

You Can't Be Missed If You Never Left, Chapter 2

It would be several hours before Twilight felt able to continue the story—she'd fallen asleep in the middle of her pony-watching, and Marina hadn't had the heart to wake her up, as eager as she was to hear the rest of the exciting tale. When Twilight did finally wake, she snorted rather loudly and sat up from the slouching position she'd taken in her chair. Across from her, Marina sat, a look of glee on her face. The fading sunlight cast a golden aura across the pair.

“Teacher!” she cried, eliciting a grimace from Twilight, “you're awake!” Twilight chuckled a little, shaking her head.

“I can see you're as energetic as ever, Marina,” she said, a yawn slipping from her snout. “Please do try to keep it down, if you would. I did just wake up, you know.” The filly blushed and shrunk back a little, her wide smile fading into a smaller, embarrassed one.

“Um, sorry, Ms. Twilight,” she said. “I'll be good. I promise.”

The purple mare laughed a little, levitating the book and flipping through the pages once more. “It isn't a matter of being well-behaved or anything like that, my dear.” The unicorn laid the book out on its spine, another yawn escaping as she cleared the last remnants of sleepiness from her mind. “I'm just asking you to please keep your voice down.” She looked at the picture on the page, sighing blissfully. It was a blown-up picture of Rainbow Dash posing with a medal around her neck, the sun glinting off her eyes. “I still remember taking this photo...” she sniffed, and a single tear rolled down her cheek, which she quickly wiped away. Marina simply smiled.

“I bet you two were the best friends in the world!” Marina cried. Twilight giggled, patting her student on the head.

“We were!” the mare said happily. “And we were also so much more than that. Everypony can tell you; what we shared was unlike anything else.” Marina cocked an eyebrow.

“What do you mean by that, Teacher?” she asked, leaning onto the table with her elbows, a look of disgust on her face, as though she hated the time period she was discussing. “I thought mares weren't really... *allowed* to be like that back then. Isn't that what you taught me in those history books?” Twilight laughed heartily.

“Marina,” she said, “that era is long, long past. It was even before my time! I'm not that old!” She looked at the well-decorated walls around her and smiled. “It was perfectly legal when I was just starting out as a mare, you see.” She sighed. “But, to be honest, everypony who felt the same way Rainbow and I did, well...they were always

afraid to say anything.” Marina seemed dumbstruck.

“Afraid to say anything, Teacher?!” she cried, earning another cringe. “But...I thought being in love was one of those things you just had to accept, and no one could tell you otherwise! Being afraid to say anything...that’s almost worse than not being allowed at all!” Twilight pursed her lips and shook her head.

“I know all too well, Marina.” She leafed back through the pages until she came to rest on a newspaper clipping. *Fillyfooler Caught In Back Of Flight School With Another Mare!* it read. “They were always wonderful masters of the obvious, the newshounds,” Twilight said, closing the volume. “Fear kept us from telling each other our true feelings for quite some time. We didn’t want to be called fillyfoolers, cast out of our town in ridicule!”

“How awful!” replied Marina, getting to her feet to slam the table with a hoof. “No pony should have to be treated like that! I heard some dumb colt call my friend Jazz Belle a fillyfooler, and he got detention for four days!” Twilight giggled a little at how up-in-arms her student was, but motioned for her to sit back down.

“Yes, it was awful,” she continued, “but somehow, we were able to overcome all that. Now, that part of the story isn’t coming up for a little bit, so please be patient while I build up to it.” When Marina pouted, she ruffled the filly’s hair. “Now now, it wouldn’t be much fun at all if I just skipped straight to the end, would it? That’s not how a good story works.” The filly nodded, sitting down with a straight face, ready to listen. “Now, after that little encounter, I was beginning to feel that things might be more than I thought at first...”

Twilight grunted as she sat up in bed, the light from the moon shining in on her. She groaned loudly, rubbing at her face with her hooves. *Unbelievable*, she thought, *this is the third night in a row! I can’t believe my stupid dreams are keeping me up!* She rolled out of bed onto her hooves, shaking her hair out. *I’m gonna go crazy if this keeps happening...*

The dream she’d had was an odd one, too: the very same dream she’d had two nights in a row before tonight. She was laying out in a field with Rainbow Dash, their hooves wrapped around one another, heads resting against each other. They spoke for a bit—weather, Pinkie, etc. But suddenly, the sky blue pony rolled over a little, her nose brushing against Twilight’s.

“Come on, Twi,” she’d said, “no pony will know, it’s just you and me. You know we’ve both been waiting on this for a while.” Twilight felt herself drawn in, unable to resist.

“Rainbow...” she’d said, moaning a little as their lips met, bodies meeting on the soft grass, and—

The clock on her wall startled the daydream out of her with finality as it softly bonged the hour: 2:00 a.m. The bookworm blinked her tired eyes, trying to get them to focus. *I know!* she thought, *I’ll just read through some of my books! Look for some way to help me get to sleep, and then I’ll just go to sleep! Perfect!* Now a little happier with the situation, she levitated a book out from her shelves, brought it up to the loft, and cracked it open.

