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# THE PURLOINED PONY

BY CHRIS



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CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE™ · 12

# THE PURLOINED PONY

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BY CHRIS



ILLUSTRATED BY RELUCTANT BRONY



BUCKSKIN BOOKS

VANHOVER · MANEHATTAN · CANTERLOT · PONYVILLE

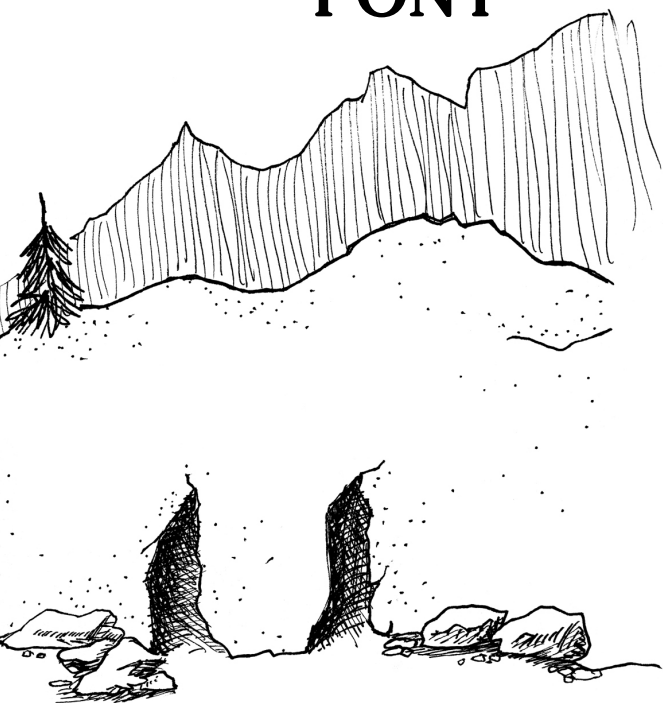
## **WARNING!!!!**

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Do not read this book straight through from beginning to end! These pages contain many different adventures you can have in and around Ponyville. From time to time as you read along, you will be asked to make a choice. Your choice may lead to success or disaster! The adventures you have will be the result of the decisions you make. After you make your choice, follow the instructions to see what happens to you next.



# THE PURLOINED PONY



It is a beautiful summer morning in the magical land of Equestria. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the carrots are selling like hotcakes. And the carrot hotcakes are selling even faster than that!

You've served the citizens of Ponyville your carrots and carrot products for years now, but today is by far the best day for sales that you've ever had. You know the reason, too: Applejack usually sets up an apple cart right next to yours in the market square, and the two of you have a friendly rivalry, seeing who can sell the most. Today, however, she appears to have taken the morning off, leaving you with no competition for customers. While you're a bit sorry that you don't have your friend here to chat with as you work, you certainly can't complain about the boost it's giving to your business!

As another satisfied patron wanders off, you count the bits in your moneybag with a grin. You've already practically emptied your cart, and it isn't even noon! Good thing too; there's a storm scheduled for tonight, and you still need to tarp down the baby carrots you planted two weeks ago. You fold up your market stand, preparing to head back to your farm.



## 2

As you're closing up, a young stallion named Caramel approaches you. "Excuse me, Carrot Top!" he says. "I can see you're packing up to leave, but is it too late to get a cup of that carrot custard of yours?"

You smile at him and ask, "Why, did you drop yours in the dirt?" Handing him the last custard in your cart, you tell him, "Don't worry about it then, this one's on the house."

Caramel looks confused. "Drop what on the where? What are you talking about?"

"You were just here not five minutes ago, and you bought a carrot custard from me then. Don't you remember?"

Caramel scrunches up his face as he thinks. "Hmm . . . nope. Oh well. Thanks anyway!"

You roll your eyes as the colt wanders off. He has a reputation throughout town for being a ditz; he'd probably lose his own shoes if they weren't nailed to his hooves! You finish your packing, and begin to head out towards your farm.

But before you've gone more than a dozen steps, you hear a familiar voice calling your name. Turning around, you see Twilight Sparkle running towards you, looking very worried.

"Oh Carrot Top, am I glad to see you! You aren't hurt, are you? Are you okay?"

Twilight's been something of an odd duck ever since she came in from Canterlot, but asking you if you're injured when you're right in front of her and clearly in fine health seems strange even by her standards. "Um, I guess so? I'm not sick, if that's what you mean. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some work to do on the farm . . ."

"NO! No more fieldwork! Not until we get everything figured out! I . . . Urgh." Twilight shakes her head. "Never mind. We've got a BIG problem, and I need you to come with me. Hurry!" And without waiting for a reply, she dashes off towards her library again.

You look at your empty cart, and think about all the work you have left to do. Following Twilight around all day would be a real pain, but it sounds like something serious is going on.

---

*If you follow Twilight to the library,  
turn to page 4.*

*If you take your cart and head back to the  
farm, turn to page 12.*

## 4

You shake your head and take off after Twilight; work will have to wait, it seems.

The two of you quickly arrive at her home, the massive hollowed-out tree near downtown which serves as Ponyville's library. She rushes in ahead of you and starts pulling books off the shelves, frantically searching for something. After hauling down dozens of books (and leaving them scattered all over the floor, you note with distaste), she appears to find what she's looking for: an ancient leather-bound tome titled *Regarding the Majical and Heretofore Unknown Among the Lesser Fey: a Compendium*. Opening the book, she asks you as she reads, "Has anything strange been going on at your farm? Broken equipment, missing or damaged crops, that sort of thing?"

You shake your head slightly. "Well of course, but that sort of thing happens all the time. It's just part of being a farmer." As you think about it a moment longer, you do remember something odd, however. ". . . Actually, the last few days I've been having trouble with some thief coming and taking carrots in the night. Figured it was probably just some foals wreaking havoc. Haven't caught them yet."

Twilight nods. "Yes, yes . . . that's how it would start . . ." Suddenly, she swings around to face you. "Do you know what brownies are?"

---

*Go on to the next page.*

You briefly consider making a dessert-related joke, but it's obvious from Twilight's tone that she's in no laughing mood. "Yes, of course. According to the folktales, they're tiny little apethings that sometimes live in rural homes. If a farmer pony is always good and kind, and sets out a plate of milk for them each evening, they'll do all her chores for her while she sleeps. Everypony knows that." You don't mention that even now that you're grown up and ostensibly don't believe in old mare's tales anymore, you still leave a saucer of milk on the doorstep each night. Just in case.

"Yes, but do you know what happens when a brownie turns bad?"

"I didn't think they did. Or could, for that matter."

"Oh, they can. Evil brownies are called boggies, and their mischief knows no bounds. They'll blight crops, spoil harvests, and even," Twilight gulps, "kidnap foals.

"Luckily, they can't stay near pony villages long. All the local animals know what horrible fellows they are, and will chase them away. So boggies usually travel to lonely mountains, where they can gather together without being bothered by other creatures.

"But sometimes, a large band of them will decide to raid a town all at once. Then they'll come in and cause as much chaos as they can for a few days before returning to their mountain homes."

## 6

You interrupt Twilight as she continues to babble on. “Okay, okay, that’s really interesting, but so what? What do a bunch of fairy-stories have you all worked up about?” *And why is it so important that I couldn’t just go back to my farm and get to work*, you silently add.

Twilight takes a deep breath. “I don’t think boggies are just fairy-tales, Carrot. I think they’re real.”

Before you can point out how silly she sounds right now, Twilight continues, “For the last five days, Sweet Apple Acres has been under attack by these creatures. Of course, none of us thought that it was boggies at the time; AJ just started complaining that the trees were getting infected, that bucket handles were snapping, that the apples she did harvest were sour or rotten . . . all sorts of things.

“I began to guess what was happening yesterday. I tried to warn AJ, but she wouldn’t listen. She told me she didn’t believe in brownies, or their evil cousins.”

Twilight hangs her head, and with a choking voice, she says, “Then this morning, Apple Bloom went missing.”

Standing behind you is Ponyville's resident mailmare, in all her wall-eyed glory. You sigh and crumple up the note in your hooves; no doubt it's another lame excuse for emptying your pantry. Still, Ditzzy is a good friend, when she's not busy eating you out of house and home.

"Hi Ditzzy," you say. "Look, I don't mean to be rude, but I was going to get some lunch and maybe—" Your stomach interrupts you with a growl.

Nodding sagely (or as sagely as anypony with googly-eyes can), Ditzzy reaches into her mailbag and pulls out a carrot-bran muffin. Giving it to you, she winks and takes off, presumably going to finish her rounds.

You eat the muffin gratefully; you hadn't realized how hungry you were until you got home. Feeling a bit fuller, you decide to forgive Ditzzy for eating all your food (again); after all, food is easy to replace, but friendship should be treasured.

Then you head outside to tend to the baby carrots. After all, that's what you came here to do.

## 8

You gasp at this revelation. Whether the boggies are real or not, this is terrible news indeed. “Do you know if she’s alright?” you ask, afraid to hear the answer.

“We don’t know. She just vanished without a trace. AJ already got Dash and Big Mac together to help her sweep the forest, but I don’t know if they’ll have much luck.” Twilight looks at you hopefully. “If you’re willing, we could really use some help finding her.”

You nod. Of course you’ll do anything you can to get Apple Bloom back safe and sound!

“Oh, I’m glad to hear that! Spike’s in Canterlot on royal business, so I need all the assistance I can get! Help me read through these books, there’s got to be something useful in here!”

You look around the library at the disorganized piles of books. *There has got to be a better way to help Apple Bloom*, you think to yourself.



---

Go on to the next page.

Seeing the look on your face, Twilight blushes slightly. “Oh, er . . . well, I’m sure there’s plenty of useful things you can do other than aid in my research.” She thinks hard, then claps her hooves together. “I know! You could go round up some of my friends! Fluttershy, Rarity, and Pinkie Pie would all be willing to help, if they knew Apple Bloom was missing! You could get their help to expand the search. Oh, and you could go and talk to Zecora! She probably knows all sorts of things about boggies!” Twilight looks at you excitedly. “There’s a lot of work to be done; what should we do to start?”

---

*If you go to Sugarcube Corner  
to fetch Pinkie Pie, turn to page 10.*

*If you go to Fluttershy’s cottage,  
turn to page 16.*

*If you go to Carousel Boutique  
to fetch Rarity, turn to page 15.*

*If you go to Zecora’s hut to see what  
she might know, turn to page 34.*

*If you decide to stay and help Twilight  
with her research, turn to page 28.*

*If you decide to leave Twilight on her own  
and go home, turn to page 11.*



# 10

Sugarcube Corner is only a few blocks away from the library so you hurry over, intent on getting Pinkie Pie. Unfortunately, the Cakes inform you that she took the hot-air balloon so that she could make a special delivery to Cloudsdale, and isn't expected home until tomorrow. Oh well, at least that didn't take long.

Still, the trip isn't a waste: when you explain why you're looking for Pinkie, Mr. and Mrs. Cake close up shop immediately and head off to help look for Apple Bloom.

---

*Go back to the previous page (either 9 or 27)  
and make another choice.*

You shake your head. “Actually, I think it’s best if I head back to my house. If these boggies are real, they’ll probably come to my farm next. It is right next to Applejack’s, after all. I’ll let you know if I find anything out.”

Twilight purses her lips and nods. “Well, whatever you think is best. I’ll keep reading up on them here. They’re a type of fey, and my books say that all fey have a weakness of some sort. If I can just find out what it is . . .” She trails off as she buries herself in her book again.

You go back to the market, pick up your wagon, and go home. You’ll keep your eyes open for boggies, but in the meantime you’ve got work to do. Besides, they probably aren’t even real.

# 12

It's only a short way to your farm, and the cart is blessedly light now that you've unloaded all your carrots and carrot products. You park it and go inside.

Now that you're home, you really ought to go tarp down those carrots in the field. Of course, you've still got the whole day ahead of you, and your growling stomach reminds you that you haven't eaten since breakfast. Maybe you should grab a quick bite to eat first.

Or, you could go ahead and get some well-earned rest. The couch looks awfully comfortable, and it's been a long time since you've had time to take a nap. Granted, you don't *really* have time to take one now either, since you should be working, but maybe it's time to take a page out of Rainbow Dash's playbook and worry about later . . . later.

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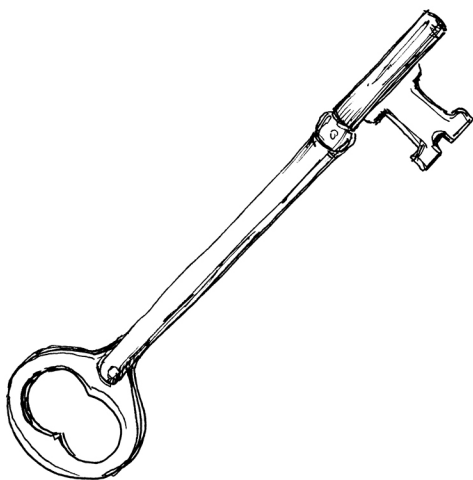
*If you go tarp down the baby carrots,  
turn to page 18.*

*If you go to the kitchen to get some lunch,  
turn to page 13.*

*If you flop down on the couch and veg out,  
turn to page 30.*

You open up your pantry door only to find its once-well-stocked shelves completely barren. Propped on an empty plate is a note. As you pick up the card, you hear a noise behind you; you turn around and—

**Quick question. Does Derp—erm, Ditzzy Doo have a key to your house?**



---

*If she does, turn to page 7.*

*If she doesn't, go on to page 14.*

# 14

You turn around, but there's no pony behind you. Confused and more than a little nervous, you look down at the note. It reads:

*Thank you for your food. It was delicious!  
Don't worry, we'll help ourselves to every-  
thing we need . . .*

Abruptly, something heavy strikes you on the head. Did the cookie jar just fall off of the top shelf and hit you? You collapse to the ground, your consciousness fading.

As you drift into darkness, you hear a tiny voice up above you call out, "Good shot! Now tie her up, we don't want her getting in our way when she awakens!" You have a terrible feeling that things aren't going to end well for you. The last thought to go through your mind as you lose consciousness is one of indignation; you never even got to find out what was going on. Still, for your story this is . . .

**The End**

You rush over to the boutique. Rarity is there with Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo. Rarity smiles politely and says, "Hello Carrot Top, is there something I can get for you? Oh, and by the way . . . I don't suppose you've seen Apple Bloom around, have you? She was supposed to meet my sister and her friend here an hour ago, but she hasn't shown up yet."

"Yeah," interjects Scootaloo, "We've been waiting, like, *forever*."

You quickly explain that Apple Bloom is missing, to the horror of the other ponies. Sweetie Belle tugs at Rarity's hoof and says, "Apple Bloom's gonna be all right, isn't she?"

Rarity puts on a brave face and nods. "Of course she will be, dear. She's a very smart little pony, and I'm sure she can take care of herself until we find her. Now let's go help search, okay? You two stay close to me; we don't want anypony else getting lost!" She turns to you and says, "Thank you for letting us know. The three of us will go help find her as soon as I close up shop." You leave the boutique, and head off to find some other way to be of assistance.

---

*Go back to the previous page (either 9 or 27)  
and make another choice.*

You find Fluttershy puttering around outside, feeding the myriad animals that rely on her for food and shelter. When she sees you, she waves timidly and greets you with a quiet “Hello.” She flaps over to you and asks, “What brings you out here, Carrot Top? Usually you only come on Fridays, and I still have plenty of carrots for the little bunnies . . .” The small white rabbit standing next to her frowns and kicks her hoof. Fluttershy jumps, then sheepishly adds, “. . . But it’s okay with Angel if you’ve got some extras for him this week.”

You shake your head. “That’s not why I’m here, Fluttershy. Apple Bloom vanished last night, and Twilight thinks she may have been foalnapped!” Fluttershy starts at the news, and you quickly add, “But don’t worry, she probably just got lost playing in the forest or something. Applejack, Big Mac, and Rainbow Dash are all out in the Everfree Forest looking for her. If you’re available, they could definitely use some more help.”

Fluttershy nods. “I was almost done with the noontime feedings. Angel, could you be a dear and finish up for me?” Angel rolls his eyes and sighs dramatically, but gives her a grudging thumbs-up. “Thank you, you’re such a sweetie!” Fluttershy kisses him on the top of his head, making the little bunny blush furiously. He scowls and hops off to work.

As she's about to leave, Fluttershy turns back to you and says, "You said Twilight thinks Apple Bloom was foalnapped. Do you know why?" She shivers. "Is there something . . . dangerous?"

You pat her on the shoulder reassuringly. "Oh, she's just been reading too many books. She was talking about something called boggies. Don't worry, it was all stuff out of old bedtime stories."

"Oh. Okay." Fluttershy doesn't look very convinced. She scuffs her hooves a moment, then announces loudly (as loudly as she ever speaks, anyways), "Well, I'd better go help with the search!" Then she leans in close and whispers in your ear, "But, um, if you really need help, you could go into my cottage and say 'Danneltuft' aloud three times. But please, only do that if you really think it's boggies. Oh, but I didn't tell you any of that!" And with that, she hurries off towards the forest.

Well, that was certainly odd. What did she mean "If you really think it's boggies?" And what should you do now?

---

*If you go into Fluttershy's cottage and say 'Danneltuft' three times, turn to page 22.*

*If you want to try something else, go back to the previous page (either 9 or 27) and make another choice.*



# 18

As you walk towards the west end of your fields, you get an uneasy feeling. That feeling only intensifies as you continue, until you crest the last low ridge and can see the edge of your field.

The baby carrots you put in two weeks ago are gone. Gone! Who would do something like this? There wasn't even any carrot to them yet, they were still barely sprouts!

Near the far west fence, you see something moving. Running over, you spot a strange sight indeed. A tiny creature, perhaps six inches tall, is climbing over your fence. Its shape is like none you've ever seen: it stands on two feet, and has hands similar to a dragon's. It has a prominent pot-belly, and is covered head-to-toe in furs and other articles of clothing. It looks for all the world like a tiny, overdressed, mostly-hairless monkey.

Hearing your hoofbeats as you run towards it, the creature turns and looks at you with surprise. Then, it quickly pulls itself the rest of the way over the fence and takes off towards the border of the Everfree Forest, only a few hundred feet away.

Coming up next to the fence, you stop when you see that the creature left several full bags behind in its haste to escape. Opening one, you find it filled with carrot shoots. This thing was stealing your crops!

You look up and find that the creature stopped just before the forest border. It's doing cartwheels and making all manner of rude gestures at you. You feel your blood rise at the thought of the malicious little creature mocking you. The nerve! Does he have any idea how much damage he caused? You feel like chasing after him right now: he surely can't outrun you on those stumpy little legs of his. On the other hand, there's a lot you don't know about this creature, and the Everfree Forest is a dangerous place. Maybe you should go tell Twilight about this latest development. She'll know what to do, right?

