

THE CUTIE RE-MARK—PART ONE

Written by Josh Haber
Produced by Devon Cody
Story editing by Meghan McCarthy
Consulting direction by Jayson Thiessen
Supervising direction by Jim Miller
Directed by Denny Lu

Transcribed by Alan Back (ajback@yahoo.com)

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Twilight Sparkle standing behind a lectern.)

Twilight: If somepony had told me when I was a blank flank that one day I'd give a speech to a class at Celestia's School of Magic, I wouldn't have believed it. But...

(Long pause, followed by a brief, nervous grin and a slight scowl. Warming up her horn, she floats a stack of note cards up off the lectern and sorts through them for a moment—she has lost her train of thought. The smile quickly returns to her face, though, and she tucks them away.)

Twilight: ...I hope that I've been up to the task, because I can tell that all of you are, and that the future of Equestrian magic is in good hooves.

(She is met by the sound of a solitary individual's clapping, and a long shot of the entire area discloses her audience as Spike. The two are in a lecture hall at Celestia's School for Gifted Unicorns, and a solitary overhead light picks her out while he stands among the cushions scattered on the raised tiers of seats. The evening sky can be seen through the window.)

Spike: *(faking enthusiasm)* Wow! *(Chuckle.)* That was even better than the first eleven times. *(He clears his throat; she sighs petulantly when the camera cuts to her.)*

Twilight: I don't know, Spike. *(floating cards up, stepping out from lectern)* I'd like to be able to get through the whole speech without looking at the cards.

Spike: *(from o.s.)* Come on, Twilight. *(Cut to him.)* You can't be nervous about giving a speech to a bunch of magic students.

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Oh, I'm not nervous, Spike. *(Cut to just behind his shoulder, facing her.)* But I do have to set a good example, especially for magic students. *(Close-up.)* That's why this speech has to be... *(Very long pause.)*

Spike: *(sighing heavily)* Perfect?

Twilight: Exactly. *(returning to lectern; cards put away)* Let's go through it one more time.

(She clears her throat; cut to the crestfallen baby dragon, who flops wearily back against one of the cushions and slumps down on the start of the next line.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* When Princess Celestia asked me to speak to you today, I was honored—*(Long shot of both.)* —to have the opportunity to talk about my favorite subject, magic.

(Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the exterior of Celestia's School, tilting down slowly from rooftop towers to grounds. It is daytime, and unicorns congregate on the lawn and gallop toward the front entrance. Cut to inside the now-packed lecture hall, the camera positioned in the upper rows and aimed toward the floor. During the next line, the door is heard opening and two late arrivals ease in, getting shushed as the camera tilts up to frame Twilight at the lectern. Projected on the screen behind her is an image of three interlocking circles, each showing the face of one Cutie Mark Crusader. The two-part symbols from their cutie marks are shown in the overlaps between each pair of circles; at the central junction of all three is their common shield backdrop.)

Twilight: Obviously the long-term effects of the simultaneous acquisition of cutie marks has yet to be determined, but... *(She pauses to float up a glass of water for a sip, then clears her throat pointedly.)* ...next slide, please?

(When a whole lot of nothing happens, she shades her eyes for a worried glance toward the audience. Cut to Spike, fast asleep next to the projector and snoring noisily. Twilight's old friend Moondancer, intently taking notes on a clipboard held in her aura, gently nudges him awake; after a couple of drowsy blinks, he snaps to and rummages feverishly through a box of slides, nearly dropping two before reaching to insert one of them. As Twilight continues, an image of a sunglasses-wearing Spike enjoying a cool drink on a beach comes up and is replaced by the picture of her and the gang from the end of Part Two of "Twilight's Kingdom"—first upside down, then right-side up.)

Twilight: I can speak from my own experience that the power of cutie mark magic is very real. *(gesturing toward screen; zoom in on it)* And in the instance of my friends and I, it can be traced to a single event.

(New slide: blank except for one wedge that shows a pre-cutie-mark Rainbow Dash in flight and her cloud/lightning-bolt mark. The tip of the wedge, at the center, disappears into a small graphic of the multicolored shock wave from her Sonic Rainboom. The other five fillies are added one by one in a series of further slides, each in a wedge of her own at the moment after the big bang; all are unmarked, but their respective symbols are on display.)

Twilight: *(now o.s.)* Without Rainbow Dash's race to defend Fluttershy's honor, this Rainboom wouldn't have happened. *(Fluttershy, surrounded by animals.)* Fluttershy might never have discovered her love of animals. *(Applejack, gazing out a window toward Sweet Apple Acres and the rainbow arcing over it.)* Applejack might never have realized that she belonged on her farm. *(Pinkie Pie, mane freshly frizzed up and smiling hugely as the rainbow plays across her pupils.)* And Pinkie Pie might never have decided to leave hers. *(Rarity, standing before the huge rock that has split open to reveal its cache of gems.)* It might be hard to imagine Rarity without her sense of fabulousness. *(Twilight, standing over Spike as he emerges from his egg.)* But it's even harder to fathom what my life would be like.

(Zoom out slightly as she steps to the screen, then follow her toward the center of the floor.)

Twilight: Without this Rainboom, I might not have gotten into magic school, Celestia wouldn't have taken me on as her pupil, or sent me to Ponyville to meet my friends.

