

Twilight Sparkle in
Horseshoe Detective or Forget it, Spike, it's Ponyville

The sugar-coated gumball rain pitter-pattered on the window of Twilight Sparkle's cozy office. The private pony detective slumped on her desk and stared out the window in a daze. She hadn't slept well in over a week. She had too much on her mind to sleep.

First there was Spike's hospitalization. That horrible incident with the candy shop taffy puller last week had resulted in multiple dislocated and fractured bones throughout the little dragon's body. He was now laid up in a full body cast from the tip of his snout to the tip of his tail. *Poor thing*, Sparkle thought.

Second, there was the more pressing concern. This case. The biggest to hit Ponyville since the series of sandwich thefts at last summer's teddy bear picnic.

Sparkle let out a big yawn as her part-time secretary, Applejack, entered the room.

"Now, now, darlin'," Applejack said with a shake of her head. "Don't you be yawning just yet. We got a full afternoon of appointments for Ms. Rarity's case."

"Is anypony here yet?" Sparkle asked while rubbing an eye with a hoofed foot.

"The suspects have arrived," Applejack replied with a smirk. "Ms. Rarity, too. She'd like a word before the others come in." Applejack turned to leave, but stopped in the doorway to address Sparkle again. "By the way, you look just awful, dear. Can I get you one of my signature Red Delicious apples? Might help. Big Mac just picked 'em this mornin'."

"No, thank you, Applejack," Sparkle said. "Please send Rarity in."

Applejack nodded and exited. Sparkle appreciated the honesty and directness of her friend. These very qualities were why Sparkle chose Applejack for her secretary. She knew the pony could be trusted absolutely.

"Detective Sparkle," a recognizable voice said from the door. Sparkle perked up as Rarity trotted into the office, closing the door behind her. As usual, the unicorn looked stunning. Her shiny, pearl coat was impeccably groomed and accompanied perfectly by a sequined blue and purple jacket. Ribbons of matching colors were weaved in amongst the long, flowing locks of her bubble-gum-toned mane.

Sparkle had to stop herself from groaning. *Leave it to Rarity*, she thought. *One of the worst crimes in Ponyville history is taking place at her shop, and she still finds the time to look like that.* Sparkle hadn't changed clothes in three days. She hadn't even been home.

"How can I help you, Rarity?" Sparkle asked. "I'm sure you noticed that I have a full waiting stable of suspects for your case."

"Indeed, I did," the unicorn said. "I just wanted to thank you again for all your help. I know how much work you've put into this."

Not as much as you've put into that outfit, Sparkle thought before replying.

"You're welcome, but it's all part of the job." She opened the side drawer of her desk, retrieved a carrot, and took a bite. Rarity eyed the carrot.

"May I bum one of those?" she asked. Sparkle peered into the drawer; she didn't have many left. After a moment's hesitation, she tossed one to Rarity, who caught it.

"Thank you, Detective," she said. "You're a good friend."

Sparkle didn't know why, but something about that remark made her tummy upset.

For the rest of the morning, one by one, Sparkle brought in the suspects for questioning. The first was Fluttershy, and it went about as Sparkle had expected.

"What were you doing at Rarity's shop that day?" Sparkle asked. "I have witnesses placing you there before the incident."

In the chair across from her, the little blue pegasus was trembling from her wings to her hooves.

"Oh... Um... Well, I... I... I don't know. I don't remember. Oh no, oh no, oh no. I don't remember. This is... This is just so much pressure. Oh gosh, oh golly..." Her voice quickly softened to an inaudible volume, though her lips continued to move as if she were still speaking.

Sparkle picked up her glitter pen off the desk and crossed Fluttershy's name off her suspect list.

Next up was Pinky Pie.

"By Celestia's crown, I just, like, can't believe it," Pinky said. "It's horrible. Who would do this?" The pink pony chewed on a piece of pink bubble-gum as she spoke, while absently braiding her mane. Meanwhile, Sparkle was trying her best to keep her eyes open.

"That's the question I need to answer, Pinky," Sparkle said. "But first I need an answer from you. What were you doing at Rarity's shop that day?"

"Well, duh doy, Sparkle!" Pinky replied. "You know I just love Rarity's shop. It's the best, most fashionablest boutique in all of Ponyville! I'm in there almost every day. I hardly shop anywhere else."

"Any particular reason for your visit that day?" Sparkle asked before realizing how unnecessary that question was.

