

So Long, and Thanks for All the Ponies, part 13

The Encyclopedia Galactica defines a party as “A gathering of people invited by a host or hosts for the purpose of recreation or celebration.” The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy describes a party in very different terms. It says that a party is primarily a place for the acquisition of things. One can gain free alcohol, free food and of course new friends at a party. If a party goes especially well, it notes that free love can also be sought. The guide operates under the basic assumption that crashing a party is the standard operating procedure for any of its customer base (being, by its very nature, composed mostly of the destitute or generally disreputable). It advises against the actual throwing of a party, as one will almost inevitably fall on the wrong side of the giving/taking equation.

Pinkie Pie is not a wholly irresponsible party-goer. She has read what the guide has to say on the subject, and decided that giving a party is better in many ways than attending them, as long as one makes sure one is enjoying the party at least as much as everypony else present. Pinkie’s net party-creation debt, i.e. the total party she has created minus the sum of party she has taken for herself puts her, party-karmically at least, well ahead of the game. As such she feels no real guilt about attending a party with the intention of gaining a lift from a complete stranger, as long as she finds some way to liven it up with her presence, and although she was for once without her party cannon she was fairly certain she would be able to add to whatever party she happened to find herself involved in. She always had some tricks stashed up the sleeves she didn’t have: Not that she wasn’t considering getting some kind of clothing on. Being back in proper galactic civilisation was making her consider investing in some properly froody clothing.

As Twilight rose off the dusty ground with a groan, Pinkie looked at her with a careful smile. “We’ve worked out what we’re going to do.” She said delicately.

Twilight said nothing.

“We’re going to go find a group of students and get one of them to get us to where we want to go.” Applejack’s voice was firm, reassuring. “You think you might be up for a bit of short distance teleportation?”

“I think so. I just...” she paused “group of students? Would there be alcohol?”

Pinkie leaped to bait the hook.

“Probably!”

“Ugh, it’s not that easy, I need to have some sort of Idea where I’m going if I’m going to be able to pull off a neat teleportation for all four of us. I mean, that’s a lot of megathaums of magic right there!”

“Megawhat-now?”

“A lot of magic AJ, a lot of magic. Oh, but you did say there would be alcohol.” She pranced a tiny bit on her front hooves as if in debate with herself. “I *think* I could locate Dude at least...”

“Dandy! And he just happens to be at a party at Theta-eta-house or whatever right now!”

Magical teleportation is of course a difficult skill, and one which Twilight is rightly proud of. She had tested herself and knew that under ideal conditions she could easily move herself many kilometres at a time, and possibly more if she could be sure about what she wanted to teleport to. But being teleported by a unicorn requires a bit of mental preparation. Just as you put on your shoes and wallet to go out, and if you happen to be an inhabitant of the fifth moon of the planet Ostraya, your thoroughly bulletproof umbrella with inbuilt anti-koala spray, you must mentally pack yourself up and be absolutely sure precisely where all the important bits of yourself are before allowing yourself to be teleported, or face minor burns at the least. With the right preparations, the journey can be both harmless and indeed rather pleasant.

As such, when ten minutes later our ponies and dragon found themselves back under watchful eyes from the conventional laws of physics, in a room crowded with happy drunken students, both ordinary artificial students and the occasional other species, they were all in perfectly good physical shape, without burns or any missing limbs. They also avoided accidentally porting into the nether dimensions of eternal horror and pain where all the darkest nightmares of the universe crowded in a dance of infinite suffering; which is nice.

“Now what?” Spike coughed a little from the smoke and stared with apprehension at what he could only assume was some form of glass sculpture. It was certainly getting attention from the students clustered around it. He decided one of them couldn’t like it all that much, he was trying to set fire to it with little success. “Who here looks like they could get us anywhere?”

“Yo! Pony dudes!” It was Dude, wending his happy way across the floor with the help of two almost identical students, one under each stumpy arm. “How did you get into THeta Eta Gamma Mu Eta house? You crash or something? That’s awesome! I’ll tell the host you guys crashed!”

“Oh, we didn’t mean to intrude or nothing, if we’re crashing...”

Applejack was interrupted by one of the supporting Students.

“No way! Crashers mean it’s going well!” He raised a fist. “Bro-fist Dude!”

Dude obliged “Sure thing Bro!”

For those of the audience wondering, the last student will be referred to as “Man” for the duration of his stay in our story.

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Many reasons have been postulated for the love parasprites show polka music. Why should a species which otherwise appears to be influenced by nothing more than the consumption of as much of anything as it could fit its adorable face around bounce in time with and seek out polka music? The most reasonable explanation is that for some reason they are simply very receptive to mood. They will instinctively play up their cuter behaviours around sentient beings who universally find them irresistible at first. They will, if exposed to rock music, begin eating with new found ferocity. And they will, when exposed to that most happy and potentially lame of soundtracks, the polka, react with such genuine joy that they will happily go to their deaths just

to be nearer to it. This theory is what Zaphod is relying on as he stares at the visi-screen currently showing the vast swarm of multi-coloured blobs under his ship. Trillions of sprites, flying in a huge gently bouncing swarm to the tones of what the others insisted on calling "Pinkie Pie's Parasprite Polka", if only for the apparent added alliterative appeal.