(Cut to her perspective, panning across the rows of spectators—one of whom is Starlight Glimmer, the proponent of extreme equality who fled for the hills in Part Two of "The Cutie Map.")

Twilight: And the most powerful thing about cutie mark magic that I've found is the connection I share with them.

(Cut to her, eyes going very wide with an unpleasant realization. She shades them and squints across the room; back to her perspective, zeroed in on the spot where Starlight had been sitting only a moment ago. She is nowhere in sight, as confirmed by a quick back-and-forth sweep, but another close-up tells how badly the thought of that mare's presence has rattled Twilight. She shakes her head clear in order to get her mind back on the matter at hand.)

Twilight: But, um... *(floating up note cards)* ...the real question about cutie mark magic is who it seems to affect.

(Cut to a long shot of the hall on the end of this, zooming out slowly, then dissolve to a Ponyville street. She flies down and comes in for a landing, with a backpack-wearing Spike, a wheeled suitcase, and her saddlebags on her back; he hops off, taking the case with him, and the two move off down the block.)

Spike: Starlight Glimmer?

Twilight: I was sure I saw her, Spike. But when I looked again, she was gone. I'm just worried what she could be up to.

Spike: Nothing good, I bet. I heard she wasn't very happy the last time you saw her.

Twilight: Forcing everypony in her village to have the same cutie mark wasn't right. We had to do something. *(Spike stops briefly.)*

Spike: And now she's coming back for revenge.

(Looking ahead, he finds that his boss has stopped dead in the middle of the street, pupils/irises shrunk almost to points over a queasy set of the mouth. A faint, full-body trembling is the only thing distinguishing her from a statue.)

Spike: *(hurrying to her; she snaps out of it)* Uh, or she was just really interested in your speech.

Twilight: Honestly, Spike, I'm not really sure what I saw. *(She smiles as they start toward her castle.)* But as long as I have my friends, I know everything will be all right.

(Dissolve to a wall within the castle. Her saddlebags are levitated into view and hung on a hook, and Spike rolls his suitcase over to park it underneath them. However, he is still wearing his backpack. On the start of the next line, zoom out to frame Twilight crossing the corridor.)

Twilight: Maybe I was just more stressed about that speech than I thought.

Spike: *(laughing, following her)* Yeah. That sounds better than Starlight Glimmer coming back with an evil plot for revenge.

(Extreme close-up of one set of doors, which are magically swung open toward the camera to frame the two travelers entering from the corridor outside.)

Twilight: Well, when you say it like that, it does sound kinda silly. *(Spike stops dead, eyes shrinking to points and ears wilting.)*

Spike: Or it's totally true!

(Total shock sets in on the violet mare's face when she looks across the room. Cut to their perspective—they are at the entrance to the throne room, and the devious unicorn has plunked herself on Fluttershy's throne. Her forelegs are crossed behind her head, and she has propped her hind legs up on the edge of the central map table, which is bare. Zoom in quickly to a close-up, which frames her smirk all too clearly.)

Starlight: *(leaning over table)* Welcome home, Twilight.

(An old scroll is telekinetically brought up from behind the edge and zapped with a beam to send it up toward the tree-stump chandelier. Stopping among the strings of glowing gems, it crackles with energy for a moment before sending a beam into the center of the table. The map manifests itself, spreading out toward the edges, and Twilight and Spike race into the room.)

Twilight: What are you doing, Starlight?

Starlight: *(cackling)* I'd tell you, but I don't want to ruin the surprise. *(She levitates the scroll down and crumples it into a ball.)* Won't be needing that anymore.

(Her magic pitches the wad to bounce across the table. A boiling-mad Twilight fires up her horn, but Starlight's spell causes waves of energy to boil up from the table. She stands up to her hind legs, laughing crazily at the heart of the maelstrom; the beam Twilight fires at this new light show has no effect. A wind begins to blow through the room, nearly sweeping Spike away before he grabs one wing and is pulled in close. Just below the chandelier, a small ball of blinding white

light grows into a glowing, translucent dome set with arcane symbols that tick and shift like the gears of a clock. Starlight grins madly up at this creation, which begins to crackle with sparks around its lower edge, and uses her magic to float herself up toward it.)

(Once Starlight is a few feet away, the dome sucks her into its lower opening like a vacuum cleaner and she disappears from sight. It then contracts to a ball and winks out, the wind dying away in time; only the balled-up parchment on the floor gives any indication that she was ever here. Spike runs to the table, followed by Twilight.)

Spike: Where'd she go?

Twilight: I don't know, Spike— *(Close-up.)* —but I think we better find out.

Spike: *(from o.s.)* I guess we could start with this.

(Looking over her shoulder, she sees him eyeing the scroll and instantly panics.)

Twilight: Spike, no! *(He wraps fingers around it.)* Don't touch that!

(The warning comes too late; as soon as he picks it up, the power surge resumes and the dome forms anew to pull them screaming out of sight. Again it vanishes as abruptly as it appeared, followed by the sound of the doors opening. Pan to frame Pinkie entering the room and wheeling a good-sized three-tier cake on a dolly. She stops for a look around, only to find not a single equine or draconic buddy around to share the sweet stuff.)

Pinkie: Hm.

