

The Candle That Burns Twice as Bright

Sitting up in her bed, Twilight Sparkle gazed out of her bedroom window as the morning sun rose. Covering her mouth with a hoof, the unicorn let out a yawn. She had been awake for hours, unable to sleep due to nerves that had created an army of butterflies in her stomach.

Sliding out of the bed, the purple pony trotted over to her mirror and stared at a tired, sad looking reflection, red eyes meeting one another. Regardless the intelligent mare smirked.

“Well, I could look worse for a pony the wrong side of 200...” Twilight managed her voice slightly croaky. Ignoring the ill sounding voice, Twilight worked on trying to improve her physical appearance.

It had been two months since the Summer Sun Celebration and Twilight was now fully moved back in at the Library in Ponyville. Having not been there for almost fifty years, Twilight had been surprised to see how neat and tidy her home was.

But then that had hardly surprised the Princess; student. Although she left them, her five best friends had looked after the tree in her absence in some way or form. Fluttershy had arranged it so some of her animal friends would stop by and do some cleaning. (This had taken the returning by surprise on the first morning back. Having a squirrel trying to make the bed whilst your still in it isn't the best way to wake up.)

At the same time, when her touring would allow, Rainbow would attempt to run the Library, but ended up reading, sleeping or dealing with fans. The Party pony of Ponyville Pinkie Pie had found limited success with book parties, until the others had got tired of cleaning up afterwards.

With Applejacks combined dislike to returning to Ponyville and relying on Fluttershy's visits, the farm pony rarely saw the Library. The few times she had gone there was to help Rarity as the fashion conscious maintained and spruced up the abode.

Besides the needed maintenance, the house had hardly changed. It was her home, as it had been for 200 years and it was almost the same as when Twilight had first moved in.

Almost the same.

The purple unicorn couldn't help but look at an old straw basket on the bedroom floor. The basket looked tatty and the blanket inside was succumbing to very old age. There was a sigh as the immortal mare sat down and gently breathed in near it.

“Fifty years since we said goodbye Spike. I've missed you.”

There was nothing but silence for a while. Eventually, after around a half hour, that was broken by knocking at the door. Its tone suggested a nervous

creator but one who still had a job to do.

“The one morning I DON’T want visitors...” Twilight muttered as she rose from the floor. After pulling on a necklace which held a large purple scale, Twilight Sparkle descended to the front door.

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“HOOF IT!”

Six mares moved as fast as they could. It had been a simple request from the Princess’; speak to Greyhorn, Ruler of the mountain realms as to why he was allowing uncontrolled weather patterns, mainly winter ones to hit ponykind. Whilst these had been dispersed easily by the weather ponies, they were becoming more frequent, and more dangerous.

What the Bearers of the Elements of Harmony had not realised was that Greyhorn lived in the Great Mare, the largest mountain in Greyhorn’s kingdom. Another fact that had been neglected was that Greyhorn was not an average pony; Greyhorn was the rare crossbreed of a unicorn and a dragon. The king of the mountains dwarfed Ursa Minors and had lived for almost two thousand years.

He had also gone insane.

This wasn’t known when the ponies had met the towering elder. His vast system of caves, whilst sparse, had seemed welcoming. Greyhorn himself had given off the aura of a friendly uncle. Refreshments had been offered and tales told of his long life. But anytime the weather issue was raised, the king dismissed the problem had changed the subject.

For three days they had been guests at the Great Mare and the cross breed had played the role of host well. But like they steady trickle of water on stone, the constant questions finally wore the old ones patience down.

“If you must know little ones, it is because I have seen through the Princess’ lies. Did you know I was once her most trusted confidant when Luna was banished? The secrets that I alone know...” he had said, his voice going deeper with every word, changing from that of pony to dragon.

“The old girl thought that by banishing me here, she could silence me! Well, Celestia will see! When I cover half of Equestria and ice! Blot out her precious sun, freeze those puny mortals!”

“You need help sir.” Twilight had said, standing firm against the frothing stallion. “Princess Celestia would never do that! If you could just tal-“

“NEVER!”

And that was when the cry to flee had been yelled out.

Greyhorn had been unable to capture them with his magic, for too long he had focused on large projects. By remaining separated the monster couldn’t hit or capture the little ponies. At the same time, his claws couldn’t focus on a fast moving target.

Sadly for Twilight, over a century of book reading and studying meant she

was one of the slowest in the group. As the shadow of a clawed paw towered over her, the mauve pony shut her eyes. But the smack she'd expected never came. When she opened her eyes, Spike was holding the leg up.

