The afternoon train was not a busy one, much to Twilight's appreciation and Rarity's indifference. For it was that special time of the day when anyone who wanted to get somewhere had left already. The returning train to Ponyville and Canterlot was usually only laden with ponies come evening. Which meant Rarity and Twilight had enjoyed having an almost empty car to themselves, minus the one stallion sitting as far away from them as physically possible.

Of course, it hadn't started that way, but then again, a walking corpse tended to clear things out in a jiffy. Somehow, it got even worse when Twilight farted a few minutes ago. Strange, yet impressive in its own rather unpleasant way.

The polite stallion sitting alone gagged once, then swallowed hard, forcing down the bile in his throat. He glanced back at Rarity, who simply ignored his angry gaze. After getting no rise out of the target of his ire, he simply grabbed his things and stood up.

With a harumph of irritation, he turned his nose up and disappeared into the next car.

Twilight looked at Rarity with a raised eyebrow. "Well, I guess we are alone now." Her voice came out a little more nasally than usual, all due to the clothespin latched firmly over her nose.

"Your observation skills continue to astound me, Princess Twilight Sparkle," Rarity replied in a flat, even voice.

Twilight frowned. "You know, other than you getting snarkier, not much has changed."

Rarity rolled her eyes, literally. They didn't stop spinning for a few moments, which didn't seem to phase the unicorn much. "You don't say."

Twilight let out a little huff of annoyance. "Which is kind of interesting if you think about it. I mean, you seem awfully calm. Snarky, but calm."

The dead unicorn looked out the window absently. "Panicking wouldn't really help much now, would it, darling?"

The only live pony in the train car scratched her head with a hoof. "I guess, but you are kind of infamous for freaking out, so I just assumed this most recent development would garner a different reaction other than... well, this."

The unicorn stopped and looked back at the alicorn, her eyes narrowing dangerously.

Twilight gulped and held up her hooves defensively. "Well, you must admit you are, or were, a little teensy-weensy bit of a drama queen."

Rarity's eyes narrowed a little more. "Yes, I suppose."

Twilight's curiosity burned and she couldn't help but speak without thinking. "Why do you think that's no longer the case? I mean, if I had been told I was dead, doomed to live forever while watching my flesh rot off my body, I would have probably hyperventilated until I passed out." Twilight paused and tapped her chin with a hoof. "Wait a second, no I wouldn't, because I wouldn't have functional lungs. Doy." Twilight chuckled to herself.

The usually calm Rarity seemed to falter and her face twisted into a snarl, only for it to vanish within seconds.

"And another thing! What exactly was that?" Twilight frowned, pointing at her face with a hoof.

"I don't know what you are talking about, darling," Rarity replied before turning back to the window and ignoring the alicorn entirely.

"That thing you just did! You got super mad and then just poof, nothing." Twilight clapped her hooves together and separated them, looking at the empty space between them.

Rarity merely hummed in acknowledgment and rubbed her chin with a hoof, deep in thought as she watched the plains that stretched between Canterlot and Ponyville zip past her. "I don't really know, it's like I'm… Hmm." The unicorn paused, rubbing her chin with a hoof. "It's like when I'm angry or sad or about to freak out, I'm chasing a firefly only for it to disappear suddenly." The unicorn turned to Twilight, who sat across the aisle in the furthermost seat. "It's just they are here one moment and gone the next, leaving behind a strange calm."

Twilight frowned and looked away from Rarity. Not because she saw a chunk of Rarity's mane hit the ground. No, she was merely looking elsewhere in thought. Yes, that was it, in deep thought...

"Odd, I always thought that emotions were born from the mind and you are completely brain-dead. Rarity," Twilight stated quite matter-of-factly with a nod.

Rarity's horn glowed and a needle and thread seemed to appear from thin air, slowly coming closer to Twilight's lips.

The alicorn backpedaled. "I meant literally since you are dead. Your brain should not be operating, meaning there should be no emotion at all." The needle and thread came closer and closer and Twilight very nearly teleported to a different seat before the needle and thread zipped off to wherever Rarity had previously hidden them.

"I suppose," the unicorn stated simply, turning her attention once more back to the window.

The alicorn looked out the same window Rarity did and pondered for a moment. *Why did Rarity have emotions at all, dulled though they may be?* She put her chin in her hoof and rubbed it, trying to get her brain to work out some kind of reasoning as to why this strange anomaly would occur.