---

*If you give chase, go on to page 20.*

*If you head back to ask Twilight about the creature, turn to page 25.*

## 20

You leap the fence and go running towards the creature, intent on making it pay. The little devil, for his part, puts his hands to his face in mock-fear and goes scampering off into the woods.

As you thought, he's no match for you in a race. You quickly gain ground on him as he runs off. Although the woods are thick, you are able to keep him in sight; lucky for you that he's too focused on running to try and hide amid the undergrowth!

Before long he runs straight up to a huge pile of boulders that are much too large for him to climb or circle quickly. As he stares at the insurmountable obstacle, looking for some crack or niche he can crawl into, you draw up about ten feet away from him. "Time to face the music, crop-thief!" you tell him. "Now we can do this the easy way or the hard way. Come on back with me, and I'll give you a chance to work off your debt."

In answer, the little creature turns and puts his thumb to his nose while sticking out his tongue. You don't recognize the gesture, but his intent is unmistakable. You grin. "Alright then, the hard way it is!" You trot over to grab the little imp.

As you approach, the ground suddenly gives way beneath you! You fall head-over-hooves, and land with a resounding thud. Looking up, you see that you're in a sheer, smooth-walled pit at least twelve feet deep; you're lucky you weren't seriously injured in the fall.

Your diminutive foe pokes his head over the lip of the hole. "Hee-hee-hee! Stupid pony, now you're out of the way! No more trouble from you, and carrots all for the taking!" Then he vanishes once more.

For hours you call out for somepony, anypony to help you, but there is no answer. Your captor doesn't come back, either. As darkness begins to fall, you huddle down in your hole and hope that the townsponies come looking for you soon. Because without any food or water, alone in the forest, you won't last long. If help doesn't come soon, this could be . . .

**The End**

With a mental shrug, you enter Fluttershy's cottage. You might as well take her advice; after all, Apple Bloom's missing, and you really *could* use all the help you can get. Maybe she has a pet hawk named Danneltuft that can help search the woods?

You stand in the middle of the living room and, feeling more than a little silly, call out, "Danneltuft! Danneltuft! Danneltuft!" You look around, but nothing comes to answer to that name.

You sigh and are about to leave when you hear a tiny voice from the direction of the backdoor. It chants a strange rhyme in a rough but lilting voice, coming closer as it sings:

*"Oh, Danneltuft's a lovely name,  
But if it weren't, then all the same,  
I'd keep it for myself, I would,  
For what care I if my name's good?"*

*"But now I hear it spoken thrice,  
And so I'll be there in a trice,  
Clothing laundered, pillows fluffed,  
Leave it all to Danneltuft!"*

And as he sings the last line, a tiny ape-like creature bursts through the pet flap at the bottom of the door. It is perhaps six inches tall, and dressed all in brown. Its face looks squished and flat, but the glint of laughter is shining in its eyes. With a start, you recognize this creature from your favorite childhood stories; you're face to face with a real live brownie!

Danneltuft, for his part, looks more than a little disheartened to see you. “Oh dear, you aren’t the lady of the house. How came you to know my name, stranger? And how did you know to speak it three times to call for me?” You’re about to tell him that Fluttershy told you his name so you could ask for his help, when you remember another bit of brownie lore: if a pony lucky enough to have a brownie house-keeper ever reveals that the creature lives under their roof, then the brownie will leave, never to return. The brownie will leave even if the discovery is accidental, in some stories. You need this creature’s aid, though, and how can you expect it to trust you if you aren’t honest with it?

---

*If you admit that Fluttershy told you his name, turn to page 37.*

*If you refuse to say where you heard the name, turn to page 33.*

*If you lie about where you heard the name, turn to page 32.*



You hurry inside the library, where Twilight is waiting for you. “It’s about time you got back,” the unicorn says. “I’ve figured out—”

“Whatever it is, I figured out something more important. I know where the boggies are camped. We need to go get Applejack and the others right away!”

Twilight nods, and a few moments later the two of you are running out the door. “Say . . . how did you find out where the boggies are hiding?” asks Twilight as she uses her magic to tighten the saddlebag full of books she brought.

“Oh, let’s just say I had a . . . *tiny* bit of help.”

Twilight shrugs. “Well, Applejack was going to start searching due west of her farm. It shouldn’t be too hard to find them, since they’ll be calling for Apple Bloom.”

The two of you gallop off to find the other ponies.

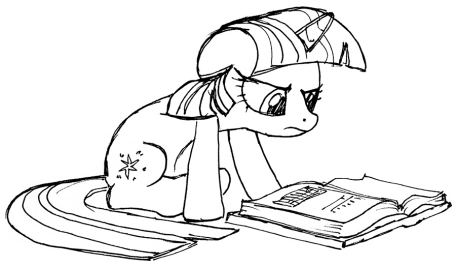
Refusing to be baited by a crop-stealing midget, you turn and trot back to town, ignoring the tiny creature's jeers.

You soon reach the library to find Twilight Sparkle reading from yet another moldy old tome, with hundreds more scattered on the floor all around her. Carefully picking your way towards her you say, "Um, Twilight, I think there's something I should tell you . . ."

She looks up at you, clearly glad to see you here. "Ah, Carrot Top! I've found some very interesting excerpts from Louis Ponyet's writings concerning the inexplicable material troubles his crew encountered during certain phases of their exploration. It seems it may support my theory that—"

You interrupt, sure that Twilight would continue babbling indefinitely if you let her. "That's very nice, but I need to tell you something *right now*. I saw a . . . thing."

Twilight cocks her head. "Oh? What sort of thing?"





As you relate your story, Twilight grows more and more excited. “Yes, yes, YES! Your visual confirmation proves that my conjecture was correct!” She pulls out a map, pointing to the mountain ridge west of the Everfree Forest. “The boggies, little mischievous imps like the one you saw, normally live here in the Dragonspine Mountains. However, a group of them have come down to harass Ponyville and play mean-spirited pranks and malicious jokes. Since they came down early last week they’ve attacked Applejack’s farm,” she points on the map to the farm, which lies near the Everfree’s border, “and have destroyed her crops, tampered with her equipment, and now they’ve stolen her sister!”

You think of the crude little monster you just encountered, and imagine a swarm of them holding young Apple Bloom hostage. The thought makes you shudder.

Twilight continues, “I’ve found out a lot about boggies from my reading, but I still don’t know what their weakness is. They’re a kind of fey, and every fairy species has something which is anathema to them. If you’re willing, I could really use some help researching. Otherwise, perhaps you could go round up some ponies to help search for Apple Bloom. Applejack, Big Mac, and Rainbow Dash are already out searching, but it can’t hurt to have a few more ponies out combing the woods. You could also go see if Zecora knows anything; she seems to know a little bit about everything.

“Oh, and there’s one other thing that needs doing! AJ and the others still weren’t entirely convinced that my theory about boggies was correct. You could go find them and let them know what you saw. That way, they’ll know what to look for. And if the boggie on your farm ran straight to the woods west of your fields, maybe that’s where they’ve made their lair. That knowledge would certainly help with their searching!” Twilight looks back at her books. “I’m going to stay here and keep reading, but you should do whatever you think will be most useful.”

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to fetch Pinkie Pie, turn to page 10.*

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*If you decide to leave Twilight on her own  
and go home, turn to page 11.*

You look at the intimidating piles of books stacked all around the library. It's clear that however prodigious a reader Twilight is, she's going to need help to get through all these books in a timely manner. You sigh and pick up the closest book: *Speculation on the Intrinsic Properties of the Diminutive Supernatural Denizens of Equestria as Related in Both Legend and Lore, Volume I: Adhene-Clurichaun*. Well, might as well start the fun . . .

Several hours of incredibly dense and boring prose later, you are starting to wonder if maybe you didn't make the wrong choice. Apple Bloom is still missing, and you haven't gotten anywhere with this research! Setting yet another useless book aside, you ask yourself whether you shouldn't go find some other way to make yourself useful.

As you think that, you see something move out of the corner of your eye. Looking over, you see nothing but piles of books, haphazardly strewn about. You narrow your eyes; something seems . . . off.

With a start, you realize what's bothering you; one of the books in the pile over near the door is *Rulers of the Wee Ones*. You're sure you just put that in your pile of unread books a minute ago; how did it get over to the door?

Suspicious now, you pretend to go back to reading, all the while keeping a close eye on the book. Sure enough, after a moment it begins to move again, slowly inching towards the door.

You leap on the book as quickly as you can, snatching it up in your hooves. You hear a soft snap, and a voice outside curses. Running out the door, you look around. You see a tiny ape-like creature disappearing down a nearby alleyway, a miniature fishing pole in his hands. You glance at the book and see a small fishhook stuck through the cover, and tied to it a broken bit of string.

“What on earth are you doing?” asks Twilight, trotting over. “We don’t have time for games, we still need to figure out how to stop the boggies!”

You quickly tell her what happened. Twilight’s eyes light up as she looks at the book in your hooves. “That’s great news! It means we must be on the right track!” Taking the book from you and opening it on the table, she continues, “The boggies wouldn’t have tried to steal this book from the library unless there was something in it that would help us drive them away. We need to see what’s in this book right away!” She opens it up and starts reading intently.

You, on the other hand, remain nervous. Surely if this book is so important, the boggies wouldn’t have given up that easily? Maybe you should go after the one that ran away, and make sure he isn’t getting some friends. On the other hoof, splitting up might also be a bad idea.

---

*If you stay here with Twilight, turn to page 40.*

*If you go after the boggie, turn to page 48.*

Settling down on the couch with a contented sigh, you quickly drift off into blissful slumber.

You awaken to the sound of somepony knocking on your door. Groggily rising, you call out, “Just a sec, I’m coming!” Boy, it’s awfully dark out . . .

You look at the clock, squinting to read the hands in the darkness. Oh dear, it’s late! You’ve slept the entire day away!

Hurrying to the door, you see Twilight Sparkle standing there with a big grin on her face. “Good news, Carrot Top!” she exclaims. “Everything’s alright!”

Not sure how to respond, you cautiously say, “That’s . . . great! I’m glad . . . it . . . worked out?”

Twilight nods happily. “Oh yes. It was all very exciting, and I admit I was worried at times, but with good friends by your side, there’s nothing you can’t do! Anyway, I just thought you’d want to know that everything’s back to normal now. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ve learned an important lesson about friendship, and I should write to Princess Celestia right away and let her know all about it!” The purple unicorn smiles and trots off.

You shake your head and close the door. You're glad that . . . it . . . worked out, even if you don't really know what happened. But Twilight said everything's fine now, and that's what's important, right?

Still, you can't help but feel like you missed your chance to help, to be in the limelight for a change. But, for better or for worse, this story is now over.

**The End**

Your mind races. “Oh, I didn’t mean to say Danneltuft, I was saying, um . . .” You glance down at your fetlocks, which are starting to get slightly shaggy. “. . . dang ol’ tufts?”

The brownie gives you a glare that could curdle milk. You begin to sweat.

“I mean, I overheard some, uh, birds. And they were singing ‘Danneltuft’? So I tried to copy their song, and I . . .” You trail off; it’s clear that Danneltuft is not amused.

“Okay, okay. The truth is, I’m part dragon on my mother’s side, and my dragon eye lets me see hidden truths that—”

Without a word, Danneltuft turns on his heels and dashes back out the door. You call after him, “Wait, no, I . . .” but he’s already gone.

Frantic, you yell, “I really need your help! Please, come back!” When he doesn’t return, you stamp your hooves and scream, “Danneltuft, Danneltuft, DANNELTUFT!” You wait a moment, but receive no answer.

Hanging your head, you leave the cottage. You feel a strange mix of emotions: joy that brownies are real, sadness that the one brownie you’ve met apparently hates you, and fear that he might guess the truth and abandon Fluttershy anyway. In all the stories you’ve heard, brownies hate the limelight; will knowing that you’ve seen him be enough to drive Danneltuft away? With a heavy heart, you return to your task. After all, Apple Bloom still needs rescuing.

---

*Go back to the library (on page 9 or 27)  
and make another choice.*

You shake your head and say, “Sorry Danneltuft, but I can’t tell you how I know your name. But I really need—”

“Oh no no no!” the little man interrupts. “I’m not listening to anything you say until I get an answer! I’ve guarded my name carefully, and now I’ll know whose loose lips are to blame or I’ll be off at once!”

He looks very serious. You’ll have to tell him something.

---

*If you admit that Fluttershy told you  
his name, turn to page 37.*

*If you lie about where you heard the name,  
turn to page 32.*



## 34

You set off for Zecora's home, deep in the Everfree Forest. It takes you only a few minutes to reach the outskirts of the foreboding woods, and you feel a tingle run down your spine as you enter. Legends and rumors abound concerning the unnatural nature of the forest and its frightful denizens. Not even the warm glow of the midday sun can alleviate your fears.

As you work your way farther down the ancient dirt path, you hear a sound, off to the left. Pricking up your ears, you hear Apple Bloom's voice, echoing through the woods as if from a great distance:

"Help me! Won't somepony please help me? Please . . . I'm so scared . . ."

You are about to dash off towards the voice when Zecora appears on the trail ahead of you. Speaking in strange rhyme, as she always does, the Zebra intones:

*"Do not pursue that mournful sound,  
You'll end up trapped deep underground  
And there be held in a darkened room;  
No good would that do Apple Bloom!"*

You ache to go rescue Apple Bloom, but Zecora's words remind you of your peril. If she's being held captive, then this could be a trap. Zecora continues:

*“Come back with me to my tree,  
And I shall grant my aid to thee.”*

Apple Bloom continues to cry out, but her voice sounds weaker now, farther away. If you want to go after her, you'll have to act quickly.



---

*If you go with Zecora to her home,  
turn to page 66.*

*If you run off to rescue Apple Bloom,  
turn to page 54.*

## 36

As your back hooves begin to slide, you take a quick step forward, fearful that you'll fall down into the chasm below. While you're distracted, the boggies quickly rush in, wrapping their ropes around your legs. You try to fight back, but they are too many; you quickly find yourself securely bound.

The boggies then all grab the ropes binding you, and together they begin hauling you off into the woods. Being dragged along the forest floor is a painful, unpleasant experience, but you suspect your life will only get worse from here. You are now a prisoner of the boggies, and they plan to take you and Apple Bloom both back to their far-off home tonight. As you are hauled off, you pray to Celestia for a miracle. If you don't get help fast, this is . . .

**The End**

Looking down at Danneltuft, you say, "Alright, I'll tell you how I know your name. But you have to promise to stay and hear me out. I really do need your help."

Danneltuft thinks about that for a moment, then nods his head vigorously. "Tell me who's been spilling my name, and I'll hear your story. I don't promise that I'll assist you, though."

You know what you're about to say could mean that Fluttershy will never see her brownie helper again, but Apple Bloom's safety takes priority. Steeling yourself, you tell him, "Fluttershy told me that if I needed help, I should go into the cottage and say 'Danneltuft' three times." You quickly add, "But she didn't tell me that you were a brownie! She just told me to say the name. Honestly, that's all!"

Danneltuft's face glows bright red, and he glowers as he says, "The lady of the house knew full well what she was doing, then. I promised I'd give you my ear, but speak quickly. I've little patience in me now."

Quickly, you explain about Applejack's missing sister, and tell him how Twilight believes it to be the work of boggies. "I wasn't altogether convinced boggies were even real, but if you're here . . ." you finish.

Danneltuft nods. “Oh yes, the boggies are as real as you or I. Not every brownie is content with his station. Some grow so jealous and spiteful that darkness eats away their very heart. I am grieved to hear that my ill-tempered kin have caused such mischief.”

“I don’t know anything about brownies. Or boggies. I’m in way over my head,” you confess, “and I don’t know where else to turn. Please, Danneltuft, if there’s anything you can do for Apple Bloom, please help her.”

Danneltuft scratches his chin, and looks you over from head to hoof. “There may be some things which Danneltuft can do, but the real question is, what are you willing to do, eh? If you wish, I will call a *Bhrùnaidh-mòd*. It is a great convocation of brownies from all over the region. If they judge your tale worthy, they will come to your aid.”

You nearly jump for joy at the news. “Oh Danneltuft, that would be wonderful! I’m sure—”

“*But*,” he continues, “if they think you false, or doubt your ability to hold your silence concerning all you see, they will not permit you to spread your tale. This I warn you, seek not the *Bhrùnaidh-mòd* if you doubt your fidelity.” Suddenly the *Bhrùnaidh-mòd* seems much more ominous. Seeing the look of fright on your face, he adds in a more kindly tone, “There are other things I may do as well. If you wish to bargain with the boggies, I can bring you to their cave unharmed, under kin’s right of free passage. Perhaps you can convince them to release your friend.

“Or, if you fear to go with only Danneltuft at your side, I could simply tell you where the boggies are making their lair. Then you and your friends could go and deal with them all together.” He bows his head. “By way of apology for my kin, I will aid you as you see fit. You need only ask.”

---

*If you ask Danneltuft to call a Bhrùnaidh-mòd,  
turn to page 68.*

*If you ask him to bring you to the boggies,  
turn to page 93.*

*If you ask him to tell you where the boggies  
are camped, turn to page 45.*

Twilight opens the book as you glance nervously around the room, alert for any more boggies coming in to try . . . something. Actually, what could they really do to you or Twilight? They're only a few inches tall, after all.

Then you remember some of the bedtime stories your mother used to tell you about goblins and hobs, and other tiny evil creatures. Hair standing on end, you go back to searching the room.

Twilight, meanwhile, is paging through the book, clearly looking for a passage that might be relevant to your present predicament. After a few minutes, she loudly cries, "Ah-HA!" and begins to read aloud:

*"Among the boggies, each clan has a ruler. This ruler they name the Ceanntighern, their head-lord. The Ceanntighern rules by right of wits and knowledge, and any boggie of the clan may challenge for the title at any time.*

*"Only the Ceanntighern may lead a clan in a raid. Usually these raids are short, lasting a week or less. During the raids, boggies will typically ransack crops, as their hunger is nigh-insatiable despite their small size. They will also sometimes kidnap young foals, taking them back to their mountain lairs to perform menial labor for the rest of their lives.*

*"During raids, the Ceanntighern will establish a base near to town, typically in an abandoned cave. Great care should be taken when approaching, as the boggies will invariably lay down many traps to catch unwary intruders."*

*“The fastest way to end a raid is to embarrass or trick the Ceanntighern. Being made to look foolish in front of his followers will always result in challenges for the title, and the resulting confusion and disunity will force the boggies to retreat back to their mountain homes.”*

“That’s it!” cries Twilight, jumping up and down with excitement. “All we need to do is find the cave where the boggies are camped, and find some way to trick their leader!”

