

MISSING THE MARK

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Prologue

(Opening shot: a pan along a path running through a tree-studded stretch of grassland, under a night sky filled with foreboding clouds. Misty gallops into view, clad in a dark purple hooded cloak whose hem reaches to her midsection.)

Misty: *(skidding to a stop)* I can't believe I finally got you!

(She lifts a fold of fabric, which falls away in extreme close-up to reveal the face and inquisitive eyes of Sparky Sparkeroni. Back to the unicorn on the next line.)

Misty: Opaline is going to be so happy. *(She unwraps and lifts him.)* You're all she thinks about.

(The camera shifts to pick out Opaline's castle in the near distance. Her captive's happy cooing wipes away her triumphant smile and leaves her to voice a heavy sigh.)

Misty: I'm sorry, but if you knew what it was like, you'd understand.

(He grabs at her nose and claps; she smiles wistfully, sighs again, and tucks him back under her cloak for the final gallop to the castle. Lightning rips the sky before the view snaps to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Cut from the title card directly to a long shot of the Crystal Brighthouse, standing tall on its promontory as the sun begins to rise over the ocean. Pan slowly toward Maretime Bay proper, then cut to the sign above the front entrance to Hitch Trailblazer's office and tilt down to street level in time with his half-asleep mumbles. The next shot is an extreme close-up of the somnolent Sheriff, who shakes himself awake with a yell as the camera zooms out to an overhead shot. He is in the office, sleeping in his hideaway bed that extends from a row of file cabinets as seen in "Have You Seen This Dragon?"')

Hitch: That was a weird dream. (*climbing out, crossing room*) I wish you coulda seen it, Sparky. Kenneth was enormous, and he was stomping through Maretime Bay like a Birdzilla.

(*Stopping at the corner cabinet in which Sparky sleeps, he opens the doors; cut to his perspective—an empty bed.*)

Hitch: Spark-Spark? (*Cut to within the cabinet, the camera aimed out at him.*) Buddy?

(*The doors are closed to black out the screen; snap to the area under a desk as he rolls a chair aside and peeks in.*)

Hitch: Uh... (*Stand up; push aside binders on a shelf.*) Come on.

(*Now showing a trace of real worry, he opens a file cabinet drawer and addresses himself inside.*)

Hitch: Kenneth?

(*The can-wearing bird is in here, sure enough, and he sends up an irritated chirp at having been roused out of his nest in close-up.*)

Hitch: (*from o.s.*) Oh, good. (*Back to him.*) You're not Birdzilla. (*Lame chuckle.*) Have you seen Sparky?

(*Kenneth replies with another bit of avian invective and turns his back.*)

Hitch: (*meekly*) Thank you. Sorry. (*Close the drawer.*) Hmmm... (*He sits to think a bit; zoom out slowly.*) ...where is my little rascal this time?

(*Just after he stands up again, the camera cuts to a long overhead shot of the front lawn of the Brighthouse and slow zoom in. He gallops up the ramp toward the entrance; inside, he throws the front doors open and enters. Blue morning sky is visible beyond them before they swing shut again. Sunny Starscout is doing a bit of reading at the table near the fireplace, while Izzy Moonbow is at her arts-and-crafts work area in the back corner nearby. The unicorn has donned her crafting glasses and is making adjustments to a tower of feather-decorated shampoo bottles.*)

Sunny: Hey, Hitch!

Izzy: (*singsong, knocking tower down*) Go-o-od morni-i-ng! (*normal tone, jumping away*) Whatcha doing?

(*She ditches the lenses in the time it takes her land alongside him and fall in with his advance.*)

Hitch: Oh, I'm just looking for Sparky. He's wandered off again, like he does.

(*He chuckles, not noticing that she has stopped dead in her tracks with a thunderstruck expression and sucked in a lung-bursting gasp.*)

Izzy: Oh, no! I take back my “good” in the “good morning”!

(She crosses to the table, where Hitch has begun checking under pillows and furniture.)

Sunny: Are you okay?

Hitch: Oh, yeah! He’s done this before. We’ll find him. No need to panic.

(The resident Princesses emerge from the shared bedroom—Pipp Petals checking her cell phone, Zipp Storm uncorking a cavernous yawn—and stop at the top of the ramp.)

Zipp: What are we not panicking about?

Hitch: Sparky’s playing hide-and-seek again.

Zipp: Ah. *(She flares her wings in a sudden burst of worry.)* Ah! Oh, no!

Hitch: But it’s fine. He’s around here somewhere. *(Both sisters fly down and land.)* Probably just playing in Izzy’s supply closet again.

(Pipp, her phone put away, giggles as he turns away from the couch.)

Pipp: So no need for a new Operation Glitter Bomb, then? *(Cut to Sunny/Hitch on the end of this.)*

Hitch: Uh, nope. *(Izzy zips partway up one ramp.)*

Izzy: Awww! *(producing a bucket, dumping glitter over the side)* Are you sure?

Hitch: Uh-huh.

(Pipp has mentioned his over-the-top plan to find Sparky after Misty’s abduction attempt in “Have You Seen This Dragon?” Cut to just inside the closet that figured in this episode; as the others hang back at the door, Izzy trots down the ramp to floor level and finds it to be...)

Izzy: Empty!

Hitch: Huh? I was sure he’d be here!

Sunny: *(patting his shoulder)* So was I. *(She smiles as an idea strikes.)* Um... *(Chuckle.)* ...not to worry!

(Step out the door; clear throat.)