(So she makes sure it will not go to waste by scarfing down half of it in one gut-busting bite. Cut to Twilight and Spike, hurtling through the space between spaces; Spike has one hand locked onto the now-unrolled scroll, Twilight has her forelegs clamped around his belly, and both are yelling their lungs out. A glowing hourglass appears within this passage, rotating slowly as it drifts away from the camera and disappears into the measureless void of distance. From here, cut to an untroubled patch of blue sky marked only by a few stray clouds. A few sparks spit from nowhere and swell into the magic dome, from which the two unwilling travelers plummet screaming downward. Spike no longer holds the scroll, which flutters out after them.)

(Twilight is first to shut off her lungs and get her brain working, remembering that she has something that can be of use in situations like this—namely, a pair of wings. Flapping like mad, she brings herself into a hover, then wraps Spike up in her field to stop him with inches to spare before he can redecorate a paved runway. The spell dissipates, allowing him to land on his feet as she touches down next to him. Off to one side of the runway is a hangar/barracks built from clouds, and a zoom out from the pair frames more such structures, floating hoops for flight practice, and pegasi of various ages talking and flying around the area. They have wound up at a flight camp in...)

Spike: Cloudsdale? Starlight doesn't even have wings. Why would she come here?

Twilight: I don't know, Spike. But it looked like she could fly with just magic. Keep your eyes open. We don't know what she has planned.

(A tiny little blue/rainbow blur zooms past in the distance as she says this, then doubles back to skim the runway and corkscrew her way between the pair, eliciting a double yelp of surprise. Zoom in slightly.)

Spike: Isn't that... Rainbow Dash?

Twilight: Did Rainbow Dash look really young to you?

(The number-one assistant sets down the backpack he has worn throughout this strange trip as she speaks, then pulls out a pair of binoculars. Cut to his perspective of two foals confronting a third on a cloud several dozen yards away. Filly RD joins them, and on the next line, the lenses are brought up to magnify the scene: Filly RD standing up for Filly FS against Colt Dumbbell and Colt Hoops. The latter colt is the only one of the four who has a cutie mark. This, then, is the lead-up to the race that ended with all six mares receiving their marks in "The Cutie Mark Chronicles.")

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* And I didn't see a cutie mark. You don't think— *(Back to Spike, lowering the binocs; he has the pack on again.)*

Spike: —we traveled back in time to when Rainbow Dash raced the bullies who made fun of Fluttershy and performed her first Sonic Rainboom?

Twilight: *(hoof to forehead)* Spike, only Starswirl the Bearded could do something like that! And even his spell just went back a week! How could Starlight do more than the greatest wizard in Equestria?

(A rustling noise draws both pairs of eyes toward the runway, caused by the dropped scroll that Spike now picks up and reads.)

Spike: *(turning written side toward Twilight)* With this.

(The violet mage gives it a look and almost immediately grimaces in barely contained panic, her wings half-unfurling out of reflex.)

Twilight: Starswirl's spell! Oh, no!

Spike: *(rolling/stowing it)* Come on! Let's go! *(He starts off.)*

Twilight: Go where?

Spike: To watch the race. I don't want to miss the Rainboom.

(He steps off the edge of the runway and onto the cloud plateau on which it is laid out, forgetting that he is most definitely not a pegasus. Gravity drops him through the condensed water vapor like a scaly rock, but Twilight just steps along the pavement with a smile and a glowing horn. Spike floats back up under her control and drops onto her back just in time for her to lift off.)

Spike: Whoa!

(Wipe to an overhead shot of the starting line, high above Equestria, and pan slowly away from it. The three racers are crouched for a fast start, Filly FS stands on a nearby cloud with checkered flag in teeth, and cloud bleachers have been built to either side and are packed with spectator foals. In close-up, Filly FS waves her flag and promptly gets it swept out of her grip when the three rocket past her. She spins and wobbles toward the edge of her cloud and topples out of sight; pan/tilt up to a slightly higher cloud on which Twilight and Spike are watching. She tenses to take flight, but he seizes both wings to reel her in. A tap on the head for attention turns into the chiding waggle of a finger—this is how events actually unfolded—and Filly RD charges on through the course. She has the lead on Colt Dumbbell and Colt Hoops, the first of whom misses a turn and crashes into a column to get firmly stuck and knock himself silly. The grinning daredevil-to-be zooms ahead, only to get body-checked out of view by Colt Hoops.)

Filly RD: (now o.s.) Whoa!

Colt Hoops: (saluting) Heh. Later, Rainbow Crash! (He dives; cut to Filly RD.)

Filly RD: Hey!

(She drops after him and starts to close the gap with remarkable speed—and now things start to go just a bit differently as Starlight slowly rises from a cloud.)

Starlight: (mock pity) Aww, sorry about this.

(She kicks her horn into third gear. Filly RD is now going fast enough to build up the wave front that is the precursor to a Rainboom, with sparks and flecks of color crackling along its length. Just as it seems she is about to either break the barrier or tear herself apart, Starlight's spell connects squarely with her flank and envelops her, bringing her to a complete midair stop. All four legs get pulled in different directions, but end up pointing straight downward.)

Filly RD: Hey! What gives?

(The result of this mucking about is to give Colt Hoops a clear run at the finish line, which he crosses to the spectators' cheers and the disbelief of Twilight and Spike now among them. A quick tilt down to ground level reveals that Filly FS is safe and sound, giggling at the butterflies flitting around her; zoom out to frame the other woodland creatures she first encountered on her unplanned trip down this way. They disperse quietly to their homes, not having been thrown into a fright by the Rainboom, and her face falls at the loss of these companions.)

