

# You Bet Your Flank (Chapter 2)

## By TenchiFreak5

“So, basically, Trixie needs you to take Rarity out of the contestant lineup. This is perfect, because now it should be simple to make. Three potential candidates, three potential positions to be filled.” Trixie said matter-of-factly to her assistant. She had found him dropping off some wet towels with the wardrobe department and dragged him into the pantry the studio used for catering. Or, rather, *used* to use for catering, back when the studio still did radio specials. Not having been used for its intended purpose for some time, it had been turned into a glorified storage closet, filled with empty cardboard boxes and old stage equipment.

“But I’m already done making it. I’ll have to start from scratch” protested the colt.

“No matter. And when you are done with that, Trixie needs you to make changes to the computer that asks the questions.”

“What! I can’t do both! I’ll get caught for sure.”

“Executive Producer. You’ll be fine.” Trixie reminded him, pointing to herself. “Trixie wants you to change the type of questions you ask each contestant. Applejack is a farming pony, so she should only get questions about things like computers” she said, waving her hoof in the direction of the control room for the show. “Rainbow Dash is an athlete, so Trixie wants her to get those questions about quantum mechanics that we assembled for the Genius’ Tournament next month. And Twilight Sparkle is a bookworm in an almost literal sense, so Trixie wants her to get questions about popular culture or sports.” She noticed that her assistant was doing a bad job trying to keep a smirk from spreading across his face. “What is it?”

“I’m just surprised. This is actually a really devious plan. What did these three ponies do to make you so mad?”

“None of your business. Now, for the final round, Trixie wants you to change it so the machine only takes questions from the hardest category, regardless of the betting level. Can you handle that?” She finished, turning around to leave normally this time.

“Yes, but are you sure I won’t get in trouble for this?”

“Of course not.” She replied. *So long as you do it right.* “Trixie wants an update on your progress with her task before the show begins.”

The colt prepared for the smoke bomb once again, but was surprised when Trixie instead just trotted out of the room. *Sure, when we’re in a room full of old boxes she doesn’t do it, but when we’re around sensitive equipment she makes the room look like we’re on stage with a mane metal band from the ‘80s.*

He was so lost in his thoughts comparing Trixie’s typical theatrics to those of bands like Van Hoofen that he didn’t notice the cardboard box sneaking around in the corner of the room, four pink legs sticking out underneath.

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The potential contestants were lined up in front of the stage, awaiting the announcement for who would be on the show.

Applejack was disgusted with how she looked. She was covered with makeup to hide her freckles, and her mane and tail had been brushed out rather than put in her preferred ponytail style. She hadn’t felt this out of touch with herself since she had moved out here with her aunt and uncle all those years ago. *Horseapples! Why did I ever agree to do this? As soon as the word ‘Manhattan’ came up I should have put my hoof down. Still, could be worse. I could be Rainbow right now.*

Rainbow Dash was unhappy, and she wanted everypony to know it. The makeup department had went through serious trouble getting her normally untamed mane to stay in place, ultimately resorting to using hairspray to keep it smooth. It made her entire head feel like it had a particularly poor-fitting (and itchy!) hat on her head, and it made her tail weigh twice as much as it usually did. *Still, it could be worse. I could be Applejack right now.*

Twilight, meanwhile, had come out of makeup relatively “normal” by comparison. Her mane was brushed out to get rid of the ratty ends before being brushed back into place, and her

cheeks were touched up a bit to get rid of the slight bags under her eyes from being woken up so many times that morning; but otherwise she looked the same as she always did.

A producer for the show came up on stage and introduced herself. She was a tan, somewhat-older unicorn with a wispy orange mane and a clapperboard for a Cutie Mark. The three Ponyville ponies all guessed that she was probably around the same age as Mayor Mare was back home.

“Each contestant’s name is entered into the computer when they sign the release form. A complex random number generator selects each contestant from the list. Those who don’t win are given a free gift basket from ‘*Better Horse and Gardens*’ and a copy of our home game. Feel free to help yourselves to the craft services table located to your left. Does everypony understand?” She scanned the room for the nods of encouragement before going on. “Okay, I will be back in a moment with the names of the chosen candidates.” With that, she walked off stage behind a curtain.

The Ponyville ponies gathered around each other.

“Twi’, have you been able to figure out what’s goin’ on?”

“I’m sorry Applejack, but I just can’t put my hoof on it.”

