

“It’s Like a Cake”

A MLP:FiM Fanfiction

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Scene 7: Ghosts

(v2.2)

[\[To <- Scene 6: Into the Void\]](#)

The air was thick and humid as a heavy fog rolled over the town, and Twilight could hear the voices of her companions in the distance, indistinct and muffled, as if she were listening to them through a pane of glass. After dragging herself up out of the muck at the edge of the pond, she trudged through the reeds, re-emerging back into Ponyville proper.

The town was quiet. Still. A warm summer wind was blowing through the empty streets as Twilight entered into the town square, gazing silently around at her surroundings. Everything was... faded. It was as if time had come through and piled several years onto the town itself. Everything was in the exact same place as before, but the paint on the buildings had begun to crack and peel, and the windows had become clouded from sun and weather. Weeds had begun to overgrow the finely grazed streets, flower beds and gardens throughout town, and even the banners above the stands had become faded and brittle. The whole town **seemed to be** possessed of an otherworldly decay as Twilight walked alone, her friends’ voices carried on the wind as she searched the lonely streets of Ponyville.

What... happened? The town’s an absolute wreck! Did that... thing do this?

“Girls? Hello? Is there anypony there?” Twilight called, walking down the main street. Voices spoke, all throughout the town around her, but none were particularly close or distinct. She couldn’t tell who was talking, where they were, or what they were saying, and as she moved throughout the town, the sources of the voices seemed to move as if carried on the wind from some distant location.

This is crazy. There’s no one here! I’m chasing after ghosts! ...No. There’s no such thing as ghosts! Shadow monsters... maybe... What was that thing, anyway?! Some sort of spell, or an entity of some kind? Some demon... or... could it be Nightmare Moon? No, we banished her. But... it seemed similar some how. Perhaps, and if that’s the case, then... we have to tell the Princess.

Concerns about the safety of her friends (not to mention her own) began to gnaw at the back of her mind. She also noted that, every once in a while, she would catch a bit of movement out of the corner of her eye. It was just a flicker of white, disappearing as soon as she looked at it, but somehow it seemed to be steadily luring her about the village in slow circles as she wandered in search of her friends.

Remember, Twilight. No such thing as ghosts...

“Girls! Where *are* you?!” Twilight called again, panting a bit as she picked up her pace, jogging through the streets at a brisk canter as she looked from shop to shop, house to house. They *had* to be around somewhere! The voices continued and every once in a while she could catch what she thought was one of the other’s voices, hidden amongst the malificent, mumbling drone that was steadily growing in intensity all around her.

Rounding the next corner, she stepped into an alleyway behind a row of shops, stopping dead in her tracks as she looked down the narrow lane. In front of her, not more than a few lengths away, was an apparition. An ephemeral projection, taking the shape of a young pegasus mare, cast onto the haze in front of her like an inverted shadow. Lacking any depth, it stood, turned away from her, flickering in and out of existence as she looked on.

Perhaps it was her innate curiosity, or her scientific mind, she didn’t know. However, *something* compelled Twilight to get a closer look, and against her better judgment, she began to approach it. As she did, the image began to glow clearer, the voices pushing themselves into her ears, merging into some sort of abrasive static that began to slowly crawl its way into her head as she got closer. The muscles in her neck and shoulders began to tense involuntarily and the world around her seemed to pull out of focus as she neared the spectre, all her attention being drawn to it and it alone.

Her proximity seemed to carry with it the threat of physical pain, but just as she was about to turn away, the apparition slowly turned its head around to her. It was the mailmare, Ditzzy, looking at her with wall-eyed confusion. Slowly counter-rotating, the mare’s eyes met in the middle and focused, the spectre blinking before raising a hoof and issuing a slight wave to Twilight...

There was a rush, the wind hitting her like a tram, Twilight having not even noticed its absence in the first place. Staggering to the side, she barely managed to keep on her feet, steadying herself against the renewed gale. The image was gone, and the voices had subsided, replaced by the lonely howling of the wind as she quickly withdrew from the alleyway back onto the main road.

“...I hope we find them soon... it would seem that this whole place has gone *completely* mad, and it will *not do* to be separated...”

Rarity?

“Rarity. **Rarity! I’m here!**” Twilight reared up, shouting into the wind as she tried to figure out where exactly her fellow unicorn’s voice had come from. She couldn’t see her around anywhere, so running across the center of town, she made her way over to a group of produce stands and began to search around them for any sign of her violet-haired compatriot.