(Wipe to a stretch of Manehattan apartment buildings, seen from roof level, and zoom out to put Filly AJ in the fore. The camera has backed up into the bedroom she used while staying with her Aunt and Uncle Orange, and she gazes dejectedly over the skyline as the rainbow that was supposed to point the way back to Sweet Apple Acres never appears. Sighing heavily, she closes the curtains and walks off. Another wipe shifts the scene to the fields of the Pie family rock farm, under its gloomy gray sky. Filly PP nudges a small chunk toward a pile with her head, then stands up to wipe the sweat from her face and catch her breath. The two sad blue eyes flick

toward the sky, but there is no blast wave to sweep the clouds away and no rainbow to tangle up her hair and make her smile. She returns to her work.)

(Wipe to Filly RA, standing before a giant rock resting on a ledge—the one whose hidden internal trove of gems sent her horn into overdrive and dragged her out here. No Rainboom means no blast wave means no splitting open; she gives it a disdainful push and walks away, leaving it to tumble off the ledge and crash down o.s. A fourth wipe shifts the scene to Filly TS, straining with all her magical might to hatch the dragon egg presented to her at her entrance exam for Celestia’s School. Without the Rainboom to freak her out, the best she can manage is a feeble spark that only bounces off the egg. The four unicorn examiners in this lecture hall quickly levitate their clipboards and start writing, disapproval clearly etched onto every face, and hers falls in crushing defeat.)

(Wipe to an extreme close-up of Filly RD’s flank and zoom out to frame all of her, remaining caught and held fast in Starlight’s magic. Twilight, with Spike still riding shotgun, flies over to the smug unicorn.)

Twilight: What did you do?

Starlight: You are about to find out.

(The dome forms overhead, sucks Twilight and Spike away into its portal, and disappears to leave Starlight alone in this time. Cut to a stretch of misty, pale blue sky, where it reforms to drop them screaming out of view. A double thud from o.s. below marks their very rough landing, and the portal shrinks away. In close-up at ground level, Twilight has fetched up in a chair that vaguely suggests one of the thrones in her castle; however, most of the back has crumbled away and the portion that remains has gone yellow with age. Also of note is the fact that the walls of the throne room are not visible behind her—only the rolling hills in the distance. A second ruined throne is off to one side. She moans weakly, rubbing her head, and snaps upright to find the table laid out with its map—now tinted an unfriendly red instead of its usual cool blue.)

Twilight: I don’t know what Starlight’s up to yet— *(Spike straightens up into view, rubbing his head.)* —but we’d better figure it out before it’s too late. *(His eyes pop.)*

Spike: Um, Twilight? *(hesitantly, pointing ahead)* I think it already is.

(She looks in the indicated direction and pulls in a disbelieving gasp, her jaw falling open for good measure. Cut to a long shot of the area; except for the map table and the remnants of a few thrones, her entire castle is simply gone from the grassy meadow in which it should be standing. A waterfall thunders down into a river that runs behind the plain where it had once stood, sending up curtains of mist that shroud the hills in haze. Zoom out slowly and snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to this radically altered tableau and zoom in slowly.)

Spike: Uh, Twilight? Where's your castle?

Twilight: The map pulled us back. *(Close-up of her.)* But whatever Starlight did in the past changed things here!

Spike: *(from o.s.)* But why? *(Cut to him.)* And how did we get here? And where's here?

(A bit of her magic fishes the scroll out of his backpack and unrolls it; on the start of the next line, zoom out to frame her crossing to him.)

Twilight: More like *when*. *(She paces, reading.)*

Spike: What do you mean?

Twilight: Starlight altered Starswirl's spell, then somehow used it on the map to travel into the past and change something. Once she did, the map pulled us back to the present.

Spike: So we're back where—I mean, when we started?

Twilight: Not exactly.

(She takes a closer look at the map, which proves to have rather extensive changes all over the place—including several twisting ridges of dark, jagged mountains. The scroll has been put away now.)

Twilight: Everything's different. Look. *(He pulls himself up to see. Overhead shot, just behind them; tilt up slowly to frame the layout.)* The map doesn't even make sense anymore. The Crystal Empire takes up half of Equestria!

(By the time she finishes speaking, she and Spike are out of frame and that northern realm is seen in uncomfortably good detail. It has gone as dark as the mountains that lead to it and is protected by a glimmering force field. Back to the pair.)

Spike: Plus, there's the whole "missing castle" thing.

Twilight: Right! *(Both think hard for a moment.)* This is too big to handle on our own.

Spike: *(dryly)* You think?

Twilight: We need to find our friends and get help!

(Dissolve to the two walking along a dirt road that winds through what might once have been a lush grassland. The vegetation has long since died or been stripped away, and denuded trees and bushes line the path. Zoom out slowly, then cut to a slow pan through the streets of a thoroughly ravaged and deserted Ponyville: doors and windows boarded up, gaping holes in the thatched roofs, spots of decay on the walls. A second such pan follows, then a cut to just behind Carrot Top, staring forlornly at them from an upper-story window as Spike waves to her. Outside again; she pulls the curtains shut, and the camera zooms out to frame him. The sky here has gone a faded gray.)

