

THE RETURN OF HARMONY—PART ONE

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to an overhead view of Cheerilee leading several colts and fillies—the Cutie Mark Crusaders, Snips, Snails, Diamond Tiara, Silver Spoon, Twist—across a well-manicured lawn.)

Cheerilee: I want to start our field trip here, in the world-famous Canterlot Sculpture Garden.

(As she speaks, the camera zooms out to frame the entire area, seen during the day. The lawn is decorated with a plethora of large white statues that depict ponies in various poses, and they are walking around the perimeter of an expansive hedge maze. Close-up of Cheerilee, Diamond, and Silver; the two fillies follow their teacher's glance toward the camera as they pass.)

Cheerilee: That one over there represents friendship.

(Cut to the statue she has indicated: three leaping, laughing fillies, one balanced atop the other. Apple Bloom, the Crusader walking point, stops short so that Scootaloo rams into her and gets rear-ended by Sweetie Belle in turn. The impacts knock them all silly for a moment, after which they trade a round of dirty looks.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* All right, my little ponies!

(Cut to her and the two spoiled brats, with the Crusaders catching up. On the next line, zoom out to frame another statue: a caped mare standing on her hind legs, holding a flag with three diamonds as stars fly around her hooves. The flag is an actual cloth, not a piece of sculpture.)

Cheerilee: This one represents victory.

Scootaloo: How cool would it be to have *that* for a cutie mark? *(Close-up of the Crusaders.)*

Bloom: Cool...if you were actually victory-ful at somethin'.

Sweetie: That's not a word!

Scootaloo: What are you, a dictionary?

Cheerilee: *(from o.s., sharply)* Girls!

(Overhead view of her and the rest of the class; the Crusaders hurry over to rejoin them. They

have stopped by a decidedly weird-looking statue: a long, serpent-like, winged quadruped, none of whose body parts match each other, standing on its hind legs. To wit: one forelimb ends in a feline paw, the other in a set of talons; one hind leg is that of a deer, the other of a reptilian creature. One feathered and one webbed wing sprout from the back. Its tail is long enough to wrap around the pedestal and nearly touch the ground, and it is laughing wildly.)

Cheerilee: Now *this* is a really interesting statue. (*Close-up.*) What do you notice about it?

(Zoom in on the hodgepodge, showing that even the head is a weird amalgamation: shaped more like a donkey or mule than a pony, with a long neck, bushy eyebrows, one antler each from a goat and deer, a snaggle tooth in the wide-open laughing mouth, and a goat's beard protruding from its chin.)

Bloom: (*from o.s.*) It's got an eagle claw! (*Back to the class.*)

Scootaloo: And a lion paw!

Sweetie: And a snake tail!

Cheerilee: This creature is called a draconequus. (*Tilt slowly up its height, putting her o.s.*) He has the head of a pony and a body made up of all sorts of things. (*Back to the group.*) What do you suppose that represents? (*Bloom pops up.*)

Bloom: Confusion! (*Sweetie shoves her away.*)

Sweetie: Evil! (*Scootaloo shoves her off.*)

Scootaloo: Chaos!

Sweetie: It's not chaos, you dodo!

Scootaloo: Don't call me things I don't know the meaning of!

(Cut to a slow zoom in on the head during the previous line.)

Scootaloo: (*from o.s.*) And it is too chaos! (*Back to them.*)

Sweetie: Is not! (*Bloom jumps on their heads.*)

Bloom: You're both wrong!

(The three-pony pyramid collapses into a brawl that leaves Cheerilee shaking her head. Tilt up from them to frame the draconequus' belly; a spot on it begins to pulse faintly, as if a heart were beating under the stone surface. At ground level, Cheerilee steps up to the beatdown.)

Cheerilee: Actually, in a way you're all right. (*Fight ends.*) This statue represents discord, which means "a lack of harmony between ponies." In fact, you three have demonstrated discord so well— (*Cut to them; she continues o.s.*) —that you're each going to write me an essay explaining it.

(Three faces fall as the rest of the class laughs at them.)

Cheerilee: (*leading them away*) Now let's go. And I don't want any more fighting. (*Next three lines are whispered among the Crusaders.*)

Bloom: It's confusion!

Sweetie: Evil!

Scotaloo: Chaos!

(During this exchange, the camera tilts up to follow a jagged crack that appears on one leg and works its way to the top of the neck. The “heart” keeps beating and a low, malicious chuckle is heard before the view fades to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to an overhead view of the Ponyville town square. Rainbow Dash flies into view and goes into a steep ascent, but something streaks across the screen and brushes past her. Its passage sets her spinning in place and leaves her badly disoriented for a second; she gets her head clear and her dander up at the same time.)

Rainbow: Come back here, you!

(She zooms off after the annoyance, which can now be seen as a small pink cloud, and nails it with a flying tackle.)

Rainbow: Gotcha!

(Once she gets it and herself stopped, she finds that it is made of a very sticky, tenacious material.)

Rainbow: Ewwww! *(shaking most of it off)* What is this?

(She licks at a wad of residue and is surprised to discover that it is...)

Rainbow: Cotton candy?

(Many more such clouds zoom past her at unusually high speeds; one stops directly above her head and grows slightly. Its rumble of thunder is accompanied by the emergence of a very brown raindrop that lands squarely on Rainbow’s head.)

Rainbow: Wait a second! It’s not supposed to rain until tomorrow! You can’t just—

(Her protest gets her nowhere, as the cloud cuts loose with a brown shower.)

Rainbow: You did.

(Wipe to a cornfield ready to harvest and pan to frame Applejack, picking the ears with her teeth

and tossing them into the cart she is pulling. The field lies outside the Sweet Apple Acres barn. One of the maverick clouds sails high overhead.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.) Hey! (flying after it) I didn't tell you to go anywhere! (More clouds move in with their weird rain.)*

Applejack: *(as Rainbow descends, now clean) Rainbow Dash, what's goin' on with this rain... I mean, chocolate milk... I mean, chocolate-milk rain?!? (Rainbow hovers near her.)*

Rainbow: There's crazy weather all over Equestria! Cloudsdale's getting soaked by a major cola storm right now. *(The corn starts to pop.)* But don't worry. I'm not leaving you 'til I get control of Ponyville.

