

The Mane Event

Part One

Twilight was peacefully reading in her study. It was the most relaxing thing in the world for her, spending a sunny, warm, gorgeous day inside, reading leisurely by the window. She could see the denizens of Ponyville trotting about outside, off on whatever errands they had to accomplish. She had been there for hours, whiling away the day in happy solitude. Little did this bookworm pony know her quiet world was about to get very loud.

"Twilight!" She heard a shout from outside, "Twilight! I need your help." A happy voice yelled as the door flew open. Twilight Sparkle turned to the doorway and saw her bright pink friend Pinkie Pie bursting into the room.

"What is it, Pinkie Pie?" Twilight asked sincerely. It was rare for her friends to just barge into her house, and more rare for this friend in particular to ask her for help.

"Well, you know how I've been together with Blues for a while, right?"

"Yup. Ever since I set you two up with that ice rink a few weeks back."

"Well, he's been really down on himself lately and kind of mopey and doesn't really want to go out and do things with me anymore."

"Right, well, his name is Blues, after all."

"But that doesn't mean he has to be so blue all the time! We do have fun most times and I'm really sure he just needs one really fun thing to break out of this...funk." Pinkie said, still talking in her usual rapid-fire style.

"What did you have in mind?"

"We-e-l-l-l!" She began, stretching the word for all it was worth. Twilight Sparkle got a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach as Pinkie Pie skipped a beat for one massive inhale.

"You know how you only had two tickets for the Grand Galloping Gala until you wrote to Princess Celestia and then she gave you seven tickets so all of us could go together? Well I was hoping maybe you could write to her again and ask if maybe pretty pretty please I could get one more ticket so that Blues could come with me too and I could show him how wonderful parties are and then he'll be happy again and everything will be alright."

Twilight Sparkle would have been stunned at the outflow of words that came pouring from the pink pony not that long ago, but she'd gotten used to Pinkie's speech patterns by now. Twilight hesitated for just a moment and began, "But Pinkie, that Gala's only two days away. Besides, I'm not so sure we should bother the princess again with—"

"Please Twilight?" Pinkie pleaded, twisting her face into her best pout.

Twilight heaved a defeated sigh. She was powerless against that face. It was the face that had convinced Fluttershy to sing, even though her voice had been altered by the Poison Joke. "Alright Pinkie, alright. I'll send Princess Celestia a letter asking for another ticket. I've just got to wait until Spike gets home."

"Ok, I'll go find him." Pinkie said and dashed out the door in a blur. She returned almost instantaneously

with the tiny dragon in tow.

“How did you do that?”

“Oh, he was just outside.”

“Yeah, I was on my way back when she grabbed me.” Spike said, “You could’ve waited like, ten seconds and I would have been here anyway, Pinkie.”

“Well ten seconds was nine seconds too long.” She replied. “So he’s here Twilight, write it!”

“Spike, I need you to take a note,” Twilight Sparkle began, giving her assistant time to grab a pen and some paper. “Dear Princess Celestia, I’m sorry to disturb you about this, but one of my friends is hoping to bring a date with her to the Grand Galloping Gala. Is there any way I could perhaps get just one more ticket? If not, I completely understand. Your faithful student, Twilight Sparkle.”

Spike finished his notation and frowned. “Are you sure you want to send this? I’m not certain Celestia would want a letter just asking her for stuff.”

“I know, Spike.” Twilight said, “But I promised Pinkie I would.”

“Yes, that’s true. You should send it!” Pinkie said, bouncing in place.

“Alright...” Spike said hesitantly as he held the note up to his mouth. He breathed a gentle stream of green on it and the letter disappeared in a puff of smoke. He stood for a moment and watched it go. “Now, it’ll probably be a few minutes before we get a response. In the meantime, care to tell me what this is all about?” Spike asked the two present ponies.

“I need a ticket to bring Blues to the Gala.” Pinkie Pie said, “And Twilight said she’d get me one more for him so he can go too.” Her cheerfulness could get on a pony’s nerves sometimes, but her innocent pleasure about such a simple task as sending a letter put Spike in a very forgiving mood.

