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The Smile Event Prize for Stormy Seas

By [Pen Stroke](#)

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“Furthermore, if we look to the library’s collection of classical literature, you’ll see we have a very disproportionate representation of earth pony authors in comparison to the number of pegasi and unicorn authors from the same time period. To counter balance this, I propose we-”

The mayor of Ponyville, Ivory Scroll, glanced up from the clutter of paperwork that was littering her desk. She focused her gaze on Twilight Sparkle, who had come into her office for a fifteen minute appointment. That appointment was now beginning to stretch into its second hour. Still, Twilight was showing no signs of finishing, and was not leaving any opportunities for the mayor to politely interrupt.

Ivory did not dare force Twilight to leave either, not when the young unicorn had Princess Celestia’s ear. Twilight didn’t seem the type to hold a grudge, but getting on the princess’s bad side was equivalent to suicide for her political career. After all, no pony in town would vote for a mayor that Princess Celestia or Princess Luna had a poor opinion of.

So she had been hearing Twilight out, but with each minute Twilight’s thorough presentation took, Ivory found herself further and further behind in her own work. She had already been behind to begin with. She needed to select a new fire chief, and had a small mountain of

paperwork to finish before the town council meeting that afternoon. Add to that the dozens of distractions that usually popped up during a workday, and it was starting to look like she'd be working late for the twelfth day in a row.

"Wait, no, you can't go in right now. The mayor is having a meeting with-"

"I don't rightly care! I got a bone to pick with her!"

Ivory Scroll ran a hoof down her face at the sound of a familiar voice. It was something she knew she'd have to deal with that day, and she did her best to put on a smile when the doors to her office were bucked open by Applejack.

"Applejack, what are you-" Twilight tried to ask, only for Applejack to stomp straight past her. She went right up to the mayor's desk, and slammed one of her forehooves down on the desk while fixing an indignant glare on Ivory Scroll.

"I just saw the paper this mornin', and I can tell you, you aren't goin' to raise the fruit sales tax again!" Applejack shouted.

Ivory stood from her desk, and reached a hoof out to try and calm Applejack. "Now, please, I'm sure we can-"

Applejack slapped the mayor's hoof away. "I'm not gonna let you sweet talk again, mayor. This is the second time you've raised taxes on fruit sales this year, and you haven't touched the vegetable tax. Now, I'm all for raising money to help the town. Shoot, we Apples have always been ready to lend the town a hoof, but this is goin' too far! You're taking a bigger bite out of our livelihood than you're takin' out of any of the other farm families, and I ain't gonna take it no more!"

"But I thought the paper this morning said it was only a one percent increase," Twilight commented. "Is one percent that big of deal?"

"Not on a single apple," Applejack admitted, "but that one percent grows right quick when ya look at all the apples my family sells. That one percent could be the difference between us replacing Big Mac's plow this year, or opening up the zap apple orchard. And I ain't gonna let her take that one percent away when the Carrot family is lording that fancy new barn of theirs over me. If the town needs money, they can tax the vegetable farmers and give us fruit farmers a break for once."

Ivory Scroll rounded her desk, her voice taking on a pleading tone. "I'm sorry, Applejack, but I can't discuss this right now. I'm already behind in my work. If you and Miss Sparkle could come back another-"

“Oh mayor!” a singsong voice called out.

Applejack, Ivory Scroll and Twilight turned to the open office door just in time to see Pinkie Pie bounce into the room. She was energetic as usual, and bounded right up to Ivory Scroll’s desk. She then began to bounce in circles around the group of ponies, her saddlebags sending out small puffs of confetti with each leap.

Ivory lifted a hoof to her head. This was the last headache she wanted to deal with right now. “Pinkie Pie, what have I told you about confetti in my office?”

“That you don’t like confetti in your office because it makes things messy and it’s hard to clean up,” Pinkie Pie answered, as if she wasn’t doing any wrong.

“Then why-” Ivory attempted to ask.

“Because, I’m planning a super special party! There are some ponies that all share a birthday, and I want to throw this super big bash for all of them. It will be so fun! Four birthdays at the same time, can you imagine it!? The most I’ve ever done is three, but I’m sure I can handle four. Still, because of how many ponies I’m planning to invite, I need to get a city party permit, but Badge Shield wouldn’t give me one.”

Pinkie Pie continued to ramble, hardly stopping to breathe while she continued to bounce around the room, spreading more and more confetti everywhere. “And I don’t know why Badge Shield wouldn’t give me one. He really liked the party I threw him when he became chief of police, but then he got all grumpy and started saying there were noise complaints about my last big party. Then I was like, ‘how could there be noise complaints? There wasn’t any noise! There was music, and laughter, and games, and fun stuff like that, but no noise.’

“But then he was all, ‘No, you can’t have a party.’ And then I asked, ‘Oh pretty please with sugar on top?’ But then he said no again, so I asked, ‘Pretty please with sugar and gum drops?’, but then he said no again, so-”

“Madam mayor!”

Ivory groaned, and looked to the doorway of her office as Pinkie Pie continued to chatter endlessly about her conversation with the chief of police. As if fate was conspiring against the mayor, Rarity had decided to come into the office at the same time as her friends. Ivory already knew what Rarity wanted, but that didn’t stop Rarity from announcing her intent.

“I still have not heard back from you about my proposal to beautify Ponyville,” Rarity said, ignoring Pinkie Pie’s chatter as if she wasn’t even there. It was a skill Rarity had been forced to develop after spending an extended period of time with her overly energetic friend. “Our town has its own quaint charm, but that’s not going to cut it. If our town is to attract the kind of

clientele the businesses around town, including my boutique, need in order to thrive, then we must be more than simply quaint.”

The interruptions continued, for no sooner had Rarity come to a stop beside Twilight, the window to the mayor’s office slammed open. Rainbow Dash had burst through, holding a piece of paper in her mouth. “What the hay is this?” she shouted through her teeth.

Ivory Scroll turned around on the spot, her irritation flaring. “What is it, Rainbow Dash!?”

“You know what!” Rainbow Dash accused. She landed right on top of the mayor’s desk, and spat out the paper she had been carrying. “The Wonderbolts are having an airshow in Graiton at the end of the week!”

“So?” Ivory Scroll asked, rubbing the bridge of her nose to try and ease her growing headache.

Rainbow Dash flared her wings, and stomped her hoof down on the piece of paper she had dropped on the mayor’s desk. “So!? Have you *seen* the weather schedule!? You and the city council scheduled a rainstorm for that day, all day! How am I supposed to go to the airshow when you’re going to make me push clouds back and forth?!”

The mayor huffed, and met Rainbow Dash’s enraged stare with one of her own. “I’m sorry, Rainbow Dash, but you’ve used all your vacation days and Ponyville needs that rainstorm.”

“Can’t it wait!? The Wonderbolts are only going to be in Graiton that one day and-”

“No, it can’t wait!” Applejack snapped. “The farms need that water, includin’ mine. Our east orchards are dryin’ up like a muffin left out in the sun and it’s your job to bring that dang rain. So how about you knuckle down and actually do your job for once!”

“Hey, I *a*ways do my job!” Rainbow Dash shouted back at Applejack. “I’m just asking why the mayor had to put a rainstorm on that day. There’s six other days in a week.”

Applejack jumped up onto the mayor’s desk. She didn’t care one bit that she was kicking around and disturbing the stack of papers. All she wanted was to put herself at eye level with Rainbow Dash as their argument escalated. “And that day is just as good as any of them! Besides, me and all the other farmers already planned our work around that storm schedule. She can’t go changing it on us now, just so you can go to some airshow.”

“Hey, it’s not just ‘some airshow’, it’s the Wonderbolts!”

Ivory Scroll whimpered, and sunk down on the floor of her office. She tried to cover her ears, to dull the five voices around her, but it was no good. Applejack and Rainbow Dash continued to argue, Pinkie Pie continued to chatter about her conversation with the chief of police and now

Twilight and Rarity were both demanding her attention. All their voices began to mix together and press down on Ivory's mind as a single, unrelenting force.

"Moving a rainstorm one day won't hurt anypony!"

"The world don't spin 'round you or the Wonderbolts!"

"Mayor, if we can get back to talking about the new books for the library?"

"New books!? Mayor, that budget should be going to my beautify Ponyville project! I submitted that proposal to you last week, and I think you've had more than enough time to consider it."

"What are you talking about? New books for the library is more important than that! How are the ponies of this town supposed to educate themselves in a ideal, well-rounded way unless the library has a wide and varied collection of books?"

