the mention of Celestia.

“Oh, yes,” interjected Platinum. “You simply *must* tell us all about the princess.”

“No. My father taught me that.” Blueblood paused. “He was...a truly great stallion, perhaps the best I’ve ever-”

“Mmm, yes, fascinating. But what of the princess?” insisted Emerald.

The waiter returned before Blueblood could answer. “So, have you decided what you want to eat tonight?” he asked as he hoofed out everypony’s drinks. The others ordered one by one until it was Blueblood’s turn. “Quiero dos de sus enchiladas especiales y una ensalada de verduras frescas. Y sin queso, no puedo comerlo.”

“Sir, this isn’t that kind of restaurant. We don’t speak Spanish,” said the waiter from behind a facehoof.

“Ugh. Very well,” said Blueblood, grimacing as he read off the menu. “I would like ‘The Enchiladas de las Two Amigos’ and ‘Super Saúl’s Superb Salad.’ And make sure there’s no cheese on any of it; I’m lactose intolerant.”

After the waiter returned to the kitchen the others continued probing Blueblood. “You’re lactose intolerant?” asked Platinum. “Well, I suppose dairy-free meals would be no problem at all in the castle. The princess must be able to get her hooves on any food she wants.” A greedy look came into his eyes. “I wonder what her favorite foods are...ah, but you must know, right?”

“No. Not really. We almost always eat our meals separately,” said Blueblood curtly.

“I imagine she’s quite busy, hmm?” said Golden Spoon.

“Yes. Always busy. Always.”

“Oh, indeed?” said Onyx. “So is there room at the castle for capable advisors, ponies who could help lighten her load? You know, I’ve always said how much I’d like to be in a position to do more for Equestria. If only somepony were to connect me with the right ponies, I could do so much for our princesses and for the realm.”

“You do always say that, dear,” said Emerald. “If only there was some way for your dream to come true.”

Diamond Tiara furrowed her brow. “But you said you were going to make a good impres-” She caught the look her parents were giving her. “Oh! Um, I mean, yes. If only.”

Blueblood put on the urbane smile he always wore when other ponies thought they were manipulating him. He had been expecting this, of course. Interactions with the petty nobility that did not involve ponies trying to use him to gain influence with the royal family were rare. What did surprise him, however, was the Tiaras’ sheer lack of subtlety. “A noble goal,” he said solemnly. “If only more ponies in Canterlot shared it.” *There must be something in the water supply*, he decided. *How else could an entire town be so appallingly uncouth?* He pondered the feasibility of importing water bottles from Canterlot until the weight, or lack thereof, of his coin purse reminded him of his limited resources.

The rest of the night went much the same, interrupted only by occasional visits from the waiter. Towards the end of the evening, he brought out six plates of desserts. He was about to leave when Silver Spoon stopped him. “Wait! We want to hear the El Caballo Birthday Song!” Glowering and with some reluctance, he sang a vapid little tune while hopping around in the taco suit. The Tiaras and the Spoons then made him sing it five more times, once for each of them. If Blueblood had to use one word to describe the performance, he would have chosen “unenthused.”

When everypony had finished eating and the bill had been paid, Blueblood’s hosts said a few polite goodbyes and left the restaurant. Blueblood himself, however, stayed behind. The waiter, who had come to bus the table, muttering something about the lack of a tip, groaned when he saw him. “What do you w-er, that is, what do you need, sir?”

“Tell me, how much would those six desserts have cost if they weren’t free?”

“Eighteen bits.” He hesitated, then added, “But better to lose eighteen bits than to get on

the bad side of the two most influential families in Ponyville.”

Blueblood hadn't been listening; he was busy with the money he had made earlier that day. Without a word, he counted out eighteen bits, set them on the table, and walked out the door.

Blueblood's stomach protested violently against the greasy meal he had just eaten for the entirety of the long walk to Sugarcube Corner. By the time he made it there, the only thing he wanted was to sleep it off in peace. There was, of course, another pony at the bakery who would do everything in her power to keep that from happening.