Melody of the lullaby Pipp sang in “Have You Seen This Dragon?”
Quiet, gentle piano melody with muted glockenspiel/harp/string accents
Slow 4 (D flat major)

Sunny: You hear that sound?
Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh

Music pauses

(Dead silence—the call-and-response magic that led them to Sparky is no good now. Izzy whips out the recorder she used in her plan to find him during that episode and blows a shrieking, out-of-tune note.)

Izzy: Sorry.

Music resumes; recorder in

(All five emerge, Izzy playing and Pipp flying.)

Sunny, Pipp, Zipp: The melody that's ringing out
Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh

Song ends

(Still nothing.)

Hitch: Come on, little guy!

(He lets his head droop, more than a touch distraught. Cut to a long shot of Opaline's castle, zooming in slowly, then to Misty entering the throne room with Sparky on her back and without her cloak. His curious gabbling stands in sharp contrast to her extreme apprehension.)

Misty: Is it just me, or have you gotten way cuter all of a sudden? *(He cuddles up by her neck.)* Oh, you're making this so hard! I don't know what to do... *(pacing)* ...take you back, or give you to Opaline. Heh. *(increasingly agitated)* Take you back, or give you to Opaline!

(The dragon expresses his opinion in the form of a burp that brings up a small, transparent, faintly glowing green bubble. Misty calms down as it slowly drifts away.)

Misty: Awww, that was cute—and kind of gross. *(resolutely, taking a breath)* Okay, that does it. I can't do this. I can't! I'm taking you back!

Opaline: *(from o.s., annoyed)* Misty!

(And here she comes, flying down the tree-root ramp at one side of the room to land facing the conflicted unicorn.)

Opaline: What have you been doing all morning? *(Cut to Misty; she continues o.s.)* You've been gone forever!

(Sparky chooses this moment to peek out from behind the tumble of corkscrewed curls; back to Opaline, who gasps in mixed disbelief and delight, and cut to/from Misty on the next line.)

Opaline: Oh! You secured the dragon! I can't believe it!

(A flare of power from her horn lifts him away, brings him over, and conjures up a shallow bowl-shaped field to hold him.)

Opaline: And what a fine specimen he is! I must admit it, Misty. I didn't think you had it in you.
(Cut to Misty as she finishes.)

Misty: Oh. I guess I did, though.

Opaline: *(to Sparky, sweetly)* Look at you, little dragon! You're even better than I imagined. I have the most lovely place for you to play. Would you like to see it?

(He throws a questioning glance and gurgle to Misty, who forces herself to smile and nod. This is enough to boost his enthusiasm, and Opaline lifts off to the upper reaches and hauls him along. Misty sighs and moves to follow, and the three soon arrive in a small circular room set up to act as a ritual chamber. Candles burn in stands around the perimeter and on a central wooden table, which also holds a couple of artifacts, and an open book and the Dragon Stone on separate stands. Books and other relics lie scattered under the feeble glow of a chandelier and set of three windows, the center one open, and bookcases stand at the walls. Sparky is placed on the table as Opaline lands by it; both of them regard the Dragon Stone with awe before she floats him up for a closer look.)

Misty: Wow! You really like him, don't you?

Opaline: Like him? *(Chuckles.)* I adore him.

(The bowl curves up around him on all sides to form a bubble, which she propels out the open window and suspends from a fixture attached to a hanging chain. A longer shot reveals that this chamber is the topmost one of not just its particular tower, but the entire castle as well; the chain is attached to a brace set above the windows. Zoom out slowly to the sound of Misty's horrified gasp, then cut between her, him, and all three on the next line.)

Misty: That's where you're going to keep him? Um, uh, couldn't we find somewhere more, um...comfortable? That bubble cage looks a little, um, dangerous.

Opaline: Not to worry. I'll only keep him there until he's done being drained.

(Cut to the Dragon Stone.)

Opaline: *(from o.s., hefting it in her aura)* And then, well... *(Back to the three; she brings it over.)* ...let's just say he'll be useless.

(The black swirls etched into the red/yellow surface pulse white for a split second; in response, a stream of greenish energy issues from Sparky's mouth, passing through the bubble, and into the Dragon Stone. It flows into the dark spot at the center of the pattern, causing it to burn bright yellow, and Opaline powers down her horn to leave the rock floating on its own and wreathed in the power being siphoned off. She sees Misty gazing out and down with great concern.)

Opaline: My. That's a long drop.

(Scaly green hide begins to lose its color as the magic is siphoned from the now-lethargic dragon and Misty watches fearfully.)

(Snap to black, against which a panel of light slides open and Zipp peeks in toward the camera.)

Zipp: Sparky?

(The screen blacks out again in like manner; snap to the kitchen of the Brighthouse, where she has just opened/closed a drawer in search of him. Queries incorporating that name are repeated over and over by Sunny/Hitch/Pipp as she puts on her high-tech visor and lifts off to cruise across the room. These other three are checking various nooks and crannies, while Izzy is tootling away on her recorder. Zipp lands in a far corner.)

Zipp: *(propping visor on forehead)* Maybe the lullaby isn't working and we can give the flute a break?

(The would-be woodwind wonder runs out of air at about this point and pitches to the floor, the instrument bouncing off her head.)

Izzy: *(out of breath)* Whoa, that was starting to make my brain all twisty-turny. *(Groan; stand up.)*

Hitch: Sparky? Come out! *(holding up an apple)* I've got snacks for you!

(He sets it on the island countertop and tries to laugh, but slumps over it with a moan as Sunny crosses to him.)