"Um... excuse me, I hope I'm not interrupting. I had an appointment, but if you're busy, I can come back later."

"And then I was like, 'Pretty please with sugar, whip-cream, sprinkles, gummy ponies, more sprinkles, nuts, more sugar, more sprinkles, gum drops and a cherry on top?', but then he still said no. So I was like-"

"ENOUGH!"

Ivory Scroll had jumped to her hooves, and yelled as loud as her voice would allow. Her one booming shout silenced all the other ponies in the room. Even Pinkie Pie ended her bouncing, and looked on with wide eyes as the mayor shot her and each of her friends a cold, rage-filled glare.

"Fine, you all think you know what's best for Ponyville? Then have fun!" Ivory shouted. She stomped around to the far side of her desk and pulled open one of her drawers with such force it popped out and crashed to the floor. Ivory, however, didn't make any attempt to put the drawer back in place. Instead, she rummaged through the drawer where it lay and eventually withdrew a small gold medallion that bore the town emblem of Ponyville on it.

After finding the medallion, which hung at the end of a fabric loop, Ivory slammed it down on the desk. She then began to go through other drawers of her desk, taking out not only her purse but several other small items.

"Uh, Mayor, what did ya mean by 'have fun'?" Applejack asked. She watched Ivory Scroll from her place beside Rainbow Dash on top of the desk.

“What I mean is I’m taking a vacation, and I’m nominating you to take my place. Whichever pony has that medallion is the acting mayor of Ponyville and has all the powers that come with the office,” Ivory Scroll answered. She finished gathering the few things she needed from her desk before she slipped on her small, purse-sized saddle bags. She then walked to the door, not pausing to look back for even a moment. “My secretary has my schedule and can answer any questions you have. Now, I’ll see you all in a week!”

With that the mayor left the office, leaving five stunned mares standing around her desk. There was a moment of silence, and then a joyous laugh as Rainbow Dash snatched up the medallion. “Cool, with an easy job like being the mayor, I’ll be able to go to the Wonderbolts’ airshow no sweat.”

“Now just wait one moment, Rainbow Dash,” Rarity snipped. “What makes you think she was talking to you?”

“Who else would she be talking to, you?” Rainbow Dash asked, only to have the medallion pulled from her hooves by Rarity’s magic.

“Why me, of course. After all, if I’m mayor, then I can put my proposal through and-”

“Now wait an apple-buckin’ minute,” Applejack snapped. She jumped down from the mayor’s desk and landed on the floor with a hard thud, cutting Rarity off. “The mayor was talkin’ to me when she said that, so I think she wanted me to be the mayor while she’s gone.”

Rarity laughed a little, as if Applejack had just told a small, delightful joke. “Oh, no offense, Applejack, but I don’t think you’re qualified to be the mayor of a town. I mean, you do run Sweet Apple Acres marvelously, but that’s just not the same. After all, ponies aren’t trees.”

“And they ain’t fabric neither,” Applejack argued. “So I don’t quite see how you think you’re any more qualified than me, considering all you do is work with fabric.”

“Ah, but I also work with customers,” Rarity said with a gentle toss of her mane. “I’m a pony that knows how to work with other ponies, to balance their requests with my own artistic vision. You, on the other hoof, don’t deal with your customers on the same level. You don’t let them weigh in on your cider making process, or when you make jam. You just sell them the product and have them hoof over their bits.”

“Now girls, I’m sure you’d both make fine mayors,” Twilight said, putting herself between her two friends. Her horn lit up, and she gently took the medallion from Rarity. “After all, you both run successful business, even if the businesses themselves are very different in nature. I’m sure Ponyville would be in capable hooves with either one of you.”

“Why thank you, Twilight,” Applejack said.

Rarity gave an approving nod. "Yes, that is very true."

"Still, I think the mayor was talking to me," Twilight said nonchalantly before securing the medallion around her neck. The medallion itself was about the size of a bit, and the short loop of fabric kept the medallion from hanging very far down Twilight's chest.

"What!?" Applejack and Rarity shouted in unison.

Twilight smiled at her friends, and lifted a hoof to examine the medallion now hanging off her neck. "Well, it would be the most logical choice. After all, haven't I proven my organizational skills before? I was the all team organizer for Winter Wrap-Up."

Applejack stomped a hoof, and shoved her nose up against Twilight's. "One don't have nothin' to do with the other, now give me that back!"

"Oh, hey, can I have it?" Pinkie Pie asked. She popped up between Twilight and Applejack so their noses were pressed into the sides of her face. "That way, I wouldn't have to get Badge Shield to sign my party form, because then I could sign it. In fact, I bet I could take away all those nasty rules the mayor made about my parties, like when they have to end and how much sugar is allowed in the cake. Oh, I could have a mariachi at the party! I haven't been allowed to have one of those at a party since-"

"Hey! I was the one that had it first!" Rainbow Dash shouted. She leapt from the mayor's desk, and crashed down on top of Pinkie Pie, Applejack and Twilight. In the confusion of the resulting pony pile, Rainbow snatched the medallion from Twilight's neck and flew up into the air. She slipped it over her own neck quickly, and let out a triumphant laugh.

"Ha! Now *I'm* the mayor!" Rainbow Dash declared as she held the medallion victoriously.

All eyes turned onto Rainbow Dash, and soon after she found herself being tackled by her four friends, each vying to get the mayoral medallion from her. The scuffle rolled through the office, shouts and slurs coming from the mouths of the five mares as the medallion shifted ownership a dozen times. Then, with one wrong turn, the scuffle rolled into the mayor's desk.

The crash landing against the desk broke up the fight, sending the five mares sprawling against the floor and causing the medallion itself to fly through the air. It landed near the office door, where it was picked up by another pony who had been watching the chaos from just outside the office. "Um, I hope nopony minds, but... um, I think the mayor was talking to Applejack."

"Fluttershy?" Rainbow Dash groaned as she sat up, rubbing the spot on her head that had collided with the mayor's desk. "When did you get here?"

"A little while ago, before the mayor left. I had an appointment, but you were all talking to her, and I didn't want to interrupt," Fluttershy answered in a calming tone. She held the medallion in one hoof, balancing it carefully. "So, um... who should I give this to?"

"Well, sugarcube, I think you answered that question yourself," Applejack said. She got back to her hooves, and walked up to Fluttershy with a smile. "Now, y'all heard her. She thinks the mayor was talkin' to me, which means I should be the one that gets to be mayor."

"Yes, we heard her, Applejack," Rarity said, an undeniable huff of jealousy in her voice. "And while I personally disagree with that decision, I trust Fluttershy as a neutral party."

Fluttershy smiled. "Oh, thank you, Rarity, and I'm sorry. I would have said you, but Applejack was the last one to talk to the mayor before she brought out the medallion."

"There's nothing you need to apologize for, Fluttershy, you're just being honest," Rarity assured her before she turned her attention to Applejack. "Still, if you feel the job of mayor has become a bit too much, please remember that I'd be *more* than happy to take that medallion off your hooves."

Pinkie Pie and Twilight nodded their heads eagerly, and Applejack laughed as she put the medallion on. "Well, I appreciate the offer, and I promise, if I get in over my head, I'll come a runnin' for help. Still, I wouldn't go gettin' your hopes up."

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"Now, Miss Applejack, are you sure you want to preside over this town council meeting? I'm sure I could reschedule it for next week, when Mayor Ivory Scroll is back."

Applejack shook her head firmly and put a hoof on the door to the council's meeting hall. "Nothin' doin'," she told the mayor's secretary. "I'm the mayor, and I got some business I'm gonna get done." With that Applejack shoved open the door, and stepped into the meeting hall.

Town council meetings were held in a public hearing hall, and anypony could come in and sit in on the proceedings. Usually, there were only a few ponies in the room at these meetings, but word about Ivory Scroll's departure had spread quickly through the small community of Ponyville. The meeting hall was currently filled to capacity, and all of them whispered quietly as Applejack entered the room. She strode to the front, and sat down in the one open seat between the other members of the town council to her left and right.

"All right y'all, I'm bringin' this meeting of the town council to order," Applejack said before taking up the mayor's gavel and giving it a sound tap on the table. She had been to these meetings before, especially when she needed to come in and give her two bits about the first time the mayor raised the town's fruit sales tax. Thus, Applejack knew the gist of how to run the

meetings, and after banging the gavel she looked to the town council secretary expectantly.

