

Cutiecorns

Game Day

by Shannon Penney

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A decorative frame with a light gray, glossy appearance. It features a central heart at the top and another heart at the bottom, with elegant, swirling flourishes on either side.

Chapter 1

“Ohhh, it smells furbulous in here!” Flash cried. She pretended to melt into a puddle on the floor of the Pawfect Slice pizza parlor.

Her Beagle friend, Twinkle, rolled her eyes. “What a surprise, Flash is hungry,” she joked.

Flash leaped to her paws and raced to the counter. Her tongue lolled out of her mouth as she peered at all the different pizza slices.

“What’ll it be today, pups?” Bruno, the Bulldog owner of the Pawfect Slice, grinned at Flash and her friends. They visited regularly, and Bruno was always doggone happy to see them.

Flash scratched her head. “Can I have one of everything?”

Bruno chuckled. “You’ve always been a little pup with a huge appetite, but that might be too much even for you!”

Flash, Twinkle, Glitter, and Sparkle all ordered and paid for their slices—just one for each of them!—then plopped down in a nearby booth.

“Holy bones, I’m so excited for tomorrow!” Glitter, a white Maltese, said, waving a paw over her slice to cool it off.

“My big brother, Dash, says that Spirit



Week is one of the biggest weeks of the year at Cuticorn Academy,” Flash said around a mouthful of pizza. “It’s going to be grrreat!”

Flash and her friends were first-year students at Cuticorn Academy. They weren’t just regular pups—they were Cuticorns! All the pups on Puppypaw Island had colorful

horns between their ears that gave them special magical powers. The first-year pups were just learning to use their magic. Since they were new to Cutiecorn Academy, they were learning all the school's traditions for the first time, too!

Sparkle the Golden Retriever grinned, and her golden horn shimmered in the lights of the pizza parlor. "What do you think Spirit Week will be like?"

"I've heard there's a special theme for each day," Twinkle said. "I hope we don't have to dress up."

"Ooh, but dressing up would be pup-tastic!" Glitter said, clapping her paws.

Flash couldn't help bouncing in her seat. She felt tingly all over with excitement.

“I think there are different games and activities, too,” Twinkle added. “They’re designed to help us test our magic skills.”

“Like Magic Tug-of-War?” Flash asked. They played that sometimes in class, and her strong shifting magic made her especially good at it!

“Sure,” Sparkle said. “And probably some games we’ve never played before, too!”

Flash’s mind was racing even faster than usual. She loved a good competition! Even though she was a first-year, she was confident in her magic and couldn’t wait to put her skills to the test.

“How are we going to wait until tomorrowww?” Flash groaned, fanning herself with her empty paper plate. “It’s so far away!”

Glitter laughed and put a paw on Flash's shoulder. "I think you'll survive." She looked thoughtful for a minute. "I'm excited, too, but a little nervous. There are going to be a lot of surprises this week!"

Flash loved surprises, but she hadn't thought about how they might make some of her friends feel worried or uncertain. Glitter was always so good at helping her to see other points of view!

"Plus, we're the youngest pups at school," Twinkle added. "Everyone else has had a lot more time to practice using their magic."

Flash felt a bolt of uncertainty rush through her. Maybe her friends were right! Should she be feeling nervous about the coming week? She

shook her snout to clear her head. No, she loved things like this! Surprises and pressure brought out the best in Flash. She understood why her friends might feel differently, but she still couldn't wait for every second of Spirit Week!

Flash leaped to her paws. "You three have some of the most furbulous magic of any pups I know!" She grinned at her friends. "No matter what, we're going to take this Spirit Week by storm . . . and have fun doing it!"

Sparkle stood up and saluted. "Aye-aye, Captain Flash!" she said with a wink. "Now, who wants to go play some beach volleyball to make the afternoon go by faster?"

Everyone headed for the door, but Flash stopped suddenly in her tracks.



“What’s wrong?” Twinkle asked, turning to look back at her friend.

Flash grinned. “Oh, nothing. I think I just need another slice of pizza for the road!”