To travel the huge distance required, the group had asked their closest friend Spike. He lived just outside Ponyville now, being the size of a house. Regardless of that, the dragon was a firm favourite in the town.

There was a massive crack as the younger dragon shot up and kicked down on the leg at the same time. It was followed with a howl of pain as Greyhorn retracted his now broken limb. As his mentor continued to bolt away, Spike hovered in front of the mountain ruler.

"You know, you shouldn't have tried that. She would have kicked your flank if you got her." Spike said, his voice between regular pony tones and the gravelly voice of a dragon.

With a heavy scowl, Greyhorn lunged at Spike with his good foreleg. Age had slowed him though as the claws swatted thin air. Spike had flanked the aggressive being. Murderous thoughts raging, the pony part of the hybrid took over and attempted to buck Spike.

Initially this seemed to work as the rear hoof smashed into the cavern walls. Reality soon struck Greyhorn much like the young purple dragon. All the strike had done was trap the huge leg in place; Spike had simply moved away. Said dragon now dived from the ceiling, straight on the trapped limb. Whilst it failed to dislodge, it certainly managed to break as the cavern was filled with a roar of pain.

With that final blow, Spike chased his friends out of there. Whimpering on the floor like a foal, Greyhorn managed to focus in the flying dragon.

"I'm not done yet," he managed, focusing his magic in his horn. "Not done, AT ALL!"

With his bellow, a concentrated beam of magic energy cast from the large horn towards the purple dragon.

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The door to the Library swung open with the aura of Twilights magic. What the expert magician failed to see initially was her visitor, up until she heard a small gasp. The unicorns eyes darted towards the ground to spot a very small filly, leg still raised in mid knock. She was a Pegasus with a bright white coat and yellow mane. Twilight had heard about this little filly.

"Hello Surprise, what can I do for you today?" The older pony asked. For a moment the Pegasus suffered from bulging eyes and extreme nerves, but managed to power on through.

"Sowwy to distuwb you Auntie Twilight, but Gwanny Pie wants to see you." Surprise managed. Pinkie Pie had a never ending amount of grand foals, all instructed to call her friends Auntie.

"I'm sorry Surprise, but Granny Pie should know that today isn't a good

day.”

“Gwanny Pie said you might say that, but Gwanny Pie says its super duper uwgent and if you don’t come along wight now thewe will be a huge pwoblem and an...”

“Okay! I get the message alwea- I mean already!” Twilight blurted out, shocking Surprise. The filly quickly recovered though and was soon leading Twilight to Sugar Cube Corner with the Pinkie Pie family hop.

Spike didn’t realise what Greyhorn had done but luck was on his side. Being such an old being, Greyhorn’s accuracy was far from perfect. The shot flew over the dragon and instead found its mark in the ceiling, smashing into it. Massive cracks spread across the mountains interior as the internal structure shook.

The ancient being could only stare as slowly the supports of the cave, walls that had formed naturally predominantly, crashed away. His eyes flickered up to see that the cracking roof was slowly collapsing. One extremely large piece above him was about to give way.

“Oh shoot.” Greyhorn managed as the house sized piece above his head plummeted.

To the fleeing ponies and dragon, the landing of this stone was drowned out by the rest of the rumbling mountain. By the time Spike caught up with the girls, the ceiling was increasing speed in its collapse. He was the first to notice a problem.

“Where’s Rarity? And Fluttershy!”

They turned back. Lying on the floor of the cavern was Rarity, looking extremely dazed. One of her cuffs that went around certain marks on her legs had been caught on a stalagmite, tripping her. Fluttershy had been the only one to notice the fashion ponies head smack into the ground. The pink mane Pegasus was attempting to lift the white unicorn up.

“I got them!” Rainbow cried before dashing towards them. Twilight’s eyes shrunk to pinpricks.

“The ceiling! They’ll never make it!” She cried. The magic mare attempted to focus her powers on the collapsing cavern. In an instant she was launched off of the ground and out of the huge entrance. Applejack and Pinkie Pie quickly rushed to her.

“Magic feedback, whatever he fired, it was powerful...” she managed as smoke rose from her horn. Twilights eyes focused back to the interior.

Despite having had nine children and forever looking after grand foals and residents of Ponyville, Fluttershy was still far from being a strong pony. By the time her fellow Pegasus had reached the animal lover, Fluttershy had only managed to half lift Rarity up. Wasting no time, the Wonderbolt Captain picked up the other half and led Fluttershy into the air.

For a brief moment, everything was perfect. That was up until the Element of Kindness glanced to the rock sky.