“Well, I guess that’s a fair enough reason.” He said, “But if you needed another ticket, you could have just taken mine.”

“That’s very generous of you, Spike.” Twilight said, “But isn’t there somepony you want to impress at the Gala? I bet if we got you dressed up in a nice suit and hat, you might get that dance you’ve been wanting.”

“Twilight! I thought we were just going to keep that between ourselves. I really didn’t want others to-*Burraap*” Spike’s inconvenient burp signaled the arrival of Celestia’s response. He caught the paper in his hand and unrolled it quickly. “To Twilight, my most beloved pupil: I am very glad that your friend is learning about the other types of relationships available to young ponies such as yourself. I think it would be wonderful if you and each of your friends could find a special pony to bring to the Gala with you. To that end, I have enclosed six more tickets. May you each choose wisely. Princess Celestia.”

Spike grabbed the tickets and held them out in front of his face, staring with a strange mix of wonder and fear. ‘Oh great,’ he thought, ‘Two tickets in Ponyville almost caused a riot. What’s going to happen with six more up for grabs? Well, five, I guess.’

As he was contemplating, Pinkie rushed up to him and grabbed one of them in her mouth. “Oh thank you, thank you, thank you, Twilight!” She got out happily, despite the obstruction, “I know this’ll just brighten up Blues’ day! I can’t wait to go to the Gala now!” And Pinkie Pie once more dashed from the room with incredible speed. When the dust of her exit settled, Twilight turned and looked at the tickets still resting in Spike’s hands.

“Well, now what do we do?” She asked.

“We gotta get a ticket to each of your other friends.” Spike said, “And I know exactly who that job’s going to. I wish they could just get them themselves. I don’t like being a messenger boy all the time.

“Not that, Spike.” Twilight said with indignity, “What do we do about finding me a date for the Gala? Who would go with me? I don’t know of anypony I’d want to go with like that.”

“Then just give it to someone else. Anypony would be glad to get a ticket.”

“No, Spike.” Twilight said, “Princess Celestia gave me a direct order to find a special pony to bring with me to the Gala. I can’t just give it away!”

“Oh, I see. Well, that’s something you’ve got to figure out. In the meantime, you should let all your friends know they get another ticket, don’t you think?” Spike asked.

“I’m sure Pinkie’s got that taken care of.” Twilight said, “Once she knows something exciting, she’ll share it. In fact, I bet that any minute now-“

“What’s this I hear about an extra ticket?” A voice called from over their heads. Spike and Twilight Sparkle looked up to see their fleet-winged friend Rainbow Dash, hovering over their heads. “Pinkie interrupted a perfectly good nap; singing something about ‘extra ticket to the Gala, he sure is a lucky fellah.’ So, why does she get an extra ticket and I don’t?”

“But you do, Dash!” Spike said excitedly, “I sure am curious to see who you pick!”

“Who I pick?”

“Yes.” Twilight Sparkle cut in, “Princess Celestia has given us each an extra ticket to the Gala. She told us to find a special pony to bring along. Who are you going to choose?”

“Well, I...what?”

“Come on Dash, don’t you have that ooone pony that just makes you feel happy?” Spike asked. “I know I’d ask Rarity to go with me, but she’s already got a ticket. Plus now *she* has to find someone to go with too. Oh no! What if...what if she’s already got a perfect date? Twilight, I gotta go, bye.”

Spike dropped the tickets and ran out the door. He had to preempt Rarity asking another pony to the Gala. This was his chance to go with her before anypony else could steal her away. Rainbow Dash and Twilight were left behind, looking at each other.

“So...any ideas?” Twilight asked.

“Hehe, not right now.” Dash said, “I’ll have to think about it some. I’ll just take that ticket there and get back to yah.”