“Don’t worry Twilight. Anything Trixie tries to pull, we’ll be ready for.”

“Remember, Rainbow, everypony promised not to do anything on purpose.” Twilight warned.

“Yeah, yeah.”

With that, the producer came back onto the stage, an envelope floating in front of her. She stepped back to her former position, opening the envelope and taking out a sheet of gold paper.

“Okay, all three names for the contestants written here on this piece of paper.” She stopped, pausing for dramatic effect. “Twilight Sparkle! You are the first contestant!”

Twilight was hit with a feeling of euphoria. *I’ve never won anything like this before!* Even if this was just a prank being done by Trixie, Twilight was still going to get to be on TV and show everypony just how much she had learned from Princess Celestia!

*The Princess! That’s right! I bet she watches Trixie’s show. I’ll be able to show her just how much I’ve learned since I saw her last!* Her thoughts kicked into high gear at that

realization, and before she knew it she had brought her hooves up to start clapping,

“Applejack, Congratulations! You are the second contestant!”

Twilight froze mid-clap. She wasn’t sure how well she was controlling her face, but a quick glance at Applejack told her that the earth pony was feeling the same way.

*What’s that mare’s game?* The thought kept repeating itself in Applejack’s mind. *Putting us on TV sure don’t seem like a good way to try embarrassin’ us.* The seconds stretched on for what seemed like an eternity as Applejack looked to Twilight for reassurance. *If anypony can figure this out, Twi’ can.* Her heart sunk as she saw the expression on the unicorn’s face. *I only hope that the next winner isn’t...*

“And miss Rainbow Dash, you are the third contestant! Congratulations!”

Rainbow Dash, who had been busy chowing down on the donuts at the craft services table, had completely missed the reveal of the first two contestants. Upon hearing her name, she took to the sky in glee.

“Yeeees! I’m gonna be on TV. My name in lights... I can see it now.” She mimed holding a trophy in her hooves. “And the ‘*Pony*’ award for Best New Talent on Television goes to **Rainbow Dash.**”

The pegasus did a mock bow in mid-air, stopping herself when she noticed the amount of stares she was getting. Several nasty faces were directed at her from several locations around the room, but more than a few ponies were scratching their heads at the specific content of her faux paus. Rainbow Dash could swear she heard a few murmurs from the audience amid the silence. “*You Bet Your Flank* is a musical?” seemed to be a phrase repeated rather often.

Sheepishly, she lowered herself to the ground in response. Rainbow Dash looked to her friends for encouragement, but was surprised when she was instead treated with the looks of panic on their faces. She was about to ask them what was wrong when the producer continued her inductions.

“Let’s hear it for our three contestants, Twilight Sparkle, Applejack and Rainbow Dash. Welcome to ‘*You Bet Your Flank.*’ Come on up on stage so we can get you ready for the show!”

The three winners slowly slinked onto the stage, walking behind the producer and shooting nervous glances at each other, none of them having a clue what to make of the situation.

As the producer scanned the room she saw the typical emotions from the losers. There were plenty of signs of disappointment, and even some tears. As much as she enjoyed working with ponies and giving them a chance to be on television, she hated having to see what happened when they missed out. What she didn't notice, however, was that the winners were not expressing the typical feelings of joy she had come to expect and love from her job. They were actually all sharing a deep-seated feeling of dread, plain as day on their faces despite the various states of makeup.

*Oh Celestia!* The lavender unicorn thought to herself. *Was I wrong about this?*

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“Welcome, fillies and gentlecolts, to ‘*You Bet Your Flank*’, now officially The Colt Broadcasting System’s most popular show.” The sound of Trixie’s voice boomed throughout the studio. Twilight noted that it wasn’t coming from the speakers around the studio, but was actually being magically amplified by Trixie herself. Suddenly, the showmare herself appeared on stage amid an explosion of smoke and fireworks. “I am your host, the world-famous Great and Powerful Trixie. So without further delay, let’s get this game started.”

Twilight chuckled to herself as the crowd burst into applause. *Whatever Trixie’s flaws, she really does seem to be able to get a good reaction when in front of a crowd.*

“First, let’s introduce the contestants.” Trixie continued. “We actually have an all-Ponyville show today. Our first contestant hails from just outside of Ponyville at Sweet Apple Acres. Her role in society is, according to this card, ‘Bucking things.’ Give it up for Applejack!”