“Where *are* you? I’m over here! Rarity! Anypony! Can you hear me?!”

Twilight listened carefully, straining to hear any sound that could even be interpreted as a response: a shout, a cry, anything.

... ..

Nothing.

Twilight wilted a bit, giving a heavy sigh. Where could Rarity have gone? Her friends had to be around here somewhere... and then the static returned. The coat on the unicorn's back stood on end, a cold chill running up her spine as the caustic noise crept into the back of her head. Stepping away from the produce stands cautiously, she turned back towards the square only to be greeted by a wall of phantasmal ponies. They were present just as Ditzzy had been before, but Twilight had their full attention and they were glaring at her, their eyes looking on judgmentally.

The unicorn screamed.

Recoiling in horror, she leapt back away from the spectres, crashing into one of the fruit stands and spilling its dusty contents across the grass as she tumbled over the stacked baskets of oranges. Disoriented, she crawled away as quickly as she could manage. It was only after finding her hooves again behind one of the stands, that Twilight was able to take a deep breath and steel her nerves. After several moments of internal debate, she opened her eyes, half expecting something to be waiting for her/looming over her, when she did.

There wasn't. Just a bunch of bundles of browned old begonias.

Slowly peeking out from behind the fruit stand, she saw that she was once again alone. Twilight drew ragged breaths, slowly scanning the immediate area for any presence, friendly or otherwise. Once again, nothing.

*I can't take this. This is ridiculous! This has to be some sort of... dream or nightmare or **something**. Maybe I'm still in the road... maybe the teleport spell knocked me unconscious and I'm still out in a field somewhere. But what about earlier...? Was that all a dream? It seemed so real. And rolling down that hill.*

Twilight felt her muscles tense, the sore spots from her tumble down the hill near Fluttershy's house still quite fresh. Her coat and mane were getting rather stiff from the wind as well, and the muck from the pond was causing her to feel rather grimy all over as it settled throughout her fur.

Not to mention the pond. I couldn't have dreamt all that! What if...

"...it's all so wrong. There's nothing here... I... I... please, we have to find the others..."

Fluttershy's soft voice whispered in Twilight's ear, causing her to whip her head around towards its apparent source. Spying the top of Rarity's boutique above the roofs of the nearest line of shops, she didn't waste another moment. Breaking into a gallop, she ran for the Carousel Boutique, bolting through the streets of Ponyville at full speed. The whispers began to return, but she didn't dare look around, keeping her eyes ahead of her at all times.

After what seemed like several minutes, she arrived at the boutique. There wasn't anypony in the yard and the building seemed to be locked up, which was unusual, but Twilight

had to see if either of her friends were around.

With a gentle spark, Twilight coiled her magic around the door handle on the lower portion of the stable-style door and pulled, causing the door to flex a little, but not open. She looked around the yard carefully, turning back towards the door once again before another slight flicker caught her attention out of the corner of her eye.

Ignore it, Twilight. Just ignore it.

Her nerves were deteriorating rapidly, the lavender unicorn attempting to pull the door open once more. Nothing. Frustrated, she began to wrench violently on it, with her magic at first and then physically, pressing her hooves to the door and pushing on it forcefully, causing the whole thing to rattle loudly. However, it was no use and finally giving up, she fell back onto her flank, sitting down in front of the door with an exasperated sigh.

A sudden wave of voices descended around Twilight and a horrible, demeaning laughter broke out amongst them, swirling around the unicorn as she sat. She wrenched her neck to the side, her joints popping loudly as she did, glaring down the road before whipping her head to the other side to look in the opposite direction. The laughter continued, growing in intensity until Twilight got to her hooves and spun around to face the invisible peanut gallery, her hackles raising as her face twisted with rage.

"**What?!**" She screamed at the top of her lungs, her voice echoing throughout the deserted town. The laughing was silenced, leaving Twilight alone once more with the sound of the wind.

*It's... It's **mocking** me!*

"**Leave... me... alone!**" she screamed at the top of her lungs, a series of electric sparks arcing down her spine from her horn and into the ground. A second later, the dirt around her hooves erupted like a long string of firecrackers, sending up columns of disturbed topsoil into the air all around her. Twilight hissed at the hiding malevolence, gritting her teeth as she scanned the yard of the boutique. But there was nothing there, and as the anger drained from her, so did her resolve.

*I can't **take** much more of this...!*

"...Ah... Ah don't know jest how much more a' this Ah can take. Ah've got to find th' others before Ah go bonkers out 'ere."