“Hey Rarity, what do you think?” Twilight asked inquisitively.

The dead unicorn frowned and continued staring out the window. “I don't have the slightest clue, nor do I care. It's kind of…” She trailed off, then added in a smaller voice, barely above a whisper, “Nice.”

Twilight nodded. “I suppose this turn of events might be nice since you were always so dramatic.”

Rarity turned back to the unicorn, waving her needle and thread menacingly at the overly blunt alicorn.

She just rolled her eyes. “You have to admit that you were quite the drama queen in life.”

Rarity’s anger seemed to boil for a moment before her needle and thread disappeared once more. “Hmmm.” Rarity muttered before turning back to the window and remaining silent for several long seconds.

The only sound was the train running along the track. Oh and the now quite incessant buzz coming from a growing horde of flies that had circled Rarity since Ponyville. “Have you ever thought that perhaps emotion is more tied to our soul than what we like to think?”

Twilight’s face twisted up in contemplation. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Well, think about it. If my brain is gone but who I am remains locked within my erm, remains,” Rarity gagged for a moment before continuing, “then would it be fair to say that a certain amount of emotion is tied to my very essence, or consciousness or the like?”

“Hmm, I suppose that’s possible.” Twilight’s eyes suddenly lit up and she turned to Rarity, a sparkle in her eye. “Rarity, I just realized that we have the perfect opportunity to test the relationship between emotion and intelligence and how one affects the other. You absolutely must let me run a few tests!”

Rarity’s eyes narrowed and she glared at Twilight who didn't seem to be fazed one bit. At least for a few seconds, then her smile faltered somewhat. “Just a few tests?” Twilight winced. “Just one teensy-weensy test? You could be helping ponies that have suffered brain damage to live normal lives!” she offered to the unicorn.

Rarity's glare wilted and she sighed. "If it's to help others then I don't mind. So long as it's not *just* for your curiosity."

Twilight grinned sheepishly. "It's not *just* for that but it certainly is a factor." She looked away, tapping her hooves together nervously.

Rarity grinned.

It was a pleasant realization, finding out her emotions were still there and her muse would not leave her forever. Initially, she had worried that her creativity would have fled along with her more powerful emotions, but they still seemed to be there, just more brief. Well, there was that and the fact that she had apparently remained as inspired even after her accidental transformation, so she had that going for her.

Which was nice.

Her smile slowly faded as the sensation of something falling off her head caught her attention. She glanced down to catch a glimpse of a chunk of her scalp, complete with a section of her perfectly coiffed mane lying on the ground amidst a steadily growing pile of similar pieces.

"Darling, could you dispose of this detritus?" Rarity gagged and waved a hoof over the pile of pony flesh on the ground.

"Oh yeah, sure. Should I just zap them or do you want tooo...?" Twilight leaned in, hoping Rarity would finish her sentence.

"You can't be serious, no, I do not want to keep the rotten bits of myself that have since fallen off my body and begun to congeal on the train floor."

"Okay, okay, yeesh." With a flash of Twilight's horn, they were gone.

"Wait, that looked like a teleport, don't tell me you just poofed that away randomly, did you?"

"Err no." Twilight gulped and looked away.

"Twiliiight, what have I told you about poofing things away for other ponies to deal with?"

The alicorn sighed. "That it is incredibly irresponsible?"

Rarity's frown deepened, which had the disturbing effect of making her bottom lip sag lower than what should be normally possible. Twilight quickly looked away.

“And just because I can, doesn't mean I should, but I didn't do that this time!” Twilight added hastily.

“So that wasn't a teleport I just saw, young lady?” added Rarity in a tone she usually used when her younger sister had done something childish.

“I'm pretty sure I’m a year older than you, but that's not the point! I designated a spot over an active volcano to which I zap things. It's the perfect disposal!”

Rarity’s frown lasted for a few seconds before it faltered and vanished. “Well, I suppose that's better than you teleporting your used tissues into other pony’s soup.”

Twilight threw her head back. “Augh, that happened only one time!”

“Twilight, by the time you were done with that cold, half of Ponyville was covered in your used tissues.”