The crowd roared in a combination of applause and laughter at Trixie’s double-entendre. Applejack, to her credit, managed to avoid blushing so much that it could be seen through her makeup.

“Our second contestant also hails from just outside of Ponyville. She’s a weather pegasus that **usually** manages to do her job on time and without falling out of the sky. Let’s hear it for Rainbow Dash!”

The crowd broke out into applause and laughter again.

“Our final contestant lives right in the center of Ponyville. She’s such a bookworm, she even lives in a library. She studies so hard she’s even Princess Celestia’s personal teacher’s pet. How about a round for Twilight Sparkle!”

The crowd repeated their actions a third time. Twilight could swear she heard a pink pony in the back of the crowd near the exit laughing hardest of all.

“Now, the game works like this. At the start of the game, the first contestant is chosen at random by the audience. They are asked successive questions of increasing difficulty until they get one wrong. The first ten questions are worth 100 bits. The second ten are worth 200. The third ten questions are worth 300, and so on and so forth. If you get a question wrong, the pony to your left gets a question of the difficulty level they were on when they last went. To keep your winnings, you need to score at least 5000 bits by the end of the game. The winner gets a 500 bit. Second place gets 250 bits, and third gets 125 bits. In the event of a tie, the bonuses will be divided equally. Bonuses are given out regardless of if the contestants break 5000, though no bonuses are given if you end up with a score of 0 bits.” Trixie paused to make sure the audience had gotten all of the information.

“For the final round, there will be a question fielded to all three ponies. Before getting the question, the ponies must wager their winnings. You can wager up to 5000 bits even if you don’t have enough bits to cover the wager.” Trixie continued. She paused, for dramatic effect this time, and then looked at the contestants. “However, beware my ponies. The more you wager before you are asked the question, the harder the final question will be. With that in mind, let’s start the game!” Trixie finished her explanation by throwing up her front hooves once again; supplementing her body motions with another fireworks spell similar to the one she had used to start her magic show. The crowd’s applause was deafening, even louder than the one at the start of the show.

“Now, who is our first contestant?” she asked the audience, opening the envelope on her lectern. “Why, it’s Applejack!” She turned to the earth pony “Are you ready to play?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Good. First question” Trixie said, pointing towards a large monitor on the back wall of

the stage. “In the 975<sup>th</sup> year of the sun’s reign, this computer company was founded to sell software to International Baling Machines, better known today as IBM. You have 5 seconds.” Trixie finished, smiling with a grin that only the three contestants knew the real meaning behind.

Applejack froze. “Er...”

The studio filled with the sounds of losing horns.

“Trixie is sorry, Applejack, the correct question was Macinsoft. Probably shouldn’t be dipping into so many applejacks before coming on the show, eh Applejack?” Trixie joked, spurring the audience on. She turned again.

“Twilight Sparkle, are you ready for your first question?”

“Yes. Yes I am” Twilight responded, confident that her knowledge would help her overcome whatever tricks Trixie had planned.

“Good. Involving a basketball, this game is played by performing a maneuver, and then having the next player attempt the same maneuver. If the second player fails, they get a letter. If they get all the letters, they lose. What is this game called? You have five seconds.” Trixie finished, with the same smile as before.

“Er... basketball?” Twilight asked, the word completely alien to her.

The studio filled with the sounds of losing horns again.

“Oh, Trixie is sorry, Twilight Sparkle. The name of the game is ‘Horse.’ Didn’t Princess Celestia ever show you how to play? I have to imagine she would be quite good at the game...” Trixie trailed off as the laughter in the studio picked up once again.

She turned once more, this time to the final contestant. “Now, Rainbow Dash...”

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“Welcome, everypony, to the final round, where we are making ‘*You Bet Your Flank*’ history with a game where none of the contestants have scored **any** points! It makes me wonder what they put in the water down in Ponyville. Or is it that maybe they spend a little too much time around Applejack?” Trixie continued as Twilight thought to herself, the audience picking up

steam again at the double entendre.

Twilight scanned the back of audience, hoping to find Rarity and Pinkie to get encouragement from her friends. She quickly found Rarity in her spot right next to the back exit, but the spot next to the unicorn that had previously contained the energetic pink earth pony was conspicuous in its emptiness. Not getting the feelings of support she expected without both of her friends cheering her on, Twilight looked down at her lectern.