(She peels out as one ear machine-guns its contents straight into the farm pony's face, knocking her back into the growing fluffy mounds. Pan to another section of the fields, where Pinkie Pie is blissfully diving among the popcorn.)

Pinkie: Why would you want to stop *this*?

(Out comes her tongue to lick the raindrops off her face. Now Rarity arrives on the scene and clears her throat as Applejack surfaces. The elegant unicorn has donned a violet raincoat and hat, as well as a saddle with an ornate blue umbrella attached to keep the storm off her.)

Rarity: I heard about your troubles, Applejack, and I came to see if there's anything I can do—without getting wet. *(Close-up of Applejack; she continues o.s.)* Or dirty. *(Back to her.)* Or out from under my umbrella.

(A sound from o.s. draws both ponies' surprised attention. Pan/tilt up to the source: the apples on a nearby tree suddenly grow to several times normal size. The weight of the gargantuan fruit causes this and other affected trees to bend over until their leaves nearly scrape the ground. One squirrel after another pops up from the leaves for an easy snack.)

Applejack: *(from o.s.)* Fluttershy, do somethin'!

(Quick pan to the animal expert on this line; she is watching her rabbit Angel chomp into one of the apples.)

Fluttershy: Now, Angel, you really shouldn't—

(In a trice, the four short white legs have sprouted hooves, become very skinny and horse-like, and grown to perhaps three times the length of hers. Close-up of her.)

Fluttershy: No! It's not possible!

(Zoom out; other bunnies stride past on their own ridiculously long shanks.)

Fluttershy: I must be seeing things!

(Twilight Sparkle and Spike walk up, the former levitating a book so she can read from it.)

Twilight: Don't worry, everyone! *(She closes the book and tosses it away.)* I've learned a new spell that'll fix everything!

(It takes her only a moment to conjure up a beam from her horn and let fly, the sky dimming briefly from its brilliance. The popping corn ears, the monster apples, the flipped-out clouds—all take the full blast, and she tops it off with a radiating blue/purple shock wave and a flash of white light that washes out the screen. As it fades away, the caster looks up, puzzled, and a long shot reveals why—her spell has had no effect whatsoever.)

Twilight: My failsafe spell...failed! What do we do?

Spike: Uh, give up? *(Zoom out slightly; Rarity crosses to them.)*

Rarity: *(reprovingly)* Spike, Twilight will come up with something.

(During this line, she levitates the umbrella saddle off her own back and the camera cuts to Twilight as it settles on hers.)

Twilight: Hmm...time for Plan B. *(addressing herself o.s.)* Rainbow! Can you corral all those clouds in one corner of the sky?

(Cut to the airborne pegasus on the end of this; several of the funky rabbits are nibbling at a cotton-candy cloud in which she is mired. After a quick shake to free herself and scare them off, she salutes and gets her wings in gear. Cloud after cloud is swiftly rounded up to the surprise of Pinkie, who enjoys wallowing in the chocolate precipitation until it moves away from her.)

Twilight: Applejack! I need you to bring those high-strung storm clouds down to earth!

(Back into the sky during this line; Rainbow is cutting tight circles around the mass of clouds to force them all together. Down below, Applejack twirls her lasso in her teeth and lets fly; Rainbow peels out to stay clear of the loop as it drops around the giant pink clump. Pinkie has shifted position to stay in the rain and fill her mouth, but she is soon left high and dry again.)

Pinkie: Hey! What happened?

(The single weird thunderhead is dragged toward ground level. Now Twilight whispers to Fluttershy, whose face brightens as she grasps the plan; the yellow flyer addresses herself o.s. in a loud, slightly stilted voice. Twilight has disposed of the umbrella.)

Fluttershy: Oh, dear! I hope that none of the animals see these delicious chocolate-filled cotton-candy clouds!

(During this line, the camera cuts to the trees and the critters whose ears perk up at these words. The next shot is of Applejack, who finishes tying the free end of her rope to a fence post to hold

the clouds in place.)

Fluttershy: *(from o.s.)* I'd hate to have to share them!

(Pan to the other side of the mass; here Pinkie is stuffing her face. She has otherwise cleaned up from her wallow in the puddles.)

Pinkie: Ah! You and me both, sister!

(She is instantly beset by a rush of animals that take her place at the all-you-can-eat candy/weather buffet. The speed of their charge knocks her backward.)

Pinkie: Hey!

(Her protest does nothing to dissuade the gorging critters. Cut to an overhead shot of the cloud and pan to the other four ground troops—Twilight, Applejack, Rarity, Spike.)

Applejack: *(as Fluttershy, Rainbow land)* And when y'all are done that [sic], feel free to have some popcorn for dee-ssert! *(Close-up of Twilight.)*

Twilight: You see, Spike? You should never give up. *(Pan to him as she continues.)* There's nothing we can't overcome if we all work together.

(He sucks in a huge, cheek-bulging breath and lets it out in a green fiery blast that solidifies into a scroll. Zoom out from the group as Twilight levitates and opens it to read, then zoom in quickly to a close-up of her. She sucks in a sharp gasp, her eyes briefly popping in surprise, and addresses the group.)

Twilight: Come on, girls! Princess Celestia wants to see us all in Canterlot immediately!

(Cut to Applejack and Fluttershy on the end of this; they trade a properly worried look at this bit of news. Dissolve to a long shot of the capital city on its mountainside, zooming in over the windswept peaks, then dissolve to a closer view of one balcony of Princess Celestia's palace. The zoom continues as the winged unicorn paces behind a row of stained-glass windows that give onto this balcony. In close-up, she stops at the sound of a door being thrown open.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Princess Celestia!