Twilight perked back up at the sound of Applejack's familiar drawl. Was it another trick...? Did it matter? The unicorn took a few cautious steps out into the yard, trying to pinpoint where her friend's voice had come from. It was time to get serious...

Twilight shut her eyes, and drawing her energy together, her horn began to shimmer as she drew her power into it. A bright white ball began to coalesce on the end of her horn, and once it was of sufficient size, she opened her eyes again, her violet irises replaced by an unbroken white glow.

Shifting her perspective to the orb, it began to rise into the air above her, looking down upon the town to get a bird's eye view of the whole thing. Everything seemed to be in the correct location, if dilapidated. The sun was slowly heading towards the horizon, its gaze a hot white and somewhat uncomfortable at this point, casting suspicious shadows along the streets of Ponyville as its position gradually lowered.

Still... the town itself seemed to be completely deserted. No life. No motion. Nothing, save for the occasional windblown object rolling across the grass.

"...oh no. No no no. This is *not* good. Not good at all!"

Pinkie Pie?

"First everypony goes missing! And now things have gotten reaaaally ugly! If I didn't know better, I'd think this was a bad dream! But I don't feel asleep... Oh no, does that mean they're *here*?"

They?

Twilight's gaze scanned the town below. No luck yet, but she could hear Pinkie Pie as clear as day.

"I've got to get back to Sugar Cube Corner, and fast!"

The orb turned around to look down at the bakery, a flash of pink disappearing inside just as its gaze alit upon it. Perfect.

She felt her control begin to waver, her perspective faltering a bit as Twilight struggled for control over the spell. Her vision flickered, going out for a moment before returning to find another pair of eyes directly in front of her, black as night and twice as deep. The spectral pony roared with the fury of twisting steel and in response Twilight let out a loud shriek, a jolt of energy running up her spine as the spell's magic snapped back into her body, snuffing her vision out like a candle. Screaming, she stumbled back onto the dirt, crawling backwards as she pressing her foreleg to her face to cover her eyes. She could swear that they were melting out of her skull, but in spite of it, she tried once more to open them. She blinked; once, twice and again, her senses finally returning to her after a moment as she cleared the tears out of her eyes. Once again, she was alone.

Without a second to lose, she rose to her hooves and bolted off towards Sugarcube Corner. That's where Pinkie was, and if past experience had been any indication, that's exactly who she wanted to talk to. Pinkie always knew something, however obtuse it might be, and at this point she just wanted more than anything not to be alone.

Galloping to the bakery, she stopped just short of the door, noticing that it was slightly ajar. A sigh of relief escaped her muzzle and trotting up, she pressed a hoof against the door, pushing it open.

"Pinkie Pie, I'm so glad that you're here, I've been looking *everywhere* for somepony to—"

A jolt of electricity forced itself down Twilight's horn into her brain, causing her to screw her eyes shut as the shrieking white noise from before tore into her mind. She collapsed onto the floor, her hooves pressed against her temples as she tried to fight away the pain. When she reopened her eyes, she quickly wished she hadn't. The inside of the bakery had taken on a nothing but a vague representation of its contents: on her right there were lumps that could be cakes, pastries or little pieces of flesh for all she knew, set on what might be tables or perhaps conveniently shaped piles of garbage; the non-descript physical presence of the counter and cash register sat to her left, huddled in fear against the side wall with what were presumably a set of shelves cowering behind them; and ahead, an open doorway with twisting, turning hall beyond that seemed to stretch onwards into eternity. Everything around her was devoid of color or proper form, all of it flickering in and out of existence, vibrating furiously and refusing to be focused upon as the phantasms from before stared at her from every corner of the room. They looked as if they were screaming— shouting at her with some sort of unexplainable, unbridled hatred.

A great pressure began to push in on Twilight's mind, constricting it as she began to writhe on the cold floor, the horrible noises taking little bites out of her nerves. Her vision began to turn red, crimson seeping out of the monochrome static to start to cover the inside of the room as it began to contract and close in upon her, the specters begging to walk towards her as their faces bled, black and red seeping from their eyes and mouths like deep necrotic wounds.

She felt her muscles twitch involuntarily, knotting up and coiling angrily in protest. She wanted to scream, but her throat simply wouldn't respond. Either that or she already was and she just couldn't hear herself over the noise. It didn't matter, at any moment the pressure threatened to crush her and—

There was a sudden pop and Twilight's muzzle broke the water, the mare gasping for breath as she collapsed onto the bank of the pond.