“Uh... okay,” the secretary said as he slowly stood from his seat. He was a unicorn, and he gathered a few papers in his magic before adjusting his glasses and beginning to read. “As secretary of the town council, I shall review the minutes from the last council meeting which occurred on...”

Applejack sat and waited patiently as the council went about its normal routine. They reviewed the meeting notes, finished off old business and then the secretary opened the floor for new business. Immediately, Applejack stood up from her seat behind the table, drawing the attention of everypony in the room.

“All right, I got some new business. I propose that we take back that new tax on fruit sales that I read about in the paper this mornin’. That there was the second tax increase against fruit farmers, and I ain’t gonna stand for it.”

“Very well,” the council secretary said. “Temporary Mayor Applejack has motioned that we remove the new one percent increase in fruit sales tax. Does anypony second the motion?”

“Eeyup!”

Applejack smiled, and gave an approving wave to Big Macintosh, who had taken up a seat in the very front of the meeting hall’s public viewing area.

“The motion has been seconded,” the secretary noted while he used his magic to jot down the meeting notes onto a few clean pieces of paper. “We will now hear any opposition to the proposal. Does anypony wish to speak?”

“I think I’d like to take that invitation, if no pony else has a mind to,” a voice called out from the crowd. Applejack knew the voice by heart, and the sound of it made her scrunch up her nose. A mare, with a tinged pink coat and hair as red as the onion she had for a cutie mark approached the front of the room.

“The town council recognizes Red Onion of the Onion family,” the secretary said. “Please, voice your opposition of the proposal before the council.”

“I’d like to remind the council,” Red Onion said, speaking with a smooth, rural accent, “why they enacted the new tax in the first place. After much discussion at previous town meetings, which Miss Applejack should have attended if she was going to voice her displeasure for the new tax-”

Applejack stamped a hoof. “Hey, it ain’t my fault the south orchard needed to be cleared! You know that nasty wind we had a few weeks ago broke off a bunch of branches. We had to get to those apples before they spoiled.”

“Oh yes, I am quite familiar with *that* particular incident,” Red Onion assured Applejack. “Our farm was littered with all the leaves blown off of *your* trees, Miss Applejack. Still, if I may get back on the topic, the reason the new tax was enacted was so that town can afford to keep up with the Cloudsdale Weather Factory’s increased rates.”

Applejack, cocked an eyebrow. “What’s this about now?”

“Oh, haven’t you heard?” Red Onion asked. “The Cloudsdale Weather Factory was forced to raise the prices on rainclouds. We’ve been having a dry spell here in Equestria. Not too many natural rainstorms have been coming in from the wilds. So those fine mares and stallions in Cloudsdale have been forced to manufacture more rainclouds than they usually do, and that costs more money. After all, it takes a lot of time and energy to haul water up to that fine, floating city.”

Red Onion batted her eyes, and let almost seductive smile spread on her lips. “And of course, I should remind the council that it’s the fruit farmers here in Ponyville that need the rainclouds the most. My family, with the rest of the vegetable farmers, prefer to make use of the canal system to keep our produce watered.”

“Don’t you be takin’ that high and mighty tone with me, Red Onion,” Applejack snapped. “The fruit farmers may need the clouds more, but my taxes went to diggin’ that canal.”

“Yes, they did, but that was a one time expense, Miss Applejack.” Red Onion explained, her tone still sweet and inviting despite Applejack’s aggression. “Rainclouds, on the other hoof, are a recurring expense. So, unless you happen to know about rainclouds we can make use of again and again, I don’t see why my family has to pay for rainclouds we don’t use.

“In fact,” Red Onion continued, “correct me if I’m wrong, Miss Applejack, but isn’t your farm the only one of the fruit farms that does not make use of the canal system?”

“Well, shoot, of course it is,” Applejack said. “Our orchards were here in Ponyville before the canal was even dug, and then you told us the only way we’d be on the canal is if we let it go through our zap apple orchard.”

Red Onion laughed a little. “Oh yes, I remember that particular discussion. You were quite adamant about protecting those famed apples of yours. Still, since every *other* fruit farmer in Ponyville can make use of the canal to keep their produce, I propose that we adjust the new fruit tax so that it only applies to Sweet Apple Acres. After all, they’re the only one that really need to make use of all those extra rainclouds.”

“You can’t counter propose that!” Applejack shouted.

“Actually,” the town council secretary said, “Red Onion is within her rights to offer a counter proposal. Are there any ponies that would second the motion?”

Several hooves raised in the audience. Many of the hooves belonged to vegetable farmers who were attending the council meeting. Some, however, belonged to other fruit farmers who were more than eager to pass off the one percent sales tax increase so that it only affected Sweet Apple Acres.

“The motion has been seconded. Council members, we shall now vote on the proposals. All for repealing the new fruit sales tax, say aye.”

“Aye!” Applejack shouted loudly, but her voice was alone. None of the other council members chimed in.

“All for the adjustment of the tax to only affect Sweet Apple Acres?”

“Aye,” several of the other town council members chimed in, including the secretary.

“Very well, the tax law shall be amended so that it only effects sales made by Sweet Apple Acres. Moving onto the next piece of-”

“Wait! You can’t do that!” Applejack shouted.

“I’m sorry, Miss Applejack, but the motion has passed and we cannot address it again until the next town council meeting in a month. Now, please sit back down so that we can resume the meeting.”

Applejack puffed out her cheeks, and turned her enraged glare on Red Onion. She, however, met Applejack’s rage with a smile and a flutter of her eye lashes. She then turned, and walked back to her seat, a small, triumphant sashay in her hips.

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“Coming,” Rarity sang out when she heard a knock at the front door of her boutique. She had just closed up the shop for the day, and was about to enjoy a light dinner. Still, never one to turn away a guest at her door, Rarity quickly made her way across the store’s front room. She arrived at the door, opened it with a smile and gave a warm greeting to the pony on her doorstep.

“Oh, Applejack, what can I do for-”

“Here, take it!” Applejack demanded, holding out a hoof with the mayoral medallion balanced on it. “I don’t want it no more!”

Rarity's smile curled up, and she lifted the medallion with her magic. "Why Applejack, are you tired of being mayor already? I thought you were going to do such a wonderful job."

"Save your sass for some other pony, Rarity," Applejack grumbled. "I got enough of it from Red Onion today."

Rarity's smile faded. She knew all too well Applejack's opinion of Red Onion. "What did she do?"

"Red Onion went and took the rug right out from under my hooves at the town council meetin'. Now that one percent fruit tax is only being applied to Sweet Apple Acres and no pony else! The worst part is I can't do nothin' about it for a month!" Applejack tossed her head in aggravation, and turned to leave. "So you can keep that medallion right there, 'cause I'm done with it!"

With that Applejack walked off, grumbling and cursing Red Onion under her breath as she went. Rarity kept a pleasant smile on her face until she saw Applejack round a corner, she then quickly retreated back into her boutique and found a mirror. As her smile widened, she put the mayoral medallion around her neck and then admired her reflection in the mirror.

"Well, it really isn't my color, but I suppose I can do something with it."

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The next morning, Rarity was at the town hall bright and early. Wanting to look the part of Ponyville's mayor and be fashion conscious at the same time, Rarity had pulled out one of her favorite designs she had never before had a reason to wear. It was a purple business suit, perfectly toned to go with her mane, with thin, pale white, versicle pin strips that were, in her opinion, wonderfully slimming.

Unable to find any way to incorporate the garish color of the fabric strip the mayoral medal hung from, Rarity had chosen to hide it beneath the collar of her suit's undershirt. That left the medallion to hang perfectly from her neck, replacing the suit's matching tie. In all, Rarity felt very official in her suit, and was ready to take on the most important task she could in her temporary position as mayor of Ponyville.

It was time to beautify the town.

Rarity first spoke with the mayor's secretary, and found out that her proposal to improve the town's aesthetics to try and attract more tourists, residents and customers for the local businesses had been passed off to the town's Public Relations Committee. It was a trio of ponies that the mayor had tasked with preserving and promoting Ponyville to Equestria at large.

With a smile on her face and flare in her voice, Rarity called for those three ponies of the Public Relations Committee to be brought in, and she met them in her office. The committee itself was made up of three mares, a pegasus and two earth ponies. One of the earth ponies Rarity recognized. It was Lotus, the blue-coated and pink-maned spa pony she was all too familiar with.