(Cut to the six ponies at the entrance; all gallop in except for Rainbow, who flies. Rarity no longer wears her raincoat and hat.)

Twilight: We came as fast as we could!

(A different camera angle reveals that they are in the palace's entrance hall; Celestia stands at the main landing of its staircase. As they stop at its foot, Celestia speaks with a slightly fearful urgency that stands in sharp contrast to her usual gentle tone.)

Celestia: Thank you, Twilight. Thank you all.

Twilight: Is this about the weather, and the animals' weird behavior? What's happening out there? (*Cut to Celestia; she continues o.s.*) Why isn't my magic working? Is there— (*A gold-shod hoof is raised; she falls silent.*)

Celestia: Follow me.

(*Dissolve to an overhead shot of the seven, now proceeding down a corridor with stained-glass windows on both walls.*)

Celestia: I've called you here for a matter of great importance.

(*Floor-level close-up of a window's image projected onto the tiles by sunlight: a creature that resembles the draconequus statue seen in the prologue. The ponies pass by this.*)

Celestia: (*from o.s.*) It seems an old foe of mine, someone I thought I had defeated long ago, has returned.

(*On the end of this, Fluttershy stops for a better look at the thing, then angles her head up toward the window itself.*)

Celestia: (*from o.s.*) His name... (*Cut to the window and zoom in.*) ...is Discord.

(*Fluttershy yelps in fear and darts ahead to rejoin the others. Head-on view of them; she peeks out.*)

Celestia: (*stepping into view before them*) Discord is the mischievous [*sic*] spirit of disharmony. Before my sister and I stood up to him, he ruled Equestria in an eternal state of unrest and unhappiness.

(*Cut to the upper section of one window, which portrays the creature manipulating an earth pony, pegasus, and unicorn on the ends of strings attached to marionette control crossbars. Tilt down/zoom in to frame the rest of the glass as she speaks; pink flames burn below the ponies, and faint screams are heard under her next line.*)

Celestia: (*from o.s.*) Luna and I saw how miserable life was for earth ponies, pegasi, and unicorns alike. (*Long shot of the group.*) So after discovering the Elements of Harmony...

(*Cut to another window and zoom in; Discord, caught between the two circling princesses, has been petrified.*)

Celestia: (*from o.s.*) ...we combined our powers and rose up against him, turning him to stone. (*Rainbow pops up into view.*)

Rainbow: All right, Princess! (*The group continues on.*)

Celestia: I thought the spell we cast would keep him contained forever. (*Close-up.*) But since

Luna and I are no longer connected to the Elements... *(Pan to Twilight and Applejack as she continues.)* ...the spell has been broken. *(They stop; she walks on.)*

Twilight: No longer connected?

(Cut to a long shot of a balcony at the end of the hall, decorated with a multitude of varicolored tapestries, and tilt down toward ground level.)

Celestia: *(from o.s.)* This is Canterlot Tower...

(The seven come into view, standing before a pair of closed double doors in a gold frame topped with a carving of a winged unicorn. A column and a unicorn sculpture stand to either side.)

Celestia: ...where the Elements are kept inside since all of you recovered them. *(Close-up.)* I need you to wield the Elements of Harmony once again and stop Discord— *(Cut to the six; she continues o.s.)* —before he thrusts all of Equestria into eternal chaos! *(Pinkie zips away.)*

Twilight: But why us? Why don't you—

Pinkie: *(from o.s.)* Hey, look! *(Cut to her at another window.)* We're famous!

(Close-up of the glass, tilting up; the six use the Elements to bring down Nightmare Moon. Applejack is portrayed without her hat.)

Celestia: *(from o.s.)* You six showed the full potential of the Elements by harnessing the magic of your friendship to beat a mighty foe. *(Back to her and Twilight.)* Although Luna and I once wielded the Elements, it is you who now control their power, and it is you who must defeat Discord!

(All six have gathered before her again. They exchange a few seconds' worth of uncertain looks and drooping ears before their usually-fearless leader finds her resolve.)

Twilight: Princess Celestia, you can count on—

Pinkie: Hold on a second! Eternal chaos comes with chocolate rain, you guys. *Chocolate rain!* *(Twilight slides up to Celestia.)*

Twilight: Don't listen to her, Princess. We'd be honored to use the Elements of Harmony again.

(Stepping up to the closed doors, Celestia inserts her horn into a hole bored through the center of the gold sunburst that rests where the handles or knobs would normally go. She hits it with a quick shot of magic and backs away; vivid blue light shines around the sunburst's outline and spreads along the seams that split the doors radially into six panels. Machinery begins to grind as the camera zooms out and two columns of three blue spots each light up on the doors, one by one. The blue brilliance spills outward from the doors, washing over Celestia, and one swift flash later they are standing wide open. Cut to a jeweled lockbox on a pedestal within, surrounded by the light, and zoom in.)

Rarity: *(from o.s., shuddering)* Ooooooh... *(Cut to her as she continues.)* You can keep the Elements. I'll take that case!

Celestia: Have no fear, ponies. I have total confidence that you will be able to defeat Discord...

(On the end of this, she levitates the box forward, the camera shifting to frame it instead of her.)

Celestia: *(from o.s.)* ...with these.

(When the lid flips open, the contents are framed in full detail: absolutely nothing. A round of gasps from the six Ponyville residents shocks Celestia into letting it hit the floor. The thud echoes prominently in the silent hall; Pinkie is first to get any words out, in her usual cheerful tone.)

Pinkie: Oh, well. *(trotting away)* If anyone needs me, I'll be outside in the chocolate puddles with a *giant* swizzle straw!

(Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of the empty box and zoom out to frame it on the floor, surrounded by hooves.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* The Elements! *(Long shot of the Ponyville six.)* They're gone!