“Here we are!” she whispered, not wanting to wake Spike. “*Hoof-Fungus and You, a Guide to...ugh, this isn’t right!*” Angry now, she tossed the book aside with her mouth, not caring about the thunk it made when it hit the floor. Desperate, she floated over two more books, leafing through them. “*Bloody Mare: The Story of a King’s Jealousy—no!*” She tossed it aside, looking at the other one. “*The Rising of Sun and Falling of Moon: Cycles in Equestr—no!*” She groaned loudly and hucked that book out of the way too. She needed Spike’s help!

She turned to face his basket, figuring that if she’d startled him awake with her loudness, she might as well take advantage; if anyone could find the book she needed, he could. But, of course, he was sound asleep in his basket, snoring his cares away, not knowing the torment Twilight was going through. She didn’t want to wake him up, and so turned back to the stairs and carefully descended them, looking out of the window.

As expected, nopony was out this time of day—they were all sane enough to actually get some sleep. The unicorn sighed wistfully, wishing she could just hit the sheets and go to bed, but there was a bug in her heart, and it kept jumping back and forth, making her burn up inside. What was she feeling? Why in Celestia’s name was she feeling it?

She flopped down in the chair at her desk, putting her head between her hooves. Nothing was making sense to her anymore, and that worried her greatly. Every time she would see Rainbow flying around, every time she would talk to the Pegasus, she would feel a chill run up her spine, followed by an extreme heat in the pit of her belly. What was her body trying to tell her? To stay away from Dash? Or...to get closer? The beleaguered mare slammed her head down with a moan of frustration.

She ran through everything in her fevered brain once more, trying to pinpoint what had caused these feelings to start popping up. It couldn’t just have been Dash’s confidence about her tryout for the Wonderbolts; Twilight had seen her act like that time and time again! Just because she was so brash, so bold...just because she was everything Twilight wasn’t, and there was a sense that she completed her...

The purple mare shook those thoughts from her head. There was no way, no way in Equestria these feelings had been bubbling below the surface all these years! She

would've seen the signs, there would've been some indication, like her heart stopping during the Sonic Rainboom, just to make that moment all about Dash, even as she cheered her lungs out. Or perhaps her secretly rooting for Dash during the Iron Pony Competition.

And, of course, as she thought more about those things, she realized—that's exactly what had happened. This caused another slam into the desk by Twilight. Unbelievable. She'd loved Rainbow Dash for years, and only just now was it making itself known. Through all of the sleepless nights she'd sat there, analyzing her relationships with her friends, only just now was she realizing she loved her brash, loyal, daring friend.

She loved the way she felt in the pegasus' arms, loved how her hair always smelled like strawberries and other fruits...she loved Rainbow Dash. A few teardrops hit the surface of the desk as the waves of recognition washed over her. How could she tell her? How could she tell a mare so clearly involved with her career, at such a late stage in their lives, that she loved her? There was only one answer to that question:

She couldn't.

Even in these times of advanced thinking, having these sorts of feelings for another mare still carried a sort of stigma. There were still ponies walking around who wouldn't hesitate to call somepony a "fillyfooler" or worse if they saw her with another mare. Twilight knew she couldn't ruin Dash's life like that.

Even as the tears poured down her face, she knew that there was only one course of action now: she had to tell somepony. There had to be somepony in her group who could help her come to terms with the sick feeling in her stomach. Standing, she figured out the first pony she should talk to. "I really don't want to wake her up, but..." She sighed, grabbing her coat from the rack to protect against the chilly night air. "I guess I have no choice, if I ever wanna sleep again." She magically got the coat on and opened the door, stepping outside. The wind, slightly high this night, immediately caught the door and closed it behind her, so she walked out into the night, with the one pony who might be able to help her in mind: Rarity.

"That's just terrible!" Marina cried, her face a mask of pure shock. "How come you decided not to tell Rainbow about your feelings, Teacher?"

The purple mare sniffed and wiped away a tear, smiling. "I told you, Marina," she said, "I was very afraid that we would be ridiculed, cast out for the way we chose to feel. Even if ponies around tolerated us, 'fillyfoolers' that we were, I knew I couldn't live my life in Ponyville like that—a life of awkward smiles and sideways glances...I didn't want to wreck everything for Dash, or myself."

“You should have went and told everypony, and not cared about what could’ve happened!” Marina cried, slamming her hoof down on the desk. Twilight remained calm, however, even as a few tears broke loose onto her cheeks. The truth that her filly student was slinging was painful—who would’ve thought such an innocent thing could unwittingly say something so insightful?

“I am aware of that, Marina,” she said, “and I wish I had done that. It would’ve saved everypony a lot of time and heartache.” Marina’s eyes grew big, and she laid a hoof on Twilight’s foreleg.

“I’m sorry, Teacher!” she said, bottom lip quivering, “I didn’t mean to make you cry; I didn’t mean it!” But the purple mare shook her head, smiling at her pupil.

“Don’t cry about it, Marina,” she said softly. “You’re just hearing about the mistakes an old mare made in her youth, that’s all. There’s no need for you to be upset.” She nosed the crying filly, helping the tears to stop flowing. “I will resume telling the story in a half-hour; I just need that much time to get my mind in order. I’m sorry to put it on hold.” Marina shook her head.

“It’s no problem, Ms. Twilight,” She said, nosing her teacher in return. “I just hope you feel better.” Twilight smiled, closing her eyes for a moment.

“I will, Marina,” she said. “I promise I will.”