Sunny: Don't worry, Hitch. *(touching his back)* We'll find him. *(He straightens up.)*

Hitch: *(with forced bravado)* Uh-huh, absolutely! I've learned my lesson from last time. Sparky will be just fine. I know it.

(An unsettled little moan belies his true mental state, though, and it begins to spread to the other four. Cut to a long shot outside the chamber windows of Opaline's castle, zooming in slowly as the power drain continues, then to a close-up of the Dragon Stone and zoom out. Opaline watches with anticipation, Misty with unease. A short length of the etched groove has gone pale green, starting from the point where it joins the central spot.)

Opaline: *(spreading wings briefly)* Finally, I will possess my full enhanced fire powers! I've been waiting for this moment for so long. Hundreds of moons! *(Cut to Misty on the following.)*

Misty: *(forcing a grin)* That's great, Opaline.

(The aspiring despot just rolls her eyes with an annoyed groan, and so misses the fearful glance and shudder that her underling throws toward the baby dragon. Close-up.)

Misty: *(softly, to herself)* It's not great. I'm the worst pony in the world.

Opaline: *(from o.s.)* What did you just say? *(She crosses to Misty.)* Seriously, Misty, I've told you a thousand times, I can't understand you when you mumble!

Misty: *(smiling, laughing)* Oh! I just said, “You must be so excited for tonight!”

Opaline: Of course I am. *(inspecting a hoof)* Now, I have to go do my pre-ceremony magic cleansing, and decorate the lair for the event. Don’t disturb me until I’m finished. Understood?

(Not waiting for an answer, she lifts off and is gone. Misty sighs heavily, moves to the windows, and strains a foreleg toward Sparky as far as she possibly can without toppling over the sill. The distance is at least double her reach, though, and she soon gives up and reels herself back in.)

Misty: I’m sorry, Sparky. I’ve made a horrible mistake.

(She makes another, halfhearted try, but pulls her foreleg back with a gasp upon realizing that it is the one adorned by the charm bracelet Izzy gave her. A moment’s regard of the jewelry, and she sighs quietly and regains her nerve.)

Misty: I’m going to find help. I promise.

(Hooves hit high gear, carrying her down from the chamber and through the throne room, where she bangs her way through the doors almost without breaking stride.)

Act Two

(Cut to the shared bedroom in the Brighthouse, where Sunny and Pipp are checking under the pillows of their respective beds.)

Sunny: Not here!

Pipp: Or here! *(Across the way, Zipp is doing the same, having removed her visor.)*

Zipp: Not under mine either.

(Snap to black, which resolves into a close-up of Izzy as something is pulled away—a pillow covering a spot on her bed.)

Izzy: Ooh! Look what I found! *(Sunny and Hitch whip across to her.)*

Hitch: Sparky! *(Cut to behind them.)*

Izzy: Oh, sorry. Yeah, he’s not here either. But I was looking for this.

(“This” turns out to be a party noisemaker, which she scoops up and stuffs in her mouth for a couple of blows. Neither of the earth ponies shows any willingness to join in the festive mood; Hitch lets off a disappointed sigh.)

Hitch: Now I’m not saying I’m nervous— *(Shaky laugh; Zipp flies down to land near him.)* —but we’ve looked everywhere!

Pipp: *(crossing to group)* Maybe Sparky got hungry and went out looking for a treat in town.

Hitch: No way!

(He holds up a box with a taped-on picture of Sparky eating a cookie.)

Hitch: *(shaking it; contents rattle)* I keep one of these in every room Sparky might go in, and they're all still full.

Sunny: Maybe Sparky's at the magic tree again?

Zipp: That's right! *(She gently backs him up; he sets the box down.)* You did say he's been spending a lot of time there lately. He's very drawn to it.

Hitch: *(relieved)* Of course! Let's go check the tree.

(They are speaking of the giant specimen they grew near what is now Canterlove Studios in "Growing Pains." In less time than it takes to say "bug out," the two pegasi are flying down to the entrance hall and the other three are hustling down the ramp. Izzy has ditched her noisemaker.)

Sunny: Okay, everypony. *(crossing to doors)* Remember to stay calm this time.

(They promptly burst open and Misty tumbles in, then slam shut; she ends up sprawled gracelessly on her back as Pipp/Zipp land with the others. Close-up.)

Sunny: *(from o.s.)* Misty! *(The unicorn's perspective, looking up at the group.)* We're about to go look for Sparky. Do you want to help? *(Back to her.)*

Misty: *(waving legs wildly)* I saw him! *(She stands up.)* I saw somepony dragon-nap him!

Hitch: *What?!?* *(Zipp bounds over him and paces as he hyperventilates.)*

Zipp: It's the evil alicorn! I know it! I warned you ponies that we were in danger! *(Cut to Izzy/Pipp.)*

Pipp: How did she find Sparky? *(To Misty.)*

Hitch: *(from o.s.)* What does she want?

Misty: I know. *(All eyes rivet themselves on her.)* I mean, I saw where they went. I can take you there, to Sparky, but we'll have to hurry!

(She gallops out, knocking the doors open on the way; the others trade determined glares and beat hooves/wings after her. All six ponies pile into the cockpit of the Marestream.)

Hitch: You're sure you know which way to go, Misty?

Misty: Positive. *(Zipp fixes her with a hard-eyed glare.)*

Zipp: How are you so positive?

Misty: I, uh, I just saw them!

Zipp: You *saw* the evil alicorn kidnap Sparky? *And* we know somepony must have told her where Sparky is in the first place? *(Pan to Sunny on the next line.)*

Sunny: Well, we know it wasn't Misty. It wasn't any of us. We would never do that do each other, right?