Celestia: *(pacing)* That chamber is protected by a powerful spell that only I can break! This doesn't make sense.

(A fruity, malicious laugh asserts itself in the hall—the amped-up brother of the chuckle heard in the prologue. It gives way to an echoing male voice whose unctuous, semi-playful tone does very little to disguise the suggestion of malevolence at its core.)

Voice: Make sense? Oh, what fun is there in making sense?

Celestia: Discord! Show yourself!

(Another contemptuous laugh rolls around the vaulted ceiling; cut to a pan past the window that depicts him pulling the ponies' strings.)

Voice: Did you miss me, Celestia?

(Pan back to that window; a flash of light, and the draconequus image begins to move and speak in this voice.)

Window Discord: I've missed you.

(He leaps away, his form disappearing past the edge as if on a television screen, and appears in the next window—the ponies gathered around the jewels that represent the Elements.)

Window Discord: It's quite lonely being encased in stone, but you wouldn't know that, would you? (*Zoom in slowly.*) Because I don't turn ponies into stone!

(*He has ended up lounging against Fluttershy's panel, which he taps with a claw. Cut to the seven.*)

Celestia: Enough! What have you done with the Elements of Harmony?

(*The window again; now he is seen in his own panel at the top.*)

Window Discord: Oh, I just borrowed them for a teensy little while.

(*A snap causes the jewels to disappear from the center of the design.*)

Celestia: (*stomping one hoof*) You'll never get away with this, Discord! (*He reclines on their pedestal.*)

Window Discord: Oh, I'd forgotten how grim you can be, Celestia. (*Head-on view of the seven; he continues o.s.*) It's really quite boring.

Rainbow: Hey! No pony insults the Princess!

(*She launches a flying charge at the window, but he disappears an instant before she smacks into the glass. Once she gets her eyes refocused and peels herself loose, he reappears—now large enough to block most of the picture.*)

Window Discord: Oh! You must be Rainbow Dash, famed for her loyalty—the Element of Harmony you represent.

Rainbow: That's right! I'll always be loyal to the Princess! (*He vanishes.*)

Voice of Discord: We'll see about that.

(*Cut to Rarity, standing before the window that depicts Celestia and Luna defeating him—but he is gone from the center.*)

Rarity: I can't believe we're wasting our time talking to a tacky window. (*He reappears at its base.*)

Window Discord: The beautiful Rarity, representing the Element of generosity, if I'm not mistaken. (*Applejack walks up.*)

Applejack: So you know who we are. Big deal. (*He grows to full size.*)

Discord: Oh, I know much more than that, honest Applejack.

Twilight: You seem to know our strengths too.

(*Now he pops over to the window of the six, appearing in small size atop Fluttershy's panel.*)

Window Discord: Yes, Twilight Sparkle. And yours is the most powerful and elusive Element—magic. (*Cut to Twilight and Fluttershy; he continues o.s.*) Fluttershy's is kindness and Pinkie Pie's is a personal favorite of mine—laughter.

(The yellow pegasus' eyes pop when she is mentioned, and the camera then pans to frame Pinkie on Twilight's other side; she has a hoof to her mouth to stifle the giggles that mingle with his.)

Twilight: *(annoyed)* Pinkie!

Pinkie: *(laughing full force)* He's standing on your head!

(Back to the window during this; he is in fact dancing while balanced on Twilight's head.)

Celestia: Stop stalling, Discord! What have you done with the Elements of Harmony?

Window Discord: Oh, so boring, Celestia, really! Fine, I'll tell you, but I'll only tell you my way.

(He vanishes with a flash. In an overhead shot of the hall, his full-size image appears in one window and weaves among others.)

Window Discord: To retrieve your missing Elements,
Just make sense of this change of events.
Twists and turns are my master plan,
(He returns to the window in which he first came to life.)
Then find the Elements back where you began.

(One last flash leaves him in stained-glass immobility again; his unsettling chuckle echoes and dies out as Twilight, Applejack, and Fluttershy step up.)

Fluttershy: Can we go home now?

Applejack: What do you reckon he meant? Twists and turns and endin' back where we started?

Twilight: *(walking toward a window)* Twists and turns...twists and turns...

(She has ended up at a spot that gives an excellent vantage point of the hedge maze. After staring out over the green walls and the gloomy gray sky, it hits her.)

Twilight: Twists and turns! That's it! I bet Discord hid the Elements in the palace labyrinth!

Celestia: Good luck, my little ponies. *(as she, Twilight, Applejack, Rainbow bow to each other)*
The fate of Equestria is in your hooves.

(The regal pony actually bows twice, inclining her head so that her horn swings down close to each of Twilight's shoulders as if she were using a sword to knight her.)

Twilight: Thanks, Princess. We won't let you down.

(She races off, leading the other five out of the hall as Celestia watches and Discord's laughter peals out over them all. Dissolve to a head-on view of the maze entrance, zooming in over a ridge and tilting up to frame the flying banners that adorn it. A collective gasp is heard from o.s.; cut to an overhead view of the six before the entrance, seen from above its arch.)

Fluttershy: *(terrified)* W...we have to go in there? *(Ground level; Rainbow walks up.)*

Rainbow: Nope. *(flapping her wings)* Dopey Discord forgot about these babies! *(She goes airborne.)* I'll just do a quick flyover and we'll have the Elements in no time.

(She is totally unprepared for a sudden flash of light that leaves no trace of "these babies" on her flanks. All her forward momentum goes bye-bye, leaving her to drop like a ton of blue bricks.)

Rainbow: My wings!

(Fluttershy promptly loses hers as well, prompting a yelp, and a double flash strips both unicorns of their horns.)

Twilight, Rarity: Your horn!...My horn!