You shake your head. “But what about all the traps? We’ll need to be careful. Maybe we should go get the other ponies.”

Twilight shakes her head right back at you. “We don’t want to scare off the boggies. If we get a whole herd of us together, they might just flee with Apple Bloom. No, I think it’s better if we go alone. Besides,” she adds, blushing slightly, “on the off chance that this plan doesn’t work *quite* as well as I think it will, Applejack and the others will still be able to come save us. I read in a book that you shouldn’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

Although you still aren’t convinced this is the best way to stage a rescue, you can see the logic behind Twilight’s argument. Together, the two of you set off for the Everfree Forest.



You and Twilight soon reach the outskirts of the woods. Pulling a map out of her saddlebag, Twilight points to your left and announces, "There's a sandstone ridge over this way that's full of small caves. It's pretty close to your and Applejack's farms, too. That seems like the most likely place for the boggies to have set up their camp."

Guided by Twilight, you walk deeper into the forest. Soon, you are lost amid the dense undergrowth. Were it not for Twilight's map, you'd have no idea where you were or which direction to go, but after a few minutes she leads you to a clearing. Peeking through the trees, you see a long yellow ridge of stone up ahead. Sure enough, it's pockmarked with holes of various sizes.

Twilight gestures and says, "We need to be careful of traps. Now, if they've got Apple Bloom here, they must have picked a cave large enough to admit a pony, and one deep enough that they can all comfortably hide down it. That should narrow our choices down quite a bit, but I don't see any way to figure out where they're camped except to try our luck down a likely-looking hole and hope for the best. Let's go, but be wary." She begins to walk, and you fall in a pace behind her.

As soon as you enter the clearing, however, you hear a whooshing sound. Leaping backwards, you barely avoid being caught in a large net that swings up from the ground, trapping Twilight high above you. You hear voices laughing and jeering all around you.

“Quickly!” yells Twilight. “You have to get to the cave! Don’t worry about me!”

“There’s no way I’m leaving you behind!” you shout back. “Don’t worry, I’ll keep you safe!”

“I’ll be fine! You need to find the *Ceanntighern* and foil him somehow. It’s the only way to save me and Apple Bloom!”

You hate to abandon your friend, but she’s right; if you can somehow trick the *Ceanntighern*, the boggies will disperse and everypony will be safe. That’s a big if, though, and if you fail then you, Apple Bloom, and Twilight will all be in big trouble. Without Twilight’s smarts, how are you supposed to succeed?

---

*If you abandon Twilight and try to find the boggie cave, turn to page 71.*

*If you stay and try to defend Twilight, turn to page 90.*

“Sorry,” you tell the boggie, “but I don’t trust you as far as I can throw you. Well actually, I could probably throw a little guy like you pretty far . . . the point is, I don’t trust you. My friends and I will do this without your help.”

At this, the creature begins to scream and rage, frothing at the mouth and hurling himself against the restraints. “I’d better stay here and keep an eye on him,” Twilight volunteers. “We can’t have him escaping and warning the others. You go put the results of our testing to use.”

You look at the boggie critically. “Okay, but what are we going to do with him after we’ve rescued Apple Bloom? We can’t just keep him locked up down here.”

Twilight shrugs. “We’ll let him go, once everypony is safe. After all, there’s only so much mischief a single boggie can get up to. Once we’ve gotten the rest of the clan to leave, I suspect he won’t want to stick around.”

You aren’t sure it’s wise to just let the boggie free, now or later, but decide to leave that to Twilight. What with engineering the rescue of Apple Bloom from an as-yet-unknown location, you have plenty on your mind already. You leave the library, the first inklings of a plan already percolating through your head.

“I think it would be best if all of my friends and I worked together,” you tell Danneltuft. “If you tell me where the boggies are keeping Apple Bloom, then the other ponies and I can all go and try to rescue her.”

Danneltuft nods his head. “Then listen carefully. If you walk a half-mile through the Everfree down the west road, you will come to an ash tree whose five boughs spread over the trail like a parasol. From there, head due north until you reach a limestone ridge running parallel to you. Follow the ridge until you find three caves, each large enough to admit one of your kind without trouble. In one of these caves will you find the boggies’ lair, and your missing filly.”

“Which of the caves are they in?” you ask.

“Alas, I do not know. I can tell you only what the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field have seen. The boggies have concealed from my friends the exact place where they reside.”

You deflate slightly, but this information is better than nothing. “Thank you, Danneltuft. I’m sure that we’ll be able to help Apple Bloom now.”

“One more thing before we part. The boggies are clever and full of mischief; be wary as you come near the caves, for there will surely be traps there to catch the unwary.” And with that, the brownie turns on his heels and heads towards the back door.

“Wait!” you call out. Danneltuft turns and looks at you quizzically.

“Yes? Have we some unfinished business?”

“Well, it’s just . . . you aren’t going to leave *forever*, are you? I mean, Fluttershy really didn’t tell me you were here . . . and besides, she only told me your name because of Apple Bloom! You’re going to stay, aren’t you?”

Danneltuft sighs and hangs his head. “The lady of the house has been kind to me, as she has been kind in all her dealings with the creatures of the woods. And it is sooth that I have never had a more worthy one to serve, for my humble tasks free her to tend to the birds and the beasts, rather than waste her time in constant cleaning.” He chuckles, and for a moment the laughter returns to his eyes. “I mean, have you any *idea* how much mess they make, all the animals which she brings into this home? Without me, she’d be buried under bird droppings and shed hair in a week!” He grows serious again. “But I cannot stay, whatever my will. A brownie must leave if the secret trust is broken; it can be no other way.” He bows to you. “Farewell, pony. Tell the lady that it has been my pleasure to serve her. And please,” he adds, “do what you must to stop the boggies. I would hate to think that the lady’s sacrifice was in vain.” And with that, he vanishes out the pet door.

You stifle a tear and start galloping back towards town. Fluttershy was willing to do whatever it took to help Apple Bloom, even if that meant losing her brownie friend. You're going to make sure her noble deed doesn't go for naught.



---

*If you go straight to AJ and the others to tell them where the boggies are, turn to page 62.*

*If you want to get Twilight first, turn to page 24.*

You head for the front door. “You see what the book says. I’m going to check on our little friend.”

Twilight gives you a concerned look, but doesn’t move to stop you. “Alright, but be careful.”

Out on the streets, you hurry to the alley down which you saw the boggie disappear. Assuming he’s trying to stay out of everypony’s sight (*fairy-creatures like to stay out of sight, don’t they?* you think to yourself), he won’t have been able to go far; the streets are still full of ponies out shopping or doing their afternoon chores.

The alley is full of garbage bags, one of which looks like it was torn open by a raccoon or some such; refuse is scattered everywhere. You make a mental note to have Fluttershy talk to the raccoons about not leaving a mess when they forage. You’re about to continue down the alley in search of your little ‘friend’ when you see an empty pastry box move. Quickly, you dive behind the pile of garbage bags and peek your head out, cautiously looking at the mysteriously mobile container.

From beneath the box, a tiny head pokes out, its heavily ridged eyes darting every which way. Once the boggie underneath is satisfied that nopony is around, his head darts back under the box. Then, the entire container rises perhaps an inch off the ground, supported by a pair of squat legs. Slowly, the box starts waddling down the alley.

As quietly as you can, you step out from behind the trash bags. Stealthily, you make your way towards the box. Once you're within a couple of feet, you jump and bring your front hooves down on it, trapping the boggie between the box and the ground beneath.

Immediately, the boggie inside begins screaming and cursing, and the box shakes and bucks in your hooves. The boggie is much stronger than something his size really ought to be, but you still outmass him by an order of magnitude at least. Once he realizes he's well and truly trapped, the thrashing stops. From the box emanates a grumbly, nasal voice.

"Alright, alright, you've caught me. Now what, eh? If you want a wish, tough beans. Pots of gold aren't really my thing either. In fact, the only things I really have to give you are my ire and my indignation. So how about you do us both a favor: set me free, and I'll pretend this ugly little incident never happened, eh?"

You smile down at the box, though the boggie can't see you. "Oh no, that's not how it's going to work. You boggies have kidnapped my friend's sister, and I intend to get her back."

"Oh, is that all? No problem! Let me go and I'll fetch her for you. Won't take two minutes!"



## 50

“You must think I was foaled yesterday. No, you’re going to tell me where you boggies are camped. Then, you’re going to tell me what your weakness is. Twilight said all fairy-folk have a weakness, and I want to know what yours is.”

“Hah, like I’d share that kind of knowledge with a stupid hick pony like you!”

“Well then, I guess I’ll have to take you back to Twilight’s lab. We’ll just start testing things on you until we find your weakness. Doesn’t that sound like fun to you?”

At that, the box starts shaking again, but you hold it in place. When the boggie inside calms down a bit, he says, “You don’t understand. You can’t do this to me! It’s embarrassing enough that I was caught by a pony, but if you were able to find out anything about boggies from me—which you won’t, by the way! But, erm, if you did, I could never return to my clan. They’d throw me out on my ear for being so stupid and weak!

“Look, I’ll tell you where us boggies are camped. That’s something you might find out anyway; I can do that. But then you’ve got to let me go. Deal?”

---

*If you accept the boggie’s deal,  
turn to page 52.*

*If you take the boggie back to Twilight,  
turn to page 56.*

You give Twilight what you hope is a reassuring grin. “I’m just worried about Apple Bloom. The poor foal’s probably scared out of her mind right now.” That much, at least, is true.

Twilight shudders. “I know, right? It’s horrible to think what she must be going through, isn’t it? Hopefully Applejack and the others can find her soon.”

You again make to leave, but Twilight stops you once more. “So, where are you off to now? If you can spare the time, I could still really use some help with my research . . .”

You shake your head vigorously. “No time, sorry! I’ve got to hurry and go . . . um . . .” You fumble for a moment; what else was there to do? “. . . Go help search. In the forest. For Apple Bloom.”

Twilight looks at you suspiciously, but (to your relief) doesn’t press the matter. “Well, I suspect Applejack and the others could use the help, too. You all be careful, and keep me in the loop, alright? I’ll come find you all if I discover anything useful.”

“Sounds like a plan. Now, I really need to get going. Now.” And before Twilight can stop you again, you practically sprint out of the cafe. You head towards the Everfree Forest, hoping that you didn’t blow your cover.

“Alright,” you say. “If you tell me where the boggies are keeping Apple Bloom, I’ll let you go. But don’t try anything funny! If I think you’re lying, I’ll just take you back to Twilight anyway.”

“Okay, okay, okay! Geeze, you ponies are stupid AND mean!” You give the box a hard shake. “OW! What was that for?”

Glowing at the pastry box, you say nothing.

“Honestly, and grumpy too . . .”

You shake the box again. “Just tell me where Apple Bloom is, without the editorializing.”

“Alright, alright. Lessee . . . you know that carrot farm near the edge of the town?”

You blink. “Yes, of course. That’s *my* farm.”

“Really? Wow, my compliments then. The apples on the next farm over are pretty sweet, but I’ve always preferred the green stuff, myself. The carrot shoots are just perfect, real moist and—”

“Are you going to tell me where Apple Bloom is, or are we going to have to do this the hard way?”

“I’m GETTING to it, sheesh! So if you’re standing at the corner of the fence, the right corner from the woods, you turn around and face the tallest mountain past the forest. Then you turn a few inches left, and start walking straight. Within a mile, you’ll come to a sandstone ridge. There’s three big caves all pretty close together; go to the one on the left. Now I’ve done my part, so how about you let me out of here?”

You briefly consider dragging him back to Twilight anyway, but a bargain’s a bargain. “Alright, I’m going to let you out, but if I find out you lied to me . . .”

“I didn’t, honest! Now hurry up, I’m chafing in here!”

You carefully lift up the box, wary for any surprises. However, the boggie simply dashes off as soon as you release him, running down the alley and disappearing around a corner.

You need to move fast now. The boggie is sure to go warn his friends that you’re coming! Should you get Twilight and Applejack, so that you have plenty of friends to help you? Or should you hurry on alone, and try to maintain the element of surprise?

---

*If you want to go get Twilight and the others,  
turn to page 24.*

*If you want to go to the sandstone ridge alone,  
turn to page 71.*

Ignoring the Zebra's warnings, you run off into the woods. "Hang on, Apple Bloom! I'm coming!" you yell.

Led on by her plaintive cries, you barrel through the undergrowth. As you run, you can hear her more clearly; you must be getting closer!

As you break through the foliage, you suddenly find yourself facing a massive drop-off. Furiously backpedaling, you barely avoid going over the cliff in your headlong rush. Looking down into the wide canyon, you see a rushing river perhaps a hundred feet below you; you doubt you could survive a fall from this height. But then where was Apple Bloom's voice coming from?

In answer, dozens of boggies step out of the woods in a ring around you. All are armed with ropes and spears; it's clear they intend to take you captive. As you slowly back away from them, one of them mockingly yells, "Oh, won't somepony help me?" in a voice uncannily like Apple Bloom's.

Your hoof slips on the edge of the cliff as you take another step back. You have nowhere else to run, and the boggies are closing in all around you.

One of them says, “If we take this one and the foal, we can trek back home tonight. Two pony slaves: that’s what I call a successful raid!”

It looks like you’ll have to chose between jumping to certain death, or ignoble capture. Neither option seems very appealing to you.



---

*If you already went to Fluttershy’s cottage and convinced her to help, turn to page 64.*

*If you didn’t, turn to page 36.*

“No deal. If you aren’t going to tell me your weakness, we’re just going to have to find out the hard way.”

At that, the pastry box begins to shake violently as the boggie inside hurls himself about, screaming. You hold the box down with two hooves, however, and start inching towards the library, holding the box firmly to the ground as you walk.

On your way out of the alley, you draw more than a couple wide-eyed stares, but no pony interferes. You drag-push the box into the library, where Twilight is waiting with the door open.

“Sounds like you caught a boggie. Think you could have made a little more noise doing it?”

You glare at her. “Look, I caught him, didn’t I? He won’t tell us what his weakness is, though. I thought maybe you’d know what to do.”

As you continue to hold the box down, Twilight goes back to her books. “Well, I’ve found the weaknesses of a few other fey. Elves are repelled by iron, and wolf-spirits fear the touch of silver. It seems like a lot of the weaknesses are metals. If you bring the boggie downstairs to my lab, we can start by bringing him into close proximity to various electropositive elements and seeing how he reacts.” You don’t know exactly what that means, but you assume she’s trying to say you can test the boggie and see what its weakness is. Twilight opens up a trapdoor in the floor and starts to trot down the stairs.

“Um, Twilight?” you ask. “This box doesn’t have a bottom. How am I supposed to get him down the stairs?”

Twilight smacks her face with her hoof. “Right, sorry. I forgot you couldn’t just levitate him. Let me get that for you.” And with that, Twilight picks up the boggie with her magic, sweeping him out of the box. The three of you head down to the lab, the boggie continuing to scream and curse as he dangles in midair above Twilight’s head.

A few minutes later, Twilight has him securely strapped into a chair with arm- and leg-clamps (*why does she have clamps for a six-inch tall biped?* you wonder). She pulls out a piece of iron pipe, saying, “We’ll start by testing some of the metals that are known to be anathema to other types of fey. I didn’t read anything that said the same material can’t adversely affect multiple species, so known weakness-inducing agents seem like a good place to start.” Levitating the iron with her horn, she moves towards the boggie.



Immediately, he begins to sweat. “No, NO! Not iron, my one weakness! Oh, you’ve found me out! Please, please let me go, I’ll never bother any of the ponies in this town again!”

Twilight rolls her eyes and taps the restraints. “These bindings are iron. Now are you going to continue the dramatics, or will you shush and let us work?”

The boggie harrumphs, then loudly begins to sing: “A hundred bottles of cider on the wall, a hundred bottles of cider . . .”

Twilight quickly produces a small ball gag (*and why on earth does she have THAT?*) and clamps it over the boggie’s mouth. As the creature glowers, she smiles and tells him, “Hey, you can’t say I didn’t give you a chance. Now, let’s get testing!”

Several hours later, all the novelty has gone out of poking the (thoroughly annoyed) boggie with various objects. You doze in a corner as Twilight crosses yet another material off her checklist.

“So, sodium nitrate is out. Next we’ll test the subject’s reaction to . . . um . . . oh dear.”

You stand up. “What’s wrong, Twilight?”

“We’re out of stable, non-toxic elements and compounds to test on him. Or rather, I’ve used all the pure samples that I have available in my lab. I don’t know what else to do!”

“What can we still try?”

“Nothing . . . unless you want to start testing composite structures on him.” Twilight rolls her eyes and levitates up a two-by-four. “Think maybe their weakness is pine wood?” She presses the board lightly against the back of the boggie’s hand, as she has done with so many other objects already. Nothing happens. “No? Oh, *there’s* a shock. What about wool?” she asks as she levitates a red sweater over to the boggie, to similarly nonexistent effect. “Oh, that’s not it either? Who would have thought? How about glass?” She picks up a clear drinking cup, and brings it into contact with the boggie’s hand.

Immediately, the boggie contorts his face in a scream which the gag in his mouth only partially muffles. There is a loud hissing sound, and steam rises from the creature's hand. Startled, Twilight jerks the cup away, revealing a large red welt where the glass came in contact with him.

As the boggie pants and groans, you and Twilight look at each other in amazement. You speak first.

"So, all this time, the one weakness of the boggies was . . . glass?"

Twilight is silent a moment longer, the gears in her head clearly spinning. "I don't understand . . . glass is just sand, shaped and heated sand, but sand nevertheless. Boggies can't be vulnerable to sand, can they?" You notice the boggie thrashing and trying to spit out his gag. Feeling a bit guilty over the pain your latest test has obviously caused him, you remove his gag for him.

The boggie spits on the floor as soon as his mouth is free. "Pah! Of course we aren't vulnerable to sand, you stupid mule! Look what you did to my hand! Oh, it hurts!"

Twilight produces some aloe from a nearby first-aid kit and applies it to the back of his hand. "So, your weakness really is glass?"

The boggie sighs. "Looks like the cat's out of the bag. Too bad; I hate cats."

You jump with excitement. "Alright! Now that we know their weakness, we can go rescue Apple Bloom!"

The boggie leers at you. “Not so fast, pony. You still don’t know where my kin are hiding your precious foal. Lucky for you, I’ve been thinking. And I’m not satisfied being just another scrub for the clan. I want to be *Ceanntighern*.”

Seeing your confusion, Twilight whispers, “That’s what they call their king. Whoever’s the smartest, craftiest boggie gets to lead the clan.”