Spike: I'm getting a bad feeling about this, Twilight.

(Cut to just behind Twilight, who is now topping a rise and not paying attention to the silhouetted building that slowly emerges beyond it as the camera moves with her.)

Twilight: I know, Spike. But this is Ponyville. How bad could things be?

(Turning her eyes ahead, she stops short next to Spike in the structure's lumpy shadow.)

Spike: Is that Sugarcube Corner?

(A long shot of the edifice reveals that it is just about the only building in town that has not gone to ruin—but it bears only a superficial resemblance to the shop they know so well. All of the gingerbread/candy-cane décor is gone, including the cane held by the weather vane, and replaced by a drab beige paint job and a shingled brown roof. The violet chimneys styled as rock-candy projections have had their icing accents stripped off, the upper-story loft is built as a loaf of bread rather than a pair of stacked cupcakes, and the hanging sign displays a loaf instead of a cupcake. The top half of the front door stands open, and all the lights are out.)

Twilight: I don't understand.

(Spike gasps and runs off to one side. Cut to the upper portion of the Carousel Boutique and tilt down slowly to the sound of his panicked breathing and running. The windows and front door are boarded up, the horse-decorated sign that had hung over the door now lies propped against a side wall, and the surrounding trees and bushes are dead and bare under a darker gray sky. Spike rushes to the door.)

Spike: Rarity?

(After a bit of pounding against the wood, he darts to a window and hoists himself up to peer through a gap in the planks covering it. Sweat runs down his face in close-up.)

Spike: Rarity?

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* I don't think she's here, Spike. *(Cut to frame both; he lets himself down.)* I'm not sure anything we know is the same. *(She gathers him into a hug with a smile; zoom in.)* But I know one place that could never change.

(Cut to a close-up of the apple-cutout board that hangs above the entrance to the Sweet Apple Acres barnyard. The chains holding it up creak faintly as it swings back and forth, and the camera zooms out to put the lie to the winged unicorn's words. Approaching the fence, she and Spike find themselves staring at a main barn that has had a sizable extension built onto the far end and a water tower added to its roof. A chute leads from an upper-story window down to ground level alongside stacks of barrels. Three soot-belching smokestacks project skyward from behind the structure, and a pulley frame is set up next to an outbuilding that is making its own contribution to the bad air. Neither Twilight nor Spike can believe their eyes.)

(Cut to just inside one grimy window as she steps up to its exterior and rubs a spot clean so she can press her face to it. Her eyes pop in surprise, the camera zooming out to show a conveyor belt of open cans whose labels bear Granny Smith's face. One by one, they are carried under a

nozzle that fills them with applesauce. Elsewhere, a large pot steams on a stovetop, its lid rattling a bit before a rope tied to the handle lifts it away. A second conveyor dumps in a fresh load of apples, and the lid drops back into place. Now the cans move along their belt, having been fitted with lids, and a large mallet swings down to pound each one into place. Zoom out from this operation to frame the entire interior of the barn. Applejack and Big Macintosh are minding the cannery, dressed in brown coveralls/aprons that sport both camouflage patches and more than a few work-related stains. Cloth surgical masks cover both muzzles, and they wear close-fitting camouflage caps with holes cut for their ears; the tails are bound in hairnets, as are the exposed mane portions that run down their necks. Their forelocks are left free, and the band of Applejack's cap has a small bow tied to rest above hers.)

(Cut to outside the window. Twilight trades a hopelessly bewildered look with Spike, who has hoisted himself up to the sill, and Applejack impassively rolls a barrel into view from around the corner. She has removed her mask.)

Twilight: Applejack?

(She rushes over and gleefully hugs the working mare, who pushes her back before speaking in a humorless, no-nonsense tone. Not a flicker of recognition from the hard green eyes.)

Applejack: What can I do for you? (She starts moving the barrel again.)

Twilight: It's so good to see you! (Spike catches up to her.) We couldn't find Pinkie or Rarity or Fluttershy or Rainbow Dash— (Applejack rolls her cargo into a waiting cart.) —but I just knew you'd still be here.

Applejack: Of course I am. (Tip barrel upright.) This is my home. (Shove it up against the others.) But who in tarnation is Pinkie-Bow and Flutter-Dash... (She passes them.) ...or you, for that matter?

Twilight: (stunned) You...don't know who I am?

Applejack: (now o.s.) Nope. (rolling another barrel toward cart) Honestly, the only name I recognize is Rarity, but she left for Manehattan years ago.

Spike: (to Twilight) Probably to become a world-famous fashion designer, I bet.

Applejack: (now o.s. again) Not that I know of. (Cut to her.) Last I heard, she went to help with the cause like everypony else. (She closes the cart's tailgate.)

Twilight: The cause?

Applejack: The war against King Sombra and the Crystal Empire?

Twilight, Spike: What?!?

Applejack: (suspiciously) Where have you two been? (Close-up of Spike.)

Spike: Actually, it's "when." (Tilt up to Twilight.)

Twilight: I know this is hard to believe, but you and I and those other ponies I mentioned are friends!

Applejack: Did you bump your head on a crate of cider or somethin'?

Twilight: I'm telling you the truth. And if you come with me, I'll prove it.

(She gallops off, Spike scrambling after her. The blond canner turns back to her cart, but gets no further once the Princess's magic aura envelops her and tows her away. Dissolve to a clearer patch of blue sky and tilt down slowly.)