(Both scream at the realization, and a ball of light appears at the maze entrance. It solidifies into Discord, who straightens his mismatched body up to full height as lightning forks across the sky, the camera framing him from the waist up. After his exultant laughter has died out, he leans down to point at the six ponies with his lion-paw foreleg. The bushy eyebrows and goat beard are white, the eyes are beady and red with yellow whites, and one pupil is rather larger than the other. His body is brown, his head and neck a lighter brownish-gray, and a short fringe of dark gray mane runs down the back of his neck. The taloned forelimb is yellow, while its lion-paw counterpart is a pale brownish-yellow. The "snake tail" that Sweetie pointed out in the prologue is red and scaly, ridged with a row of spines and tapering to a tuft of white hair at the end. The previous echoing quality is gone from his voice.)

Discord: *(giddily)* You...you should see the looks on your faces! Priceless! *(Giggle.)*

Twilight: Give us our wings and horns back!

Discord: You'll get them back in good time. *(Teleport over to Applejack; nudge her flank as he continues.)* I simply took them to ensure there's no cheating. *(slithering to Fluttershy/Rainbow, then Twilight)* You see, this is the first rule of our game—no flying, and no magic.

Rainbow: *(unnerved)* The...first rule? *(He rests on the nearest hedge.)*

Discord: The second rule is, everypony has to play, or the game is over—and I win. *(hovering)* Good luck, everypony!

(The previous sequence clearly picks out the rest of his coloration. Light blue feathered wing; darker blue-gray webbed one; deer hind leg in medium brown; reptilian one in green. He now winks out with one last laugh; instantly Fluttershy drops into a fearful huddle on the grass.)

Twilight: Never fear, girls. We have each other. *(Fluttershy is back up again.)*

Rainbow: Yeah! Like Twilight said, there's nothing we can't overcome if we all stick together.

(On this line, the camera cuts to Applejack and Fluttershy, who trade reassuring smiles, then to Pinkie and Rarity as they do the same while standing behind Rainbow. The view then shifts to

just inside the entrance and zooms in on the six ponies taking up positions before it.)

Twilight: All right, girls. Let's do this.

(Ground-level view of their line, from the chests down and seen from Fluttershy's end.)

All: *(taking one step ahead)* Together!

(In a longer shot, they are startled into an assortment of panicked responses by the hedges that suddenly shoot up from the ground to wall one off from the next. An overhead view reveals that they have been split up into six parallel lanes; in addition, another hedge has sprung up behind to cut off their retreat.)

Twilight: Stay calm, girls!

(Cut to a screenful of hedge leaves. A vertical panel showing her slides up from the bottom to fill the middle third of the screen.)

Twilight: Everypony head to the middle as fast as you can and we'll regroup there! *(The next four appear in turn.)*

Rainbow: *(top left)* Moving out!

Rarity: *(bottom right)* See you in the center!

Applejack: *(bottom left)* Yee-haa!

Pinkie: *(top right)* See you guys there!

(These five panels have nearly filled the screen; the ponies within them zip away at top speed, after which the assembly flies up like a window shade. Behind them is a freaked-out yellow former pegasus who can do no more than hyperventilate for a second.)

Fluttershy: What's that? Who's there? *GIRRRRLS!!*

(As she holds out this last word, zoom out to a long overhead shot. The other five have started to run the maze, but she is still at the start of her path. The camera briefly roves ahead to frame more of the vast scramble of hedges that awaits them, then focuses on the galloping Applejack. After several seconds of sure-footed charging, she slows to a walk and advances quizzically along a straightaway in close-up. A zoom out frames the reason for her puzzlement: three red apples lying on the ground, in nearly the same arrangement as the ones that make up her cutie mark. They roll ahead on their own.)

Applejack: What in tarnation?

(She resumes her galloping pace to follow them and comes out in a grove of apple trees. The pieces of fruit roll in a small circle before her.)

Applejack: Where am I?

(Another apple drops into view and clunks her square in the noggin; she looks up, slightly dazed, in time to see others fall from the branches. Within seconds, they are tumbling along the ground in a broad swath, accompanied by three separate high, cackling giggles. A brief overhead shot of Applejack reveals that they have separated themselves into three groups by color—green, light red, dark red—and are now circling her.)

Applejack: Who are y'all?

(Each group in turn forms itself into a tall pile and shapes a face to speak, while still circling. After a pile finishes, it collapses back down.)

Dark red: The keepers of the Grove of Truth.

You may ask us... *(Quick pan to light red.)*

Light red: ...one question... *(Quick pan to green.)*

Green: ...past, future, or present. *(To Applejack.)*

Dark red: But be warned...

Light red: ...that the truth...

Green: ...may not always be pleasant.

Applejack: All right, then. I don't trust this place worth a hill of beans, but I got a real bad feelin' about this feller Discord. What's gonna come of this here mission we're on?

(All three groups stop moving. Cut to the edge of a pond and zoom out slightly as they and their reflections move up to the edge, with Applejack in between them. Now all three guardians' faces remain in view.)

Dark red: For the answer you seek...

Light red: ...go ahead. *(Close-up of her reflection; it continues o.s.)* Take a peek.

(Her image gives way to the six friends standing in a decidedly warped version of Ponyville. A tree and streetlight list at crazy angles; houses are placed smack on top of tall hills; Sugarcube Corner stands on a floating midair island; the ground has taken on a pastel checkerboard pattern. The ponies, all unusually cross, stand in what used to be a normal street. Each speaker's face briefly superimposes itself over the scene, then vanishes as her words echo weirdly over the pond surface. Of the four non-earth ponies, only Twilight has regained her normal state.)

Rainbow: I hope I never see you again!

Fluttershy: Me too!

Pinkie: Fine!

Rarity: Fine!

Twilight: It's settled, then.

[Animation goof: Twilight's horn is missing in her close-up.]

(They scatter in all directions, the image changing back to Applejack's reflection. Zoom out

quickly as she straightens up with a frightened start; the guardians have collapsed again.)

Applejack: No! Our friendship...over?