*The worst part of this, Twilight thought, is what she's doing to Applejack. All of the questions Applejack has gotten are ones where Apple or Macinsoft could both conceivably be the answer, so if she could just bring herself to guess something she might get one right. At least Rainbow Dash's questions are so hard that even I would probably mess many of them up, and it's my fault that I've never read about sports.* She looked back to Trixie, who was waiting for the laughter of the audience to die down. *Though it is somewhat impressive that Trixie still hasn't run out of jokes involving Applejack's special talent involving being inebriated.*

“So, how much will each contestant wager? Keep in mind that the more you wager, the harder the question will be. You have 10 seconds to decide.” The showmare explained.

The three friends exchanged nervous glances, and then nodded in understanding. They would all wager something small, a few bits, to try to at least salvage something out of the day.

As Twilight wrote her number down, she could swear that she saw Pinkie back in her spot from the corner of her eye, making winking gestures so obvious that ponies around her were beginning to stare.

“So, what did each of you wager? Applejack... wow, 5000 bits. We have a big spender here tonight!” The studio erupted in laughter as Applejack froze; looking down at her monitor as the three zeroes added themselves to the number Applejack had written. She swallowed hard and looked straight forward, not daring to glance at Twilight, and especially not Rainbow Dash.

“And how about Rainbow Dash? Oh, 5000 again? Look at how risky these ponies are with money they don't have!” More laughter from the audience as Dash's hair stood on end, shattering the hairspray holding it in place. Applejack gave her a look of understanding to try to calm her pegasus friend down, though Applejack wasn't surprised when it didn't end up working.



At this point, Twilight knew something was wrong. She didn't think that she had misread her friend's intentions, but they had still both gone all-in rather than the handful of bits she had expected them to bet. As she looked down at her monitor, she saw the 2 bits she had written slowly rotate 180 degrees before flipping over. As she stared in shock as the zeros started writing themselves in, Twilight failed to notice Trixie make her way to the lavender unicorn's lectern and start talking again.

"And now for Twilight Sparkle. What do you wager? 5000 bits from you too? Looks like we aren't going to have an easy question tonight" she finished with a chuckle, getting more cheers from the audience.

Trixie was beside herself with giddiness. Not only had all three ponies performed exactly as she expected, but they were going to go all in on a question she knew they couldn't possibly answer. *It's like they are committed to making as much of a fool of themselves as possible.*

"Alright, studio audience. It is time for the final question: 'What is Friendship'? You have 60 seconds." Trixie read off, fighting so hard to contain her grin that she failed to realize what she had just read. It was only upon scanning the audience's faces that she realized something was wrong.

She reread the card. She reread it three more times. *What is this? This isn't a hard question. This isn't even a real question! It's philosophical nonsense! The things asked on cartoon shows watched by young fillies and colts!*

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Twilight, Applejack and Rainbow Dash all shot nervous glances at each other.

*What is going on?* was the unspoken question shared on the faces of all three of them. Nervously, they each wrote down the obvious answer, none of them thinking it could possibly be the correct one.

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Trixie was panicking. *My carefully laid plans have been ruined, but how? That assistant! Eldorado or Colorado or whatever that foal's name was.* She had made sure that assistant had reprogrammed the machine to always spit out the toughest category of questions regardless of the final bet, but that shouldn't have mattered because all three ponies had bet the maximum 5000 bit amount anyways. And yet, now the machine was spitting out this nonsense? *Now I know why he didn't come and get me before the show. I'll have that idiot's head,* she thought to herself.

She heard somepony clearing their throat, and looked over to the producer. The entire studio was silent and unmoving but him, who was making blatant motions towards his watch and the camera. He clearly didn't know what was going on, but they might as well get the show done and figure it out later. Trixie got the message, and made her way to the closest lectern before the cameras began rolling.

“And welcome back to *You Bet Your Flank*. Going into the final round we had the unprecedented situation of all three contestants being tied for first, or more accurately, **last**, and we went on to the final question. The final question, which was” Trixie paused and cleared her throat before continuing “what is Friendship?”

“Applejack, with 0 bits and a bet of 5000 bits, what did you put down for what Friendship is?”

She motioned towards the screen as Applejack's answer lit up.