W...what? No... I'm back here...? But how? I...

Slowly standing once more, she dredged the silt out of her eyes with a hoof. The voices of her friends danced on the howling gale once more as she crawled up out of the pond, a very alarming sense of déjà vu overtaking her as she emerged once more into Ponyville. The thick soup of fog rolled across the town, obscuring her view of the main road as the white gaze of the sun made it glow.

"...that just leaves, Twilight. Knowing her, she's probably hanging out in her library or something. You guys stay here, I'll be back in no time!"

Dash's voice spoke somewhere off in the distance. That was all five. There was no time to waste. Without a second thought, Twilight took off towards her home, running off into the fog as pond water and muck trailed off of her onto the ground. They *were* looking for her, Thank Celestia! Dash was heading back to her library right now, and knowing that particular pegasus, she had probably already arrived. She had to be there to meet her, before Rainbow's patience ran out and she left again.

Booking it through town, she was rounding the last bend when she came face to face with another creature. It was almost a blur, shooting towards her at a blinding speed. Its rose eyes were not more than half a length from her own as she skidded to a halt, letting out a frightened shriek as it stopped dead in the air before her. It responded in kind, falling backwards into a cart of hay as Twilight turned around and scrambled to get away once more.

"Twilight!" A familiar rasp called out after her.

The unicorn skidded to a halt, blinking and turning around to face the voice. Much to her relief, the pony crawling out of the pile of hay was none other than Rainbow Dash, looking a little disoriented as she batted the loose straw off her person with her wings, dusting her coat off like an old leather jacket.

Good as new.

Twilight's heart soared and she rushed back over to her friend to assist her.

"Oh Rainbow! Is that you?" She looked the mare over, poking her with a hoof to check for corporeality and general believability. That is, at least, until Dash started giving her odd looks. Noting this, Twilight stopped her prodding, taking Dash's mane and drawing her up out of the hay before smiling broadly. "Oh it IS you! Thank the stars... Dash, you have *no* idea how glad I am to see you!" she said, her horn flickering to life and drawing the remaining hay off of Dash in one large wad and depositing it back into the hay pile behind her. The pegasus gave a short nod, her wings flapping and pulling her off of the cart and into the air in front of Twilight.

"Same here! I've been looking for you *forever!* Where have you been, anyway?"

"I have no idea, I could hear the rest of you, but... Listen, I don't want to talk about it right now. It's just that something's *really* wrong here, Dash. ...Are you, okay? I didn't mean to scare you."

"Oh I'm fine, I just— scare? What? No. You didn't scare me! I was just... *startled*, that's all. I didn't expect you to come tearing around the corner like that." Dash's ever-present smirk settling back on her face. "I didn't think you could move so fast, Twilight. You get spooked or something? You should have seen the look on your face!" Twilight glared at Dash, not amused by the pegasus' comments. Still...

"Well... I've been having a rough time, so *excuse* me if I'm a little shaken up!" The unicorn gave a huff and began to trot past Dash towards the library. Her friend simply rolled her eyes and took to the air, floating lazily after her. It was only a few more seconds, though, before Twilight's analytical demeanor returned.

"Anyway," she began, "you said that you and the others were looking for me?"

"Yeah." Dash responded as she came up beside Twilight, hovering about half a height off the ground next to her as she walked along towards the Library. "See, I figured that you'd be here, so I searched around for a bit, but then I got kind of bored so I figured I'd head back to

Sugarcube Corner. That's where the others are." Dash pulled a flip in midair and fluttered down in front of Twilight, causing her to come to a stop. "I'm surprised you didn't head there. I've been flying all over town to try and find you! I was just heading back to tell the others that I hadn't seen you when I ran into you. Well, *almost* ran into you." Dash broke into a bit of a grin, but Twilight just gave her friend a firm nod in return.

"I don't know how I managed to miss you, but I could hear everypony's voices once in a while. I kept following you around, hoping I'd find you but... it just wasn't working out."

"Tell me about it," Dash huffed, "Anyway, we should probably get back to the others."

Gazing around her, Twilight took a moment to catch her bearings before nodding to Dash and turning to head off back towards the center of town, new theories beginning to form in her mind.

"Yeah... once we're back together with the others, we can try to figure out what's going on, and what to do about it... things seem to be getting worse.

...and if that's the case we're running out of time."