Hitch: Right!

Izzy, Pipp: Right!

Misty: Right!

Zipp: *(skeptically)* Right.

Sunny: Now let's stay focused. Sparky needs us!

Misty: *(pointing ahead)* It's that way!

(Zipp fires up the ignition and the vehicle lifts off, its rainbow contrail standing out against the foreboding dark clouds that have gathered over the ocean. Lightning forks through the sky, but the ace flyer dips and weaves to avoid being struck.)

Sunny: Are you sure this is the way?

Misty: *(quietly, inclining her head)* It's down there.

(Zipp shoves the steering yoke sharply forward to send the Marestream into a steep dive.)

Izzy: This is the spookiest place I've ever seen.

(They drop the rest of the way and land in a clearing, then exit from the cabin; Pipp's cheerful humming turns into a shocked gasp as they get their first good look at Opaline's castle, not far away.)

Izzy: I take it back. *This* is the spookiest place I've ever seen.

Hitch: Sparky's in *there*? *(Hard swallow.)*

(Cut to just inside the throne room as the doors open and the group enters. An overhead shot presents the entirety of the space for the first time, including a new addition—purple banners hung up to partly cover the stained-glass windows. Each of these is marked by a pair of pale blue flames that resemble spread wings, cradling a darker blue gem cut in a lozenge shape with one end extended upward to suggest the flame on a Bunsen burner or blowtorch. At the heart of the gem is a gleam in the same hue as the flames. Farther up on each banner are several stars in the darker blue, and a lozenge gem in the lighter one with all edges the same length.)

Sunny: I can't believe this is here.

Pipp: She's got great style! *(A funny look from Zipp; she clears her throat and catches herself.)*
Great evil style.

(Misty, trying to sneak past, freezes in her tracks on the older sister's next cutting words.)

Zipp: What is this place, Misty? And how do you know your way around so well?

Misty: There's no time to explain!

Hitch: *Where's Sparky?*

Misty: We have to get him before Opaline comes!

(Cut to an overhead shot of the group, the camera positioned near the top of the tree-root ramp. Pan slowly across as both dark purple forelegs plant themselves in view.)

Opaline: *(from o.s.)* Oh... *(Head-on view of her, stepping down.)* ...I'm right here.

(The wings spread, the horn fires up, and a transparent hemispherical field washes upward from the floor to pen in the Maretime Bay quintet. Yells and shrinks from inside; Misty gasps and puts

her front hooves to the surface in close-up; on the next line, cut to the winged unicorn swooping down to a hover, her horn extinguished.)

Opaline: Misty, I expected the dragon, but you've brought the whole set. *(Misty yelps.)*

Sunny: Misty? *(Who turns gloomily away without a word.)*

Opaline: *(circling down slowly, landing to face Sunny)* As soon as I'm done draining that little lizard of every ounce of his precious magic, I'll be able to steal the source of theirs too—their cutie marks!

(Cut to an extreme close-up of the stars on Sunny's haunch, punctuated by a wild cackle from the o.s. Opaline, after which the orange mare loses a bit of her fighting spirit and takes a step backward as she begins to comprehend.)

Opaline: What an added bonus. *(She walks away...)* Come, Misty.

(...and lifts off, Misty following resignedly. The winged unicorn's cutie mark is now seen clearly for the first time—the flaming wings and two-tone lozenge gem seen on the banners, with a light blue star tucked in between the gem and one wing.)

Sunny: No! It can't be true!

Pipp: She's lying! Right, Misty?

Zipp: *(bitterly)* No. She's been helping her this whole time. *(Her perspective of the blue mare.)* Haven't you?

(Close-up: Misty turns to face them, regret saturating every square inch of her face.)

Misty: I'm sorry. *(Sunny's breath catches in her throat.)*

Sunny: You betrayed us.

Misty: I-I...I didn't... *(Her perspective; all but Izzy turn their backs.)* ...mean...

Izzy: *(voice breaking)* I thought we were your friends.

(She too presents her hindquarters; back to the turncoat.)

Misty: No...

(Cut to an overhead shot of the two sides, zooming out slowly, then dissolve to a close-up of the Dragon Stone in the ritual chamber with more of its etched groove now lit to indicate its building power. Misty enters and looks to it, then to the severely enfeebled Sparky, and is about to make up her mind on something when a bit of placid humming from the o.s. Opaline cuts into her thoughts. A longer shot frames the boss off to one side, eyeing the reflections of her own face and the back of Misty's head in a hoof-held mirror.)

Opaline: I am so proud of you, Misty. *(Cut to the latter as her name is spoken.)*

Misty: You are? *(Now the mirror shows both faces.)*

Opaline: Yes. And you've worked so hard to earn your cutie mark.

(Close-up of the glass, angled to show only Misty.)

Opaline: *(from o.s.)* You must be so excited.

Misty: *(stammering)* I—I am. *(Cut to her.)* I did work really hard. I just...wanted to make you happy for so long, like...forever, practically.

(A deep purple hoof lifts her chin so she can look into Opaline's jubilant face; the mirror has been put aside.)

Opaline: And you've finally done it! *(Back to Misty, who smiles gratefully; she continues o.s.)* You'll get your cutie mark as soon as I'm done draining the dragon of his dragon fire.

(On these last few words, the green eyes pop in disbelief and the camera cuts to just outside the windows, framing both. Zoom out slowly.)