The boggie continues, “If I can trap the *Ceanntighern* in our lair, I’ll have proven my wit and resourcefulness. Then I can take the mantle of *Ceanntighern* for myself! Of course, in deference to your assistance, I could probably be persuaded to release the foal—after suitable begging and groveling, of course. I’d have an appearance to maintain, after all.”

You snort. “So let me get this straight: now that we’ve discovered your greatest weakness, you want us to help make you king, and then beg you to free Apple Bloom as a favor to us?”

“It’s that or try to rescue her on your own. My way, you’re practically guaranteed to succeed, and I get *power*! It’s a win-win!” He looks at you hopefully, as you consider your options.

---

*If you agree to help the boggie become  
Ceanntighern, turn to page 102.*

*If you decide to try and find the boggie camp  
on your own, turn to page 44.*

You hurry off into the Everfree Forest. You aren't sure exactly where Applejack and the others are searching, but soon you see a rainbow streaking about overhead. Following it, you quickly locate the search party.

Applejack and Big Mac come running up to you, as Dash lands nearby. AJ exclaims, "Oh, Carrot Top! Twilight said she was gonna try and find some help for us! We've been looking all over for Apple Bloom, but there's no sign of her yet."

"I know, and I'm sorry to make you wait. However, I think I know where she is."

"Well, that's the best news I've heard all day! Where is she, then?"



You try to decide how best to explain the situation. “Okay, so you know how Twilight was going on about boggies earlier today?”

Big Mac leaps into the conversation with his usual verbosity. “Eee-yup.”

“Well, it turns out she was right.” You hold up a hoof to forestall argument. “I know, it sounds silly, but it’s true. Brownies and boggies are real; I’ve seen one with my own eyes!” The three ponies all give you incredulous looks. Finally, AJ breaks the silence.

“Well, if you say so . . . I guess I ain’t gonna gainsay you. So where are these boggies keeping my Apple Bloom?”

Smiling as you realize that your friends believe you, you lead them towards the boggie camp as best you can.

You look at the boggies, advancing all around you with malice in their eyes. Then you look behind you, at the sheer drop down to the raging river below. You gulp loudly, close your eyes, and jump.

To your surprise, you fall about five feet before landing on something soft. The something soft goes “Ooof!” and dips, causing you to nearly fall off. Opening your eyes, you scramble to stay on top of . . .

“FLUTTERSHY!?”

The yellow pegasus smiles back at you as she carries you to the far edge of the chasm. “Yes. Um. While I was flying around looking for Apple Bloom, I saw you were trapped against the cliff. I guess I got here just in time, didn’t I?”

You step off back onto solid ground as Fluttershy lands. Looking behind you, you see the boggies angrily shouting and gesticulating. “Yeah . . . you sure did.”

“Well, I should get back to searching. Besides, um . . . I don’t really like standing around on the ground with all these boggies around. What are you going to do?”

You shrug. “The whole reason you had to rescue me is because I didn’t listen to Zecora. I guess I should go talk to her, huh?”

Fluttershy nods. “Alright then. Good luck!” And with that, she takes off.

Although you’re well off the trail, you’re actually pretty close to Zecora’s house now. Fluttershy’s emergency ferry service saved you from having to make a wide loop over to the bridge. Hurrying in case any more boggies are on this side of the chasm, you trot off to Zecora’s.





You soon reach the hollow tree where Zecora lives. Stepping inside, you find yourself assaulted by strange sights and smells. Spices you cannot name waft through the air, while bizarre and frightening masks litter the walls.

As you look around, Zecora suddenly appears in front of you, holding a cup of tea in her hooves. You almost refuse when she offers the drink to you, but then remind yourself that none of the nasty rumors ponies used to spread about her are true. She's a bit odd, certainly, but she's no evil enchantress. Feeling a little guilty, you take the tea and taste it; it's not half bad.

Zecora gets a cup for herself, and once you're both sitting, begins to talk:

*"I know you're here to ask about  
The boggies. Well, they're awful louts,  
But if you seek the place they rest  
I can't do more than simply guess."*

You consider pointing out that neither of those rhymes are perfect, but let it slide; you're here to ask for help, after all. "Well, is there anything you *can* tell me about the boggies, then? Any help you can give would be very, um . . . helpful." You cringe at your inability to come up with a good synonym on the spot, but Zecora doesn't seem to notice.

*“The boggies cannot bear the touch  
Of glass; I hope that’s help enough.”*

“Glass? Like, the clear stuff in windows, glass?”

She nods:

*“It gives their skin a nasty burn,  
And so its touch they’ll always . . . um . . .”*

Zecora looks a bit flustered, unable to come up with a rhyme. You quickly offer, “Spurn?”

She smiles and nods. “Yes, spurn! Thank you.

*“Please forgive my troubled speech,  
These boggies have me slightly freaked.  
Perhaps when they are far away  
My mind won’t be so taut and frayed.”*

You smile reassuringly at her. “Well then, we’ll just have to get rid of these boggies before your nerves get any worse, won’t we? Don’t worry, I’m sure that we’ll be able to deal with them, now that we know their weakness.”

You leave her home and head back to town quickly. You keep your eyes peeled for boggies, and you are able to make it back to town without incident. Now you just need to figure out how to use your newfound knowledge to stop the boggies and rescue Apple Bloom.

You ask the brownie, “So, if you call one of those, um . . .”

“A *Bhrùnaidh-mòd*,” Danneltuft supplies.

“Right. If you call one of those, then will the brownies be able to help me?”

“There are many of us throughout these lands, and we may move quickly when need is at hand. The boggies are fewer than we are, and their skills and magics are rough and unlearned. If the *Bhrùnaidh-mòd* consents, then have no fear; the foal for whom you fret will surely be brought to safety.”

“Alright then. If they can help, I want you to call a Brunny-mood.”

Danneltuft flinches slightly at your mangled pronunciation, but nods. “Very well. All the brownies of the region shall meet at sundown tonight. Do not fear, the boggies will not depart in that time, nor shall any harm come to Apple Bloom meanwhile. You, however, must set off now if you wish to reach the site of the convocation in time.”

He then gives you detailed directions to a grove deep in the Everfree Forest. It will take you several hours at least to reach the place. If you want to be sure of making it to the site by sundown, you’ll need to leave soon.

“Do you need me to carry you on my back?” you ask Danneltuft. “I mean, it’ll be a near thing for me to make it there myself, and I imagine it’s hard to run fast on legs that short. No offence.”

The brownie gives you a big wink. “Oh, don’t you worry none about old Danneltuft. I and my kin will be there when the sun’s last light is gone. You run along now, for the way is long.”

You nod and leave the cottage, mentally re-viewing Danneltuft’s directions. You have no doubt that the brownies will be willing to help you, but the implied threats which Danneltuft left you with linger. You hope that you made the right choice.

## 70

You soon reach your farm. Your heart is beating fast; on the way here, you had plenty of time to think about all the ways your plan could fail, all the ways in which the boggies could have sabotaged the raw materials you need . . .

You breath a sigh of relief when you see your house, and beside it (panes blessedly unbroken), your brand-new greenhouse. You'd put it in just a few weeks ago, hoping you'd be able to make a few extra bits selling out-of-season carrots during the winter. You quickly dismantle the roof, hauling down the thick, heavy panes of reflective glass. Now you have the raw materials, which just leaves the matter of transport . . .

---

*If you already went to Sugarcube Corner to find Pinkie Pie, turn to page 100.*

*If you didn't, turn to page 123.*

You hurry along the base of the ridge, moving as quickly as you dare while still keeping an eye out for any traps. Soon, you find yourself standing in front of three large gouges in the sandstone. Each is large enough for a pony to enter without ducking; one of these must be the boggies' lair. The tiny piles of refuse and lingering smell of smoke confirm your supposition, but neither seem to be coming from any one cave in particular. Now there's just one problem: which cave do you enter? Knowing these creatures, the two that they aren't inhabiting are sure to be filled with traps. Well, the one they are in is probably also a trap, for that matter . . .

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*If you go into the leftmost cave,  
turn to page 96.*

*If you go into the middle cave,  
turn to page 110.*

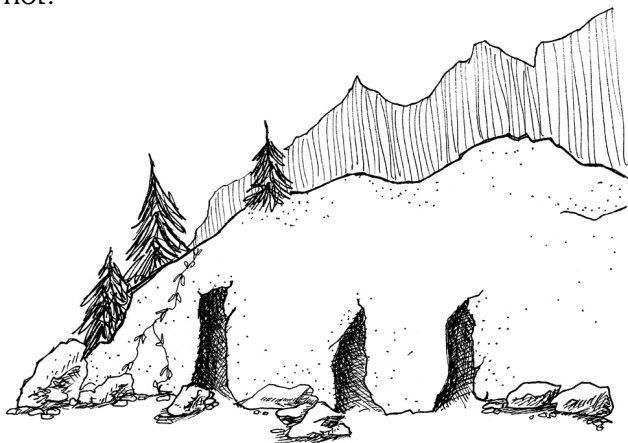
*If you go into the rightmost cave,  
turn to page 107.*

You soon find the three cave entrances you were told about. Before you can say anything, Winona sniffs around the openings and points with her body towards the leftmost one. “Seems Winona thinks Apple Bloom’s down thataway. I’ve never known her to make a mistake when it comes to sniffing out ponies,” says Applejack.

Twilight calls you all into a huddle and starts whispering. “Okay everypony, listen up. I’ve got a plan, but it’s going to take all of us working together. This will be a little tricky, but I know that with teamwork and co-operation, we can make my idea work.”

You feel a little riled by that. After all, you’re the one who figured out where the boggies are; all Twilight did was sit in her library reading some books! She could at least give you a little credit.

Twilight is already starting to explain the details of her plan to the group. It occurs to you that if you want to be recognized for your contributions, and not just for following Twilight's orders, you have the perfect opportunity right now. You know where Apple Bloom is; you could go down and rescue her while Twilight is still talking. Everypony is paying attention to her, they probably won't even notice you've left until you come back triumphant. A little voice (okay, a big voice) in your head tells you that this is a terrible idea, but do you want to be the hero or not?



---

*If you go along with Twilight's plan,  
turn to page 75.*

*If you enter the leftmost cave while Twilight  
is talking, turn to page 96.*



With the four of you working together, it doesn't take long to find a likely spot for the boggie camp. A bit west of your farm (and far enough into the Everfree Forest to avoid detection by casual ponies) is a sandstone ridge, full of small caves. Soon, you find yourself standing in front of three particularly large gouges in the yellow rock. Each is large enough for a pony to enter without ducking (a necessity if they wanted to take Apple Bloom); one of these could well be boggies' lair. The tiny piles of refuse and lingering smell of smoke confirm your supposition, but neither seem to be coming from any one cave in particular. Now there's just one problem: which cave do you enter? Knowing these creatures, the two that they aren't inhabiting are sure to be filled with traps. Well, the one they are in is probably also a trap, for that matter . . .

---

*If you go into the leftmost cave,  
turn to page 96.*

*If you go into the middle cave,  
turn to page 92.*

*If you go into the rightmost cave,  
turn to page 108.*

After a few minutes, the group disperses. You are left alone in front of the caves. "Oh well," you loudly announce, "I guess this isn't where the boggies are camped after all. I guess I'll just lie down here, near the cave entrances, and take a nap. Since there aren't any boggies around, I know that nothing will disturb my rest!" You cringe a little at your delivery; you were never much of an actress. Then you lie down and pretend to go to sleep, cracking one eye open so you can see the leftmost cave.

For a few minutes, nothing happens. Then, you hear voices coming from the cave:

"Do you think she's really asleep?"

"I don't hear anyone else, she must be alone!"

"This is great, now we can bring back *two* ponies!"

Then you see a grotesquely obese boggie step into sight. You have no doubt that he's their leader, for he wears a lopsided crown and carries a scepter made of an old pipe. In an imperious voice, he announces, "Alright, you lazy slob! Let's all get this pony tied up and hauled away!"

You are quickly surrounded by about two dozen boggies, who swarm from the cave at their leader's instruction. As they gather around you with ropes and bindings ready, the other ponies begin phase two of the plan.

From the brush, Applejack, Winona, and Rainbow Dash leap out and run at the boggies. Not expecting an attack, they forget all about you and quickly begin to run back towards the safety of their cave. Before they can reach it, however, a massive boulder tumbles down from the top of the ridge, blocking off the entrance completely. Your part in Twilight's plan complete, you open your eyes and stand up. From the top of the ridge, Big Mac gives you a wink.

Meanwhile, the other two ponies (and Winona) have herded the boggies all together on a large stone slab. Their leader yells, "There's only a few of them ponies, lads! Stand and fi—WOAH!"

At that moment, he is unceremoniously thrown on his bottom as the slab of stone he and the other boggies are standing on jerkily rises up off the ground. Twilight steps out of the bushes, her horn aglow with magic and a smile on her face.

Rainbow Dash flies up to the stone slab, now floating high above the ground. Addressing the boggie leader, she says, "Okay, here's what's gonna happen. You're gonna come down and let Apple Bloom out of your cave without any tricks, and then you're going to promise that you'll leave and never come back. Once you do that, *maybe* Twilight here will think about letting you go."

The fat boggie stands up and thrusts out his gut. "How dare you make demands of the *Ceanntighern!* You will release my people and I, or else you will face my wrath!"

"Actually, it's 'my people and *me!*'" Twilight calls up.

Dash makes a show of considering the offer. "Well . . . when you put it that way . . . no. I guess you guys can just hang up here, then." She begins to fly away.

"Wait!" calls the boggie. As Dash turns to face him with a smile on her face, he continues, "I . . . suppose I might be willing—of my own free will, mind you!—to go down and release the foal. As a gesture of goodwill, that is."

"And after that . . . ?"

The boggie visibly deflates. "And after that I . . . I suppose that it's probably about time to head back to the mountains. There's nothing here worth taking, anyway," he adds hurriedly. "That foal we took would probably have made a terrible worker in any case. Yes, we'll definitely be better off without her."

Twilight smiles as she lowers the boggies back to the ground. You go help Applejack push aside the boulder blocking the cave; it looks like everything's going to work out alright.

The group of you return to Ponyville, Applejack and Big Mac taking turns carrying Apple Bloom. She's not hurt, and keeps insisting she can walk just fine, but her older siblings don't seem to want to let her go.

As you reach town, Twilight puts a hoof on your shoulder. "Carrot Top," she begins, "I don't know how to thank you enough. Without your help, I hate to think what would've happened."

You blush at the compliment, but Applejack pipes up as well, "Yeah, you really came through. We all owe you a mighty big debt."

"Eee-yup," contributes Big Mac.

Apple Bloom leaps off of his back and gives you a hug. Whispering in your ear so her siblings won't hear, she says, "It was a *little* scary when I was all alone with the boggies in there. Thank you so much for saving me."

Flush with praise, you barely hear Rainbow Dash as she calls out from up above you, "Hey guys, I see a hot air balloon coming in from Cloudsdale! Pinkie must be back!" She swoops a little lower. "Hey, I've got an idea! Pinkie loves having parties, how about I go round up everypony else and tell her to throw a celebration!"

Twilight laughs. "I think that's a great idea, Rainbow Dash!" Then looking at you, she adds, "And I think I know who the guest of honor should be."

As Dash flies off to tell Pinkie and gather the other ponies, you feel a warm glow in your chest. Too often, you've felt like you've been relegated to the background as other ponies took the reins during crises. Today, you've found out what it's like to be in the limelight, and you discovered that you enjoy being the hero of your own story.

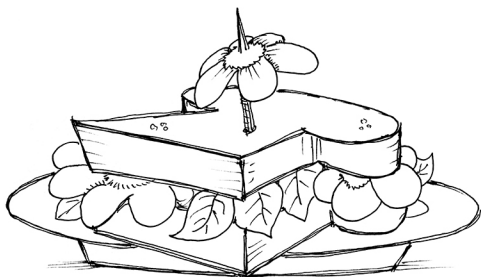
Today there was a happy ending, and it was thanks to you. And there's no better feeling in all the world.

**The End**

You leave the cottage at once; traveling through the Everfree Forest is dangerous business, and you feel sure that it would be unwise to come to a *Bhrūnaidh-mòd* late. However, there is one thing that *must* be done first: you haven't eaten since breakfast, and you need to get some food in your stomach before going on a long hike. You stop by a small deli to grab a sandwich and drink before you head out.

A few minutes later, you sit down at a table with your food. You try to pace yourself (no sense eating too fast and getting stomach cramps later, after all), but you can't help hurrying. Every few bites, you nervously glance at the sun, as if to reassure yourself that it isn't evening already.

As you polish off your sandwich, you hear a voice behind you. "Carrot Top? What are you doing here?"



You cringe as Twilight Sparkle sits down next to you, her sandwich in tow. Looking at the remains of your meal, she smiles and says, “I guess that’s a silly question, isn’t it? I usually skip meals when I’m busy like today, but Spike sent me a message a few minutes ago to remind me to get some lunch. Isn’t that sweet of him? He doesn’t even know about the . . .” Twilight looks around and lowers her voice, not wanting to panic the diners. “He doesn’t know about Apple Bloom, I mean. But I guess I’m just that predictable, huh?” You nod absently, and are about to leave when Twilight puts her hoof on yours. “Is something bothering you, Carrot Top? You look really distracted. You know you can tell me if something’s on your mind, right?”

You hesitate. You know you aren’t supposed to talk about the *Bhrùnaidh-mòd*, but you also know you’d feel a *lot* better if you had somepony to confide in. Or at least, if somepony knew where you were. Besides, Twilight seems like as trustworthy a pony as any; you truly doubt she’d spill your secret.

---

*If you tell Twilight about the Bhrùnaidh-mòd,  
go on to page 82.*

*If you make up an excuse for your behavior,  
turn to page 51.*



You lean in close; luckily nopony is sitting near enough to overhear your conversation. “Alright, I’ll tell you. But you have to *promise* that this never leaves the table . . .”

A few minutes later, you’ve finished describing your encounter with Danneltuft and what little you know about the upcoming convocation, Twilight listening with rapt attention all the while. “A *Bhrùnaidh-mòd!*” she breathes. “I’ve read about them, but they’re strictly a matter of rumor and hearsay. Carrot Top, you have to tell me all about it when you get back!”

You nod reluctantly. “Alright, I will. But this *can’t* go any farther than your ears, alright? You can’t even tell your friends.”

“Not even Spike?”

“*Especially* not Spike!”

Twilight sighs. “Alright, alright. You have my word.”