(Cut to Discord floating in the sky. He is working three marionette crossbars just as he did in the stained-glass window of the palace—one in each foreleg, the third with his tail—and he chuckles nastily to himself. Tilt down to ground level, the strings disappearing from view; the three guardians respond to his motions, rising and falling to show/hide their faces.)

Applejack: It can't be true! *(taking off hat)* It just can't!

(Snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: an overhead view of Applejack and the three guardian/puppets at the edge of the pond. The surface shows the six friends going their separate ways as the camera zooms in; Applejack has put her hat back on and is watching closely. After the vision fades away, cut to a close-up of her, straightening up to full height.)

Applejack: That just can't be the truth.

Light red: When all the truth does...

Green: ...is make your heart ache...

(As this pile continues, Discord's face and voice fade in partially to overlap it and the hypnotic influence of his eyes spreads to hers.)

Green, Discord: ...sometimes a lie is easier to take.

(Green's wildly laughing voice fade away, the three piles of apples roll off the scene, and Applejack's entire form takes on a faded, washed-out tone, starting from the hat and working down. Only the colors cycling through her mesmerized eyes retain any vivid hues. Just behind her, a section of hedge slides open as if it were a door and Twilight gallops past on the other side. She quickly backs up to the new gap.)

Twilight: Applejack! Thank goodness!

(Overhead shot of the area, now seen as a completely empty clearing within the maze: no trees, no pond, no apples, nothing. Evidently Discord has the power to create illusions that go far beyond simple puppeteering.)

Twilight: *(entering)* I thought I heard voices over here. *(Close-up; Applejack faces away from her.)* Who were you talking to?

Applejack: I was talkin' to, uh...no pony! *(glancing at Twilight)* No pony whatsoever.

(The movement of her head reveals that her eyes have reverted to their normal appearance, but the irises have gone a darker shade of green. As soon as the last two words are out of her mouth, she cuts her eyes from side to side and avoids looking Twilight straight on, all the while keeping her lips firmly clamped shut. Back to Twilight.)

Twilight: *(with great disbelief)* What? *(Zoom out; Applejack trots over to her.)*

Applejack: Nothin'. *(glance away; passing her)* Come on, uh, we best be goin'.

Twilight: *(to herself)* Did Applejack just... *(smiling, laughing)* Come on, Twilight. Applejack wouldn't lie.

(She trots away with another laugh, the camera tilting up to point over these hedges at Pinkie, who whistles while hopping merrily along a distant passage. Cut to a close-up of her cutie mark, then to a T-junction. She stops short here, staring wide-eyed at the camera, as a chorus of high laughing voices makes itself heard. A cut to the sky and tilt down reveals that she has entered a courtyard full of balloons, many in assorted shapes, sizes, and colors and sporting smiley faces. Floating above and separate from them are two blue and one yellow, in the same arrangement as the three on her haunch. The laughter is coming from the masses of balloons, but none of the painted mouths are moving; Pinkie lets off an ecstatic squeal as she hops into the area.)

Pinkie: *(laughing)* This is the greatest balloon garden I've ever seen! *(Head-on view.)* It's the first balloon garden I've ever seen, but still—

(Her voice trails off into a surprised yell when her hooves slide out from under her and she crashes down into a puddle. Two puzzled blue eyes stare out through the mud now covering her face and body; the laughter takes on a much nastier tone now while the balloons float toward her. One has tied itself around her rear leg to trip her up, and among the cacophony of jeers are a few voices that might, just might, belong to her friends. All fall silent when she speaks up.)

Pinkie: Hey! What gives? *(Discord appears.)*

Discord: What's the matter, Pinkie Pie? I thought you appreciated a good laugh.

Pinkie: It's different. They're laughing *at* me.

Discord: *(leaning his head behind a blank green balloon)* It's hardly different.

(When he pulls away, his head is gone and the floating rubber toy rotates to show that it now has a smiley-face parody of his own leering mug. It speaks with his voice and a bit of a reverberating quality, as if heard through a hot-air register.)

Balloon Discord: Your friends laugh at you all the time. *(It floats down to her; she is standing up and clean, no balloon on her leg.)*

Pinkie: *(smiling)* My friends laugh *with* me, not *at* me.

Balloon Discord: *(circling)* Oh, really?

(Here comes his jeering laughter again, this time accompanied by a speed boost that leaves Pinkie's eyes whirling in their sockets as they track his motion. The other balloons join in the

mockery; she snaps to with a gasp.)

Pinkie: No! Stop it!

(They do no such thing. In fact, when the camera cuts to her perspective and pans across, five balloons manifest the other ponies' faces and coat colors and step it up a notch. Back to her, now huddling on the ground below them.)

Pinkie: Stop laughing at me! *(Balloon Discord floats down.)*

Balloon Discord: *(with mocking sadness)* Oh, poor Pinkie Pie. And here I thought laughter made you happy.

(He stops right in front of her face and lets her have a blast of his hypnosis. In extreme close-up, she squeezes her cycling eyes shut and reopens them—same blue irises, but the eyebrows are fixed down in a scowl. Her harsh tone of voice tells the rest of the story: every bit of good cheer is gone from her.)

Pinkie: Happy? *(She stands up, becoming washed-out as Applejack did.)* I don't think so.

(Balloon Discord drifts away and all the others burst, exposing Twilight and Applejack at a different entrance to this courtyard.)

Twilight: Pinkie Pie! *(galloping in)* Are we glad to see you!

Pinkie: Oh, you are, huh? Why? *(trotting past)* Need a good laugh?

Twilight: Pinkie?

(The not-so-pink pony exits past Applejack, who has stayed at the entrance; Twilight trots back to her.)

Twilight: What do you suppose has her so upset? It's not like her.

Applejack: I didn't notice anything strange about Pinkie.

(She does her shifty-eye bit again, then walks out.)

Twilight: *(to herself, whispering)* Weird. *(heading off)* Better pick up the pace before the stress of this gets the better of all of us.