Opaline: *(giddily)* Isn't that exciting? *(Sparky gives a barely audible murmur.)*

Misty: I-I better go check on the others, to, um, make sure they're not causing any trouble.

(Exit one frightened flunky. Down in the throne room, three of the five captives are sulking quietly, while Sunny paces and Izzy tries unsuccessfully to bull her way out with horn and hooves. The field holding them simply stretches and snaps back as if it were made of rubber, and each attempt seems to sap more of her strength. Zoom in slowly until she falls to her haunches.)

Izzy: Whoo! The first forty tries were fun, but this is getting tiring.

Sunny: I just can't believe Misty would do that to us! We're her friends!

Zipp: She's not our friend, Sunny. She was just pretending. I knew it. I should've just followed my instincts.

Pipp: *(touching Zipp's shoulder)* She fooled us all. *(Close-up of Hitch.)*

Hitch: And now Sparky is gone.

(The mingled sounds of the stretching barrier and Izzy's labored grunt are heard from o.s., followed by a snap and the unicorn hitting the floor on her back—another breakout gone wrong.)

Izzy: *(moaning)* My horn is dizzy.

Sunny: We can't just stay here and let them win! We can fix this! I can fix this! *(Deep breath; close eyes.)* I just need to change...

(She lowers her head and tenses every muscle from one end to the other, groaning with exertion; her magic horn and wings sputter into and out of being.)

Sunny: *(with effort)* ...into...an alicorn!

(She gives up once the added appendages switch off and stay that way. Zoom out slowly.)

Sunny: *(sighing)* But...but I'm trying to help somepony! Why won't it work? *(deflating)* Maybe I can't do it. Maybe I'm not true alicorn material after all.

Pipp: *What?! How can you say that? Of course you are!*

Sunny: *(lying down)* But I trusted Misty so much, and I was completely wrong.

(Zipp does a quick bit of mental heavy lifting.)

Zipp: Wait a second.

(She flaps her wings furiously, but is unable to rise more than a few inches off the floor. Now Izzy gets upright and tries to kick-start her horn; all she can manage is a few fizzling sparks.)

Zipp: It's not you, Sunny! Our magic doesn't work in here! *(Izzy gasps, beaming.)*

Izzy: *That's why you can't turn into an alicorn!*

(Small comfort, as seen in a cut to Sunny on the end of this. Pipp prods the field with a front hoof, finds that it takes some effort to pull away, and cries out in revulsion upon finding a bit of sparkly residue on the limb.)

Pipp: *(shaking it off)* We've gotta get out of this sticky thing! *(Misty gallops into the throne room.)*

Misty: I can help! *(Sunny stands up to face her.)*

Zipp: *(acidly)* Like you helped us get *into* this situation? *(All five turn their eyes away.)*

Misty: This wasn't the plan! I-I didn't mean to get you all trapped! I brought you here to help get Sparky out! Honest!

(Each speaker in turn pivots to face her.)

Zipp: You haven't been honest with us—*ever!*

Hitch: Yeah. How did Sparky get in here to begin with?

Sunny: You betrayed us, Misty. How could you?

Misty: It's not like that! Opaline found me a long time ago, when I was just a lost filly and I couldn't remember where home was, and she...she took me in, and I...she promised me a cutie mark, and... *(voice breaking; Sunny disgustedly refuses to meet her gaze)* ...I'm so sorry. You didn't deserve this.

Opaline: *(from chamber above)* Misty! Get up here!

(The summoned mare deliberates for a few seconds that feel like a week before gathering her courage.)

Misty: I'm gonna fix this!

(She gallops away and is soon up in the candle-lit room. Opaline is watching the Dragon Stone intently, the length of its glowing grooves showing how far its charging has progressed.)

Opaline: You, my dear, are just moments away from getting your gorgeous new cutie mark! *(She turns to the windows, her wings flaring briefly.)* I just want to watch this stinky little dragon fall first.

(Said dragon now lies barely conscious at the bottom of his bubble. Cut to a long shot of him and the windows from below, zooming out slowly as Misty peers past the sill.)

Misty: Uh, do we really have to drop Sparky into the water, Opaline?

(Back to the two mares on this last; the smaller one quails at a grimace from the larger.)

Misty: I mean, he's just a baby dragon and...now he'll be powerless, so...he's... *(Swallow.)* ...harmless?

Opaline: *(spreading wings, advancing)* This "harmless" baby dragon has given me one headache too many! And now that he'll be without dragon fire, I'll have no use for him. *(waving)* Ta-ta, dragon baby.

(As she speaks, cut between her, a properly scared Misty backing away from her into a shadowed corner, and finally to Sparky. He blows a small, transparent, faintly glowing green bubble—much as he did in Act One, but without the burp—and it drifts through his confines and into the chamber. Misty smiles at the sight, but Opaline recoils and cries out in revulsion when it pops just above her raised foreleg, showering the limb with tiny sparks that rapidly fade out.)

Opaline: Disgusting! *(walking out)* I have to go wash my hooves in case I got spit on me. *(now o.s., retching slightly)* Revolting.

(Misty bails out and down the tree-root ramp into the throne room, but finds five ponies glaring at her with enough raw fury to bore a hole through a Sherman tank.)

Sunny: Don't bother apologizing again. We don't want to hear it.

Hitch: Yeah. We're too busy trying to figure out how to get out of this mess.

Pipp: The one *you* put us in.

Misty: I—I'm sorry. Really, I...

(She spares a glance for her bracelet, as at the end of Act One, and sighs.)

Misty: Listen. You ponies have been nothing but good to me. You treated me better than anypony ever has. You treated me like a friend. *(She turns her attention to the room at large.)* And it's my turn to do the same.