Applejack: *(from o.s.)* Well, I'll admit—

(The camera motion brings her, Twilight, and Spike into view around the map table.)

Applejack: —I've lived in these here parts my whole life and I've never seen this before.

Spike: There's also supposed to be a castle that goes with it. *(Close-up of Twilight and Applejack.)*

Applejack: But I still don't see what this has to do with you and I being friends. *(Zoom out slowly.)*

Twilight: Another pony named Starlight Glimmer used this map to travel through time and change things in the past. For some reason, the map's here, but everything else is different.

Applejack: Different, how?

Twilight: Well, for one thing, where we came from, there's no war with King Sombra.

(The orange-tan face slides from skepticism to muted despondency at this prospect.)

Twilight: Maybe you could tell us how the war started. Then we can figure out when everything changed.

Applejack: That's easy enough. *(Close-up; she sighs, the camera tilting down toward the map.)* When the Crystal Empire returned, it brought King Sombra back with it.

(As she finishes speaking, the view dissolves to a long overhead shot of the actual Crystal Empire, standing under a lurid red sky and ringed by the jagged peaks Twilight and Spike saw in the revised map. The Crystal Castle is a thing of deep gray/purple peril, tipped and studded with lethally sharp barbs and crags. Cut to a balcony; King Sombra—very much in one piece, as seen during Princess Celestia's history lesson in Part One of "The Crystal Empire"—steps out, torches flaring up purple/green/white at the railing. The only difference between then and now is in the whites of his eyes—white rather than a nauseous green. The camera tilts down to ground level, where—again just as before—a long, lusterless line of crystal ponies trudges past, forelegs shackled and connected one to the next by the chains running through the collars around their necks.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* And it didn't take long for him to force every one of his subjects to fight for him against Equestria.

(Profile close-up of one weary stallion, already clad in dark spiked armor. An equally unpleasant-looking helmet is magically clapped onto his head, obscuring everything but his ears; a black crest of hair and two short red horns stand up on top, and a sick green light comes to life in the eye slits. Sombra stands before a platoon of ponies equipped with this armor, as well as cannon guards on all four legs, and the camera pans slowly along the assembly. Attacked to each pony's armor is a tail to match the helmet crest. Dissolve to a close-up of a patch of snow,

through which the dark troops begin to march, then cut to a close-up of a grim-faced Celestia raising a foreleg. As she points ahead, the camera zooms out to show her standing on a ridge; armored, spear-carrying unicorn and earth pony soldiers advance as pegasi rip through the cloud-choked skies above.)

(In close-up, three aerial troops pull ahead, giving a clear view of their blue coverall-style flight suits with yellow accents; they also wear visored helmets marked with yellow lightning bolts. As they peel off, the maneuver brings their tails into view, allowing a positive identification of one of the three as Rainbow; the tail is cut shorter than usual, and her left wing has been replaced by a fully functional steel prosthesis. Sombra's and Celestia's forces thunder toward one another, every throat voicing a savage war cry, and collide in a blast of snow and dust. Pan slowly through the free-for-all of grappling and brawling that instantly breaks out, then cut to a wall of haze through which Sombra makes a slow, inexorable advance onto the battlefield. Warming up his wickedly curved horn, he raises himself off the permafrost on a wall of massive, dark violet crystals. A few of Celestia's soldiers stop their charge just in time to avoid hitting the barricade headfirst, and their foe just laughs down at them from his catbird seat.)

(One, two, three of his conscripts get the sense knocked out of them by Rainbow; when she lands on the contested ground, though, a fourth drops onto her back. She throws him off with ease, losing her helmet and fully exposing her face. The forelock has grown long enough to hang down to her nose, while the portion of mane running down her neck is cut short and sharply upswept; a scar bisects her left eye socket, and a ragged chunk is missing from that ear. Her features set in an unyielding grimace, she charges back into the fray.)

(Tilt quickly up to the top of a cliff that stands behind the battle and zoom in. Something massive begins to move up the slope and into view; cut to its level—an enormous boulder, being pushed by two of Sombra's fighters. It tumbles over the edge, and the daredevil finds herself in its rapidly growing shadow and throws a panicked glance up the cliff as it whistles through the air on its deadly plunge. Before it can turn her into multicolored mulch, two figures in dark gray-brown coveralls with knee/hock pads leap up toward it from opposite sides and begin pummeling it relentlessly with their front hooves, chewing through it like a blowtorch through butter. Pinkie is on the right, her sister Maud on the left, their manes/tails straight and cut considerably shorter than usual. The camera cuts to a split-screen close-up of the two pulverizing ponies, showing the scuffs on their faces and the rock-filled pouches clipped to their belts, then back to its previous distance. They finish reducing the boulder to gravel and slabs, which rain down harmlessly around Rainbow, and drop to the ground on either side of her to salute before racing off. The battle-scarred pegasus takes flight again; cut to a visibly horrified Celestia walking among her fallen forces.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* And even with Princess Celestia leadin' the charge...

(Four Sombra soldiers burst up out of the snow to pen her in during this line. She counters by generating a force field around herself and expanding it sharply outward to plow them away. Cut to a set of boat docks in Manehattan, panning slowly from water to land; sheep are being

unloaded from every sailing ship at anchor, under the supervision of Derpy Hooves, in khaki coveralls and cap.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* ...it still takes every last pony in Equestria...