(Balloon Discord floats after her with a smirk. Dissolve to a pan across the maze, which seems to have grown several sizes and, even more improbably, expanded its hedges to cover quite a few hills and overhangs. Stop on Rarity as she walks along a passage laid out on a nearly spherical hill; this in itself would be unremarkable, except for the fact that the path takes her around its equator so that her entire body is turned sideways relative to the ground below. The fact that gravity has had a thumb put in its eye does not ruffle her. Overhead, the sky has become even more heavily overcast than it was at the start of this obstacle course.)

Rarity: I was expecting an audience with the Princess— *(Cut to her, right-side up.)* —not outdoor sports.

(She runs flat into a rock wall set with three lozenge-shaped jewels in the same pattern as her cutie mark. These glow brilliantly and cast their reflections in her eyes as she backs off with a small cry.)

Rarity: Oh, my.

(Cut to behind her and zoom out slowly. She has hit a dead end and is standing on a large gold sunburst with a purple background. In close-up, Discord's chuckling face appears in each of the three gems—his true face, that is, not the balloon one—and his voice echoes as it did when he spoke from the stained-glass windows in Act Two.)

Discord: Welcome to your lucky day, Rarity. You've found the one thing in Equestria that could rival my face for sheer beauty.

(The jewels blaze brightly, filling the screen for a moment, and the camera shifts to a head-on view of her.)

Discord: *(from o.s.)* What do you think? *(She becomes hypnotized.)* You like?

Rarity: *(moaning weakly)* I like very much. *(She shakes her head clear and turns away.)* No! No! I shan't succumb to such fabulousness!

(She begins to walk away, but every step is an effort as if a giant rubber band were trying to pull her back to the wall.)

Rarity: Must...get to the center...to meet...the others!

(Finally she gives up and rushes back to the wall, standing on her rear legs and stretching up as tall as she can.)

Rarity: MINE!!

(Her colors become faded as she attacks the stone with her front hooves, sending bits of gravel showering down around her. Clock wipe to her, now scuffed and filthy from the effort; stone dust settles around her and the rock fragments that now litter the ground. She is fiercely pleased with herself.)

Rarity: Well, Rarity. It took forever, but it was worth it!

(“It” turns out to be an enormous diamond that she has excavated from the rock. She runs over, now cleaned up, and puts her front hooves lovingly on it. This thing is as wide across as she is tall when standing on two legs.)

Rarity: Who knew three little gemstones would turn out to be this handsome *hunk* of a diamond? (*Happy gasp.*) Now to get you home.

(Ducking as low as she can, she gets enough of her back underneath the monster gem to allow her to hoist it up. As she trudges away, step by labored step, the camera pans back to the remains of the rock face, which collapse in a belch of dust to reveal Twilight, Applejack, and Pinkie on the other side.)

Twilight: Rarity! Are we glad to see—

(She cuts herself off in shock and the camera cuts to the greedy ex-unicorn. The diamond has been replaced by an ordinary boulder of roughly the same size and shape—another of Discord's tricks, no doubt.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Why are you carrying a humongous boulder? *(Rarity flips it off her back.)*

Rarity: What do you mean, boulder? *(stroking it)* This big, beautiful, bedazzling rock is a *diamond!* And it's all mine. *(She zips up with it on her back.)* Keep your envious little eyes off it! I found it and it's mine, fair and square!

(She hauls it away, followed by Applejack and a hunkered-down Pinkie, and Twilight's concern grows by a few orders of magnitude as she moves out. Dissolve to a screenful of leaves, from which two very scared blue-green eyes peek out. Their owner leaps out into the path—it is Fluttershy, whose nerves have not calmed down one bit since this funhouse began.)

Fluttershy: Okay, I can do this. *(moving ahead)* I can—

(Or perhaps not; since the appearance of three pink butterflies right in front of her is enough to spook her into a scream and a full-speed retreat. Matching the ones in her cutie mark, they hover around her rump as she tries to burrow back into the hedge. As soon as she gets all the way in, they flit away and she puts her head back out with a smile.)

Fluttershy: Oh, wait a minute! *(Cut to them; she continues o.s.)* Butterflies? *(galloping after them)* Wait! Don't leave me here!

(They continue their flight, but she spots them from around a corner and hurries to catch up. In short order she skids to a stop, the camera cutting to her perspective and panning across: a juncture of several passages, but no butterflies in sight. Back to her; they emerge from one side, and one speaks in a high-pitched version of Discord's voice.)

Butterfly Discord: Fluttershy...

(Close-up; these things have his mismatched antlers, snaggle tooth, and bushy white eyebrows.)

Butterfly Discord: ...looks like you've been left behind by your so-called friends, huh?

Fluttershy: *(smiling)* Oh, no. I'm certain they're doing their best to find me. *(They circle her)*

head.)

Butterfly Discord: Well, it must be so upsetting to know how weak and helpless they think you are.

Fluttershy: Not at all. I *am* weak and helpless, and I appreciate their understanding.

Butterfly Discord: (*normal voice, stammering*) Yes, well, surely it burns you up, I mean— (*high voice*) —that they're always pointing out your flaws, right?

Fluttershy: Not really. In fact, I think I'm awfully lucky to have friends who want me to be the best I can be.

(This is too much for the trickster, who resumes his normal form and voice; the butterflies disappear.)

Discord: Oh, for goodness' sake!

(Cut to her; he jabs a taloned finger into her forehead, hypnotizing her and bleaching out her normal coloration.)

Discord: (*pacing behind her*) You've been kind for far too long, my dear! Time to be cruel! *Arrivederci!*

(He winks out, an instant before a section of hedge retracts into the ground to expose Twilight and the three previous brainwashed ponies. Twilight trots in; cut to a close-up of the dazed, even paler yellow victim.)

Twilight: (*from o.s.*) Fluttershy! (*She walks into view; Fluttershy gets her head clear.*) I'm so glad to see a friendly face.

