

## **AN EARL IN PONYVILLE?**

*By GeodesicDragon*

Under a clear blue sky, the citizens of Ponyville went about their business as normal. They did their shopping, cleaned their homes, played with their children, mended the hole in the roof, or met up with their friends at Sugarcube Corner to enjoy a tasty treat.

Within the walls of the eatery sat five friends talking amiably amongst themselves, the empty plates in front of them indicating that the bakery was – as per usual – living up to its well-earned reputation of providing good, wholesome food.

"The day this place fails to make me clear my plate is the day I die," Rainbow Dash said, stifling a belch. "I'm gonna need to do a few laps to burn all of that off, but it was totally worth it."

Rarity nodded. "I agree," she replied. "It's good to know that we can rely on the Cakes to provide us with wonderful meals."

"Correction," Pinkie chirped. "You mean super-duper-ultra-mega-great-and-amazeballs-wonderful meals, all at insanely low prices!"

"Oh, yes, darling." Rarity dabbed at her cheeks with a napkin, checking meticulously for stains. "Of course that's what I meant."

"It's sad that Twilight missed out again," Fluttershy said. "She's been so busy with her Princess duties lately, I can't even remember the last time all six of us had lunch together."

"Fluttershy makes a good point, y'all." Applejack put her hat on the table. "When the last time any of us even saw Twilight?" The five of them thought for a moment; when nopony offered a reply, Applejack nodded. "Eeyup, that's what I thought."

"Well... she's just been so busy lately," Rarity defended. "I heard that she has been spending a lot of time talking to emissaries from the dragons, the yaks, the hippogryphs, the changelings, the gryphons, and even the minotaur. It would be rude of us to intrude on what could very well be an important meeting."

"That's not it." the girls turned to the source of the new voice to see that Spike had managed to integrate himself into the group without any of them noticing. "Twilight hasn't been talking to any yaks, gryphons, or anything of the sort; she's *actually* been spending all her free time talking to somepony she calls 'Earl.'"

Applejack raised an eyebrow. "How do you know that?"

"Because I heard her talking to him," Spike replied. "She told me that I could go and do whatever I wanted, because I'd be bored, but I managed to overhear part of her meeting when I was going to the kitchen to get another bowl of gems."

When he didn't continue, Rarity looked at him expectedly. "And?" she queried. "Did you hear what they were talking about?"

Spike shrugged. "I could only hear Twilight talking; she was going on about how much the Earl meant to her, and saying stuff like 'You complete me' and 'I wish this moment could last forever.'"

Rarity squealed with glee, much to the consternation of her friends and the other patrons of the bakery. "Twilight has a secret colt friend!" she said eagerly. "No wonder she didn't want anypony around to know about it; dating an Earl is no small matter!"

"Now hold on, Rarity, you can't know that for sure," Rainbow Dash said. "Maybe Spike misheard what Twilight was saying?"

"Nope." Spike shook his head. "I remember every word, because she was speaking in a really weird tone of voice. Remember that romantic film Rarity dragged us to once?"

"Yes," came the unenthusiastic response, much to Rarity's dismay.

"Right," Spike continued. "Well, Twilight was speaking like the mare in that movie; her voice sounded *really* seductive." He visibly shuddered at the memory.

"Look, y'all, why don't we go around to the castle and see if we can't get Twilight to come clean about what's going on?" Applejack offered. "We *are* her friends, after all, so she can tell us anything."

"Okay." Fluttershy nodded. "We can do that, but we shouldn't pressure her into telling us anything she doesn't want to."

Pinkie got out her seat and bounded on the spot. "Ooh, I hope she tells us about her new coltfriend!" she said. "I will throw them the best party Ponyville will ever see!" She paused for a moment, then shrugged. "Well, the best party they'll see this week."

"Very well, girls." Rarity sighed. "Let's go over there now."

All as one, they put some bits on the table and left the bakery, their hooves propelling them towards the castle in the distance.

\*\*\*

The girls and Spike arrived at the castle in a matter of minutes; they walked up to the front door and tried opening it, only to discover that it was locked.

"Great." Rainbow Dash huffed. "Well, *this* was a waste of time."

Spike chuckled. "Puh-leeze," he scoffed. "You forget that I live here too, Dash, so that means I have ways of getting in." He put a claw into the lock and twiddled it around; after a moment, there was a small click and the door opened. "Just like that." He polished his claws on his chest and blew on them. "Now come on; if the door was locked, that means the Earl will be here."

The six of them crept down the hallway towards the main living area, casting furtive glances around to make sure that nothing would alert Twilight to their presence. Even as they approached the door, they could hear Twilight's voice filtering out from underneath.

"Oh, Earl," she said. "How I wish that our moments together could last for a lifetime." There was a pause. "No, no, don't say anything; just let me savour you some more before you go."

Spike stuck a claw in his mouth. "Eww, gross."

"Shush," Rarity chided. "She'll hear us."

"When I first encountered you at the store in Canterlot, I have to admit that I was a bit sceptical," Twilight said. "But everypony I spoke to was adamant that you were worth my time and, well, I'm glad that I heeded their advice." She sighed contentedly. "I love everything about you: your shape, your smell... and your taste."

"Aw, *hell no*." Rainbow Dash's pupils shrunk to pinpricks. "I'm not listening to another moment of this nonsense! Come on, everypony, we're going in there before we hear something we'd rather not!"

The six of them piled into the room as one solid mass, landing in a heap in front of a startled Twilight. The alicorn shot upwards, ending up precariously perched on one of the bookcases that filled the room, and glared at her friends and assistant.

"What on Equestria are you all doing?!" Twilight demanded, gliding back to the floor while her friends disentangled themselves. "Spike, do you have anything to do with this?"

Spike chuckled nervously. "Well, no, but—"

Rarity was the first to stand up; she immediately rushed over to Twilight and got in her face. "Details, darling!" she exclaimed. "I want to know everything about this mysterious 'Earl' of yours!"

Twilight's face flushed crimson. "Y-you heard about that?" she asked, to which her friends all nodded. "I-if I'd known that somepony was listening in, I wouldn't have acted that way."

Rarity waved a forehoof dismissively. "Oh come now, Twilight," she said. "We all act a bit strange when we're in love."

"You've all got it completely wrong." Twilight sighed, turning away from her friends and pointing at the table.

Her friends looked at it in confusion; confusion which turned into a collective sigh of disbelief when they saw the teapot.