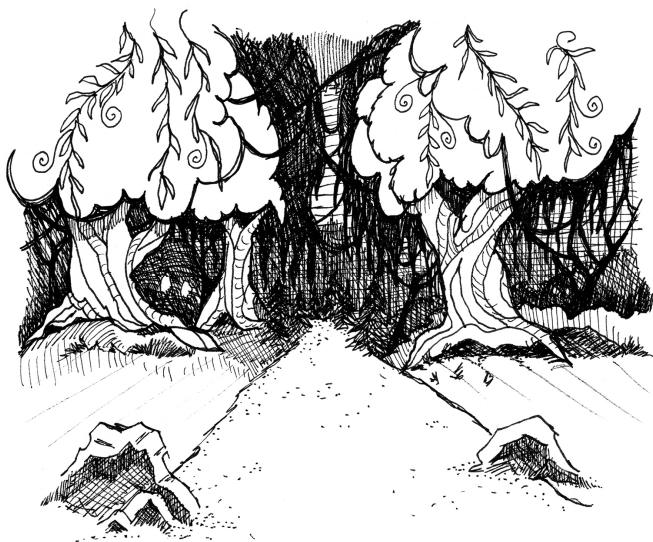
You stand up. “Thanks for listening,” you say. “I’ll feel better knowing that somepony knows where I am.”

“No problem. If you aren’t back by tomorrow morning, I’ll know something’s wrong and get a group together to come find you. But don’t worry,” she hastily adds, “I won’t say why. Exactly. I mean, I’ll be discreet.”

You smile at Twilight. “I know you will be. But just for my sake, why don’t you brush up your alibi this afternoon? You aren’t much of a liar.”

Twilight laughs. “I’ll take that as a compliment. You’d better get going, though.”

She’s right, of course; you’ve already spent longer getting lunch than you planned. Hurrying out of the deli, you set off for the Everfree Forest.



You set off into the Everfree Forest, carefully picking your way through the dense undergrowth. Although the location Danneltuft described isn't too far from Ponyville as the crow flies, you'll have to take a circuitous route around the river chasm that splits the forest. And of course, there's always the risk of encountering one of the woods' more dangerous denizens.

It is with a sense of great relief that you arrive at the *Bhrûnaidh-möd*'s location a few hours later. The sun has yet to go down; in fact, not only are you on time, you're almost half an hour early!

Relief quickly turns to disappointment, however, as you realize that you are completely alone. You briefly wonder if you might have taken a wrong turn somewhere along the line, but a quick glance at your surroundings reassures you that this is the right place. The shallow depression lined with close-cropped grass, the veritable wall of trees surrounding it, the four-foot-wide flat at the bottom of the depression: all are exactly as Danneltuft described them. You spend a few minutes wandering around the area, looking in vain for some sign of the brownies. Eventually, you give up and settle down at the bottom of the depression to wait.

Ten minutes pass, then twenty. You're feeling very nervous now. Danneltuft told you not to be late, but the sun's about to set and you're still the only one here! You start to worry that something terrible might have happened. Could the boggies have caught Danneltuft before he could send word to the other brownies? What if there's a gang of boggies coming after you right now? What if the brownies have already decided not to help you, and you're sitting here waiting for a convocation that will never come?

You have almost convinced yourself that you should leave and go try to find out what's wrong when the last rays of the sun recede over the hills. As if by magic, the tall trees surrounding the depression you sit in soak up the last vestiges of light, and you find yourself plunged into total darkness as suddenly as if someone had flipped a light switch.

Well. There's no way you can leave *now*; the Everfree Forest is dangerous enough when one can see where one's going, but trying to navigate the woods while blind? That's tantamount to suicide! You'll just have to wait here for dawn.

As you make yourself comfortable, dozens of tiny torches blaze to life all around you at once. You leap to your hooves in shock as you take in the sudden transformation of the depression. Where its softly sloping sides were bare mere minutes before, now they are covered in brownies, all sitting and talking to one another in a strange, guttural tongue. You find that you are at the center of a gathering of a hundred or more of the wee folk.

Before you can gather your wits, a low chime sounds and all conversation stops. Looking in the direction of the sound, you see Danneltuft standing by an ornate gong that you are certain wasn't there a moment ago. He winks and gives you a thumbs-up. Assuming that he's using the gesture the same way Spike does, he's probably trying to reassure you that everything is alright.

You take a deep breath and calm yourself. Unsure what to do, you wait quietly for one of the brownies to speak. It isn't a long wait.

From the crowd, a particularly tall and lanky brownie steps into the center of the depression and up onto a small podium by your side (which you are *positive* wasn't there just a moment ago). Clearing his throat, he announced, "Called by Danneltuft, and sanctioned by the elders, I, Glomgrime, declare this *Bhrūnaidh-mòd* to be open." He turns to you. "Speak, and you shall be judged."

Just as Twilight predicted, you find Applejack, Big Mac, and Rainbow Dash without difficulty. You quickly relay to them what you've discovered, the trio growing more and more agitated as you tell them what you know.

"So they're going to make Apple Bloom their slave? We gotta stop them!" exclaims Rainbow Dash. "What're we waiting for? You know where they are, let's go!"

You smile at your friend's trust. As you're about to head off, Applejack whistles shrilly. A moment later, a small shaggy dog appears out of the undergrowth. "C'mon, Winona!" she yells. "Let's get!"

Together, you all head off towards the sandstone caves.

For an instant, you freeze with nervousness. All of the brownies are staring intently at you, no doubt prepared to hang on your every word. What on earth can you say?

Then you feel something tap your flank; looking to your side, you see Glomgrime smiling and motioning you toward him. You lean your head near the podium, and he whispers, "Don't worry about the formalities so much; it's all for show, really. Just tell those here assembled what's happening, and why you need our help."

Hesitantly at first, but with greater and greater speed and clarity as you go on, you tell the convocation what you know about the goings-on at Applejack's farm, Apple Bloom's disappearance, and Twilight's conjecture that a group of boggies must be responsible. You tell them how Danneltuft offered to call a Brawnaid-mud (you hear some snickering in the crowd when you say that, but it's quickly shushed) so that you could make your case to the brownies. "Before he offered his help, Danneltuft asked me what I was willing to do to help Apple Bloom. Well, I'm willing to do whatever it takes. I don't know what kind of price you brownies charge for your help, but I'm willing to pay it if you can make sure that Apple Bloom gets back to her family safe and sound." You hold your breath in anticipation, waiting for whatever comes next.

Glomgrime clears his throat. "So . . . aye?"

With a single voice, every brownie assembled around you cries, "AYE!"

"Good! Then it's settled." Glomgrime grins at you, seeing your confusion. "Don't worry, your Apple Bloom will be safe in her bed before morning, and the boggies will trouble you no more."

"You mean . . . that's it?"

"Of course! And on behalf of our kin, I apologize for their outrageous behavior. We'll deliver the foal safe and sound, and make sure that the details of her encounter are nothing but a hazy memory. Now, there's just one more matter: *you*."

You cringe when Glomgrime says that, although his voice lacks any malice or threat. He continues, "We must ascertain if you can keep secret that which you've heard here. Tell me, can you solemnly swear that you will speak no word of the brownies or their kin upon leaving the *Bhrùnaidh-mòd*? Can you truthfully vow that you shall never give hint to any you meet of the brownies and their convocation?"

---

*If you tell the brownies that you can keep their secret, turn to page 126.*

*If you tell them you can't keep their secret, turn to page 98.*

*If you admit that you already told Twilight about the Bhrùnaidh-mòd, turn to page 118.*

*If you told Twilight but don't admit to it, turn to page 111.*



“Don’t worry, Twilight!” you call to her. “There’s no way I’m gonna let a bunch of pint-sized pipsqueaks ta—” You stop short as something sharp pricks you in the haunch. Turning around, you see a minuscule spear, perhaps three inches long, embedded in your flank.

The world starts spinning around you as Twilight calls down, “Carrot Top? Are you okay?” Her voice seems like it’s coming from very far away.

You hit the ground with a thud. As your vision swims, you can just barely make out several brown and grey blurs approaching you. Boggies? You can’t tell. What you do know, however, is that you and Twilight have failed. You’ll have to hope that Applejack and the others can rescue you all on their own, or else this will be . . .

**The End**

You stand before your evil twin, her skeletal forelegs crossed and a look of smug confidence on her face.

“The trouble with you, my sister . . . is that you’ve always been too good.”

You scratch your chin thoughtfully. “Well, that may be. But I still think I look more like Ma than you do. You know, uh, lots of character. I’m aging better.”

The bony grey pony you face is not impressed. Looking down on you with scorn, she says, “Sister, there is no need for me to destroy you. Surrender. Surrender your world!”

You reward that line with a slow clap and a rueful chuckle. “You always did need an audience, you sap. Let me tell ya . . . I ain’t practiced much magic in a long time.” You leave unsaid that you have no talent for anything more than simple sleight of hoof, while your unicorn sister may be the most powerful wizard in Equestria, able to summon armies of long-dead spirits to do her bidding. “I wanna show you a trick mother showed me when you weren’t around. To use on special occasions, like this.” You roll up one of your sleeves, then begin rolling the other. Your evil twin listens attentively, clearly enjoying every moment of her imminent victory. “Ah. Oh yeah, one more thing . . .” With a flourish, you whip a Luger out of your sleeve and point it at your sister. “I’m glad you changed your last name, you son of a—!”

**The End?**

Cautiously, you step into the center cave. You plan to take only a few steps in, and see if you can spot any signs of habitation. However, as soon as you enter the rock tunnel, the floor collapses beneath you! You fall into the inky blackness . . .

. . . About two feet. Then you feel yourself being hauled backwards by the tail.

Looking behind you, you see Applejack with her lasso in her teeth. "Whoa there, sugarcube!" she exclaims. "Can't have you disappearing on us, can we?" She frees the other end of her rope from your tail. "Hope that didn't hurt too much?"

You shake your head. "No, no. I was just a little . . . surprised."

Applejack frowns at the caves. "Well, we'd better try one of the other caves. Let's be extra careful, though; I don't like the looks of either of these two."

---

*Go back to the previous page (either 74 or 125) and make another choice.*

You consider Danneltuft's proposal for a minute. "Well," you say at length, "if you can bring me to the boggie camp, maybe I can figure out some way to help Apple Bloom. You said you can take me there safely?"

Danneltuft nods. "Aye, I can bring you before them under kin's rights; so long as you do nothing to offend them, they will not lay a finger upon you. However, it will be up to you to find a way to rescue the foal."

"Well, that's good enough for me! Let's go have a talk with the boggies."

The two of you set off at once. Danneltuft takes you straight into the Everfree Forest before turning north, towards your and Applejack's farms. Although he's only a few inches tall, the brownie seems to have no trouble passing through the thick underbrush that fills these woods. In fact, you find yourself struggling to keep up.

Soon, the two of you come to a sandstone ridge. There are three cave openings in the ridge, each large enough to admit you. Danneltuft puts his fingers in his mouth and whistles sharply.

At once, a band of boggies swarm out of the leftmost cave. They and Danneltuft begin yelling and gesticulating in a harsh-sounding, guttural language. After a minute, Danneltuft turns to you. "The boggies will take you to their *Ceanntighern*. It will be up to you to find a way to free Apple Bloom."

You look at him in panic. "Wait, you aren't coming with me?"

The brownie shakes his head. "Alas, the kin's rights which our common laws grant they will extend to only one of us. Do not be afraid, they will respect your sanctity and bring no harm to you if you act in a straightforward and polite manner. Refuse nothing offered, and speak with candor but respect." Danneltuft bows to you. "And now, I must be off. The rest is up to you."

The brownie vanishes back into the woods as the swarm of boggies lead you into the leftmost cave. You walk in and down for what you estimate to be several hundred feet before coming to a fairly large chamber. The chamber is at least twenty feet on a side, with a roof about eight feet high at the center. In the middle of the room is a large fire, which illuminates the entire area.

Tied up in a corner, you see Apple Bloom. You want to run to her and tell her that everything will be okay, but you remember Danneltuft's warnings. You merely raise a hoof to her and say in a soothing voice, "Hey Apple Bloom. It's me, Carrot Top! I've got to take care of some business right now, but then if things go well you and I can go home together. But right now, I need you to be a big girl and stay calm, alright?" Apple Bloom is gagged, but manages a weak nod.

Then you turn your attention to the figure sitting next to the fire. There is no doubt in your mind that this is the boggie's chief: his crown (disheveled and dirty), scepter (a rusty length of pipe), and throne (a ratty chair painted garish purple) all attest to that fact. You suppose that his gross corpulence might also be a sign of his station. He claps his hands as you step towards the fire, favoring him with the slightest bow you can manage without being disrespectful.

"Welcome, strange pony!" he cries in a reedy, nasal voice. "My guards tell me that you come under kin's rights to bargain with us!" He leans forward in his chair, resting his elbows on his enormous belly. "I think we have quite a lot to talk about."

You enter the leftmost cavern as quietly and cautiously as you can. Unfortunately for you, your caution is not rewarded.

As soon as your body is entirely inside the cave, a mass of stone slams to the ground behind you, trapping you inside and blocking out all light. Panicking, you turn and try to find some crack or flaw in the obstruction, but it's almost as if the cavern itself has closed up behind you. You shout and pound on the wall, but no pony answers your cries.

As you are trying to figure out what to do next, several small lights flicker into being behind you. Turning, you see a half-dozen boggies in front of you, all armed with spears and nets. One of them addresses you, saying, "So, you're the stupid pony who's trying to bungle our raid, eh? Well listen up! We can do this the easy way, or we can do this the hard way." Then he pauses and looks behind him before whispering, "No promises, but if we do this the easy way, you *might* still get a chance to see that foal we caught go free." In a louder voice, he continues, "Now lie down and surrender, or else we're going to take you down like the ugly mule you are!"

You have only a moment to decide. Will you try to fight off the creatures? There's only six of them, and they are quite small. Or will you surrender, and hope that what the boggie said about freeing Apple Bloom wasn't just a ploy to convince you to give up without a fight?

---

*If you surrender and let the boggies take you captive, turn to page 134.*

*If you try to fight the boggies, turn to page 120.*



You open your mouth, then close it again. You spend several long moments thinking about the question.

Finally, you hang your head and tell the brownies, “I really wish I could say that I’ll keep your secret. But brownies . . . boggies . . . brothy-mowds”—a few more quiet chuckles cause you to flush—“erm, brownie gatherings . . . how can I keep all of that secret from everypony I know? I . . . I think eventually I’ll slip up, even if I try my best.” You flinch in expectation. “If you have to lock me up forever, I . . . I guess I’m ready.”

There is silence. Then as one, all the brownies at the convocation burst out laughing. Wiping away a mirthful tear, Glomgrime exclaims, “*Lock you up?* Oh, that’s rich! What sort of tales has Danneltuft been telling you?”

Calming down a bit, he continues, “No, no. We appreciate your honesty, it is a rare quality among your kind these days. With your consent, we will work a bit of magic, then. It will wipe from your mind the memory of this night. It is not a magic we use lightly; we will do nothing without your agreement. Now tell me, will you consent to let us work this sorcery on you?”

You nod your head. “I’ll be sad not to remember any of this . . . but I guess if that’s the only price I have to pay for helping Apple Bloom, then I should count myself lucky.”

Glomgrime smiles. “You have a deep and generous heart. Although you will not remember this night, you will always have the goodwill of the brownies. Goodnight, Carrot Top.”

You feel a sudden wave of exhaustion. You slump to the soft ground, and are unconscious in moments.

As you contemplate the large, bulky panes of glass, a shadow falls over you. Turning to see what's blocking the sun, you find yourself staring at a large pink hot air balloon.

"Hiya, Carrot Top!" cries Pinkie. "Looks like you need some help!" She throws you a rope. "Here, start tying up those windows and let's go!"

"But . . . you were in . . . the Cakes said . . . how did you . . . ?" you stammer.

Pinkie laughs. "Oh, you silly filly! I came back from Cloudsdale and saw that Sugarcube Corner was closed, so I said to myself, 'Now Pinkie, why would the Cakes close Sugarcube Corner early?' And there were only two reasons I could think of: either Apple Bloom was kidnapped by a band of roving boggies, or else they were out of flour and needed to make a special trip to Hoofington to restock. But then I remembered that there was still an extra bag in the cellar last night, so I came over here to borrow your glass panes, but you already beat me here, so I said, 'Hiya, Carrot Top! Looks like you—'"

"Yes, yes, I got the last bit," you hurriedly cut in. "But how did you . . . you know what? Never mind." With that said, you take the rope and begin loading sections of your greenhouse roof into Pinkie's balloon.

Moments later you and Pinkie are floating over the Everfree Forest. “Alright,” you tell her, “we need to figure out where the boggies are hiding. Ponies have been searching these woods all day without finding a trace of them, so it’s sure to be somewhere hard to find. We’ll have to—”

“There it is!” cries Pinkie. Looking down at the spot where she’s pointing, you see several tiny dots (boggies?) moving into a sandstone cave. Looking levelly at Pinkie, you ask, “How did you do that?”

She shrugs her shoulders. In an effort to preserve your sanity, you don’t question her any further.

Using the rope, you carefully lower one of the large, heavy glass panes over the cave entrance. Immediately, you hear shouting and screaming coming from inside. Lowering yourself down to the ground, you untie the rope and guide Pinkie over to several nearby holes; you doubt the boggies would choose a cave with only one entrance or exit. Once you have all the nearby openings covered with glass, you return to the first hole you and Pinkie sealed. You find yourself facing a mass of small but furious boggies trapped inside the cave by your glass. They scream and shout, but you note with satisfaction that they shy away from touching the pane itself. You decide to let them yowl a bit, until they’ve calmed down enough to listen to you.

Then, you’re going to tell them *exactly* what’s going to happen if they want to be freed . . .

You and Twilight look at each other. She shrugs. “I don’t know, Carrot Top. These boggies don’t seem like the trustworthy type . . . but my books say that if a fey makes a promise, they’re bound to keep it.”

The boggie pipes up, “I promise, I promise! I promise that if you help make me *Ceanntighern*, I’ll make sure your foal gets home safe and sound!”

You reach your decision. “Well, that’s good enough for me. Untie him, Twilight. Let’s see if he can help us out.”

A moment later, the boggie is free of his restraints and rubbing his burned hand. “Jeez, that stings. Okay, we’re gonna need a lot of glass. What’ve you got?”

You rub your chin thoughtfully. “I suppose I could take down some of the roof panes from my greenhouse . . . that would work, right?”

“Hey, glass is glass. Alright, you ponies get a few of those, and meet me at the edge of the carrot farm, by the forest. Then we’ll go have some fun.”

“Wait!” you exclaim. “How do we know you’re not just going to run off and betray us?”