(The camera passes a stack of crates, behind which the view wipes to Fluttershy shearing the woolly beasts at top speed in a barnyard. Her mane/tail are cut short, and she is decked out in khaki utilities and a fair bit of mud from her work.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* ...doin' their part...

(Next the camera passes a pile of wool and the view wipes to a workshop in which a number of ponies, including Rarity, toil at sewing machines. The weary white unicorn, in dark gray coveralls and cap, wears her mane/tail short and raggedly cut. She pauses briefly to wipe her forehead.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* ...workin' day and night...

(A completed set of coveralls floats away from her workstation and onto a huge pile.)

Applejack: *(voice over)* ...to keep up the fight.

(Behind the mass of standard-issue clothing, the view wipes once more to a train station platform and the pan stops. Ponies of varied ages and sizes are lined up here, each wearing a pair of loaded saddlebags and being stared at by the image of Sombra on a propaganda poster. A guard unicorn stallion transfers a package of gear from his control to that of the unicorn mare at the head of the line, and she turns to board the train—off to boot camp and the front lines. The train whistle pierces the air as steam billows from the locomotive to fill the screen.)

(The view clears to give a close-up of a thunderstruck Twilight.)

Twilight: I just can't believe it! We stopped King Sombra! *(Zoom out; she grabs Applejack's shoulders beseechingly.)* You and me and all of our friends!

Applejack: *(pushing her back)* But we aren't friends, at least not here.

Twilight: *(softly)* Right.

Applejack: Look. I hope all this helped, but— *(walking off)* —I really need to get back to cannin' those apples.

Twilight: Thank you. We're going to set things right. *(Applejack stops with a quiet sigh.)*

Applejack: I hope you do. *(She continues on her way.)*

Spike: *(to Twilight)* So how are we gonna set things right?

Twilight: *(shrilly)* I DON'T KNOW!

(She lets her face plunk onto the table; in close-up, she lifts it away and calms down.)

Twilight: The only thing we know for sure is that Starlight stopped the Rainboom. (*Zoom out slightly; Spike crosses to her.*)

Spike: And that the map's still here. (*She thinks briefly and comes up with a gasp and smile.*)

Twilight: Spike, that's it! (*This outburst startles him into falling behind the table.*) The map is connected to the Tree of Harmony! (*He climbs back up.*) It must sense that something isn't right! That's why it's still here!

(Close-up of the baby dragon.)

Twilight: (*from o.s., floating scroll out of his backpack*) I'll just use Starlight's version of the spell— (*Cut to her, unrolling it.*) —and go back a little earlier and stop her before she even knows we're there!

(The document is levitated up a bit higher above the table, where she proceeds to sock it with a beam from her horn. Just as in Act One, the energy washes upward from the table and the dome portal opens to draw them toward itself. Spike snags the scroll as they ascend past it.)

(Cut to a long shot of the Cloudsdale flight camp. The passage opens above the floating cloud hoops and ejects them toward the runway; Spike launches into a terror-stricken scream, having packed the scroll away, but cuts himself off as Twilight's magic gently brings him to a high-altitude stop. She hovers composedly next to him.)

Twilight: All we have to do now is find Starlight and—

(She never gets to finish that thought, as a beam of the meddling mare's magic lances into view for a direct hit on them both. They are left encased in a single giant blue crystal, unable to do anything but blink as it drops o.s. A few puffs of cloud float up to mark its muffled impact; cut to them, stuck in the water-vapor turf next to the runway and sinking at an almost imperceptible rate.)

Starlight: (*from o.s.*) Well, finding her will be easy— (*Cut to her, self-levitating across to them.*) —but stopping her's gonna be harder than you think! (*She pulls up alongside the imprisoned pair.*) Sorry to disappoint you, but I created that spell to send myself back in time. So even when you cast it, I still get sent back here.

(Extreme close-up of the Princess's frozen face, zooming out to frame the gloating unicorn on the start of the next line.)

Starlight: It wasn't difficult to change Starswirl's spell. He'd already done the hard part. But figuring out I could use the map to go to any time or place *and* pull you along with me? (*Nasty chuckle.*) I even impressed myself with that. (*Cut to within the crystal; her voice slightly muffled by it.*) I knew you'd try to stop me. You're *so* predictable. Why else would I leave the scroll behind? Touching it triggered the map to whisk you here and watch me erase the one thing that linked you with your friends.

(A crazed grin is followed by a long shot of the three; the crystal has now sunk nearly halfway into the cloud, and she lands on it to drive it in a bit deeper and speed the slippage. Her self-levitation spell fades out.)

Starlight: *My village was a sanctuary of equality, where nopony's cutie mark allowed them to feel superior! (Close-up.) It was a special place, and you and your friends took it away!*

(Her venomous scowl gives way to a truly baffled look, and a longer shot tells the tale: the crystal holding Twilight and Spike has gone all the way through the cloud, on which she is now standing. Rolling her eyes in disgust over her hubris, she restarts her spell and maneuvers herself away; tilt down to show the crystal now protruding from the cloud's lower surface and still sinking. Starlight brings herself in next to it.)

Starlight: *(increasingly unhinged)* Now it's my turn to take something special from you! Without the Rainboom, you and your friends will never form your special cutie mark bond! Cutie marks for cutie marks! Sounds like a fair trade to me!