With that, the blue pegasus pony snatched the ticket with her mouth and flew back out through the window. Twilight Sparkle was left alone in her house with four new tickets and a head full of questions. Still, she was a practical pony, and was never one to let what she couldn’t do stop her from doing what she could. ‘I at least need to get these tickets to their rightful owners.’ She thought as she picked them up off the floor. ‘Might as well get going.’

“Oh no, Twilight, I don’t have anyone like that.” The gentle yellow pegasus said. “You can just give that ticket to someone else.”

"I can't Fluttershy," Twilight responded forcefully, "It's an order from the Princess. This ticket is for you."

"Um...but...eep!" Fluttershy jumped high into the air when she felt a tap on her flank. She quickly recovered herself and turned around to see an angry-looking rabbit tapping its foot impatiently. "Oh, well, I guess I could take Angel with me."

"But Fluttershy" Twilight was about to protest when she realized it wasn't her place. Each pony had their own extra ticket, and if Fluttershy wanted to go against the Princess' wishes and bring Angel, that was her decision. "I guess that would work." She finished.

"Oh thank you, Twilight." The timid little pony said, "I'm sure Angel will just love exploring the royal garden with me. This is going to be the best night ever."

"As long as you're happy, I think that's the main thing." Twilight said as she trotted away from Fluttershy's little cottage toward Sweet Apple Acres.

"Oh tha's jus perfect, Twilight!" Applejack said excitedly when she heard the good news. "I bet Big McIntosh is gonna be pleased as punch tah come with me to the Gala."

"Um...you're bringing Big McIntosh with you?"

"Sure am, sugar. There's nopony I'd rather bring with me."

"Wow, I never knew that, Applejack." Twilight was shocked, she never knew AJ felt that way about her brother. "I...um...well, alright then."

"What're you getting all weirded out fer, Twilight?" Applejack asked. "Why shouldn't I bring Big McIntosh with me?"

"No, no, that's fine. I was just surprised, that's all. It's your ticket and you can bring who you want with you. Forget I said anything."

"Well, alright then. Thanks a ton, Twilight! Ah can't wait to tell 'im the good news. Oh big brooother!" She called out in a sing-song voice while walking back toward the farmhouse.

Twilight Sparkle turned and trotted quickly away. She had no idea AJ thought of her brother in that way. Twilight couldn't help but admit that Big McIntosh was indeed a handsome stallion, but still; the thought just didn't sit right with her. Regardless, Applejack was her friend. She probably should have picked a better place or time to let Twilight Sparkle know about her "special" relationship with Big McIntosh, but Twilight shook it off and pressed on. There was one more delivery to make.

Twilight walked on to Ponyville proper, eventually stopping outside the Carousel Boutique. She could see Rarity through the window, working diligently on some new dress. Rarity was always inventing, trying to find the next big style and show it off before any other pony had even dreamed such a design could exist.

Twilight walked in through the door and was greeted warmly by the owner. "Twilight! How good to see you. If you're looking for Spike he just left. He seemed awful intent on getting me to agree to go to the Gala with him. He wouldn't say why, though."

"I know why," Twilight began, "Princess Celestia sent us all an extra ticket. She wants us to bring a pony that's special to us along to the Gala. Here, this one is yours."

"Oh Twilight, how nice! But I won't be needing another ticket."

"Oh, did you decide to go with Spike?"

"No dear, I thought I let everypony know I intend to meet the best stallions Canterlot has to offer at the Gala. I couldn't possibly do that while being escorted by another pony, now could I? That would be utterly distasteful."

"So, you're not going to do what Celestia wants us to?"

"Twilight, it would simply be uncivil of me to bring a date to the Gala and then ignore them. I must be alone to see who at the Gala has the right degrees of taste and tact to woo me properly."

"So, what should I do with the ticket, then?" Twilight asked, still stunned from Rarity's brash refusal to follow princess Celestia's orders.

"Oh, give it to whomever you wish, dear." She replied. "Just make sure they have the class needed to attend such a dignified event as the Grand Galloping Gala."

"If you say so..." Twilight agreed reluctantly. She certainly didn't want to go against a royal decree, but she could never force her friend to bring a date to the Gala. She simply had to hope Celestia would understand, and not be too upset at her.