(Cut to her perspective, eyes roving this way and that and finally locking onto one of the tree-branch torches that flank the throne. Zoom in quickly on its burning tip, then cut back to her.)

Misty: *(racing across, climbing on throne)* I'd rather be a pony without a cutie mark forever than live one more day as a pony that does the wrong thing!

(A double-foreleg strike snaps off the uppermost portion of the torch, which clatters to the floor; the flame goes out, but the tip continues to glow. She hops down and clamps her teeth onto the

other end, eliciting smiles and gasps from Sunny and company—and now here she comes at full speed, her head angled to aim that tip directly at the field holding them in. This dents inward on contact, throwing sparks back in her face...she jabs ferociously into it time and again...and finally it explodes in a shower of sparkles. Misty is thrown backward by the force of the blast, while Izzy falls onto her back, having stood up on her hind legs and backed up against the interior wall to avoid becoming pony shish-kebab. Both unicorns slowly come to their senses, Misty having dropped the torch-end in her tumble across the room.)

Sunny: You freed us?

Misty: I had to.

(She finds herself on the receiving end of five grateful smiles with Izzy upright and Pipp/Zipp hovering, then gets a real surprise when a bluish aura envelops all four legs and lifts her clear of the floor.)

Misty: Huh?

(The limbs piston uselessly against air; a large mote of light forms and begins to circle around her body.)

Misty: What's happening?

(It traces one orbit after another, never exactly repeating its path, and eventually settles onto her right haunch, where it flares brightly and disappears in extreme close-up. In its place is a butterfly with an orange-pink body and half-blue, half-pink wings; each blue portion bears a heart to match the pink one and a spot in the same hue as the body. A gasp is heard from the o.s. Sunny; cut to her and the other newly freed captives, awe and delight registering on every face.)

Zipp: Whoa!

Pipp: Woo-hoo!

(The radiance sets Misty gently down on all fours and subsides.)

Misty: *(joyfully, turning in place to see the result)* At last! A cutie mark! *(Sunny crosses to her.)*

Sunny: Helping us gave you your cutie mark! *(The others do likewise, Pipp/Zipp hovering.)*

Misty: I just couldn't bear to see my friends in trouble! It...unlocked something in me! *(A thought occurs to her.)* What if...that something was me? The real me?

Sunny: That's it!

(She snaps up the torch-end with her teeth and throws it to Hitch, who catches it in his.)

Sunny: Come on, everypony! Let's get our baby dragon back!

Act Three

(The draining of Sparky continues topside as Opaline watches with undisguised avarice, and at a pulse from the now-fully charged Dragon Stone, she spreads her wings and lets it send a rivulet of pale blue power into her form. She laughs wildly, violet flames kindling at every hoof and washing upward over her, and leaps into a triumphant hover with horn and wings alight in blue fire and a spot of this same color flaring on her chest. The beam feeding magic to her breaks at this point.)

Misty: *(from throne room below)* Opaline! *(Who growls to herself and lands.)* HELLLP!
HELLLP!

Opaline: That Misty. *(The energy extinguishes itself.)* That pony will be the end of me.

(The leeching green beam fades away, and the Dragon Stone settles back into its stand and goes dark. Cut to just outside the open door to this chamber as she exits. Hitch's hooves are dangling into view from above, but she takes no notice on her way out. Tilt up to frame him being held aloft by Zipp, who carries him through; inside, he gasps around the torch-end upon discovering Sparky's predicament and Zipp sets him down.)

Hitch: Sparky!

(Outside the windows, the camera aiming downward from above; the pegasus positions herself directly beneath Sparky's bubble, belly up and hooves spread.)

Zipp: Don't worry, Sparky! We're here to rescue you!

(On the second half of this line, cut to Hitch balancing himself on the sill and pressing the tip of the torch-end against the field. It deforms and spits sparks for a long moment before bursting, and Zipp is there to stop gravity from claiming the dragon.)

Zipp: Gotcha!

(She flies in and passes him off to Hitch, who laughs in pure relief and cuddles him; the torch-end has been put aside.)

Hitch: I'm never letting you go again.

(To which Sparky responds with a happy little coo. Down in the throne room, Misty sits in the seat of power, lashed into it by a mass of vines; Izzy and Pipp stand to either side.)

Misty: Okay, she's coming.

Izzy: *(winking)* Okay. You got this.

(The "captive" gives an answering wink and affirmative grunt—the group has laid a trap, for which she is acting as bait. Cut to Opaline flying down the tree-root ramp into the room.)

Misty: *(from o.s.)* HELLLP! *(Overhead view of all four.)* HELLLP!

Opaline: Misty, what did you do?!? *(Izzy and Pipp brace themselves.)*

Misty: They overpowered me, Opaline! They tricked me and tied me up!

Opaline: Where are the rest of—

(Something clicks in the brain behind those deep blue eyes, and she cuts herself off with a gasp that yields to an infuriated growl. Flying back up the ramp, she finds one very angry orange earth pony blocking her way.)

Sunny: So, you're the evil alicorn.

Opaline: Oh, is that what they're calling me? *(Horn/wings/chest ignite; she rises higher.)* Better make it "evil fire alicorn." OPALINE ARCANA!!

(The incendiary feathers spread as wide as they will go, creating a gust of wind that flutters the banners hanging by the windows.)

Izzy: Uh-oh.

Pipp: Oh, dear.

Sunny: Twilight warned us about you! You're the one who tried to steal magic all those moons ago!