The boggie rolls his eyes and sighs dramatically. “I *just* gave you my word, didn’t I? Weren’t you listening to what the fat purple one said? Besides,” he grins, “now that I’m untied and you don’t have surprise on your side, you couldn’t stop me if you tried!” And before you can react, he springs up the stairs and out of sight. You’ve never seen a creature so small move so quickly.

You shake your head; you’ll just have to trust him. “Come on, Twilight,” you say. “Let’s get over to my farm.”

“Um, right.” Twilight starts up the stairs, then pauses and looks at you. “Um . . . you don’t think I’m fat, do you? I mean, I don’t get a lot of exercise, what with constantly being cooped up here at the library, but I try to—”

“NO! I mean, no. You look fine. Honest.”

“Oh. Well, good.”

With that crisis averted, you turn your mind back to Apple Bloom. The two of you set off.

Transporting several thick, heavy glass panes across rough terrain would be a formidable task for you alone. Luckily, Twilight is with you. Although the panes weigh a good 20 pounds each, she assures you as she picks several up with her magic that it will be no trouble at all for her to carry them for several hours, if need be.

With the glass in tow, the two of you walk towards the edge of the forest. You breathe a sigh of relief when you see the boggie there, tapping his foot impatiently.

“Jeez, you ponies are stupid and slow AND ugly! C’mon, follow me!” He sprints off into the woods at once.

You and Twilight lose him constantly in the undergrowth, but true to his word, the little creature does not abandon you. Every time he disappears out of sight, you find him waiting impatiently for you a short way forward, ready to goad you on towards the boggie lair. In good time, the three of you arrive at a sandstone ridge pockmarked with small caves. From the concealment of the underbrush, the boggie points out several of the larger entrances. “Alright fatty, you’ve only got one shot at this. You need to block off all the holes right away, or else the *Ceanntighern* might escape. If he makes it out, then I can’t claim victory.”

Twilight nods and focuses (though you see her surreptitiously glance down at her waist first). Swiftly but carefully, she sets the panes of glass over the cave entrances, using her magic to hold them tightly in place.

Approaching the largest hole, you find yourself facing a mass of furious boggies trapped inside the cave by your glass. They scream and shout, but you note with satisfaction that they shy away from touching the glass itself.

The boggie whom you helped runs ahead of you and starts shouting back and forth with the trapped boggies in a strange, guttural language which you don't understand. After quite a bit of jawing, he turns to Twilight and says, "Okay, blobbo. You can let them out now."

Putting out a hoof to stop Twilight, you eye the boggie suspiciously. "And then you'll turn over Apple Bloom and leave this place forever, right?"

"GAH! You ponies are so dumb. I swore, didn't I?" You give Twilight a nod, and she moves the pane of glass away.

There is a brief ceremony wherein, you assume, the title of *Ceanntighern* is passed from the old chief to the new. It seems to consist mostly of the two dozen or so boggies who swarmed out of the cave once the glass was lifted ripping the clothing and symbols of office from a morbidly obese boggie and wrapping them around your 'friend,' all the while babbling to each other in their bizarre tongue. Once that is done, the new *Ceanntighern* approaches you, a look of triumph on his face. "Now, is there something you ponies wished to beg of me?"



You nearly shout with annoyance, but then remember what he said about needing to maintain face as a newly minted ruler. Doing your best to keep your tone civil, you say, “Oh great and powerful boggie king, could you let Apple Bloom go, please? And then leave forever, if it isn’t too much trouble?”

He makes a great show of pondering. Then, to your surprise, he says, “No.”

Smiling, he continues, “As I recall, I promised ‘if you help make me *Ceanntighern*, I’ll make sure your foal goes home safe and sound.’ Well, I plan to take her to her new home unharmed; she can’t be expected to do much work if she’s hurt!” He waves a hand at you negligently. “Now be gone, unless you have something valuable to offer in trade for the foal. Otherwise, I’ll have my new guards take you down, and we’ll have three new slaves to bring home instead of just one!” The boggies all laugh uproariously and grip their weapons, ready in case you try anything.

---

*If you swallow your pride and try to negotiate with the new Ceanntighern, turn to page 153.*

*If you decide it’s time to put this uppity boggie in his place, turn to page 121.*

You poke your head into the cave. The entrance, at least, seems empty. You carefully enter.

Finding nothing immediately threatening, you walk a little farther down. The cave appears to lead straight forward, sloping gently down as it goes. You look around for any side passages, but you're finding it very hard to concentrate.

You look back at the entrance, only a few feet behind you. You can see the sky at your back, tinged with . . . yellow? That doesn't seem right. Maybe there's something in the air . . .

After a moment, you realize you're lying on your side. When did that happen? You don't remember . . .

It's hard to make out what the boggies are saying, what with the wet cloths they have plastered over their mouths. Something about extra pony laborers . . .

As you're dragged out into the air, you realize you're drifting in and out of consciousness. Maybe next time you can . . .

You come around yet again, but this time stay awake; the clean outside air seems to be helping. Your hooves are bound, and a gag is in your mouth. You look around, and find yourself surrounded by jeering boggies. Your heart sinks; you don't think you can escape this one on your own. Perhaps the other ponies will come to rescue you, but for your part in Apple Bloom's rescue, this is . . .

**The End**

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You look back at the entrance, only a few feet behind you. You can see the sky at your back, tinged with . . . yellow? That doesn't seem right. Maybe there's something in the air . . .



Then the entrance is blocked by a large blue shape. “Hold on tight, Carrot Top!” a voice cries, and you feel yourself buffeted by high-speed winds. Grabbing a nearby protrusion, you grit your teeth and try to weather the gale.

After a few moments, the cyclone winds stop, and you find you can breath easier. Much easier, in fact.

“Are you okay, Carrot Top?” asks Rainbow Dash as you step back out of the cavern. “We saw some funny-looking smoke coming out of the walls, and you didn’t seem like you were doing all that hot. So, I went ahead and blew a little fresh air in there for you.”

“I’m fine, thanks,” you tell the concerned ponies. “I just . . . let’s see if one of the other caves is a safer bet, okay?”

The other ponies all readily give their consent to that. None of you need to be told that strange gasses plus mysterious caves are not a recipe for anything good.

---

*Go back to the previous page (either 74 or 125) and make another choice.*

Cautiously, you step into the center cave. You plan to take only a few steps in, and see if you can spot any signs of habitation. However, as soon as you enter the rock tunnel, the floor collapses beneath you! You fall into the inky blackness . . .

After what feels like an eternity (but is probably less than a second), you land on something hard. You cautiously stand up and check yourself over, but you don't appear to be seriously hurt. You are at the bottom of a pit at least twelve feet deep, and the walls are smooth. You don't think you can get out on your own.

A small, wide head pokes over the lip of the pit, its large mouth split in a wicked-looking grin. "So, the stupid little pony came to visit, eh? So sorry, but we don't want any visitors right now. You wait down there, yes? Here, I'll cover the pit again. I saw some other stupid ponies out prowling around—maybe if you're lucky, we'll get two in the same snare, and then you can have a friend!"

As the boggie blocks off the top of the pit once more, you scream as loud as you can. You try threatening, you try begging, you even try to appeal to his vanity, but the little demon just whistles to himself and plugs the last holes of light above you. Left in total darkness, you have no choice but to sit tight and hope that somepony finds you and Apple Bloom soon. With a little luck, maybe they won't make the same mistake you did.

**The End**

You nod your head vigorously. “Don’t worry about that, everypon—erm, everybrownie. Your secret is safe with me.”

You feel the eyes of all the brownies on you. Glomgrime presses, “Are you *certain* that you can give your word? It is a matter of great importance, and there can be no lapse or dishonesty in this vow.”

You feel yourself start to sweat. “Ah, of course! Don’t you all worry, you can count on Carrot Top!”

From the back, you see Danneltuft hang his head and sigh. Glomgrime frowns and says, “We hoped it would not come to this, but it is clear that you are false in your dealings with us. We must therefore take action to prevent the betrayal which is already writ on your face and in your heart.”

“What? No! No, you don’t understand, I just—”

The world spins, and you fall unconscious.

You awake to find yourself resting on a soft down pillow in an opulent room. A bit groggy but otherwise alright, you rise to your hooves, wondering what happened.

“Well, it seems you’re finally awake!”

You turn to face the voice, then widen your eyes in shock and quickly bow. “PRINCESS CELESTIA! What are you . . . what am I doing—”

“Please, it’s quite alright. It seems you had a little run-in with the brownies, didn’t you?”

Danneltuft steps out from behind the princess and smiles ruefully. “Yes, you could say she did.” Turning to you, he says, “Please, we’re all very sorry that things have come to this. I hope you can still find happiness. If I can, I will try to visit and see to your comfort.” Then turning back to the princess, he tells her, “I must be off, Your Majesty. You have our gratitude.” She smiles and waves him away, and he leaves the room.

“Please, sit.” The princess motions you to a soft cushion. “I imagine you’ll want an explanation, won’t you?” Not waiting for you to reply, Celestia begins, “The brownies have asked a favor of me, and after some consideration I’ve consented. They asked me to take you in.”

You blanch. “Take me in? You mean, you’re going to throw me in the dungeon?”

Celestia laughs at that. “Oh, where do you Ponyvillians get these crazy ideas? No, I mean that you’re going to become one of my courtiers. The brownies knew that their secret wasn’t safe with you, and I’ve agreed to put you in a position where I can personally keep an eye on you.”

You boggle at this news. Courtier to the princess? You have so many questions! “What about my farm? What about the other ponies? When can I see my friends again?”

Celestia is quick to reassure you that the other ponies have been told that you’ve been specially selected to serve in Canterlot, though of course they don’t know the real reason. Your farm will be taken care of, as well. “As for seeing your friends . . .” She smiles sadly. “I’m sure we can arrange some short visits, but the reason you’re here is so that I can make sure you don’t tell anypony anything you shouldn’t. You won’t really be able to have time alone with any of them anymore.”

You nod slowly. “I must return to my duties now,” the princess says. “I’ll send in my chamberlain, he’s been apprised of the situation and will assist you in learning your new duties. Is there anything else I can do before I go?”

You still have many questions, but one is paramount in your mind. “Is Apple Bloom alright?”

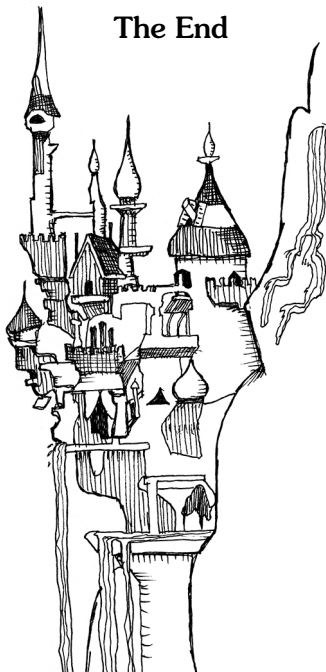
Celestia seems gladdened by the question. “Yes, the brownies brought her home last night. The poor dear doesn’t remember a thing, but she’s safe and sound. Don’t worry for her sake, Carrot Top.” Then Celestia leaves, and you are alone.



You trot over to the window. In the distance, you can see Ponyville. Will you ever be able to return there? You hope so, but you know it doesn't really matter. Thanks to you, Apple Bloom is safe. And even if you won't be able to see your old friends much, life as one of Celestia's courtiers should be pleasant enough.

You get down from the window and make your way to a mirror. You start to straighten out your mane as best you can; you want to look presentable when the chamberlain arrives.

### The End



You wake up the next morning to the sound of somepony knocking on your door. "Carrot Top? Carrot Top, are you home?" comes the unmistakable voice of Twilight.

"Hold your hideous mouse-horse hybrids, I'm coming," you mumble as you slump out of bed and walk to the door. Outside your house you see not only Twilight, but Applejack and Apple Bloom as well.

"Apple Bloom, you're all right!" you cry as you wrap the little pony up in an ursa hug. Apple Bloom squirms and makes gagging noises, and you quickly set her back down. As she gasps for breath, you smile apologetically and say, "Sorry, I guess I was just a little excited to see that you're okay." Turning to Applejack, you ask, "So, where did you find her?"

Applejack shuffles her hooves and says, "Well actually, that's why we're here. She was right in her bed this morning, and says she doesn't remember what happened. We thought maybe you'd brought her in."

"Me? No, yesterday I was . . ." You struggle for a moment; what *were* you doing yesterday? "Well, Twilight came and told me about the problem, and then I went out into the forest to start looking . . . and I guess after it got dark I came home?" That doesn't seem quite right, but as you think it over, you begin to remember bits and pieces of last night. Running through the forest, staying out until sundown . . . yes, that must be what happened.

Applejack shrugs and turns to Apple Bloom. “Well, come on little sister. Let’s head into town and let everypony else know that you ain’t missing no more.” As the two of them trot off, Applejack calls over her shoulder, “Thanks a ton for helping with the search, Carrot Top!”

Twilight stays where she is, looking at you with concern. “Okay, it’s just you and me now. You can tell me about *them*.”

“Who?” you ask, uncertain what Twilight’s talking about.

“You know.” Twilight looks around, assuring herself that the two of you are alone. “Our *little friends*. Remember?”

You struggle to think what she might be talking about for a moment, then recall that yesterday she was babbling on about boggies and brownies. “Oh, you mean the fairytale stuff? Twilight, I don’t know how to tell you this, those things aren’t real.”

“But, yesterday you—”

“Yesterday you told me all your crazy ideas about kidnapping and boggies, and what came of it? Apple Bloom turned up safe and sound in her bed this morning! She probably just got lost while playing in the woods and doesn’t remember coming home.” You look at Twilight critically. “Honestly, I’m a little surprised at you. You’re the smartest pony I’ve ever met, Twilight. Don’t you know a tall tale when you hear one?”

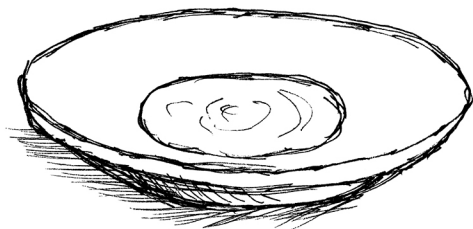
“But I . . . but yesterday you . . . but . . .” Twilight takes a deep breath, regaining her composure. “You know what? I’m going to go back to the library. I need to do some more . . . studying. Yes, studying.” She beats a hasty retreat from your door.

You shake your head as the purple unicorn gallops off. How can she be so smart, and still have so many silly ideas? Still, the whole conversation reminds you to check the back step. Just as you thought, you forgot to leave a bowl of milk out yesterday.

As you start to load up your wagon for today’s market visit, you make a mental note to put one out tonight. It wouldn’t do to forget two nights in a row, after all.

Just in case.

## The End



You shake your head sadly. “I didn’t . . . I mean . . .” You take a deep breath. “What I’m trying to say is . . . I kind of already told someone.”

Immediately, all the brownies begin talking in their native tongue. Glomgrime loudly bangs a gavel and eventually succeeds in calling them to order. “Now then, my lady, you had best explain what you’ve done.”

Feeling an acute sense of shame, you tell the convocation about your conversation with Twilight during lunch. “I guess I’m just no good at keeping my mouth shut,” you conclude miserably. Looking up at where Danneltuft is standing, you tell him, “I’m sorry I didn’t keep my promise.”

Danneltuft smiles and says, “Here now, my lady. What’s done is done, and no sense losing sleep over it.”

Glomgrime nods, then asks Danneltuft, “But what are we to do now? This ‘Twilight’ has heard tell of you and of our convocation. What will we do with her?”

Danneltuft laughs. “I’ve heard a bit about that one during my time in Ponyville. She’s as smart as they come, but she’s none too keen to believe aught save what her eyes and ears tell her. She’ll give up this crazy idea of brownies quickly enough, with no evidence nor witnesses to support her.”

Glomgrime nods. “Good enough, then. That just leaves the matter of dealing with this one . . .”

You flinch in expectation. Steeling yourself, you say, “If you have to lock me up forever, I . . . I guess I’m ready.”

There is silence. Then as one, all the brownies at the convocation burst out laughing. Wiping away a mirthful tear, Glomgrime exclaims, “*Lock you up?* Oh, that’s rich! What sort of tales has Danneltuft been telling you?”

Calming down a bit, he continues, “No, no. We appreciate your honesty, it is a rare quality among your kind these days. With your consent, we will work a bit of magic, then. It will wipe from your mind the memory of this night. It is not a magic we use lightly, and we will do nothing without your agreement. Now tell me, will you consent to let us work this sorcery on you?”

You nod your head. “I’ll be sad not to remember any of this . . . but I guess if that’s the only price I have to pay for helping Apple Bloom, then I should count myself lucky.”

Glomgrime smiles. “You have a deep and generous heart. Although you will not remember this night, you will always have the goodwill of the brownies. Goodnight, Carrot Top.”

You feel a sudden wave of exhaustion. You slump to the soft ground, and are unconscious in moments.

You rear up, towering over your pitifully small foes. “Now listen here!” you shout. “Either you bring me Apple Bloom, or else I’m gonna tear this place apart and find her myself!” You take a step forward menacingly.

The head boggie rolls his eyes. “Alright boys, you heard her.” The boggies quickly spring into action.

The ones clinging to the ceiling above you, that is. Before you know what’s happening, four boggies have dropped down on top of you. With expert skill, they bind your legs together. You manage to swat one away with your tail, but one of his compatriots binds it as well. In short order, you find yourself trussed up like a pig.

The commander comes over and looks you in the eyes. “Honestly, I’m kind of glad you chose the hard way. Seeing your expression when my boys fell on you was priceless!” Then he turns to his men, yelling, “Come on, ya lazy slobs! Haul ’er down to the main room with the other one! The *Ceanntighern* will want to see the latest prize.”

As you are dragged down into the cave, you know that your fate rests in the hands of the other ponies. You just hope they’ll find a way to rescue you and Apple Bloom. Because if they make the same mistakes you did, this is sure to be . . .

**The End**

Twilight starts to open her mouth, but you put a hoof up to block her. “No. We tried doing it your way, with the testing and the books. Now we’re going to do things *my way*.”

You glare over at the boggie. “So now that you’re king—”

“*Ceanntighern*,” he corrects you in a patronizing tone.

“Whatever. Now you want us to bargain for Apple Bloom’s freedom. Even though you promised you’d—”

“Don’t impugn my honesty! I kept my word!” he cries. More slyly, he adds, “If you were too stupid to parse my meaning, that’s your problem.”

“Right.” You look over the guard boggies who have surrounded you and Twilight, picking out the least disgusting-looking one. “You there, you the second-in-command or something?”

The boggie in question straightens up a bit. “You may address me as Hinterheart, First General of the Most Illustrious—”

“That’s nice, Hinter. Say, how’d you like to be *Ceanntighern*?”