“Oh no!” She squeaked as the rock roof suddenly lurched downwards. Both girls shut their eyes for the inevitable. All sound seemed to fade as the expectation of pain took hold.

Except, it never came. Bar a few pebbles and sprinkling of dust, the trio remained uncovered. Opening their eyes, Rarity just coming too, this spotted that at the entrance Spike stood as tall as possible, holding the roof up with his shoulders.

“Oh my gosh, he’s holding the mountain up!” Rainbow yelled her mouth wide open. It was only thanks to Fluttershy’s nerves that kept them moving. As they went by him, they noticed he was shaking.

As Applejack went to helping Fluttershy with Rarity, Twilight went as close to the entrance as she felt safe.

“Come on Spike!”

Before she knew it, the dragon collapsed to one knee, the mountain shaking at the sudden drop.

“SPIKE!”

The dragon looked towards the entrance, directly at Twilight as he slumped to his other knee. He smirked whilst gritting his giant teeth.

“Too, heavy...”

With another rumble, the dragon was on his scaled stomach and paws, elbows and knees just holding the ceiling up now. All six mares were now stood near the hole, Spikes head poking through.

“I think, this wasn’t, my best idea.” Spike wheezed. Finally the rocks gave way to the cracking. The young dragon winced with pain as the surface crumbled and tonnes of rocks collapsed on his body. The noise masked his bones being crushed as the mountain took its toll him. Spikes friends could only look in horror, tears falling around their faces.

The pain for Spike didn’t so much as subside but be a continuous agony, each part of him crying out for attention. One thing was for certain though; Spike could feel his life fading. He just about felt his mouth smile weakly.

“Told you it was a stupid idea. I think this is it, and goodbye, for now.” The dragon’s voice was weak, lacking the booming grand tones of before. Twilight rushed to his face.

“No! We’ll find a way! Just hang on a little bit lon...” Twilight was cut off with a gentle nuzzle by the dragon.

“You can’t fool your, number one assistant.” A broad grin formed on dying dragons face as his eyes started to close. “Heh, I guess that makes you girls, the Eternal Six, minus, one...”

With that, his eyes finished closing. The last of the assistant’s breath passed through his nose as a gentle sigh.

The purple unicorn took no notice of her surroundings from there. As she collapsed onto the slowly cooling face, her ears fell deaf to Pinkie sense pointing out an oncoming avalanche. The unicorn attempted to pull the dragon, failing to notice Applejack and Rainbow Dash flanking her.

Despite not being the strongest pony, Twilight managed to form a very strong grip on a scale with her jaw. The first tug from the farm pony and athlete failed to move her from the body. A second pull using both ponies strength tore Twilight and the scale away. Forced away, her eyes streaming, the mare could only scream into the scale as she was dragged away. Her eyes didn't stop looking at Spikes smiling face, even when it was covered by rocks.

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The Pegasus filly nudged the door slightly with her nose, and then stepped aside for Twilight. With a sigh, the unicorn stepped past Surprise and walked into Sugar Cube Corner. At that point, her jaw hit the floor.

The interior of the shop, the original of multicity brand, had been decorated with pictures of Spike through his life; from when he had just been hatched right up until a few weeks before his last adventure. In his older ones his grin seemed more sheepish, dealing with the local friendly dragon. More importantly, there was a crowd of ponies there. The norm for them was that of middle aged and over. This was broken by a certain five mares in the middle of the crowd.

“Wh-what is this?” Twilight stuttered, still taking it all in.

“Well, we realised we never had a memorial for Spike...” Applejack said, her hat tucked under her leg.

“And of course, we couldn't just forget all the ponies Spike knew.” Chimed in Rarity.

“So rather than do something normal, I looked up a different sort of memorial. It's called a Pónaí Wake.” The shop's owner stated. Whilst Pinkie still sounded cheerful it was a lot more subdued.

“This way, we can celebrate his life.” Rainbow Dash added. Her pregnancy was showing now and was using up a lot of leave she had built up with the Wonderbolts.

The one silent friend only nodded her head. Twilight smiled at Fluttershy and looked at the ponies in the room. She sniffed as a few tears slipped down her cheeks.

“Yes, I think that's what he would have wanted. So, where do we begin?” All eyes fell on a certain butter coloured Pegasus, which squeaked under the attention.

“Well, I remember when I first met Spike...” Fluttershy started beginning a party of warm memories of a beloved friend.

Back outside the Library, Surprise placed a small candle in front of a stone sculpture of a flame. It was one of two dozen candles, each one glowing

with a bright green flame that rapidly burnt through the wax.

-Brian Blessed Pony

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