“Hiiiiiiya, BeeBee!” He cringed as he felt her syrupy-sweet voice hit him like a buck to the gut.

“That...creature...is locked up, correct?”

“Oh, no, I couldn't do *that* to poor Gummy. He's waaay too sensitive to be locked up in an itty bitty cage all by his ittle-wittle lonesome self. I gave him to Fluttershy; I know she'll take the *best* care of him until you get used to him.”

“So long as it's gone. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll be off to bed.”

“Wait! You can't go to sleep yet, you haven't had the most important meal of the day! How can you sleep without dessert in your tummy?”

“It's simple. You lie in a bed, then you close your eyes. And for Celestia's sake, you *be quiet!*”

“Aw, *that's* no fun! Look! I made some yummy, delicious, taste-acular sorbet!” she said, pulling several bowls out of a freezer.

Blueblood felt his mouth watering despite himself. “It has been a number of days since I've eaten anything appetizing and befitting my stature...I suppose I could stay awake for another fifteen minutes or so. How much?”

“Oh, there's tons of it! There's cherry and orange and lime and-”

“No, no, I meant how much money do you want for it?”

She cocked her head to the side. “Money? Don’t be silly, I didn’t make this for you to pay me for it.”

“Well, what *do* you want for it? A position at the court, an autograph from the princess, what? Spit it out.”

“I just did you a favor; why would I *want* anything for it? What kind of friend would I be then?”

“F-Friend? *What?*”

“Well, *duh!* What else do you call a pony who sleeps in your house and parties with you all night?”

Blueblood opened and closed his mouth several times before he found his voice again. “I’m afraid there’s been a terrible, terrible mistake; the institution of friendship is-”

She giggled that infuriating, already all too familiar giggle. “Oh, BeeBee, you really don’t get out much, do you?” Blueblood refused to dignify the question with a response. “Aw, that’s okay, Pinkie Pie’s gonna show you how to loosen up, I promise! Cross my heart, hope to fly, stick-”

“I don’t need help from anypony,” interrupted Blueblood, bristling. “Most especially not from a commoner pony with an uncountable number of loose screws.”

She giggled. Again. “Pssh, don’t being silly; ponies don’t have screws! Now, Sugarcube Corner has screws, and I think some of *them* might be loose, but I don’t see what that has to do with anything. Oh! And nails, too, Sugarcube Corner definitely has a few loose nails. Just yesterday I stubbed my hoof on one and got a-”

“Do you listen to yourself speak?”

“Well duh, I have ears, don’t I? Of course I hear everything I say,” she gasped. “Unless I talk in my sleep! Beebee, do I talk in my sleep?”

The prince did not hesitate to seize the opportunity that had just presented itself. “I don’t

know; I always fall asleep before you. Perhaps we could test it tonight, but only if you went to bed early...say, a half hour from now?"

"Why wait that long?" she asked, at which point she tipped several bowls of sorbet into her mouth and swallowed them in one gulp. Without skipping a beat she then bounced up the stairs and down the hall. By the time Blueblood had followed her to their room, she was already fast asleep and blessedly silent.

He allowed himself a small smile. *She doesn't sleep-talk...I have an entire night of peace and quiet!* His smile grew wider. *Perhaps more; one night is hardly sufficient sample size for a proper experiment. And tomorrow...Shudderfly, was it? The yellow one. Something about animals. That should be easy.*

It wasn't.

Quick note about the Spanish:

El Caballo com Hambre = The Hungry Horse

Bienvenuto al Caballo con Hombre = Welcome (the real word is bienvenido) to the Horse with Man

Questions? Comments? Criticism? Hate mail? Go ahead and send it to lowestcommondenominator.m@gmail.com or, alternatively, contact me on [Fimfiction](#) or [Deviantart](#). I appreciate your input.

As of now I am looking for a small group of people to help edit future chapters; if you have some experience writing and/or editing and would be interested in helping, please contact me. Thank you, and thanks for reading.