To his credit, Hinterheart grasps your meaning immediately. “The foal for my elevation? It’s a deal!”



The current *Ceanntighern* cries out, “HEY! You can’t do that!” But you’re already moving. A few of the guards lift their weapons, but Hinterheart loudly orders them to stand aside. Confused, the other boggies do nothing as you run up to their leader and, turning around at the last second, buck him as hard as you can.

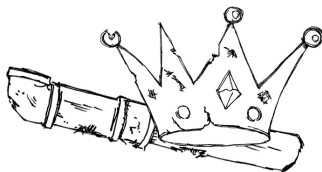
With a scream, he goes flying off into the forest, his crown and scepter falling to the ground at your feet. You face the boggies and announce, “Hinterheart’s in charge now. Any of you got a problem with that?”

The boggies all stay silent. Hinterheart grabs the crown and scepter from beside you, hastily donning them. Waving you quiet, he announces, “My first decree as *Ceanntighern* is that we dispose of any useless baggage in camp. I have no desire to haul valueless junk all the way home. Therefore, let us cast away the foal. I have seen her; she is weak and useless, and I have no doubt she’d make a terrible slave.”

As the boggies scramble to obey his orders, Twilight gives you a level look.

“Your way?”

You smile proudly. “My way.”



It takes you a few minutes, but you carefully load the panes of glass into your wagon. It will be difficult to maneuver your cart through the forest, but it's the only way you have of transporting so much material in a single trip.

You head into the forest, moving slowly so as not to tip the cart. Since you don't know exactly where you're going yet, you decide to stay on the main road. With any luck, you'll bump into some of the other ponies who are out searching for Apple Bloom.

As you make your way down the path, you hear sounds of the forest all around you; the trilling of birds, the rustle of the wind in the trees, the heavy breathing of—

You turn in your harness as best you can, and see a terrible sight. Slinking onto the trail behind you is a giant rat, at least three times your size. Its eyes glinting with hunger, it squeaks and moves forward.

You take off down the trail as fast as you can, but the cart slows you. The rat gives chase, gaining on you with each stride. You hear it suck in its breath and leap, and you hurl yourself forward as hard as you can.

The rat lands squarely on top of the cart, shattering it and the greenhouse windows alike. At once, the creature lets up a terrible shriek; you can see that its belly has been cut by the shards of broken glass. It flees into the forest, leaving you alone with the wreckage of your wagon.

“Anypony there? We heard something . . . do you need help?” calls a voice from above. Looking up, you see Rainbow Dash come flying in overhead. “Oh hey! What’s up, Carrot Top?” She frowns. “And what happened to your cart?”

As Big Mac and Applejack come trotting out of the forest, you tell them about your discovery, and the encounter with the giant rat. Then you look sadly at the broken chunks of glass. “So much for that plan,” you sigh. With your cart destroyed, you can’t even carry the shards to the boggie lair.

“Aw, don’t go giving up just yet,” Applejack tells you. “Dash here thinks she’s found the spot where the boggies are hiding!” She chuckles. “I admit, when Twilight told me about them, I thought she was just . . . well, just being Twilight. But Dash saw one with her own eyes!”

“Yeah! It was all short and ugly and it dressed like something out of Rarity’s nightmares!” Dash interjects.

You smile at the good news. “Well, maybe we can still do something, then.”

Applejack nods. “I s’pect we can. We’re gonna head down to the spot where Dash saw the boggie right now. Twilight mentioned they don’t stay in one place long, once they’ve been found out, so we’re gonna have to hurry.”

Together with your friends, you set off to stop the boggies. You wish you still had the glass panes, but hopefully together you’ll be able to rescue Apple Bloom anyway.

Following Dash's directions, you soon come to a spot a bit west of your farm, and far enough into the Everfree Forest to avoid detection by casual ponies. There you find a sandstone ridge full of small caves. Soon, you find yourself standing in front of three particularly large gouges in the sandstone. Each is large enough for a pony to enter without ducking (a necessity if they wanted to take Apple Bloom); one of these could well be boggie's lair. The tiny piles of refuse and lingering smell of smoke confirm your supposition, but neither seem to be coming from any one cave in particular. Now there's just one problem: which cave do you enter? Knowing these creatures, the two that they aren't inhabiting are sure to be filled with traps. Well, the one they are in is probably a trap too, for that matter . . .

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*If you go into the leftmost cave,  
turn to page 96.*

*If you go into the middle cave,  
turn to page 92.*

*If you go into the rightmost cave,  
turn to page 108.*

You look around the convocation. All the brownies are staring at you, waiting to hear what you'll say next. You take a deep breath.

"I may not be perfect, but I always keep my word. I promise I'll never tell anypony about you brownies, and you can take that to the bank."

Glomgrime looks to Danneltuft. "And what say you? Surely your lady has made mention of this one at times. Is she worthy of our trust?"

Danneltuft smiles and says, "Never have I heard my lady speak aught but well of this one. She is kind and generous, and freely donates her excess crops for the creatures under my lady's care. And remember also, she was prepared to face a *Bhrùnaidh-mòd* not for herself or her kin, but to rescue a foal to whom she had no obligation. Of our trust, I believe none could be more worthy."

"Very well, then." Glomgrime calls forward one of the brownies. "Thistledown, it is dark and these woods are perilous for the big folk come night. Escort our lady to her home, and see that she arrives without trouble."

Thistledown nods and tells you, "If you will follow behind me, I will make sure that we do not encounter any of the forest's most perilous denizens."

Danneltuft clears his throat. "Ah, if I may be so bold, I think that perhaps Fallowhall would be a better choice. And that perhaps she would be best escorted to the cabin of my lady, rather than her own home."

Glomgrime grins. "Well, who am I to argue with your assessment? Fallowhall, if you are willing . . . ?"

"It would be my pleasure," announces another brownie, stepping up towards you. "Come, my lady. Let us go to the home of your yellow friend."

"And fear not for the foal," Glomgrime reassures you. "She will be snug in her bed long before you, I would wager."

Thanking the brownies one last time, you follow Fallowhall out into the woods.

A trip through the forest at night should be terrifying, but you find yourself feeling oddly relaxed. Fallowhall is always a few steps in front of you, holding his tiny torch aloft so that you can see where you're going. True to his word, he guides you to Fluttershy's cottage quickly and without incident.

When you arrive, it is nearly midnight. As you approach the cottage, Fallowhall nudges you towards the door. "Go on, we must speak with the lady."

"But I thought I couldn't—"

"You may speak to the lady of this house freely, and only to her. She too has earned our trust, and our existence is no secret to her."

Tentatively, you raise a hoof and knock on the door. A light comes on at once, and you hear a soft voice from inside call, "I'm coming, I'm coming!" A moment later, Fluttershy opens the door a crack. Her eyes widen when she sees you and your brownie companion, but she opens the door and lets you in.

Once you enter, Fluttershy is the first to speak. "So, um . . . I guess this means you talked to Danneltuft, then."

“You may be sure that she did!” cries Danneltuft as he springs into the room. “And a good thing she did, too; the boggies would have left for their mountain homes this very night, and then your poor Apple Bloom would have been in trouble indeed! But never you fear,” he quickly adds, “for even as we speak, she’s sound asleep in her own bed, the events of today already but a hazy dream to her.”

You and Fluttershy both relax at the news, but it’s clear that something is still bothering the yellow pegasus. “So Danneltuft, if you’re here, does that mean you aren’t going to leave me forever?”

Danneltuft looks at her sternly. “You should know better than that, my lady. By your words and actions, you have betrayed the bond between us. That your only desire was to save another matters not. Whether I will it or no, I must leave this night and never return.”

Fluttershy looks like she’s about to cry, but Danneltuft isn’t finished yet. “However . . .” he adds, stroking his hairless chin, “this fellow here, Fallowhall. He’s a young brownie, and has yet to find his first home. Perhaps I might recommend such a cottage as yours to him . . .”

Fallowhall plays along, making a great show of mulling the matter over. “Well, if Danneltuft thinks such a place is fit for me . . . I suppose I could come to live under this roof.”



At that, Fluttershy really does start crying. Scooping up both brownies in her hooves, she hugs them close. “Oh, thank you! Thank you so much! Oh, I’m so *happy!*”

As Fluttershy rejoices, Danneltuft squirms free from her grasp. Stepping over to you, he says in a conversational tone, “Of course, that leaves me without a home to tend, and such a state is most miserable for one of my ilk. Perhaps if there was some selfless, hard-working, and above all trustworthy mare in this village, I might take up residence under her roof. Of course,” he adds, “she’d need to be sure to leave a bowl of fresh cream on the doorstep every night. I have *very* discerning taste, you know.”

Your face glows red, and you manage to whisper, “I-I’ll remember that.”

Fallowhall, meanwhile, has finally gotten free of Fluttershy. The two brownies bow to each of you in turn, and say in unison, “Farewell for now, gentle ladies. We’re sure to meet again.” And in a twinkling of an eye, they scamper off.

Fluttershy turns to you and says, “I’m so glad you were able to talk to the brownies. Thanks to you, Apple Bloom’s safe!”

You nod. Apple Bloom’s been rescued, you discovered that brownies are real, Danneltuft wants to live in your house . . . all in all, this was a pretty good day.

**The End**

It's the next day, and you feel like you're on top of the world. Applejack was ecstatic when you came back with Apple Bloom trailing behind you, naturally. And then Pinkie insisted on throwing a party . . .

Apple Bloom is the focus of attention among the young fillies and colts, of course. They crowd around her, asking her over and over to tell them what the boggies looked like, what they talked like, how they smelled and, most of all, what it was like to be rescued. You grin as you catch a bit of her latest tale; each time she tells another story, it seems to get a bit more outlandish and fantastic.

Twilight and the other ponies are all being honored too, of course. Everypony did their part to try and rescue Apple Bloom, and it wouldn't do to forget that.

Still, every time you look up at the hastily painted banner that hangs from the rafters you feel a little thrill run down your spine:

THANK YOU CARROT TOP  
HEROINE OF PONYVILLE

it reads in great block letters. You've attended plenty of celebrations for other ponies, but this is the first time you've been singled out for your deeds. Throughout the party, you've been approached by friends, neighbors, and even a few complete strangers, all eager to congratulate you for your part in saving Apple Bloom.

At one point during the party, Twilight leans over to you and asks, "I was going to write a letter to the Princess and tell her all about yesterday. You don't mind if I mention you by name, do you?"

"There's no need for that, Twilight Sparkle. I've already heard the news."

"PRINCESS CELESTIA!" you gasp, as you and everypony else in the room fall to their knees at the monarch's sudden appearance.

"Please everypony, there's no need to bow." The princess makes her way over to where you and Twilight are standing. "Yesterday, I received word that a band of boggies had made camp near Ponyville. But when I got here, I found that the problem had already been solved, thanks to the hard work and quick thinking of Carrot Top here."

You blush at the complement. "Thank you, my Princess."

Celestia turns her attention to Twilight. "Now, I believe you had a report you wanted to give me?"

Twilight clears her throat. "Dear Princess Celestia," she begins, earning a few chuckles. Looking at you and Applejack, she continues, "Today I learned that there are many kinds of friends. Some you hang out with every day, and some you only spend time with occasionally. But a true friend will always help you out when you're in a bind."

“And I learned that I’ve got a true friend in Carrot Top, here!” interjects Applejack.

Celestia laughs. “Well, it certainly seems like you’ve learned a lot! I must return to Canterlot now, but you all have my gratitude for taking care of the problem so quickly and effectively.” She turns and locks eyes with you, making you blush. “Especially you, Carrot Top.”

As Celestia leaves, you practically glow with pride; it’s not every day somepony gets a compliment from the princess herself! All in all, you can’t imagine how things could have gone any better than they did. And now, you’re going to enjoy basking in a little well-earned glory.

**The End**

You slowly lie down. “Alright, I’ll come along quietly.”

At once, the boggies surround you. The one who spoke before tells you, “My name’s Hinterheart. Don’t bother trying to resist, these spears are tipped with poison. One jab, and you’ll be asleep in seconds.”

Stepping up next to your ear, he whispers, “Now here’s the deal. Our current leader is an old, useless git, but he’s clever. If you can help me take his place, I’ll let you take your foal back. Sound good?”

“How can I do that?”

“We’re going to bring you before him. When we do, you tell him you’re invoking right of parley. Tell him you speak for the ponies of your town, and have come peacefully to negotiate for the foal.”

“And then he’ll let me talk?”

“Well, since you aren’t kin, he doesn’t have to. But don’t worry, he’s too greedy to let a chance to wring your city dry pass by. Then you’ll need to find some way to outsmart him.”

“How do I do that?”

“That’s your problem. But if you can make him look like a fool in front of all the boggies, then I’ll be able to challenge him for the position of *Ceanntighern*. Without the support of his lackeys, he won’t have a chance. Then I can help you out. You scratch my back, I scratch yours, you get me?”

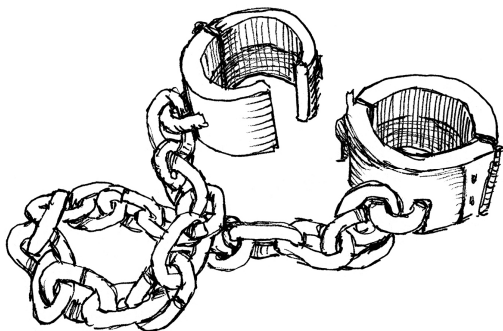
You nod, and Hinterheart smiles. “Good. Now we’d better get going, before someone gets suspicious.” Motioning for you to stand up, he leads you down the tunnel, your boggie escort crowded at your sides.

You walk forward and down for what you estimate to be several hundred feet before coming to a fairly large chamber. The chamber is at least twenty feet on a side, with a roof about eight feet high at the center. In the middle of the room is a large fire, which illuminates the entire area.

Tied up in a corner, you see Apple Bloom. You want to run to her and tell her that everything will be okay, but you have no doubt the guards would stop you. You merely raise a hoof to her and say in a soothing voice, “Hey Apple Bloom. It’s me, Carrot Top! I’ve got to take care of some business right now, but then if things go well you and I can go home together. But for now, I need you to be a big girl and stay calm, alright?” Apple Bloom is gagged, but manages a weak nod.

Then you turn your attention to the figure sitting next to the fire. There is no doubt in your mind that this is the boggie's chief: his crown (disheveled and dirty), scepter (a rusty length of pipe), and throne (a ratty chair painted garish purple) all attest to that fact. You suppose that his gross corpulence might also be a sign of his station. As your escort leads you to the fire, you say, "Greetings, sir. I'm here to bargain on behalf of Ponyville for the freedom of Apple Bloom. I wish to invoke the right of parley."

The *Ceanntighern* looks at you suspiciously, but then waves his hand. "Very well," he says, "I will bargain with you. But if you can't make me an offer I like, you and the foal will both be coming back to our mountain home in chains."



The *Ceanntighern* looks you over from head to hoof. “Humph. I’d have thought the ponies would send one less . . . uncouth.” He gestures to the armed boggies standing all around you. “Before we begin, let me make clear that at the first hint of insolence, my guards will stab you with their spears. These spears are treated with a very special chemical; once you are pricked, you’ll fall asleep in a trice. Despite your size, do not think for one moment that you have the slightest chance of escape, save by my will alone.”

You nod. For Apple Bloom’s sake, you’ll need to play by the boggie’s rules.

“Now then, tell me what you’re prepared to offer me in exchange for your foal. I will deign to hear you, but speak quickly.” The guards around you grip their spears in anticipation; you know you have only one chance to make an offer.

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*If you offer the Ceanntighern great wealth,  
turn to page 144.*

*If you offer him carrots from your farm,  
turn to page 143.*

*If you challenge him to a fight,  
turn to page 151.*

*If you challenge him to a game of riddles,  
turn to page 154.*

*If you offer to make him invulnerable to harm,  
go on to page 138.*



You bite your lip, doing your best to look distraught. “Well . . . I suppose there’s not much a poor, miserable pony like me can offer to a great and powerful ruler such as yourself. It’s clear you provide well for yourself, being as wise and clever as you are.”

“Flattery will get you nowhere,” the fat boggie croaks, but then he waves his hand indulgently. “But it’s true, my wisdom and insight are beyond compare.”

“Well then,” you shrug, “I’m sure you’ve got no need for carrots from my garden . . . or bits from my pocket . . . or my magical spell that makes me completely invulnerable to harm . . . or my—”

“Wait, wait! What was that last one?”

You smile shyly. “Oh, merely an enchantment which I’ve learned which makes one’s body proof against all poisons and wounds. No matter how hard I am struck, no blood will spill forth. I assumed you, with all your knowledge, must already have such a spell.”

The *Ceanntighern* looks at you suspiciously. “You mean to tell me that you ponies have discovered such a power?”

“Oh, not at all! Why, I’m the only pony who knows this spell, I believe. You don’t know much about ponies, I suppose?” You mentally cross your hooves; your plan won’t work if he knows anything about pony physiology.

The *Ceanntighern* scoffs. "I know more than any boggie about ponies, but perhaps there are still some . . . minor details . . . in which you could instruct us. It has been generations since the last raid into pony lands, after all. You say you're proof against any weapon or poison?"

"I'll prove it, if you like. Have one of your guards stab me with your sleeping spears, say . . ." You make a show of looking over the guards, before pointing to Hinterheart. ". . . that one. Here," you hold out your hoof to him, "strike me on the very bottom of my leg." Hinterheart looks at you suspiciously, but thrusts his spear into the bottom of your leg. As you'd hoped, he caught the importance of striking low; his spear bites into your hoof well below the flesh.

You hold your impaled hoof aloft and remove the spear with a dramatic flourish. "No blood, and no sleep. I trust you are satisfied?"

The *Ceanntighern* gapes at you. Then he announces in a voice that quivers ever so slightly, "I order you to bestow this power upon me immediately. Do this, and I shall . . . I shall deign to release the foal."

You smile brightly at him. “Of course, sire. Allow me.” You wave your hoofs in the air and start chanting nonsense words. After a few minutes, you lower yourself to the ground, doing your best to look exhausted. “It is done. No weapon can harm you now.”

The *Ceanntighern* frowns. “Is that it? Funny, I don’t feel any different . . .”

“Ah, but sire!” offers Hinterheart. “You glow with an unearthly aura! Your skin glistens like diamonds! You practically radiate invulnerability!”

The fat boggie looks down at himself with a grin. “Why yes, I suppose I do . . .”

“Here sire,” Hinterheart offers, taking another spear from one of the guards. “Hold out your hand and let me prove to all your incomparable resilience. When you are unharmed by the prick of this spear, your position will never be in doubt again!”

The *Ceanntighern* hesitates, but puts forth his hand. “Well . . . yes, I suppose that’s best . . .”