The other earth pony was Rose, one that Rarity was acquainted with but did not know well. Rose was a florist in Ponyville, and worked with two other mares by the names of Lily and Daisy. Rose had come into the boutique for an outfit on occasion, but beyond that Rarity didn't know that much about her. The last mare of the committee, the pegasus, was a mare with a powder blue coat and blond hair. Not a bad color combination, in Rarity's opinion, but not quite as fabulous as her own.

"Now, ladies, the first order of business I'd like to take care of as mayor is my proposal to beautify Ponyville. Now, the mayor's... or, I suppose she's my secretary, isn't she?" Rarity chuckled a little, enjoying the thought of actually having a secretary. "In any case, my secretary told me that my proposal was passed off to you three. Might I ask for what purpose?"

"Well, to make adjustments to it, Miss Rarity," Lotus answered with her thick accent.

Rarity's right eye twitched, and the smile on her face became forced. "Adjustments? Why would you need to make adjustments?"

"Well, while the mayor liked the direction you were taking, she said it didn't really feel like Ponyville," Rose said. "That, and she said that some of your ideas would have been too expensive, so she asked us to try and simplify the design."

Rarity forced a laugh through her gritted teeth. "Oh, of course. I mean, there was nothing wrong with my designs, but the mayor is entitled to her opinion. So, could I by chance see what you were able to come up with?"

The three mares nodded, and quickly scrambled out of the room to fetch their materials. They were gone only for a few minutes before they returned, and as they worked to set up an easel, Rarity began to think back to her original design, trying to contemplate why her original design had needed adjustment.

Her original proposal had been so elegant. It would have been a face lift she felt Ponyville desperately needed, and it was inspired by Canterlot itself. Every building on Ponyville's main avenues would have had their exteriors redone to share a single, constant design. Fanciful white base paint, accented with a tasteful mixture of gold and purple tones. Then, every light post in town would have banners displaying tasteful depictions of the sun, moon, dawn and dusk. It would have all been so genteel and beautiful.

Still, Rarity admitted to herself she might have been over-reacting. After all, the mayor had only asked these mares to simplify her designs; how much could they honestly have changed?

“Are you ready, Miss Rarity?” Lotus asked. She, Rose and the pegasus mare had set something rectangular on the easel, and then covered it with a white cloth. It was almost like they were unveiling a painting, and Rarity couldn’t deny, her curiosity was piqued.

“Yes, by all means,” Rarity said with a wave of her hoof. “Show me what you have.”

The three mares nodded and the pegasus pulled the fabric cloth off the easel with a flourish. Rarity’s eyes settled on the once hidden display, and began to take in its details. It was a sample board. At the center of the board was a painting depicting what their designs might look like if they were applied to Ponyville. Then, around that design, were samples of fabric, what looked like glass and the other materials that would be used to realize the design.

The design itself, however, made Rarity’s stomach do a back flip. She just stared at the board for a few minutes, mouth agape at what had become of her designs. She could feel her head getting light, like she was about to faint, but she kept herself together long enough to get up from her seat at the desk and approach the display board.

Her designs... her beautiful designs had been simplified, that much was true, but in that process the public relations committee had managed to destroy every ounce of elegance she had tried to infuse in her work. The pristine white had been replaced with an off-white that just looked dirty, and the regal purple had been exchanged for a faded pink that just clashed with everything.

Then there were the golden accents. They had been replaced with iron: simple cheap iron. Yes, it looked to be polished iron, but... iron. About the only part of her design that had not been changed were the banners, but now they stuck out against the rest of the colors like a stain of fancy wine on a cheap table cloth.

“Well, what do you think, Miss Rarity?” Lotus asked as she, Rose and the pegasus put on bright smiles.

“I... I... I...” Rarity stuttered out before the strength left her legs. With a loud thump, she hit the floor, passing out from the sight of the design board. Both Lotus and Rose quickly moved to Rarity’s side, and called for the mayor’s secretary to fetch a doctor. All the while, the pegasus mare floated above, and glanced back and forth between the sample board and Rarity.

“Do you think she didn’t like the banners?”

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Fluttershy looked up from her tulip salad, and spoke with a hushed, concerned tone. "Rarity's in the hospital? Is she okay?"

Twilight nodded, swallowing the mouthful she had been chewing. "Yes, she was admitted this morning. I went over to see her as soon as I heard. The doctors say she just had something like a panic attack. She's fine now, but they want to keep her under observation for a day to make sure she's okay."

"Oh, that's good," Fluttershy said, breathing a sigh of relief. "I wonder what scared her."

"From what she told me, it was a 'travesty against good tastes'," Twilight said before taking a quick sip of her water.

"What is 'it'?" Fluttershy asked before taking another bite of her salad.

"She wouldn't tell me," Twilight answered. "All I know is that she was taken to the hospital from the mayor's office, and from what the doctor told me, it had something to do with the Public Relations Committee."

Fluttershy cocked an eyebrow and then quickly finished her mouthful before speaking. "Wait, why was Rarity in the mayor's office? I thought Applejack was filling in for the mayor."

"I thought so too," Twilight said as she swallowed the last bite of her lunch, "but Rarity had the medallion, so I guess Applejack gave it to her."

Fluttershy watched Twilight stand up from the table, levitate some bits out of her bag, and set them down on the table to pay for her lunch. "But, how is Rarity going to be the mayor if she's in the hospital?"

"She's not," Twilight answered after throwing a few more bits on the table to cover the waiter's tip. The unicorn then focused her magic back on her saddle bags, from which she withdrew the mayoral medallion. With a confident smile Twilight secured the medallion around her neck and then gave it a single gentle nudge with her hoof, ensuring it was in perfect position.

Fluttershy blinked once, glancing from the medallion to Twilight. "You're the mayor now?"

Twilight nodded to Fluttershy and, using her magic, began to bind her mane back in a bun. "Yes, at least until Ivory Scroll gets back."

"Are you sure you're going to be able to handle it?" Fluttershy asked. "I mean, if Rarity and Applejack-"

Twilight waved a hoof, and from her saddle bags removed a pair of black framed glasses. She

didn't really need them, but she wanted to look professional. "Oh, don't worry, Fluttershy, I'm sure I'll be able to handle myself. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some mayoral duties to attend to."

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"I don't mean any offense to Applejack or Rarity, but it is nice to have you here, Miss Sparkle," the mayor's secretary said with a smile. She gathered up the many pieces of paperwork Twilight had managed to work through over the course of a few hours. Most of it was the mundane work that Applejack and Rarity had chosen to ignore to pursue their own interests. Raincloud orders for Cloudsdale, the signing off on vacation time requests and other things that ponies expected to be done but really only required the acting mayor's signature.

"Oh, I'm happy to be of service," Twilight said with a wide smile. "So, is there anything else?"

"No, that was the last of the forms I needed you to review," the secretary answered.

Twilight gave a nod. "Good, then maybe you can help me with something. I was wanting to order a few new books for the library, to round out the collection. I already have the list ready, so if I could just get a check from the town treasury--"

"I'm sorry, Miss Sparkle," the secretary interrupted, "but transactions like that needed to be recorded and approved. You'll have to fill out the appropriate paperwork."

"Oh, of course, I'd be happy to," Twilight said. "Can you bring me the forms I'll need?"

The secretary nodded, and quickly scuttled out of the room. As she waited, Twilight began to prepare herself. She made sure her quill and ink were ready, and she pulled out the list of books she was going to have ordered. It was really only the necessities, in her opinion, but it would surely round out the library's collection.

"Here you are, Miss Sparkle."

Twilight looked up just in time to see a small mountain of paperwork get set down on her desk. She craned her neck around it, looking at the tower of forms before turning her attention back to the secretary. "What's all this?"

"The forms you requested."

Twilight's jaw dropped, and her glasses fell from her nose. "I have to fill out all this just to order some books?!"

"Of course," the secretary answered. "First, you have to fill out the form letter that will be sent to

the local library, to verify that the books wanting to be purchased aren't already in the collection. You'll then need to fill out the paperwork to organize a committee to review the selection of books and ensure that all the books selected are appropriate materials for the library, since the library serves not only the community at large but Ponyville's school system.

"Once the books have been approved by that committee," the secretary continued in her flat tone, "we will then need to put in a budget request to the town treasury to see how many bits will have to be put towards the purchase. Then we'll have to send out requests forms to a number of book distributors to get quotes for the purchase. We then must keep all the book publishers informed of all the quotes we receive in case any wish to lower their quotes to compete with another offer."

"Then can we buy the books?" Twilight asked.