“My point still stands, it was *only one* time!” Twilight straightened herself out and sat taller. “Shouldn't we be thinking of a plan to get you a new body and get rid of all, well, you know?”Twilight motioned a hoof over the rest of Rarity’s body, all in various states of falling off of her.

“Yes, well, first things first, we need to get to my Canterlot Boutique and zap away the rest of my flesh. Then it's simply a matter of making a doll version of myself and sewing myself inside. And voila, Rarity is back all in time to hoof deliver the princesses’ dresses.”

The dead unicorn struck a fabulous pose with her forelimbs extended and a huge smiling face. Although it initially inspired confidence in the live pony, it was ruined when a chunk of her skin came loose and fell down to expose a patch of rotting muscle beneath.

“Hurk.” Twilight spun and quickly grabbed a barf bag she had stationed nearby for such an occasion.

That left Rarity staring at her limb with disdain. “Oh, for the love of Celestia.”

Recalling her needle and thread, she quickly sewed the leg back to normal and smiled at her hornwork. Sure, it wasn't perfect, but she had enough forethought to bring thread the same color as her fur. Well, the same color as what her fur used to be before it became discolored by rot anyway.

“Are you quite done, darling?”

Twilight heaved one last time into the bag and breathed heavily, putting up her foreleg as if asking for a minute. After some heavy breathing Twilight nodded and poofed the bag away.

“Sorry about that, I may have a better stomach than most ponies due to my medical experience, but this is a bit much.” Twilight took another deep breath only to stop mid-inhale. “Sweet Celestia, I think I swallowed one of your flies.”

Rarity scoffed. “They are not *my* flies!”

“Well they are probably laying eggs in you by now, so I’d say they are yours.”

The dead unicorn huffed, only for her eyes to light up—literally—and with newfound horror look at the flies buzzing around her head. Thankfully the scream building in her throat vanished as some unseen force made her emotions return to normal.

Shaking her head, Rarity chose to distract herself from the disturbing bugs. “You said you had medical experience, darling? I didn't know that.”

“Well yeah, I mean, I have a doctorate and not in something stupid like aromatherapy.” Rarity blinked. “Wait, you didn't know I was a doctor? You’re probably my best friend and you didn't know!?” Twilight asked angrily, her voice alternating between confusion and anger.

“I always assumed you were joking,” Rarity replied quickly.

Twilight’s face screwed up into a mask of disappointment and anger. “Pinkie even threw me a big party for my second doctorate in theoretical magic, you were there!”

“Yes, well some of us do a little more pre-partying than you do. That whole evening is sort of a blur.”

Twilight blinked. “Pre-partying? Is this a Pinkie Pie thing? Because the one time I went to one of her afterparties, I woke up with a black eye, a tattoo, and in Mayor Mare’s attic. Which doesn't actually have any doors or windows I might add.”

Rarity snorted and wheezed, though it sounded horrific, it was probably an attempt at laughter. Seconds passed and the halting hoarse wheeze coming from the unicorn’s windpipe disturbed Twilight. If her friend was alive, Twilight would have rushed over to see what she was choking on, but that was kind of a moot point now.

“What’s so funny?” Twilight asked defensively.

Rarity’s wheezing slowly died down, which was probably a poor choice of words. “Nothing darling, some of us are a little better at holding our liquor than you.”

Twilight huffed and turned away to the window, she blinked twice when recognition settled in. “Oh hey, it’s Canterlot Mountain, we are almost there. We should get your disguise ready.”

“Yes, that would probably be for the best, do you need me to stand up?”

“That would make things easier.” Twilight stood up and pulled out a scroll filled with notes from her bags, running through the equations necessary to complete the spell.

Rarity in the meantime stood up and began sewing any loose flesh that seemed like it was about to fall off.

While Rarity inspected her stitching and body for more loose chunks, she extracted a shawl from her baggage and a wide-brimmed sun hat to hide the chunks of her scalp and back that she had lost already. Twilight nodded once and cast a quick glamour to hide what little Rarity could not and smiled proudly.

Though there wasn't anything she could do about the smell, she could hide pretty much everything else from sight. Twilight rolled her eyes and slapped a hoof to her head. With a quick burst of power, the flies were flash fried. “Well Rarity, I didn't think I’d say this, but you look great!”

“Why thank you dar— wait, what was that first part?”

“Nothing, hold on, I think you missed a spot.” Twilight recoiled in disgust, pointing to Rarity’s distended stomach.