Hinterheart pricks his hand, and at once the *Ceanntighern* collapses off his throne, already deep in slumber as he hits the ground.

Before any of the other guards can respond, Hinterheart snatches up the crown and scepter from the fallen boggie. Motioning for you to keep your mouth shut, he loudly proclaims, "Well done, pony! You followed my instructions to the letter, and by my hand the old *Ceanntighern* has been made a fool. I hereby claim the mantle of ruler for myself, and let any who think themselves clever enough to oppose me try if they dare!" He looks around expectantly.

At once, the guards who had previously surrounded you begin to chant his name. Soon, the other boggies are doing so as well, though whether they're glad to be rid of the old ruler or simply fearful of the consequences of insufficient lauding of the new one you're unsure. At length, Hinterheart takes a seat in the ugly purple throne, from which he addresses you. "Pony, you have served adequately. Therefore, I will permit you to leave. This is a great honor, be humbled." You're about to protest that he said he'd free Apple Bloom, but he continues, "On another note, I hereby decree that all useless baggage be disposed of before we break camp. I've no desire to haul valueless junk all the way home. Let us start by disposing of the foal; she is stupid and weak, and I have no doubt she'd make a poor slave." He gives you a subtle wink. "Pony, as a final act of fealty to me before you are freed, I order you to take with you the foal, so that I need not bother disposing of her myself."

You rush over to Apple Bloom, nuzzling her as you begin setting her free. “Don’t worry,” you reassure her. “We’re going home now. Everything’s going to be okay.”



“Well, I’ll tell you what,” you say, trying to think of something you could offer in exchange for Apple Bloom. “I’m not a rich pony, but I’ve got a nice big farm full of carrots of every shape and size. If you’ll let Apple Bloom go free, I’ll give you anything from my field. As much as you can take with you, it’s all yours.” You smile and put a hoof out toward the boggie leader. “Sound like a deal?”

The *Ceanntighern* looks at you with contempt, then spits on your hoof. “Pah! Stupid pony! We have no need of your *permission* to take your carrots; we’ll take all we want and give you nothing in return. Nothing!” Before you can react, you feel several sharp jabs in your flank. As sleep quickly overtakes you, you pray to Celestia that the other ponies will do a better job rescuing Apple Bloom than you did.

**The End**

“So . . . what do you want? Wealth?” You scratch your head. “I don’t have a lot of money, but I suspect I could come up with something.”

The *Ceanntighern* rolls his eyes dramatically. “More treasure to add to my limitless hoards? Very well, I suppose that will do. I will release the foal if you bring me . . . say . . . three times her weight in gold. By sundown.”

You gasp incredulously. “You can’t be serious!”

The fat boggie laughs. “You had best hurry, the day is already passing!”

“Alright, alright. I’ll go see what I can do. Just sit tight, I’ll be back soon.”

The *Ceanntighern* waves his hand imperiously. “Very well, you may go. Bring the treasure to these caves, and the trade shall be made. Don’t bother trying any tricks once you’re free; if you seek to cheat us or to bring force against us, be assured that you will never see your precious foal again!”

You trot back towards the cavern entrance, mind already racing. Where will you be able to come up with so much gold in so little time?

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*If you already went to Carousel Boutique to find Rarity, go on to the next page.*

*If you didn’t, turn to page 147.*

You quickly gather together all the ponies out searching the woods. Applejack's group is waiting practically right outside the cave, and with Rainbow Dash's incredible aerial speed it takes little time to track down everypony. You all meet back at Twilight's library.

“. . . So now we have to come up with three times Apple Bloom's weight in gold by sundown.” you finish. Looking out the window, you add, “We have only a few hours left. Unless you've all been hoarding bits, I think we're gonna have a problem.”

“Maybe not,” Rarity interjects. “You said they wanted wealth. Do you suppose the treasure *has* to be gold?”



It's nearly sundown by the time you, Rarity, and Applejack make it back to the boggie cave. Applejack hauls behind her a large cart, with a blanket draped over the top to conceal its contents. As you approach the cave, the *Ceanntighern* trundles out, flanked by guards.

"Well well well," he drawls. "It looks like you were able to find the gold after all. I thought a deadline might encourage you to be resourceful."

You hang your head and tell him, "Sadly, we failed. We tried and tried, but we just couldn't come up with enough gold in time." With a flourish, Rarity pulls the blanket off the cart, revealing a massive mound of gemstones, shining with every color in the rainbow. "All we have is this cartload of rubies and topaz and emeralds, which I'm sure doesn't interest you in the least . . ."

The boggie tries to keep his poker face, but the greed in his eyes is evident. "Weeellll . . . perhaps as a token of my great generosity and benevolence, I could be persuaded to release the foal in exchange for the cart and its contents."

You smile at Rarity. "I think that's very generous of you." Although the boggie puffs out his chest and nods when you speak, you and Rarity both know who your words are really aimed at.

You quickly gather together all the ponies out searching the woods. Applejack's group is waiting practically right outside the cave, and with Rainbow Dash's incredible aerial speed it takes little time to track down everypony. You all meet back at Twilight's library.

“. . . So now we have to come up with three times Apple Bloom's weight in gold by sundown,” you finish. Looking out the window, you add, “We have only a few hours left. Unless you've all been hoarding bits, I think we're gonna have a problem.”

As the group goes around figuring out what little wealth they have, it becomes painfully clear that all your bits, jewelry, and tooth fillings combined wouldn't be a fraction of the wealth you need. “Well, shoot!” exclaims Applejack. “We don't need to bribe these boggies to give back my Apple Bloom. We know where they're camped; I say we bust in and rescue her, and any of those hairless monkeys that gets in our way can suffer the consequences!”

Without any obvious alternative, the rest of you agree to help. Soon the lot of you are running towards the boggie's cave, ready for a fight.

When you reach the cave, you motion the others back. “Let me go in first. They're expecting me, in any case.” The others nod, and you lead the procession of ponies down into the cavern.

Inside it is conspicuously empty. You reach the main chamber, where the fire has burned down to embers. Twilight tosses a few nearby logs on as the rest of you look around with apprehension and confusion. Once she's built up the blaze, its light reveals a message scrawled on the wall with charcoal. It reads:

*Stupid ponies; you think we didn't  
know you'd try to trick us?  
Now you'll never see your foal again!*

You all gape in stunned silence. It looks like you came too late.

“What? That’s it?” cries Applejack. “Where’d they go? What’d they do with my sister?”

Twilight examines the markings and shakes her head ruefully. “They must have returned to their home in the Dragonspine Mountains. I read that they’ll often cut short a raid once their lair is discovered.”

“Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s go!” Applejack looks like she’s ready to run all the way to the distant mountains tonight.

“Whoa whoa whoa!” yells Rainbow Dash, grabbing AJ by the tail before she can sprint off. “First of all, charging off half-cocked like that is my job. Second, those mountains are days away by hoof! We’re gonna need some supplies.”

Twilight nods. “Rainbow Dash is right, Applejack. It won’t do Apple Bloom any good if we go running after her without a plan. We should spend tonight getting some rest and packing for the trip. And then we can set off tomorrow morning.”

“Alright,” you say. “I’ll start working on provisions. I’ve got some dried carrot strips that ought to be lightweight but full of energy, and I—”

“Carrot Top,” interjects Applejack, “I think it’s best if you stay here in Ponyville for this one.”

“What?” you sputter. “But why?”

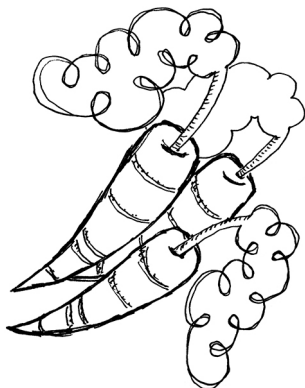
“Well, there ain’t no way I’m not going on this here trip. It’s my sister we’re rescuing, after all, and I wouldn’t leave that job to anypony else. And I’m sure Big Mac feels the same way as I do.”

“Eee-yup,” Big Mac confirms.

“Well, if we both go running off, that only leaves Granny Smith to work the farm. She’s too proud to ask for help, but there just ain’t much she can do, what with her hip and all. We need you here at home to look after your farm *and* ours.” Applejack smiles. “I know it ain’t the most glamorous work, but somepony’s got to watch after the crops, or else it’ll be a long, hard winter.”

Slowly, you nod. You’d hoped that there was more you could do, but tending the farm is important work. Still, you’re sorry you won’t be able to do more to help than stay home and look after the fields. For your part in the story of Apple Bloom’s rescue, this is . . .

### The End



“Alright then, mister boggie-king. If you’re so tough, I challenge you to a fight. If I win, Apple Bloom goes free. If I lose, then you can take me and her both.” The boggie is tiny, and in any case he’s so fat that he looks like he can barely move. Surely he won’t be able to put up much of a fight?

The boggie king leans forward in his throne. “So let me get this straight. You are challenging me to combat, and the foal is my wager?”

“That’s right.”

“Very well. My conditions are that the combat be observed by all the boggies, and that each of us be allowed to use one weapon.”

You nod. “Let’s get this over with.”

Soon, a large space has been cleared in the middle of the chamber. Standing all around you and the *Ceanntighern* are perhaps thirty or so boggies, all eager to see the outcome of this fight. The *Ceanntighern*, for his part, stands opposite you with one of the spears his people seem to favor clutched in one hand. He hasn’t even bothered to remove his crown or put down his scepter.

*All right Carrot Top, you can do this, you think to yourself. As long as you don’t let him hit you with that spear of his, there’s no way he can win.*

The *Ceanntighern* calls out to you, “Are you ready for the trial by combat to begin?”

You nod.

“Then let the fight . . . commence!”

Immediately, you feel a sharp pain in your flank. Looking back, you see that one of the boggies in the crowd has stabbed you with a spear. As you feel your legs start to wobble under you, you gasp out, “You . . . you cheated!”

The *Ceanntighern* gasps in mock indignation. “I? *Cheated*? Why, I never! We agreed that the duelists would be allowed to use one weapon each!” He tosses aside his spear, “And you can clearly see that I only used one weapon on you! If you didn’t think to specify that the weapon couldn’t be wielded by another, that’s your problem.”

Before you can retort, unconsciousness overtakes you. The last thing you hear is the cheers of the boggies, congratulating their ruler on yet another impressive victory.

**The End**

You swallow the many uncouth words that come to mind at this latest betrayal. Your only concern is to rescue Apple Bloom, and even with Twilight's magic, picking a fight with thirty armed boggies seems like a good way to sabotage that goal. "Alright," you growl. "What do we have to do to get Apple Bloom back?"

The newly minted *Ceanntighern* shrugs his shoulders. "What else? Bring us gold. Lots and lots of gold. Let's say . . . three times the foal's weight."

Twilight gasps. "And where exactly are we supposed to come up with that? There's probably not that much gold in the entire town of Ponyville."

"Hey, that's not my problem!" snaps the boggie. "Bring the gold here by sundown, or we're taking the foal home with us. And don't bother trying any funny business; we'll know." He makes a shooing gesture. "Now get out of here, and don't come back without the treasure."

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*If you already went to Carousel Boutique  
to find Rarity, turn to page 145.*

*If you didn't, turn to page 147.*



“How about this,” you offer. “I hear that you boggies pick the wisest and most knowledgeable to be your leaders.”

“That is true,” interjects the *Ceanntighern*, puffing out his chest.

“Well then, I challenge you to a riddle game. I’ll pit my wits against yours any day.”

The fat boggie ponders that for a moment. “This shall be the deal: if you can answer my three riddles and I cannot answer your one, then I will concede to the superiority of your wit. But if you should fail on either count, then I shall claim you and the foal both as slaves, to be taken to our home under the mountain. There, you shall never see the light of day again!”

You swallow. “Well, let’s do this. Ask your riddles, then.”

The *Ceanntighern* leers. “Very well:

*“What hath meat, yet hath no bone,  
Upon whose heart the sun’s ne’re shone?”*

“Nuts!” you reply at once. The boggie must think you’re stupid—that’s one of the oldest riddles in the book!

“Very good,” drawls the boggie, giving you a slow clap. “But the next one will not be so easy:

*“What sits beside your bed at night,  
gaping for your bones?  
What gets on at first morning’s light,  
and clatters over stones?”*

You struggle with that one a bit. The last line sounds a little like an old riddle you know, but the answer to that is ‘horseshoes.’ But what could that bit about gaping for bones mean?

Then you notice the *Ceanntighern* impatiently tapping his foot, and you realize boggie shoes go over their entire feet, skin, bones, and all. “Shoes!” you cry, triumphantly.

The fat boggie grimaces. “Alright, alright. I’ve got one riddle left in me:

*“What’s round as a dishpan, deep as a cup,  
And yet all the oceans could not fill it up?”*

Now you panic. This riddle you’ve never heard before! You wrack your brain for an answer, but come up with nothing. How could so small an object possibly hold so much water?

Then a voice nearby shouts, “The answer is a sieve!” Looking down, you see Hinterheart standing beside you.

Quickly, you chirp, “Yes! Yes, my answer is ‘a sieve.’”

“Hinterheart! What is the meaning of this?” cries the *Ceanntighern*. “Just what are you up to?”

“This was all my doing, you old fat fool! I’ve convinced you to grant this pony an audience, accept your riddle game, and now she’s going to give you a riddle you can never hope to answer, all by my guidance! You are no longer fit to bear the mantle of *Ceanntighern*, and I mean to show the clan the truth of my words!”

“Very well,” glowers the *Ceanntighern*, “Ask your riddle, then. But when I answer it—and I will!—you will both find yourselves very, *very* sorry to have tried me so.”

Hinterheart turns to you and whispers, “He really is one of the best with riddles. I hope you’ve got something good—I’ve never managed to best him.”

You smile. There's a reason you chose to challenge the *Ceanntighern* to a game of riddles: your grandmother was a great fan of the riddle game, and she taught you the ultimate riddle, to which there can be no answer:

*"What isn't the answer to this riddle?"*

The *Ceanntighern* boggles at the twisted logic of that question. He opens and closes his mouth several times, but nothing comes out. Finally, he squeaks, "That . . . that wasn't in verse! It doesn't count!"

"Pah!" cries Hinterheart. "If you wanted your riddles to rhyme, you should have said so. Don't blame others for your weak and feeble wit!" Then turning to the other boggies gathered around you, he announces, "Boggies, hear me! By my hand the old *Ceanntighern* has been made a fool. I hereby claim the mantle of ruler for myself, and let any who think themselves clever enough to oppose me try if they dare!" He looks around expectantly.

At once, the guards who had previously surrounded you begin to chant his name. Soon, the other boggies are doing so as well, though whether they're glad to be rid of the old ruler or simply fearful of the consequences of insufficient lauding of new one you're unsure. A swarm of them seize the old *Ceanntighern* and rip from him his ornaments of office, presenting them to Hinterheart with great reverence. The old *Ceanntighern*, for his part, reluctantly slinks away into the shadows.

At length, Hinterheart takes a seat in the ugly purple throne, from which he addresses you. “Pony, you have served adequately. Therefore, I will permit you to leave. This is a great honor, be humbled.” You’re about to protest that he said he’d free Apple Bloom, but he continues, “On another note, I hereby decree that all useless baggage be disposed of before we break camp. I’ve no desire to haul valueless junk all the way home. Let us start by disposing of the foal; she is stupid and weak, and I have no doubt she’d make a poor slave.” He gives you a subtle wink. “Pony, as a final act of fealty to me before you are freed, I order you to take with you the foal, so that I need not bother disposing of her myself.”

You rush over to Apple Bloom, nuzzling her as you begin setting her free. “Don’t worry,” you reassure her. “We’re going home now. Everything’s going to be okay.”

That night, all of you who helped find Apple Bloom dine together at Applejack's house. Applejack insisted she be allowed to treat you all to dinner, as a thank-you for your efforts. Once the group of you have stuffed yourselves full of all things apple-related, Applejack sits back and sighs contentedly.

"Carrot Top," she says, "I want to thank you especially for all yer help. You're the one who talked to the boggies, after all. It's thanks to you that Apple Bloom's safe and sound."

"Oh, you should really thank Rarity," you modestly demur. "If she hadn't been generous enough to give up all those gems, who knows what we would have done?"

"Well, I still had a cart-full or so left over from that lamentable incident with the diamond dogs. We should really be thanking Twilight here. She was the first one to realize that boggies were the source of our problems; without her, we would never have had the first clue where to look!"

"Girls, girls!" laughs Twilight. "We all did our part. Everyone at this table helped in some way."

Apple Bloom exclaims, "That's right! You all helped get me out of there, and I'm real grateful!"

Everyone at the table nods at that, yourself included. Then you settle back in your chair, enjoying the twin sensations of a full belly and a warm heart.

**The End**

The *Ceanntighern* looks you over from head to hoof. “Humph. I’d have thought the ponies would send one less . . . uncouth.” He gestures to the armed boggies standing all around you. “Before we begin, let me make clear that at the first hint of insolence, my guards will stab you with their spears. These spears are treated with a very special chemical; once you are pricked, you’ll fall asleep in a trice. Despite your size, do not think for one moment that you have the slightest chance of escape, save by my will alone.”

You nod. For Apple Bloom’s sake, you’ll need to play by the boggie’s rules.

“Now then, tell me what you’re prepared to offer me in exchange for your foal. I will deign to hear you, but speak quickly.” The guards around you grip their spears in anticipation; you know you have only one chance to make an offer.

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*If you offer the Ceanntighern great wealth,  
turn to page 144.*

*If you offer him carrots from your farm,  
turn to page 143.*

*If you challenge him to a fight,  
turn to page 151.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

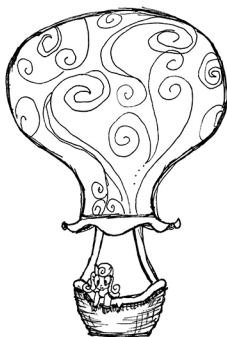
A musician by training but a word person at heart, *CHRIS* lives in the upper midwest of the United States. He found *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* right before it really exploded in popularity, and ended up reading all the fan fiction he could get his hands on before beginning to write his own.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

*RELUCTANT BRONY* is a patient, generous soul whose son appreciates her very much.



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You're selling your carrots like you do every day in the market. Strangely, your friend Applejack hasn't set up shop today. Suddenly the unicorn Twilight Sparkle appears and asks you to come with her right away—something is wrong!

*How do you react? If you follow the excitable librarian to help, turn to page 4. If you go home to your farm instead, turn to page 12.*

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Be careful! One choice might put you in danger, but another might mean Apple Bloom is lost forever! What happens all depends on the choices *you* make. And the best part is that you can keep reading and rereading until you've had *many* fantastic adventures!

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