"Oh no," the secretary answered. "Then, in the event that the budget allotted for the book purchases isn't sufficient to meet the lowest available quote, we must step back several steps and remove some of the books from the list. It then must be reapproved and then resent out to receive fresh quotes. Then, when a distributor's offer is accepted, we must submit the correct forms to the treasury to make the purchase, and organize the books for delivery.

"And, of course, all the forms must be filled out in triplicate. One to be an acting copy, one to go on file here at the mayor's office, and one to be submitted to Canterlot for storage. We only keep the town records for a year, where the National Records Office of Canterlot holds all these forms for a span of no less than ten years."

"Wait, so there's an entire office in Canterlot devoted to archiving forms!?" Twilight asked in disbelief.

The secretary nodded her head. "Of course there is. Ponies in Equestria expect accountability from their governments, so we have to be able to account for every bit of the tax payer's money we spend."

"But," Twilight tried to protest, turning her attention back to the stack of forms. "That's... that's such a waste of time and paper! Do you know how many books I could make with just the paper right here?"

"About ten, Miss Sparkle, but there's nothing we can do about it. That's the system we have to work with."

"Well the system's broken, and I'm going to fix it!" Twilight proclaimed, taking the stack of papers and shoving them off her desk. "All it needs is a bit of reorganizing, and I know how to reorganize."

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"Are you sure she never came back to the library last night, Spike?" Fluttershy asked. She was walking along side Spike, with Pinkie Pie bouncing a few steps ahead. They were making their way towards the town hall, and Spike had a worried look on his face.

"I'm sure," Spike confirmed. "I fell asleep downstairs, and whenever I do that, Twilight tucks me into bed when she comes back. But, this morning, I woke up where I fell asleep, downstairs, and that means Twilight never came back to the library last night. I mean, what if something happened to her? What if she got lost?"

Fluttershy cocked an eyebrow as she, Spike and Pinkie Pie reached the steps of town hall. "How would she have gotten lost? The library's just down the street." To further prove her point, Fluttershy lifted a hoof and pointed down the street, where the library was clearly visible in the distance.

"Yeah, Spikey, I bet Twilight just had so much fun being mayor that she fell asleep at her desk," Pinkie Pie assured as the trio entered the hall and began making their way to the mayor's office. "After all, when I first started working for the Cakes, I didn't sleep for a whole week. I just kept baking and baking so many tasty things but then I got really tired. So I made myself a bed out of ginger bread and marshmallows and went to sleep right there in the kitchen."

"Really, what was that like?"

"Not that comfortable actually. There were cookie crumbs in all the sheets," Pinkie Pie commented before bouncing in through the door to the mayor's office. "Oh Twilight, how do you like being... mayor..."

Pinkie Pie's voice lost its usual enthusiasm, and she fell silent as Fluttershy and Spike came up beside her. The mayor's office was a disaster, with papers pinned and stuck to the wall with everything from hoof tacks to sharpened sticks. There were also strings of red yarn going in every direction, connecting the many papers on the wall in a spider web-like fashion.

Amidst it all, lying on the floor in a fetal position, was Twilight. The bun she had tied her mane back in had come undone, and her fake glasses had been used to pin some piece of paper to the wall. She was twitching slightly, and her eyes kept darting around as she followed the strange logic of her yarn web.

"Twilight!" Spike, Fluttershy and Pinkie Pie all called out in unison.

Spike was the first to reach her, and he waved his claw in front of her eyes in desperation. "Twilight, Twilight, what happened?"

"It's... it's too much. I... I can't organize it. It's too much," Twilight muttered with a twitch.

"What's too much?" Pinkie Pie asked.

"Everything!" Twilight exclaimed, jumping to her hooves. She then began to bolt around the room, pointing at papers and pulling on lengths of yarn. "The system, it's too much! I tried, I really did! I thought there had to be a way to organize this, but it's too much! Too many ponies need to know about what's going on, too many records have to be kept. I take out a form in one place, and it has to be replaced by five others. There's no way to fix it!

"But there has to be a way!" Twilight shouted, looking across the room. "It shouldn't take so many forms to order books, it just shouldn't!"

"Okay Twilight," Fluttershy said in the most soothing voice possible. "I think you've been working hard enough. How about I take you to the spa and you can have a nice, hot, relaxing bath?"

Twilight shook her head firmly. "No, I can't. If the temporary mayor wants to take a break she has to fill out break form C-5, and then have it notarized by the secretary. She then has to take a form to the treasury and see if the expenses of taking a break will be covered and then-

"Well then maybe you could give that medallion to somepony else," Fluttershy suggested. "That way you don't have to worry about all these nasty forms any more."

Twilight's eyes lit up with joy, and she quickly took the necklace off. "Of course; the only way to beat the forms is to not play their game." She then shoved the necklace into Fluttershy's chest. "Here, you be mayor."

Fluttershy flared her wings in fear, and quickly stumbled back from Twilight, which left the medallion to fall on the floor. "Oh no, I couldn't. I'm... I'm not really mayor material. I'm indecisive, and I hate giving speeches. So, um... if it's all right, maybe you could find somepony else?"

"Oh, me! Let me do it!" Pinkie Pie cheered.

"Here, it's yours," Twilight said, happily securing the medallion on Pinkie Pie's neck. Twilight then jumped into the air, cheered, and began to gallop around the room. All the while she chanted, "I'm free, I'm free, I'm free!"

Twilight then skidded to a stop, turned and galloped out of the room, leaving Spike to sprint after her. Fluttershy followed quickly after them both, leaving Pinkie Pie alone in the mayor's office. Within moments Ponyville's own party pony had gone to the desk, and was digging through it in her search for blank paper and pencils. The ruckus soon drew the mayor's secretary, who poked her head into the room.

“Uh, where did Miss Sparkle go?”

“Oh, she left,” Pinkie Pie answered happily as she continued to dig in the desk. She squirmed into one of the drawers, which then shut behind her. A few moments later, a drawer on the other side of the desk opened up, and Pinkie Pie stuck her head out. “Oops, made a wrong turn,” she said with a giggle.

The mayor’s secretary approached the desk anxiously, watching as different parts of Pinkie Pie popped in and out of different parts of the desk. “Left? But she’s the substitute mayor! She can’t just leave!”

“Oh, don’t worry,” Pinkie Pie said before climbing out of the desk with piece of paper and pencil trapped in the curls of her mane. She then turned to face the mayor’s secretary, and pointed a hoof to the mayoral medallion. “She made me the official temporary substitute mayor, and I promise to do my very best. Now, where is that party request form I left here?”

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“No... no... no... no way... no... what was I even thinking?... no... no... GRAH!”

Rainbow Dash slammed her head down on the desk of her cloud home, causing a cascade of scribbled papers to float up into the air. Each page was a scribbled out schedule, with diagrams and doodles in the shapes of clouds, pegasi and advanced aerial maneuvers.

Picking her head off the cloud desk, and rubbing her now sore nose, Rainbow Dash fetched a fresh sheet of paper and took back up her pencil. She then scratched her mane with a hoof, and began to doodle as she talked around the pencil’s eraser. “Maybe if I borrow some rope from AJ, and then use my Buccaneer Blitz, then- GRAH!”

Rainbow Dash slammed her hoof on the latest piece of paper, and tossed it from the desk. “Dang it! Why did the mayor have to have a rainstorm tomorrow, and a big one too?! I can’t move enough clouds fast enough, and now I’m going to have to miss the Wonderbolts’ show.”

Standing up from the desk, Rainbow Dash kicked at the floor of her cloud home as she made her way to her door. She needed to go blow off some steam. Maybe she could go pull some pranks with Pinkie Pie. That always-

**BOOM!**

Rainbow Dash stumbled on her hooves as the pulse of air shook her home, and almost knocked the cloud house from the sky. Within moments Rainbow Dash was outside, and she turned her head in the direction of the explosion she had heard. A dark mushroom cloud was rising from

the far side of Ponyville, and with it the wind brought the smells of hot sauce, cake frosting and smoke to Rainbow's nose.

"Yikes, Pinkie Pie, what did you do this time?" Rainbow Dash said to herself before soaring away from her home. It only took her a few moments to close the distance between her and the site of the explosion, and she saw the decimation: a crater the size of a small pond, with Pinkie Pie lying in the center of it. Ponies were tossed all around, along with numerous scorched and cake stained party decorations. There was also an excess of confetti floating through the air, like a thick and colorful snowstorm.