Opaline: And now that I have the dragon's power, I'll do it again right now!

(She cranks off a deranged cackle and fires a beam at Sunny, who jumps clear and slides down the ramp. A second shot barely misses her, and the snarling mare continues the assault as Sunny reaches floor level and does a circuit of the pool.)

Sunny: Ha-ha! Missed!

(Opaline roars savagely and fires again, tracing along the contour of the ramp and ripping into the tree whose roots form it. Sunny slams on the brakes and looks upward with a gasp, the camera shifting to her perspective as a huge slab of severed wood plummets toward her. Its impact blacks out the screen; snap immediately to the trio at the throne, Izzy gasping in terror.)

Izzy: Sunny!

(Pipp and Misty mirror her gasp before the camera cuts back to Sunny, now pinned under the chunk and straining to free herself as Opaline hovers nearby.)

Opaline: Look at me. Do you really think you could stop a fire alicorn?

(Her malicious laugh is rudely cut off by a magically propelled book that whaps her upside the head. She yells in pain and follows that up with an enraged growl; cut to the perpetrator—Izzy, who is slinging other literature with all the horn-power she can work up.)

Izzy: *(between throws)* Leave...Sunny...alone!

(Back to Opaline on this last word; she dodges one but takes another to the face, which she shakes off only to be struck by a hoof-thrown bottle immediately afterward. A glare in its

direction informs her that Pipp has taken flight with all the glassware she can carry; the next throw is the nearest of misses.)

Pipp: Yes! Leave her alone!

Opaline: YOU PESTS!!

(Separate force bubbles snap into existence around the two, Pipp getting unceremoniously grounded when hers slams to the floor. Sunny gasps in horror and redoubles her efforts to unpin herself, while the two fields crash together and merge to leave Izzy and Pipp trapped together.)

Opaline: *(hovering closer)* You weak little ponies can't stop Opaline Arcana!

(A double gasp from the pair; now Sunny's horn/wings flicker on and off as she heaves at the wooden weight. Here comes a fresh blast from Opaline, lancing straight and true toward the bubble—but a fully powered-up Sunny gets loose, plants herself in its path, and creates a hemispherical shield to block it, her saddlebag gone. The next two lines overlap.)

Izzy: Yeah!

Pipp: Whoo!

Opaline: Uh-oh.

Sunny: Maybe alone, we can't. But together, we can do anything! *(to herself, straining)* Come on!

(Her barrier expands outward, forcing Opaline's beam back and smashing her in the face to throw her across the room. Sunny snarls and takes flight, leading to a vicious dogfight that ranges up and down through the open space. Every time that the screaming Opaline throws a beam, Sunny either dodges or throws up a shield just long enough to stop it cold.)

Izzy: Yes! You can do it, Sunny!

Pipp: Way to glow, Sunny!

(Hitch and Zipp watch from the top of the ramp, a drowsy Sparky riding back of the former, who once again has the torch-end in his teeth.)

Zipp: Yeah! We have your back!

Hitch: GET HER!!

(Hooves and wings bring them down to floor level, and Hitch pops the bubble holding Izzy/Pipp with his torch-end and then drops it. The midair free-for-all continues, with Opaline still unable to lay a magical glove on her opposite number. As the four onlookers not tied to the throne cheer for their friend, one cutie mark after another blazes to life.)

Misty: *(softly)* You can do it, Sunny.

(Her new mark does the same; as if on cue, streams of energy begin to emanate from the five symbols, each in a pastel shade of its wearer's coat. These snake into Sunny's body, setting off

the stars on her haunch—and Opaline has time for exactly one deep, mind-blown gasp before Sunny lowers her head and plows her shield into the purple face. She drops out of the air, the beam from her horn slashing raggedly through one banner before going out. The cut edges ignite in blue flame, and she crashes down in a most undignified heap with the severed portion settling over her and all her fire out. Sunny lands and conjures up a bubble around cloth and conqueror alike. Opaline thrashes her way up to all fours and slams her front hooves against the field with a shout, but can do nothing to affect it; Izzy just scoffs at her.)

Izzy: It's no use! Those bubbles are horn-proof!

Pipp: And sticky!

(Remembering her own experience in this respect, she allows herself a revolted grunt and lets her tongue loll out; sure enough, Opaline needs a bit of muscle to pull one foreleg loose. By the time Sunny crosses to the group, Hitch has wrapped a protective foreleg around...)

Sunny: Sparky! *(nuzzling him)* Oh, I'm so glad you're okay.

Opaline: You can't keep me here forever!

Sunny: *(icily)* No, but I *can* keep you away from my friends. *(to them)* Let's go. *(They head out.)*

Misty: *(as Opaline frees her other foreleg)* Yeah! Get outta here, you ponies!

(As said ponies and their dragon buddy exit the throne room, she lets a gentle smile steal over her face.)

Misty: *(softly, to herself)* Hoof to heart.

(Sunny, in the rear, throws a smile back over her shoulder before clearing out. Opaline conjures up a shield between herself and the one Sunny put around her and, with horn blazing and a groan of supreme exertion, forces it outward until both of them burst. Yellowish glop splatters all over both her and the immediate vicinity, and she snarls through gritted teeth.)

Opaline: THAT WAS OUTRAGEOUS!! NOPONY TRAPS OPALINE!!

(Now she gets a good look at the aftermath of the battle: candles knocked over, books and bottles scattered everywhere, wood gouged out of the ramp.)

Opaline: AND LOOK AT THIS PLACE!! *(Growling, she turns to Misty.)* Those little ponies will pay for this! They may have taken the dragon...