“Honesty. Friendship is Honesty. Trixie is sorry, that is incorr-”

Trixie was interrupted by the sound of the correct answer tone playing throughout the studio. She threw a panicked glance at her producer, who threw his front hooves up in the air in response.

“Er, Trixie apologizes. That is the **correct** answer.” Trixie corrected herself, beginning to lose control of the tone of her voice. “That brings your final point total to 5000 bits.” She finished, moving to the center contestant lectern.

“Okay, Rainbow Dash. With 0 bits and a bet of 5000 bits, what did you say Friendship was?”

She motioned towards the screen.

“Loyalty? Trixie is sorry once again, but that is-”

Trixie was interrupted again as the correct answer tone rung. *What is this? Two different answers can't both be correct? By Celestia, what is going on here?* Murmurs in the audience started to break out.

A quick glance at the producer confirmed her fears, as he caught her glare and broke out into a full gallop from his table behind the cameras to the door used by management located Stage Left. The message was clear: Trixie was going to have to deal with this mess on her own. As she composed herself she could swear she saw a bit of smoke seep through the door as it closed, but she ignored it and trudged on.

“Er, correct! And that takes you into a tie for first place with 5000 bits.”

Rainbow Dash and Applejack both shot Twilight a confused stare. She responded with her own.

Trixie was now completely at a loss for what was going on, but she continued anyways towards the final lectern. “So, Twilight Sparkle, with 0 bits and a 5000 bit bet, what did you say Friendship is?”

She motioned towards the screen, dreading what she would see.

“Friendship is Magic. Um, that is... correct?” Trixie guessed. The correct answer tone told her she had guessed accurately, though it was soon drowned by murmurs from the crowd.

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It had taken a good hour to clear out the studio after they ran the end credits. Trixie hadn't bothered paying attention to the guests as they filed out, but she distinctly heard the words “scandal” being repeated several times. *Great*, she thought to herself. *If nothing else, Trixie will probably be on the news for the rest of the week.* She stood at her lectern resiliently, watching as Rarity and Pinkie Pie joined Rainbow Dash, Applejack and Twilight Sparkle. She had never heard the pink earth pony speak before, but she could swear that every fourth word from her

mouth was some variation of the word “party.”

Twilight Sparkle caught her glance, and motioned for her friends to quiet down. She could tell the blue unicorn had something on her mind, and for all the trouble Trixie had put them through she still wanted to know what it was.

Trixie took that as her cue.

“I hope you’re happy. You ruin my magic show and drive me out of Ponyville, and then you come all the way to Manehattan to ruin my game show and attempt to drive me from here as well.” Trixie said, her voice breaking and eyes watering as she stormed past the surprised ponies, off the set and onto the adjacent stage where they filmed *You Bet Your Flank: Kids Edition*.

Rarity’s face contorted in fury as she opened her mouth to speak, but Applejack responded first. “Hold it just a darn second! I seem to recall gettin’ a letter from ‘The Great and Powerful Trixie’” Applejack said, pantomiming Trixie’s stage mannerisms as she said her name “practically demandin’ us to come down here an’ be on this show.”

Rainbow Dash went next “Yeah, and you ran yourself out of Ponyville when that Ursa of yours whipped your tail. We didn’t ask you to show up in town and start being a massive arrogant foal.”

“Rainbow Dash!” Twilight admonished, seeing this conversation start to derail itself so quickly. “Trixie **didn’t** bring-”

“Oh, you mean you had a problem with The Great and Powerful Trixie, a well-known traveling magician, coming to your backwater town and putting on a traveling magician’s show with all the typical trappings? Have you no shame? Trixie came to put on a performance and she was immediately heckled by the likes of all of you before I could... before **Trixie** could even properly start her show!” Trixie’s voice began to crack as she got out the last part, her tears starting to run down her face.

“Backwater!” screamed Applejack. “I’ll show you backwater. Come on, Rainbow” She beckoned to the pegasus, and they both began advancing on the crying unicorn. Trixie backed up until her flank bumped into one of the contestant’s lecterns, leaving her with nowhere else to go. She stared at the advancing ponies, the terror spreading throughout her body.

“Girls!” came a shout from behind the two threatening ponies as their tails were both

grabbed. They turned around to see not Twilight as they both expected, but Pinkie Pie pulling both of their tails.

The sudden escalation of the conversation had caught Rarity off-guard. Her expression softened, and she tuned out the rest of the conversation as she thought about what Trixie had just said.