"Oh my," a familiar voice said. Rainbow Dash turned her head just in time to see Fluttershy fly up beside her. She was holding a hoof to her mouth, looking around with wide eyes. "What happened?"

A series of grunts drew Rainbow Dash's and Fluttershy's attention to the crater. There, Pinkie Pie had just stuck her hoof over the edge, and with great strain she hauled herself out of the deep hole. She then flopped onto her back, and stared at the sky. Her eyes were narrow, and her expression blank. She was shell-shocked.

"It was the medallion, then the permit, then the cake, the balloons, the streamers, the confetti and more streamers. There was music, laughter, but then it was the mariachi, the piñatas and the deviled eggs. Then there was the punch, and the cupcakes, and the syrup and the hot sauce. So. Much. Hot sauce!"

Rainbow Dash glanced at Fluttershy. "You understand any of that?"

"Well, the medallion and permit part," Fluttershy answered. She reached her hoof forward to a small glint in the dirt near the crater. She drew something out of the dirt, and then brushed off the confetti and maple syrup that clung to the item before holding it out to Rainbow Dash. It was the mayoral medallion.

"Pinkie Pie got this earlier today, from Twilight, and I think she took the party permit she wanted the mayor to sign the other day and signed it herself."

"So this," Rainbow Dash began as she landed, and waved a hoof at the destruction around her, "was a party?"

Pinkie Pie grabbed Rainbow by the neck, and brought her face so close to Rainbow's their noses were touching. "It wasn't a party," she whispered with a tremor. "It was black licorice infused chaos!"

At that Pinkie Pie released Rainbow's neck, and fell into a crumpled heap on the ground. At that same time several emergency ponies began to arrive on the scene. Fireponies began to douse

the few flames that remained after the party-induced explosion whilst several ponies from the hospital began shifting ponies into stretchers.

Rainbow Dash and Fluttershy watched as Pinkie Pie was rushed to a waiting ambulance cart. She was rambling about marching gingerbread ponies, but they weren't able to hear what she was saying once the ambulance cart's doors were shut. The ambulance was then pulled away as another arrived to retrieve the other ponies who had attended Pinkie Pie's party, along with the mariachi band.

"Almost wish I had been here," Rainbow Dash said with a small laugh. "It looks like it was a great party, at least until the part where all this happened." She then looked to Fluttershy, who was looking at the mayoral medallion with a worried expression. "Hey, what's wrong?"

Fluttershy looked up from the medallion. "I'm just trying to think who's going to be mayor now. Pinkie Pie can't handle it right now, and I don't think Twilight would take it back. Maybe Rarity or Applejack will take it back. They've had some time to recover and-"

"What, no!" Rainbow Dash shouted with a firm shake of her head. She then reached out and took the medallion with a greedy grin. "If they've all had a chance and couldn't handle it, then I think it's my turn."

"But, Rainbow Dash, are you sure you can handle it? I mean, you're a really fast and amazing flier, but... you don't own a business like Applejack or Rarity, and you're not organized like Twilight, and-"

"Hey! I can handle it," Rainbow Dash assured her. She put the medallion on, and then put a hoof into Fluttershy's chest. "You just watch. I'll be a better mayor than Applejack, Rarity, Twilight and Pinkie Pie combined."

"Well, if you're sure, then-"

Rainbow Dash jumped into the air, and flashed a confident smile while giving Fluttershy a playful salute. "Oh yeah, I'm sure. Now, catch ya later, Fluttershy. I've got to go to the mayor's office and see if I can't get that rainstorm rescheduled." With that Rainbow Dash bolted off, leaving with such speed that Fluttershy was pulled off of her hooves. She hit the ground with a small squeak, which she followed with a sigh as she watched Rainbow fly off into the distance.

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"Oh, this is so cool," Rainbow Dash cheered through the huge smile on her lips. The previous day she had not only been able to reschedule the rainstorm so she could be at the Wonderbolts' airshow, but she found out the Mayor of Ponyville had been given a special invitation by the Mayor of Graiton. Now, because she was the acting Mayor of Ponyville, she got to watch the

show from the fancy box seats, and she'd get to say hi to the Wonderbolts afterward.

Being the mayor was a sweet gig. Maybe she'd consider running for the office during the next election. After all, everypony in Ponyville knew how awesome she was. She'd probably win in a landslide.

Smile widening, Rainbow Dash landed at the door to the box seating area at the Graiton Fair Grounds. It was the same place the town held most of its big events, from music concerts to the yearly rodeo to the Wonderbolts' show. There was a local police pony standing at the door, but with a flash of her mayoral medallion, Rainbow Dash was let right in.

The box seating was really a step above the normal, stadium seating outside. It was like somepony had plucked a comfortable living room out of a house and dropped it on top of the bleachers. Big comfortable chairs, free snacks and a huge window that let everypony inside get a perfect view of whatever happened to be going on in the fairgrounds.

Rainbow Dash stepped inside the posh VIP box, but then jumped a little when the police pony behind her shouted, "Announcing the Mayor of Ponyville."

"Oh, Ivory, I did not think-"

Rainbow Dash turned to look at the source of the second voice. It was a pony who had been sitting in one of the comfortable chairs, a mare that looked to about the same age as Ivory Scrolls. She had a gray coat and grayish-blue mane, and was looking at Rainbow Dash with a pair of surprised, magenta eyes.

"You're not Ivory," the mayor accused, her nose scrunching up.

"Yeah, no, I'm not. My name's Rainbow Dash. I'm filling in for Ivory Scroll while she's away," Rainbow Dash replied with a nervous chuckle.

"Well, I do suppose you are wearing Ponyville's mayoral medallion," the mare said before putting on a smile. "I can't deny that Ivory needed a vacation. That mare takes her work too seriously. Still, it's a pleasure to meet you Rainbow Dash. I'm Laffer Courbe, the mayor of Graiton. Now, why don't you come sit down."

"Don't mind if I do," Rainbow Dash said eagerly. She trotted over to the seats, and plopped down in the seat next to Laffer Courbe. Her smile then widened, and she sunk into the soft cushions. "Oh wow... these are awesome. Way better than sitting on those hard bleachers."

"I know. I've told Ivory this a dozen times but she just won't have one built for herself at the Ponyville Fairgrounds. It's a shame really. I'd be inclined to come up and join her for some of the events that go on around Ponyville, but I just can't bring myself to sit on those hard seats for

that long. That, or heaven forbid, I'd have to stand."

Laffer turned to the table beside her own cushioned seat, and took a sip of a iced tea that was sitting there before she turned back to Rainbow. "So, Miss Dash, are you a fan of the Wonderbolts?"

"I'm about their biggest fan," Rainbow Dash said proudly, "and I'm going to join them someday."

"Well, I hope I someday get to see you flying out there in uniform, Miss Dash," Laffer said with honest encouragement before her eyes were drawn to the window in front of them. "Oh, it looks like they are about to start."

Despite the comfortable chair she had been offered, Rainbow Dash zipped forward and pressed her face against the window. Her smile only widened as she saw which Wonderbolts were going to be performing. "Aw, this is going to be awesome. Spitfire's out there, and so's Soarin'. Oh my gosh, Fleetfoot's here too, and Rapidfire!"

Rainbow Dash pulled her face off the window glass, and took no notice of the smudge she had left as she began to prance on her hooves. "Oh, the only thing that could make this better is if Fire Streak was here."

"Why Fire Streak, dear?" Laffer asked. She got out of her seat, and moved up to the window, beside Rainbow Dash.

"Because he and Spitfire have this amazing combo they do, the Firestorm Loop. They spin around each other while doing a double helix, making small loops in the air. Then, they set their smoke trails on fire and fly through the loops. It's has to be one of the Wonderbolts' best tricks."

Laffer chuckled. "Well, I hate to disagree, Miss Dash, but I always found the Firestorm Loop to be such a boring trick. Ponies flying through flaming hoops. If I wanted that, I'd got to the circus and pay a quarter of the price."

Rainbow Dash's face fell, and her jaw dropped open. "Are you kidding!? The next thing you're going to tell me is you don't like the Meteor Fall Spiral."

"I don't," Laffer answered back, her eyebrows furrowing as she scrunched up her nose. "All they do is fall out of the sky and turn up at the last moment. I've seen little fillies and colts that can do that."

"Okay, so what trick of theirs *do* you like?" Rainbow Dash asked.

"Personally, I've always been fond of their Celestia's Grace," Laffer said with a smile. "It's such a beautiful trick."