"A party!" Pinky shouted with a flourish. "Ha, ha, ha! You know me, girl! I was hosting a party at the Cutey Kitten Club that night, and I needed a new outfit. You know, just something ridiculously cute that didn't attract cat hair. You see, I'm allergic. I probably shouldn't have taken the job, but I just love, love, LOVE those itty, bitty kitties. I could squeeze them forever and ever and ever! By the way, do you know any spells that repel pet dander?"

As Pinky Pie continued, Sparkle crossed her name off the list.

"You look sleepy, Sparks," Rainbow Dash observed.

"Yeah. It's been a long week," Sparkle replied as she took a drink of the homemade apple juice Applejack had brought for her. Rainbow Dash was the last suspect on her list. The impressive pegasus was a loyal friend, but Sparkle couldn't rule out her friend's magnificent speed, which may have aided her in committing the crime.

"I have to admit," Dash began. "It's strange to be in this position."

"It's mostly a formality, Dash," Sparkle explained. "I have a source saying you were at Rarity's that day."

"Well, they aren't lying," Dash admitted. "I was there. Rarity had a white leather jacket with rainbow fringe on display that was literally calling my name."

"Literally?" Sparkle asked.

"Yeah. I think Rarity put a charm on it or something."

"Oh, I see."

"Listen, Sparks," Dash said, leaning forward, "given the circumstances of the crime, I don't understand why I or any of the others from the waiting stable were brought here today."

"What do you mean?" Sparkle asked.

"None of us can perform magic," Dash explained. "I'm no detective, but I think it's pretty clear what happened was done by a unicorn."

Sparkle's tummy felt uneasy again. She didn't like where Dash was going with this.

"You're right, Dash. You aren't a detective. You can't know that for sure." Dash must not have liked Sparkle's tone because her cheeks began to flush.

"The hooves I can't!" Dash protested. "Sparks, do you honestly believe what you're saying here?"

"What makes you think I don't?" Sparkle retorted.

"Because Rarity's entire store was filled to bursting with sticky, oopy, goopy marshmallow cream! What do you think? That one of us poured all that down her chimney pail by pail?"

"I don't know, you're pretty fast, Dash!"

"Not that fast! No pony's that fast. Not even the Wonderbolts! It's ridiculous!"

"Yeah, well..." Sparkle hesitated. Dash was right. It did sound ridiculous. Still, she couldn't back down now, not after all the work she'd done. "So what would you have me believe then, Dash? That Fluttershy did it? Pinky Pie? You know as well as I do they aren't capable of such a thing. You're the only pony left!"

Dash leaned away then. The flush in her cheeks diminished. She looked at Sparkle with concern in her eyes.

"You don't see it, do you? No... No, you're too sleepy."

"What?" Sparkle urged. "What don't I see?" Dash sighed before replying.

"It's you, Sparks. You did it."

Anger began to bubble up in Sparkle's tummy like soap in a hot bath. She felt her own cheeks flush and legs tremble.

Me? she thought. *The bad pony? How dare Dash say such a thing? After everything I've done, I get blame? I'm the one who saves the day! I solve the crimes! All Rarity does is make beautiful clothes with sequins and ribbons and fringes and everypony loves her!*

"It's not fair!" she yelled out loud. Dash jumped at her sudden outburst. Sparkle instantly felt ashamed. She hung her head and put her face in her hooves. The haze of the last week was starting to make sense.

With a sudden swing of the door, Applejack entered the office, followed by Rarity.

"What in tarnation was that?" Applejack asked. "What's going on in here?"

"Detective?" Rarity asked. "Are you okay?" Sparkle didn't answer for a moment. The soft sound of the other unicorn's voice hurt her heart. She had worked so hard to forget, but that voice reminded her of what she had done and why she had done it.

She lifted her chin up and looked Rarity in the eye. She felt a cool, wet tear slide down her cheek as she opened her mouth to sing:

I did it
It was me
Rarity,
I filled your shop with marshmallow cream

I'm so sorry
For what I've done
Being a jealous pony isn't very fun

I should've told you how I felt
But I kept it all inside
Friends speak the truth
But in this case I lied

I remember now
So sleepy
Rarity,
I cast the spell from within my dreams

I'm so sorry
For what I've done
Cleaning that mess up couldn't have been fun

I hope you can forgive me for
Destroying your whole store
I know I hurt you
And you deserve so much more

When Sparkle was finished, Rarity was smiling. The pearl-coated unicorn trotted up to Sparkle's desk, placed one of her hooves atop one of Sparkle's, looked her in the eye, and said...

"Of course I forgive you, Sparkle. You're my friend."

And then Sparkle smiled, too. Her heart still hurt, but it was a good hurt.