“Pinkie, you weren’t even there when her dumb bear attacked the town. You didn’t even show up until after Twilight got rid of it. You don’t know what’s going on!” Rainbow Dash said, struggling to free her tail.

“Exactly, Rainbow. She wasn’t there when it happened, but I think she does know what is going on. She knows better than anypony what foals we all sound like.” This time it **was** Twilight, giving Trixie a look of sympathy as she spoke. “For that reason I think we need to hear what she has to say.”

Rainbow Dash and Applejack exchanged glances before they both motioned for Pinkie to continue.

“Well, girls, it seems to me that everypony here is mad at Trixie for something. She is a big braggy meany pants? Well, Rainbow Dash, remember when you were so worried about proving you could win a race that you knocked Fluttershy off a cloud and she landed on dark matter butterflies?” Pinkie Pie asked, looking at the pegasus with pleading eyes.

“I... yes?” Rainbow Dash started, not having any idea what a dark matter butterfly was. “But how do you know about-” was all she was able to get out before Pinkie continued.

“She is stubborn and proud? Well, Applejack, remember the Baked Bads?” The mere mention of that incident was enough for Applejack to recoil. “Trixie can hold a grudge, even without any fudge that gives her such a pudge that she can’t budge? Twilight, remember the Doozy? You got so mad you even turned into a Rapidash!”

Trixie was clearly confused at this statement, and she raised her hoof to question it, but Twilight waved her off.

“And Rarity,” Pinkie motioned to the white unicorn who plainly wasn’t listening. “Remember when you told Twilight that secret about being jealous of Fluttershy? And Twilight was all like ‘I gotta tell the secret,’ and I was all like ‘losing a friend’s trust is the fastest way to

lose a friend, FOREVER!' Well, you said sorry to Fluttershy in the end and you're still best friends. But to be friends you have to try to forgive mistakes, and you didn't want to forgive Trixie for hers."

Pinkie Pie reared up, ready to deliver the intended moral of her story. She looked upon the other ponies the room, building up the drama to an almost-painful point as they followed her every word. "And that is why I had to tie up Trixie's assistant and throw him in a storage locker."

Twilight looked around. While it certainly wasn't possible to completely decipher such a message when the messenger was Pinkie Pie, Applejack and Rainbow Dash seemed to have gotten the gist of it, having both sat down with a look of shame covering their faces. She couldn't make out what Rarity was thinking, but Twilight figured she could talk to Rarity later about it if she needed to.

Twilight could see that Trixie was having trouble overcoming the last part of Pinkie's explanation of the events, though, and decided to try her hoof at explaining things.

"I guess what we're trying to say is that we're sorry for acting the way that we did. You were trying to put on a show, and even though we didn't like the way that you were doing it we should have found a better way to express our feelings." Twilight explained. "Even when the odds were stacked against you, you attempted to help the ponies who had done nothing but cause you grief. And I guess we all think it takes a big pony to stand up for others. We only wish that you had explained your behavior to us better before you decided to escalate everything in response."

She paused, looking over at Rainbow Dash and Applejack so they would understand that the next apology was something they should hear as well. "And I wish I had explained what really happened to the rest of Ponyville before we came on this trip, because I think we've all come to some incorrect conclusions about you since the day you visited Ponyville. I know it wasn't your intention for Snips and Snails to bring the Ursa into town."

There was silence in the stage for several minutes as everypony in the room attempted to come to terms with what had been said. Applejack and Rainbow Dash both shrunk back from Trixie, trying to make their feelings of shame and sympathy known to the unicorn for threatening violence against her.

"Trixie is not sure what to say" Trixie finally spoke up, staring at the group before her with tears reforming in her eyes. "Thank you Twilight Sparkle. Thank you Pinkie Pie. Trixie is... **I'm** sorry for what I've done today, and I'm sorry for how I've acted towards you in the past. I guess I should have-"

"I have something to say." Rarity interrupted, finally breaking her silence and earning a glare from Twilight for doing so. "Hold that thought, Twilight." She trotted over to her saddlebags and ruffled around them for a few seconds, before removing a small package wrapped in a white plastic bag with the Hoity Toity fashion label on the front. She returned to the stage and held the package in front of Trixie. "This is for you. I have been... conflicted in my feelings about giving it to you, but how could I even pretend to represent generosity and withhold such beauty from its rightful owner? I simply couldn't. Your apology is sincere. Your feelings are sincere. I can see that now. And so I give this to you as a gift representing forgiveness rather than..." she trailed off.