On the walk home, Twilight reflected on the strange day she'd had. In two days she had to find somepony that was special to her, bring them to the Gala, and give away an extra ticket from Rarity. It was a lot to do with only one full day left ahead of her, and she still had no idea who to bring.

When she arrived back at her tree-house, Spike was in a sour mood. Twilight could almost see a tiny storm cloud hanging over his head as he sat in the middle of the floor, arms crossed in front of his body and mouth curved into a determined frown.

"I heard from Rarity. Did she drop you that hard?" Twilight asked, seeing the sad plight her assistant was in.

"No...she wasn't mean about it or anything, but she still said no." Spike replied grumpily, refusing to move from his designated moping ground.

"Well, at least you had somepony in mind." Twilight said, "I still don't have anyone to bring with me."

"What about Caramel?" Spike asked, "Didn't he ask you one time?"

"Yeah, but he's just not my type. I need someone more...thoughtful, I guess. I don't want a pony that's all about joking around. I need a pony who loves reading, will listen to my ideas and thoughts. I need a pony that's interested in stimulating conversation and magic studies. I couldn't just take a pony with me because I had to. And besides, now I need to find an extra pony to take, since Rarity didn't want her ticket."

"You can take mine back, too." A voice said from up above.

Spike and Twilight turned to see the speaker, Ponyville's top flyer Rainbow Dash, coming in through the window again. "I got in touch with a friend." She said, "and he's already got a ticket to the Gala so, I don't need this one. Give it to somepony else."

"But Rainbow Dash-" Twilight started to object.

"Hey, you said I needed to find a date, and I got one. I just don't need to use this ticket to make it happen so, here." She dropped the ticket from its place in her teeth and let it flutter gently to the ground. "Anyway, I gotta get some sleep. Big rainstorm scheduled for tomorrow. See yah, Twilight." She called as she was off again in a flash.

“Argh! Two extra ponies now? Who in the world should I give these to?”

“Well, you could just send them back.” Spike offered.

“What? And defy Celestia? Never, Spike. I must find good homes for these tickets, or she may never trust me again.”

Spike decided that Twilight was simply overacting to this whole ticket fiasco, but thought better of telling her in her present state. When things got too stressful, Spike knew Twilight was prone to snap. He didn't want to see that happen again, not after the Parasprite problem.

“I think maybe a good night's sleep will help you decide.” Spike said, fully taking over the role of consoler from Twilight. “I know I always feel better in the morning if I've had a bad day.”

“Yeah Spike, that's a good idea, thanks.” Twilight Sparkle said wearily. She dragged herself to bed and tried to fall asleep, but couldn't shake the tension accumulated that day. Who in Equestria would go with her to the Gala? And how would she properly dispose of two extra tickets? Almost anypony in Ponyville would want to go. The Grand Galloping Gala was a huge affair, after all; but who was most deserving was a question only Twilight could answer. She tossed and turned in her bed until finally exhaustion got the better of her and she fell into a fitful sleep.

The next morning, Twilight awoke with a start. She had had a most strange dream, all about the Gala, tickets, and ponies wanting tickets. In her dream she saw all of Ponyville chasing after her for a ticket. In the dream she was running away constantly, trying to decide who needed the ticket most. At the end of the dream, Twilight had disappeared into the Everfree Forest and found a familiar pony sobbing softly among the trees. It was Trixie, alone and depressed. Trixie told Twilight how the news of her boasting spread across Equestria, until Trixie could no longer work as a traveling magician. Her career ruined, she became a hermit, completely alone in the forest.

Twilight was skilled enough in the ways of magic to know the difference between a normal dream and a vision. She recognized that a dream this vivid, dreamt by a pony who specializes in magic, could only be a sign of what was to come. Twilight still didn't know how to use all the tickets entrusted to her, but she did know how to use one. She had to make amends with Trixie, and welcome her back into Pony Society.