(Coming up from behind, she does not notice the lowering eyebrows.)

Twilight: This awful labyrinth is getting to everypony.

(A grunt from Applejack, a sullen raspberry from Pinkie, and not much of a response from Rarity. The last strains to keep her "diamond" balanced on her back and is again filthy from the effort. Now Fluttershy turns to face her and speaks in a tone dripping with venom and sarcasm.)

Fluttershy: Aw, boo-hoo-hoo. (*Twilight's jaw drops; Fluttershy crosses to her.*) Why don't you wave your magic little horn and make everything all right?

Twilight: Uh...

Fluttershy: Oh, that's right. You can't. (*walking away*) You don't have one.

(She punctuates this crack with a lash of her tail across Twilight's cheek. Cut to her, Applejack, and Pinkie as they walk away, Fluttershy hip-checking Pinkie into the nearest wall and Applejack laughing at the hit.)

Twilight: (*from o.s.*) What is happening to my friends? (*Pinkie gets up.*)

Pinkie: *(to Applejack)* And what are you laughing at?

Applejack: *(hastily)* Chocolate milk. *(She glances away; Rarity struggles with the boulder.)*

Rarity: *(to Twilight)* Little help here!

(The two former unicorns get the massive stone balanced on their backs.)

Rarity: Thanks, Twilight. *(Cut to Twilight.)*

Twilight: You're welcome.

Rarity: *(from o.s., sharply)* But don't get any ideas about my gem. *(Cut to frame both.)* I know where you live.

(The two move out. Dissolve to another stretch of the maze; as thunder rumbles somewhere nearby, Rainbow peeks around a corner and gallops ahead a short distance. She dives behind another corner and risks another quick look, catching sight of a small, moving white cloud with a red/yellow/blue lightning bolt crackling out every so often. It is a scaled-up version of her own cutie mark, and it is the source of the thunder.)

Rainbow: I've got you now, Element.

(She races after it and keeps up through a few turns, but skids to a stop with a pop-eyed stare as it floats out of view. The camera shifts to behind her and zooms in on two apple trees in a clearing. With a cloud strung between them for a hammock. And a sunglasses-wearing Discord lounging on this.)

Discord: *(stretching)* Oh, I can see why you like these clouds so much. Very plush.

Rainbow: Get off there and put 'em up! *(standing on hind legs, ready to box)* Come on! Let's go! *(Discord sits up.)*

Discord: Hey, I'm here to deliver a message.

Rainbow: I've got a message for you, too!

Discord: *(removing sunglasses)* Listen closely. This is important.

(The irate sky-blue pony settles back to all fours as he approaches her. He whips around to address her from different angles during the following.)

Discord: A weighty choice is yours to make—
The right selection, or a big mistake.
If the wrong choice you choose to pursue,
The foundations of home will crumble without you.

(He backs off and snaps his fingers, bringing the white cloud in front of himself. It whirls in place, throwing off tri-color lightning and growing to fill the screen as the sky darkens. The view dissolves to a long shot of the sky city of Cloudsdale and zooms in; structures and columns begin to topple in a midair earthquake.)

Rainbow: *(voice over; weakly)* Cloudsdale... crumble... without me...

(In a street, several pegasi—one of whom is Derpy Hooves—bail out to avoid being crushed by a falling column. Back to Rainbow, whose eyes betray the hypnotic spell that has taken over.)

Rainbow: NOOOO!!

(A wrapped gift box materializes and floats before her, sparkling faintly.)

Discord: *(from o.s.)* That box contains your wings. *(leaning over her)* You can take them and leave the game, or you can carry on aimlessly wandering this maze.

(On the end of this, he runs a finger over her head and her color washes out. Zoom in to an extreme close-up of her face.)

Discord: *(now o.s.)* Your choice.

(Dissolve to a long overhead shot of the maze, the camera spinning as it zooms in on four moving shapes and one boulder. At ground level, Rarity—now clean and not carrying the load—walks disdainfully ahead.)

Twilight: *(with great effort, walking into view)* Must...find...Rainbow Dash. As a team...we're...unstoppable. Rainbow Dash won't let us...down.

(Her slow pace and strain are due to the fact that she is now hauling the rock alone.)

Applejack: *(from o.s.)* Well, looky there. *(Quick pan ahead to her and Rarity; Twilight catches up.)* Rainbow Dash is flyin' away. She's abandonin' us!

Twilight: Now I *know* that's a lie.

(When she flips the boulder off her back and looks up, though, she finds that the suddenly dishonest farmer is telling it straight for once. She gasps softly as Rainbow soars overhead and out of the maze to disappear into the clouds.)

Twilight: How can it be?

(The entire maze shakes as a layer of even darker gray clouds move in to cover every square inch of sky. Blocks of hedges swiftly retract into the ground, throwing up curtains of dust in all directions. When these clear, the camera shifts to an overhead view of the other five ponies and zooms out. Nothing is left but a wide tract of bare earth, with the perimeter footpaths and statues still in place except for the one of Discord. Back to Twilight and Applejack.)

Discord: *(from o.s.)* Well, well, well. *(He emerges from the dust.)* Somepony broke the “no wings, no magic” rule.

(A finger snap puts Twilight's and Rarity's horns and Fluttershy's wings back where they belong.)

Overhead view.)

Discord: Game's over, my little ponies! You didn't find your precious Elements. Looks like we might be due for a big old storm of chaos.

(During this line, the camera cuts to ground level; he leans over Twilight for a moment, then produces a pink umbrella that meows softly when he opens it. The canopy opens upside down on the shaft, so that it will catch rain instead of letting it run off, and lightning rips the sky as he laughs crazily and Twilight stares in total disbelief. Cut to an overhead shot and zoom out, then to a "To be continued..." title card. Unlike all other episodes to date, there is no transition to black, but rather a cut directly to the closing credits.)

Continued in Part Two