"But the Celestia's Grace isn't a trick!" Rainbow Dash argued. She jumped into the air, needing to hover to try and relieve her quickly building frustration. "The Celestia's Grace is... is synchronized sky writing. It's their slowest maneuver, and it's not even that hard. I could do the Celestia's Grace in my sleep, with a hoof tied behind my back, blindfolded."

Laffer turned to face Rainbow Dash, their eyes meeting in hateful glares. "The Celestia's Grace is elegance embodied. It takes perfect timing, careful control. The Wonderbolts truly show their abilities as aerial aces with that maneuver, where most of their other tricks are just to shock and awe ponies who can't appreciate art.

"To put it in terminology you'd understand, Miss Dash, I find all the rest of their tricks quite lame."

"Lame?" Rainbow Dash echoed, staring in disbelief with her mouth hanging open as wide as it would go. "*Lame?! They're not lame! They're awesome!*"

"They are not. They are cheap thrills at best, boring at worst," Laffer stated, as if her words were undeniable fact.

"You take that back!" Rainbow Dash ordered, her mind beginning to boil with rage.

"I shall not, because it is my opinion and I'm entitled to it," Laffer Courbe said before lifting her nose in the air. "And, if I may say so, any pony that can't appreciate the beauty of the Celestia's Grace maneuver will never be a Wonderbolt."

Rainbow Dash gritted her teeth, and before she could really even think, brought her hoof back.

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The doors to the mayor's office were bucked open, and Fluttershy let out a panicked squeak as she was tossed inside. She had been thrown by Rainbow Dash, who flew inside a few moments later and grabbed the mayor's desk. She then slid it across the room, and slammed it up against the doors of the office, barricading her and Fluttershy inside.

"Okay, I think that might buy me some time," Rainbow Dash said before ducking underneath the desk.

Fluttershy raised her head, and swayed a moment before she regained her sense of balance. She had just been at her cottage, feeding some of her animal friends, when Rainbow Dash came bursting in. She had been talking faster than Fluttershy could understand, and without any warning, Rainbow had grabbed her up and carried her to town hall.

"Um, Rainbow Dash, if you don't mind, could I ask what's going on?" Fluttershy asked as she

slowly picked herself up off the floor.

Rainbow Dash poked her head out from beneath the desk, and put her forehooves together pleadingly. "Save me!"

"From what?" Fluttershy asked, only for another small squeak to escape her lips when a loud banging came from outside the office doors.

"Rainbow Dash, I know you're in there!" a voice called out with the banging. It was a voice Fluttershy didn't recognize but one that caused Rainbow Dash to dive back behind the desk. Confused and curious, Fluttershy trotted over behind the desk and poked her head in the small space beneath it. Rainbow Dash was curled up in a ball, and in a panic waved Fluttershy off.

"Go away, they'll find me!" Rainbow Dash said in a hushed panic.

"Who are they, and why do they sound angry?"

"It's the Mayor of Grinton and her goons. You see, because I'm mayor, I got to sit with her at the Wonderbolts' Airshow. Then we started talking about the Wonderbolts, then we started arguing, and then I..." Rainbow Dash fell silent, and looked away from Fluttershy.

"And then you what?" Fluttershy asked gently. She didn't want to press Rainbow Dash, but at the same time the pounding from the other side of the office door was getting louder.

"I got angry, and I kind of, sort of... decked her."

Fluttershy flared her wings in shock, and her voice took on a scolding tone. "You *hit* her?!"

"Hey, it's not my fault!" Rainbow Dash argued. She pulled herself out from beneath the desk, and met Fluttershy's disapproving gaze. "She said I'd never be a Wonderbolt just because I don't think Celestia's Grace isn't their best maneuver. I mean, you've seen the Wonderbolts; their Waterfall Wind trick is ten times better than that."

Fluttershy forced a smile. "Well, I don't know about *that*, but..." She then sighed, and frowned. "Rainbow, you can't just hit somepony."

Rainbow groaned, and threw her head back. "I know, but-"

"I can hear you in there, Rainbow Dash! I want to have some words with you!" the voice from the far side of the office doors shouted. The pounding was becoming louder, and the desk was starting to move away from the door.

Rainbow Dash, in a panic, threw her weight against the desk, forcing it back against the office

door. Still, the ponies pounding on the other side were able to make the desk slide back out. "This isn't going to hold them for much longer."

"Well," Fluttershy began, trying to keep calm, "maybe you should just apologize. I'm sure if you say you're sorry, then-"

"No way!" Rainbow Dash shouted back. "She said I wasn't going to ever make it into the Wonderbolts! She deserved what she got."

"But don't you deserve to be punished for hitting her?"

"That... that's different," Rainbow Dash argued, though her voice was lacking conviction. "Look, Fluttershy, I came to you for help, and I'd prefer help that doesn't involve me having to face those ponies out there."

"What do you want me to do?" Fluttershy asked. "I mean, those ponies sound really angry."

"Just... just hold them off," Rainbow Dash pleaded. She then took off the mayoral medallion, and quickly secured it around Fluttershy's neck. "Just tell them you're the new mayor and distract them."

"But where are you going?" Fluttershy asked.

Rainbow Dash went to the office's window, and threw it open. "I, uh... I'm going to Cloudsdale. Yeah, that's it. I changed my mind about canceling the rainstorm today, so now I've got to go to Cloudsdale and get the rainclouds. All of them. At once. Yeah, I'll probably be gone for several hours. Just tell them that and I'm sure they'll go away."

"But Rainbow," Fluttershy tried to call, but it was too late. Rainbow Dash was gone, flying off to Cloudsdale. Then, moments later, the office doors were kicked open. The mayor's desk, which had been holding the door shut, flew over Fluttershy's head and crashed against the fall wall. She then looked back to see two very large, burly stallions trotting into the office. They were on either side of a gray mare. She had a grayish-blue mane, one of her eyes was black and swollen shut, and every crease on the mare's face reflected the anger inside her.

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"Miss Pie, you have visitors."

Pinkie Pie sat up from her hospital bed, where she had spent the past few days recovering from her party. She smiled, and waved a hoof as Applejack, Twilight and Rarity, who stepped into the room bringing get well cards and balloons. "Hey girls!"

"Hey there, Sugarcube, how are ya feelin'?" Applejack asked.

"Better. The doctor thinks I'll be able to go home this afternoon, and I can't wait. I miss seeing Pound Cake and Pumpkin Cake, and I know Mr. and Mrs. Cake are worried about me," Pinkie Pie answered with a smile. Her smile then weakened, and she began craning her neck and looking to the door of her hospital room.

"What are you looking at, Pinkie Pie?" Twilight asked, looking over her shoulder and at the empty doorway. "There's nopony there."

"I know, that's the problem," Pinkie Pie explained. "Where's Rainbow Dash and Fluttershy? Didn't they want to come?"

"We don't know, Sugarcube," Applejack said. "I went by Fluttershy's cottage, but she wasn't there. That, and I haven't seen hide or hair of Rainbow for a few days, not since she put that rainstorm of hers together in record time. I even went by her house, and there was this note pinned on a tree that grows beneath that rainbow waterfall of hers."

"What did the note say?" Twilight asked.

"Just said, 'In Cloudsdale. Be back when the heat's down. Ask Fluttershy'," Applejack answered with a shake of her head. "Personally, it don't make a lick of sense to me, and of course we can't find Fluttershy to ask her. Still, I'm sure they'd be here if they could be."

"But, how can Rainbow Dash be mayor if she's in Cloudsdale?" Pinkie Pie asked.

Rarity arched an eyebrow. "What do you mean, dear? I gave the medallion to Twilight."

"Wait, you're not the mayor any more?" Applejack asked. "What happened?"

Rarity shivered in her hooves. "Something I shall never speak of again."

Applejack pushed her hat back, and scratched at her head. "Now, wait just a moment. If I gave the medallion to you, and you gave it to Twilight, then why in the world did she give it to Pinkie Pie?"

Rarity and Applejack turned to look at Twilight, who put on a forced smile. "Well, uh... let's just say that I got a little lost trying to organize everything, but Spike and Fluttershy helped me feel better. Still, Pinkie Pie, why did you make Rainbow Dash mayor?"

"Well, I didn't," Pinkie Pie answered. "Fluttershy came to visit me and she told me that Rainbow Dash had the medallion, and that she had canceled the rainstorm we were supposed to get."