Twilight packed well for her trip. She put the tickets securely in her saddlebag, grabbed a few snacks and plenty of water. She was certain she'd find Trixie by that night, but just in case she carefully folded her gorgeous gown that Rarity designed and packed that too. She quickly explained the situation to Spike who tried to stop her at first, but eventually gave in.

“Now make sure the library is spotless by the time I get back, and no parties, got it?”

“Of course, Twilight.” The dragon said, “Who do you think I am? Pinkie?” He chuckled gently and continued, “When will you be back?”

“I should be back by tonight, but I'll be at the Gala tomorrow whether I make it back tonight or not.”

“Alright, see you there if you're not here tonight.” Spike said, waving goodbye to his pony friend as she walked out the door.

Twilight started very early in the morning, before most of the town had woken up. She trotted quickly through town square, and was only a few blocks away from Fluttershy's hut on the edge of the forest when she came upon a house that already had occupants stirring. It was the tiny house owned by the resident mailmare. Twilight knew her real name wasn't Derpy, but everyone had called her that for so long, Twilight had already forgotten what her given name was. She knew that Derpy lived on a very small salary, and often tried to supplement it by moving furniture. She also knew that the mailmare always did

her best to make sure her filly had a chance for a better life.

When Twilight got closer, she could see that Derpy was just about to leave for work, and was saying goodbye to her little filly before she left. “-and make sure to do what Ms. Teacher Cheerilee says today. No more fighting with other little fillies at the schoolyard anymore, okay?”

“But-“ The little one started, but was shut down by her mother’s glare. She wanted to tell her mom that she only got into fights because they were making fun of Derpy’s eyes, and the strange things she did around town sometimes, but instead let out only: “Okay, mom.”

“There’s a good little one.” Derpy said with a smile, patting her small child on the head with a free hoof. “Now talk to no strangers, go straight to school, be safe.” She said before turning and flying off toward the post office. Twilight smiled a sad smile at the pair, and finally knew exactly what to do. She trotted up to the filly who was still waving goodbye to her mother, despite Derpy already being well out of sight. When she saw Twilight approaching, the pony gasped and quickly shut the door.

“Hello? I just have something I need to give you.” Twilight said through the closed door. “Can’t you open up, miss...?”

“Nuh-uh.” Came the reply, “Momma said to talk to no strangers.”

“But you know me, I’m Twilight Sparkle.” She said, hoping to coax the filly out, “I run the library. You know my friend Applebloom, right?”

“Oh yeah,” The pony responded, starting to think she recognized the name Twilight. “I’m Dinky.” She said, opening the door slightly. “What do you need?”

“Well Dinky,” Twilight began, reaching back into her bag, “I’ve got a present for you and your mom. Have you heard of the Grand Galloping Gala?”

The filly’s head drooped at the question and responded sadly, “Yes. Mommy says in a few years, after she’s saved up some money, maybe we can go sometime.”

“Well Dinky, I happen to have two extra tickets with me.”

“Really?” Dinky said, her face lighting up.

“Yes, and if you can promise me two things, I’ll give them to you.”

“What’s that?”

“First, you have to promise me you won’t let your mom know I gave them to you. Just tell her the pony giving them didn’t want her to know. Can you do that?”

“I guess so...” Dinky said, displeased that she’d have to trick her mom. “What’s the second thing?”

“The second thing is that you have to promise me you’ll have a great time at the Gala!”

“I can do that, Twilight!” The filly replied happily, practically jumping for joy. “Oh, mom’s gonna be so happy!”

“I hope so.” Twilight said with a smile. “Now hurry up, you’ve got to get ready for school.”

“Oh yeah!” Dinky said, quickly running back into the house with her new treasures. Twilight watched her go and smiled again as she left to continue on her original quest. She was filled with a sense of joy, having made a good little filly happy. The feeling gave her some hope as she neared the Everfree Forest, about to embark on what Twilight knew could very well be a wild goose chase. The dream told her Trixie

was somewhere in the forest, but the forest was large, and Trixie probably didn't want to be found. Still, Twilight was determined, and trotted confidently into the woods.