(A flick of one hoof burns away the vines binding the unicorn to the throne.)

Opaline: ...but I've still got all the fire magic I need! *(flying up ramp and o.s.)* Clean this place up, NOW!!

(Misty gasps upon discovering that her cutie mark is still glowing, then giggles once her horn begins to do likewise. She cheerfully hops off the throne and gets to it, levitating items with ease as she zips back and forth.)

Misty: Whoo! Yeah! Whoo!

(Now she adds a giggly little leap and twirl to her tidying-up antics. Dissolve to her floating one last candle holder into place on a side table; she then gasps and shuts off her magic, seeing that Opaline has just returned to the throne room and cleaned herself up. A few bottles are hastily put away by hoof.)

Opaline: Well, that was fast. I should make you clean more often.

(Misty turns to face her, carefully draping her tail over her right haunch to conceal her mark.)

Opaline: I was just going to say that although you may have un-earned your new cutie mark by foolishly letting those ponies capture you, at least they know you work for me now. No reason to pretend to be their friend anymore. *(Giggle.)* That's a good price, no? *(Exit.)*

Misty: Of course! Thanks...Opaline.

(She sneaks a quick look at her bracelet and cutie mark, sighing quietly as the latter item finally stops fizzing. Cut the front lawn of the Brighthouse, the Marestream parked on its side patio under the night sky. Zoom in slowly and cut to Sunny and company gathered around Sparky, who has been deposited on a couch near the fireplace at the back of the entrance hall. His color has improved, and a few toys and a box of snacks have been placed around him. Sunny has dispelled her horn/wings and is wearing her saddlebag again. Zoom in slowly, then cut to the little guy as he burbles contentedly and Zipp covers him with his favorite little blanket as seen in "Have You Seen This Dragon?")

Hitch: Are you sure there's nothing else we can get you, Sparky?

(Sparky just nods, yawns, and cuddles with a squeaky crab.)

Sunny: I think he's okay. He's just gonna need some rest.

(Which he proceeds to get, as he has instantly conked out and begun to snore with gusto.)

Sunny: A lot of rest. *(Hitch sighs and plops to his haunches.)*

Pipp: Can I just say how *amazing* Sunny was as an alicorn? (*"Amazing" is sung. Next two lines overlap.*)

Hitch: She was incredible!

Izzy: Oh, yeah. Abso-toot-ly.

Sunny: I guess I was right. The key to unlocking my alicorn power is to do my best to help when my friends are in need—and not being stuck in a magical no-magic bubble. *(Sparky yawns and shifts a bit; zoom out slowly.)* Seeing my friends in danger brought out a whole bunch of abilities that I didn't even know I had.

Misty: *(from o.s.)* Me too.

(All eyes turn toward the front; cut to frame her, having let herself in. She is wearing the purple cloak she used in the prologue, its hood up, along with a most contrite expression. The doors close behind her.)

Misty: It's what finally gave me the courage to be who I should have been this whole time. *(She puts the hood down; the others smile.)* Myself. And who I really am is a pony who would never betray a friend.

(Close-up of the bracelet on her foreleg.)

Misty: *(from o.s.)* I know what I did was wrong. *(Back to her, removing and holding it forth.)* I totally understand if you all hate me now.

Sunny: *(from o.s.)* We don't. *(She and the others approach, Zipp hovering.)*

Misty: What?

Izzy: We don't hate anypony.

Pipp: Yeah. I mean, what you did was wrong— *(Zipp lands.)*

Zipp: Really wrong. *(Dirty look from Pipp...)*

Hitch: —but what you did in the end was right. *(...followed by a smile/nod.)*

Zipp: Really right.

Sunny: Sometimes ponies make mistakes. *(She fits the bracelet back onto Misty's foreleg.)* But it's what we do in the end that counts.

Misty: I promise, you can trust me now. I'll do whatever it takes to help you defeat Opaline. *(raising a front hoof, touching it to her chest)* Hoof to heart.

(Five forgiving smiles and five raised forelegs say it all—apology received and accepted—and the camera cuts to a spot between the six. Sunny and company have already put one hoof each into view, forming a semicircle, and Misty puts hers into the center of the arc.)

All six: *(from o.s.)* Hoof... *(Cut to them, touching their chests.)* ...to heart.

(The warm fuzzy moment is broken up by a monster snore from the direction of the couch; cut to Sparky, a green bubble forming at one nostril and popping as he keeps sawing toothpicks. The ponies laugh gently at the sight.)

All six: *(softly, repeating the motions)* Hoof to heart.

(Cut to a long shot of the Brighthouse's lower portion, zooming out slowly, then dissolve to one outside the windows of the ritual chamber in Opaline's castle. Zoom in slowly and cut to her inside, the zoom continuing; the inert Dragon Stone sits on the central table, but she ignores it in favor of a violet fire she has lit on an upraised front hoof. She waves it from side to side as she speaks.)

Opaline: Hmmm...if one dragon is awake, then the rest must be stirring.

(On these last three words, the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of the flames, which form into a vividly glowing silhouette of such a beast, screeching and spreading phantasmal wings.)

Opaline: With more dragon fire, I'll be able to steal all of the magic, including the alicorn's!

(Her perspective of the beast image, zooming in slowly.)

Opaline: *(softly, gently)* Wake up, my dragon darlings.

(Extreme close-up of her eyes, each widened pupil reflecting it.)

Opaline: Opaline's coming.

(Cut back to it, exhaling a gale of fire that fills the screen.)