The dead unicorn looked down and tsked in annoyance. “I know I have a bodice somewhere in here that would look—”

Shlop.

“Hurp.” Twilight turned quickly, vomiting all over the floor, barely missing her own hooves and baggage, rainbow-colored vomit splashing all over the ground.

Rarity however didn't notice and merely blinked and looked down at her stomach, that was now lying on the floor of the car. It sat there along with what looked like most of her intestines and a majority of her other formerly internal organs.

“Celestia damn it,” Rarity muttered.

“Celestia didn't damn you, you did, remember?” Twilight added unhelpfully, muzzle deep in a new puke bag. “Good thinking with the needle and thread, Rarity. We are going to have to sew up that hole in your torso. Wait, what are you doing?”

The needle and thread weaved through the air, closing in on the alicorn’s face like a shark circling its prey.

“Wait, let's talk about this, Rarity, you are going to need me to get you out of— No, not the face, NOT THE FACE!”

The immortal alicorn shrieked like a filly and ran around the train car, trying to dodge the needle and thread and the dangling remains of her deceased friend. Several hundred miles away and several minutes ago, two dragons had just settled into a nice semi-dormant volcano, perfect for a pair of dragons out on a date.

“Pretty sweet, huh?” Garble asked with a smirk, leaning closer to the female dragon next to him.

“I don't know about this, Garble. There was a bunch of signs and—” Garble placed a claw over the smaller dragon’s lips.

“It’s okay, baby, there is nodragon around and some namby pamby pony princess put up those dumb signs. What is she gonna do, come down here and nag us to death?”

“Well, I suppose it is kinda nice…” The female dragon smiled shyly and let the other dragon wrap his arm around her shoulder.

“Besides, if she does show up, I’ll be here to protect you. One blast of fire would send those pansy ponies back to wherever they came from.” Garble casually breathed a painfully average gout of flame in a show of strength.

The female blushed and bat her eyelashes at the male dragon. “Hehe, oh Garble~.”

Noticing his chance, Garble pulled the other dragon closer and leaned in. “Then after I scared her off, you would give your protector a big kiss on the—”

It was then that fate, karma, justice, and simple dumb luck combined with weaponized ignorance decided to rain on his parade, literally. Rotting pony chunks rained all over his and his date’s head, some splashing into the magma and filling the air with the smell of rotten burnt flesh.

“What the fuck is that smell?” Garble picked something off his head and nearly wretched at the sight of what seemed like somepony’s scalp, complete with perfectly coiffed, if a little rotten, violet hair.

Unfortunately, his date didn't have quite his level of fortitude and proceeded to vomit a mixture of crag rat meat and gems all over his chest. “Oh come on,” Garble grumbled.

Shaking his head, Garble quickly took a breath and dunked his head in the lava in order to cleanse himself of the filth. Something his date quickly did as well, screaming bloody murder all the while.

Once cleansed of the pony filth, Garble did his best to ignore the smell of charred and rotten flesh. Blinking twice, he spun in a circle. “Cinder? Where did you…” Noticing the other dragon striding slowly through the lava pit to its edge, he quickly began trudging after her. “Wait, just wait for a second!”

Cinder hesitated at the edge of the pool, she stopped reluctantly and turned around, arms crossed in front of her.

Before she could open her mouth to speak, Garble cut her off. “I know that was weird, but it was probably some dumb drake being a jerk. Why don't you come back in and later you can watch me beat the snot out of whoever did that?”

Cinder paused, the promise of wanton violence following a brief cuddling or makeout session in the lava pool did sound nice…

“I—”

Once again, someone was cut off mid-sentence by something disgusting happening, this time it was a small bag of vomit landing on the top of Gable's head and spilling its contents equally in all directions.

“Nope.” Cinder turned and walked off without another word, leaving behind a dumbfounded Garble standing there with rainbow-colored vomit dripping off of him.

Wiping away a portion of the vomit around his eyes, he blinked and looked at his hand with disgust and confusion. “What the? What kind of vomit is rainbow-colored?”

Picking the bag off his head, he looked down at the smiling stallion’s face on the front of the bag. “Dusk and Dawn Railroads?” As realization slowly dawned on him, he crumpled the bag in his claws. “PONIEEEEEEEEEEEEES!” he screamed to the heavens.