Trixie fumbled with the bag, attempting to open it to reveal its contents despite the tears in her eyes. Finally, she was rewarded with a beautiful purple cloak with a radiant star pattern; far fancier and well-made than the one she had lost on that fateful day all those months ago.

"Thank you. It's beautiful. I... thank you." Trixie managed to squeak out, giving Rarity a hug.

Twilight finally got a good look at the cloak and gasped. "Rarity! Isn't that the cloak that you were making for Hoity Toity?!" She felt a hoof on her shoulder, and looked to see Applejack shaking her head. Twilight began thinking back to the events of the previous day, and the realization dawned on her. The four remaining friends joined Trixie and Rarity for a group hug.

Suddenly, Pinkie spoke up.

"Twitcha twitch! Twitcha twitch!" She exclaimed, looking at her tail with her eyes wide.

Trixie watched in awe as her new friends all dove for cover underneath pieces of the surrounding set, confused at the sudden change in the tone. She wasn't sure what to expect as they all shivered, looking up in the sky, but she imagined it wasn't anything good.

Her eyes caught movement from Rainbow Dash as she started to move from under the host's lectern where she was hiding to be next to Pinkie Pie under one of the cameras. However

in the process the pegasus tripped over the cables for one of the cameras and went tumbling into a large lever located just off stage. Trixie began laughing at the sight before her eyes when suddenly she found herself covered with a green gooey substance, at which point everypony else started laughing.

"Don't worry Darling; we will get you cleaned back up." Trixie heard somepony say between the giggles expressed by her new friends.

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It was the next day. Trixie had come to visit the five Ponyville residents before they checked out to return home. After expressing mild confusion about the door to the room looking like it was made from splinters that had been reattached to each other ("I LOVE puzzles!" was the emphatic yet completely unhelpful answer to the question when Trixie finally got up the nerve to ask it), Trixie had spent most of the morning helping her new friends pack their things together for the trip back to Ponyville, repeatedly apologizing throughout for conspiring to have them on her show just to make them look foalish.

While the ponies were enjoying lunch, Rainbow Dash had made it a point to apologize to Trixie for assuming the worst of her; and after some coaxing from Dash and Twilight, Applejack did the same. The six ponies had just watched the actual episode of the events that transpired the previous day when a thought came to Trixie's mind.

"What Trixie doesn't understand is how did Pinkie Pie know that Twilight Sparkle, Applejack and Rainbow Dash would answer the question with their elements?" Trixie asked the pink earth pony. "And how did Pinkie Pie know how to make it so the computer would make them all have the maximum bet?"

Trixie had gotten much of the background information regarding the incident from her new friends and her beleaguered assistant after she had tracked down the locker that he had been stuffed into, but many of the specific details of the Final Round incident were still confusing her. Of course, it didn't help that the assistant's most recent recollection of the events prior to Trixie



discovering him was that he had been attacked by what he thought was a box of oranges as he walked out of the control room to tell Trixie he had completed her final task.

“Oh, silly. I don’t know anything about computers. I just went in the room and turned the fire sprinklers on during the last commercial.”

“Oh, well that explains...” Trixie began, before realizing that one of Pinkie Pie’s explanations had once again only succeeded in making her more confused than she had been before she asked.

Twilight sympathized with the emotions being expressed on Trixie’s face. “Don’t worry, Trixie. You’ll get used to it.”

And with that the six new friends joined in what would be the first of many laughs together.

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Dear Princess Celestia,

My friends and I all learned an important lesson today: Always think about **why** somepony may act the way that they do before you judge their actions. Sometimes, if you take the time to get to know somepony, you just might find that they aren’t so different from yourself; and you may just make a new friend in the process.

Your faithful student,

Twilight Sparkle.

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*Author's Notes: So there it is. My first Pony fic. I had wanted to write one for about a month now, but I couldn't think of a overall plot to tie things together that hadn't already been done at least as well as I could have done. Came to me in a dream, I kid you not.*

*I'd like to thank the members of the GTP Bronies and Gerkuman from TSS who helped pre-read this for me. I can honestly say that it wouldn't be nearly as good as it is now had they not all helped catch some of the screwups I made in the first two drafts of the story.*