“Now wait just a moment girls,” Rarity said, looking between her friends. “If Rainbow Dash was the last one to have the medallion, and she’s nowhere to be found, and none of us are the acting mayor, then who...?” Rarity trailed off, and looked to her friends. They all shared her worried expression.

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“Fluttershy!” Twilight shouted as her magic flared. With a resounding crash, the doors to the mayor’s office flew open and she leapt in. Applejack was a few steps behind, and Rarity followed behind her, pushing Pinkie Pie in a wheelchair.

“Oh, hi girls.”

Twilight, Applejack, Rarity, and Pinkie Pie looked around the office, each expecting to find something amiss, but everything was in order. The room was clean, and the desk was where it was supposed to be. The desk itself was a little cluttered with paper, but nothing that would be deemed dangerous or worrisome.

Fluttershy had gotten up from her seat behind the desk, and flew over with a big smile on her face. “Oh, Pinkie Pie, you’re out of the hospital. Are you feeling better?”

“Yep,” Pinkie Pie answered from her wheelchair. “Though, the doctor still would only let me come here if Rarity wheeled me. He didn’t want me running all the way over here, which is silly. I wasn’t going to run, I was going to bounce, or maybe jog. Oh, I haven’t skipped in a while. I should skip someplace.”

“Well, I’m glad to here you’re feeling better, but what are you all doing here?” Fluttershy asked.

“We’re here to help you, sugarcube,” Applejack answered. “And we’re sorry we only just now figured out that you’re the one Rainbow Dash made mayor.”

“But don’t you worry,” Twilight said. She walked up to Fluttershy, and put a reassuring hoof on her shoulder. “We’re here to help you.”

“Oh, um... well, that’s really sweet, and I really appreciate-”

“Yeah, don’t you worry, sugarcube,” Applejack assured her. “I’ll make sure Red Onion don’t pull the wool over your eyes like she did to me.”

Fluttershy put on a smile, though it was a little forced. “Really, that’s very sweet of you, but I-”

Rarity gave her head a firm nod. “Yes, and I’ll ensure that you and no pony else sees that... that abomination the Public Relations Committee made of my proposal.”

“Oh, you see, I’ve already-”

“And don’t you worry about the paperwork. After all the time I spent trying to reorganize the system, I know almost every form like the back of my hoof,” Twilight said, using her magic to take hold of the quill and ink that was sitting on the desk.

“Oh, thank you, but... well, you see, I don’t really need any help right now.”

Applejack, Rarity and Twilight all fell silent, glancing between one another. Eventually, Rarity stepped forward and said, “Don’t take this the wrong way, dear, but did you just say you don’t need our help?”

“Well, yes,” Fluttershy answered. She nervously scratched at her leg, and hid one of her eyes behind her mane. “It’s not that I don’t appreciate the offer. I’m always happy to take help when I need it, but... well, I just kind of don’t need it right now.”

Twilight scrunched up her nose, and furrowed her forehead in thought. “But... but how? I mean all of us needed help after a few hours, and you’ve been the mayor for a few days. How could you not need any help?”

“I think I may know the reason.”

Every head in the room turned, and saw Ivory Scroll standing in the doorway. She had a relaxed smile on her face, and was wearing a pair of red sunglasses in place of her usual half-moon spectacles. She also had on a wide-brimmed sun hat, and a floral lei adorned her neck.

“Mayor, you’re back!” Pinkie Pie cheered. “How was your trip?”

“Wonderful,” the mayor answered as she walked towards the group. With a toss of her head, she took off the wide brimmed sun hat, and hung it on a coat rack by the door. She then reached into her saddlebag purse, and after a few moments had replaced her sunglasses with her normal reading glasses.

“Where did you go?” Twilight asked.

Ivory Scroll gently tossed the floral necklace to Pinkie Pie, who eagerly stuck out her head to catch it. “It was a bit of a long train ride, but I went west to the beach. Honestly, I haven’t been to the beach in such a long time, but I may just have to go more regularly. I don’t know about you girls, but nothing is more relaxing to me than sitting out under an umbrella, my hooves in the sand and the sound of the ocean in my ears.”

Rarity smiled, and got a dreamy look about her face as she imagined being on the beach. “Oh

my, that sounds positively divine.”

“It was,” Mayor Ivory Scroll said. She walked up beside Fluttershy, and then turned to face the other mares in the room. “Still, as I was saying before, I believe I know the reason why so many of you had trouble being the mayor.”

“And why was that?” Twilight asked.

“Yeah,” Applejack pressed, “what in Equestria did Fluttershy do that we didn’t?”

“She did what any good mayor has to do; think about somepony other than herself,” Ivory Scroll said. “Do you know why Fluttershy had an appointment me with the day all of you were in my office, demanding my attention?”

The four mares shook their heads, and after seeing this, Ivory Scroll continued. “She came in for the same reason the rest of you did, because she wanted my help with something. Isn’t that right?”

Fluttershy nodded, a small smile forming on her lips. “Yes, I was hoping I could get some more trees planted around town. There were a lot of baby birds born this year, and I’m just worried there won’t be enough places for them to have their nests when they come back next spring.”

“Yet,” Ivory Scroll continued, turning back to the others, “despite being the mayor for the past few days, unlike the rest of you, Fluttershy didn’t make her sole focus getting her trees planted. She instead spent her time as mayor doing what the town as a whole needed the most. That’s what being a mayor is about.”

Ivory Scroll smiled, and carefully removed the medallion from Fluttershy’s neck. She then held it out to the ponies in front of her, letting it hang from her hoof in the sunlight. “The mayor’s job is to make sure their town continues to grow, to prosper and to be a safe and welcoming community. You have to have priorities, to know what needs the most attention and what will benefit the most ponies.

“For example,” Ivory continued, “Rarity, don’t you think the bits I would have to spend on your proposal would be better spent paying for the hospital? After all, where would you and Pinkie Pie have gone for medical treatment if we didn’t have Ponyville General?”

Rarity touched her hoof to her chin. “I do suppose you have a point.”

Ivory Scroll lifted the medallion to her neck, and carefully secured it where her white collar would normally be. “It’s hard, but sometimes that’s what I have to do as mayor. I don’t like making Rainbow Dash miss a Wonderbolts’ airshow, and I don’t like putting out new taxes. I also don’t like telling ponies that I can’t help them with something because of one reason or another, but

that's what I have to do."

"We understand, mayor," Applejack said, taking off her hat and holding it to her chest. "And we're right sorry we were so demandin' of you."

"It's all right, Applejack," Ivory Scroll assured her, "and I do want to hear from you girls. You're bright, young and I know you all have wonderful ideas that will help Ponyville as a whole. All I ask is that you understand that sometimes I'll have to say no to your ideas not because they're bad, but because there are more important things that need to be done first."

Twilight nodded, and looked back at her friends. "It's just like all the letters Princess Celestia gets. There's always somepony asking her to make the days longer or shorter, but she keeps to the scheduled sunrises and sunsets because that's what's best for everypony else."

Applejack chuckled. "Yeah, that sun would be goin' up and down just like when Discord was loose if the princess went and listened to what every mare and stallion in Equestria wanted. Why, just imagine what Rainbow Dash would do. She'd want it dark whenever she took a nap, then light out the next minute so she could practice her tricks."

"Actually, thinkin' about Rainbow Dash," Applejack continued before she turned to look at Fluttershy. "I found a note from her that said she went to Cloudsdale and that you'd know why."

Fluttershy laughed a little, and began walking with her friends out of the office. "Well, it's kind of a long story, but what happened was--"

Ivory Scroll smiled and watched as the five young mares left her office, Pinkie Pie wheeling herself in circles around her friends as they all listened to Fluttershy's story. Ivory then went back to her desk, and settled into the seat with a content smile on her face. Despite some of the chaos those mares had caused, a few days off had done her wonders. That, and now she knew Fluttershy was a good mare to fill in for her; maybe she'd actually be able to take some time off on a more regular basis.

Shifting around her desk, Ivory Scroll found the morning's paper and decided she could spare a few more minutes just to relax and catch up with some of the news. She opened the paper, and then had to cover her mouth at the picture on the front. Laffer Courbe, the mayor of Graitant, was on the front cover. She had a horrified look on her face, and one of her eyes was swollen and bruised.

"I suppose I need to talk to Rainbow Dash about that," Ivory Scroll mused before letting a sly smile form on her lips. "Then again, there's no rush."

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**The End**

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Questions, Comments, Concerns?

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I do not own the intellectual properties this fan-fiction is based on.

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