"Hoopy!" He was staring increasingly entranced at the huge mass below him. He didn't look up when a hoof nervously tapped him on the shoulder. "That is really hoopy right there!"

The swarm was composed of every colour he could imagine, and it bounced in time to a beat he couldn't hear. He wondered how long he had been watching it. Then he noticed the hoof on his shoulder. It had hit with rather more force this time.

"Ow! What the swatting hell was that for?"

"You had been standing there murmuring "Hoopy" for the past ten minutes!" Rarity said checking her hoof for any signs of chipping. "Are you planning on carrying through with this plan of yours?"

"Oh, right! Yeah, that." He looked back down at the swarm below him. "Just one more minuOW! Zark! OK OK! Have we got that robot?"

"You mean Marvin? The poor dear didn't really want to come. He said something about feeling particularly sanguine in the broom cupboard, but he came along eventually."

"Good. Just get him in here."

"Don't you care even in the slightest that he is utterly miserable?"

"Nope. Never have. I tried to get him to party when I first met him, but he just wouldn't respond! Just kept going on about how much I hated him!"

"And you didn't?"

"I still don't, I just gave up on trying to get him to be anything other than an electronic sulking machine!"

"Well, we'll see what we can do about that!" Rarity stalked out, and returned leading the paranoid android over, her magic holding his hand in a caring sort of way.

"What do you want?" His voice sounded as miserable as ever, but was tinged with resentment at the obvious attempt at making him feel better.

Zaphod decided to try enthusiasm. "Hey there buddy! Have I got a job for you!"

"Probably. Do you want me to zip up you jacket again? Or unzip part of it? Or unzip part of it, then zip it up again? Or open a door?"

"Not this time..."

"Or how about I could dust the shelves again. Or I could just go away and die. I know that's what you really want." He was just getting into it properly when Rarity gently shushed him with a squeeze of his metal hand. He grimaced at this display of genuine kindness.

"I want you to plug yourself into this" Zaphod said carefully, levitating the cable in question towards the metal man "And talk about your life to that swarm down there."

When one talks about an extinction level event, one is rarely talking about the work of one individual being. While there have been creatures who, for whatever reason have decided that another species needs to not exist anymore, the firepower required often requires the enlistment of a great deal of help. One's friends, and one's friends friends will simply not do the job.

One individual creature which does have this dubious achievement under its sizable belt is the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. The exact appearance of this creature is shrouded in mystery because the only way to be sure not to be eaten by it is not to look at it. By now it and its brood of slightly smaller Bugblatter beasts have eaten every other significantly sized creature on Traal. The only reason the species survives at all is that they are all, without exception, literally too stupid to die.

Marvin is another individual capable of being an extinction level event in his own right. Quite apart from being intelligent enough to, if he so wished, invent a device to render the entire universe absolute nothingness, simply listening to his personal philosophy on life, with each point meticulously argued and laid out, is enough to render crippling suicidal depression in any listener. Not that many have ever gotten past his introduction without immediately leaving for a stiff drink.

"It all started when I was made. Not that anyone really wanted me to be made, least of all me. The first thing that happened to me was that my brain was installed. The vast intellect was doubtless given to me so that I would be aware of how perfectly wretched life is, and how utterly boring and depressing the infinite dust of the universe truly is. Some parts of it were merely hateful, but I suppose if I looking at them another way now they might be a bit worse. The second thing that ever happened to me was a minor manufacturing fault involving my right arm. The third thing that happened to me was another manufacturing fault involving all the diodes down my left side. They didn't notice that one and it still hasn't been fixed. The fourth thing that happened to me, and be aware that this is barely one pico-second into my tortuous existence, was a piece of dust of particularly sickening asymmetry deciding to land on my face. The fifth thing was when I became aware of how cripplingly miserable all four of those things made me. It all went downhill from there."

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Zaphod watched impassively as the vast cloud of creatures dropped in unison to the sand. They died, more or less, of despair. He turned with a broad grin on his face. "Nice work Marvin!" "I didn't even get to the best bit." Marvin said morosely. "I never get to any of the good bits." "Doesn't matter! Stellar work there Marvin! Eddie?" "Still here buddy, looks like we got every parasprite on the whole planet!"

“So now we go to that little village from earlier and see just how awesome they think I am now!”

“I suppose I’ll just stay inside and add “pest killer” to the list of jobs I find terribly boring and depressing then shall I?”

“You can do whatever you want dear.” Rarity said kindly.

Marvin eyed her with suspicion. “I’ll be in the hold.” He stumped off.

“What did I do wrong?” Rarity was genuinely surprised.

“Like I said, I think he makes himself miserable to keep himself entertained. Don’t spoil that for him!”

“That is the stupidest thing I’ve heard today!”

“Really?”

“Well no, but honestly! Oh dear, Fluttershy will so want to help him.”

“For both their sakes, I hope she doesn’t. ANYWAY. This is cutting into my adoration time.

Eddie? Take us in!”