(A flick of one hoof against the glassy surface dislodges the whole thing to let it plummet o.s. Cut to an extreme close-up of it, seen from above and hurtling away from the camera toward the distant grasslands of Equestria—much too far away for any living creature's comfort. Twilight and Spike can only stare in frozen, mute horror as the mineral mass carries them toward what will surely be the last, roughest, most spectacular landing wipeout of their lives. Snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a very long shot of the flight camp, the trapped Princess and dragon visible only as a minute speck accelerating toward the earth below. They continue their fall in close-up and drop past the camera, which swivels downward to keep them in frame for a moment, and Twilight manages to scrunch her face up in desperate concentration as her horn ignites. An aura begins to spread from its tip with agonizing slowness—and in another very long shot, the hunk of crystal disintegrates with a flash to leave two specks in midair. One stops dead, while the other keeps right on going—Twilight and Spike, respectively. Cut to the winged mare, hovering and smiling serenely at her breakout success.)

Spike: *(from o.s., drawn-out, sobbing)* TWIIIIIIIGHT!!

(During this one hyperextended word, her self-satisfaction turns to a freaked-out glance downward and the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of him, seen from above and dropping away fast.)

Twilight: Oops!

(She hits the gas and zooms down after him; he, on the other hand, just yells and flails uselessly at the air, dropping straight through a cloud. A well-timed swoop allows her to snap him up in a foreleg with no loss of speed.)

Spike: Thanks.

Twilight: No problem, Spike. At least now we know exactly what we have to do!

(She flies o.s. Wipe to a stretch of hoops on the course above the flight camp; the two of them peek out from behind a nearby cloud for a quick look. Nothing going on, so she teleports them over to one hoop so they can scout from opposite sides of it. Two more pops take them out of sight and deposit them behind a different cloud; Twilight risks a glance from here, then pulls her head back down and comes up flying with Spike on her back. They dart into a third cloud and push their faces out through its billows.)

Twilight: Okay. Keep your eyes peeled. *(Spike whips out his binoculars.)*

Spike: Right!

Twilight: *(as he starts using them; she shades her eyes)* We have to stop Starlight as soon as Rainbow Dash and those bullies race by.

(Close-up; he lowers the instrument, green eyes widening in surprise.)

Spike: Um, Twilight?

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* So be ready.

Spike: I know, but— *(Cut to her.)*

Twilight: Because she could pop up anywhere! *(One clawed finger taps her shoulder for attention.)*

Spike: *(from o.s.)* Like— *(Both again; he points down to one side.)* —over there?

(Her magic pulls the binoculars over to her own eyes, and she cranes her neck out over the cloud's edge for a better view. Now it is her turn to register pure shock, an image of one popping eye appearing in each objective lens, and she sucks in a sharp gasp for good measure. Pan/tilt down quickly to the cloud plateau next to the runway, where Starlight is addressing Colt Dumbbell and Colt Hoops, with Filly FS standing next to her.)

Starlight: *(sweetly)* Just remember how you'd feel if someone said those things to you.

(The two colts trade a chastened look—she has managed to head them off at the pass without Filly RD getting wind of their taunts, evidently. Twilight comes in for a landing with Spike on her back and the binocs put away, and she is not too happy about this swerve.)

Twilight: What's going on here?

Starlight: Oh, I was just reminding these two colts how hurtful teasing can be.

Twilight: Well, don't!

(Cut to a slow pan across her audience; the three foals trade confused murmurs as the goody-goody unicorn puts on a savagely triumphant little smile. Back to Twilight, who realizes just how dumb she has made herself sound and tries to play it off.)

Twilight: I mean...you were?

Starlight: Of course! In a world where everypony is unique— *(ruffling Filly FS's mane)* —some are bound to feel more special than others. *(leaning into Twilight's face)* But that isn't a license to be cruel, is it? *(She backs off.)*

Twilight: *(a bit flustered)* No. Of course not.

Starlight: *(lifting Filly FS's chin, gathering her and Colt Hoops into a hug)* Oh, isn't it shame we don't live in a world where everypony is equal? No one would ever tease anyone there. Wouldn't that be nice?

Filly FS, Colt Dumbbell, Colt Hoops: *(nodding)* Mmm-hmm!

Twilight: *(panicked)* No! It wouldn't! *(catching herself)* I mean...it'd be nice not to be teased, of course, but...that's not the same thing!

(This bizarre argument gets her a round of weird looks from the foals and a narrow-eyed smile from Starlight.)

Colt Hoops: Come on, Fluttershy. Maybe I can help you get through the course this time.

Filly FS: Well, I...I sure could use the practice.

(All three exit the scene together as Twilight advances menacingly toward their impromptu counselor. Zoom in slowly.)

Twilight: I know you only convinced those bullies to not tease Fluttershy to stop the Rainboom!

Starlight: Aw, that's not true. I convinced them not to be bullies because everypony should be equal. *(scowling)* Stopping the Rainboom is just a bonus.

(The rancor in Twilight's expression is a match for hers as Filly RD streaks past behind her, a blur of sky-blue and vivid hues. Spike is first to notice and point after her.)

Spike: Look! *(Filly RD flies on.)*

Twilight: This isn't over yet! *(She lifts off.)*

Starlight: *(smiling nastily, calling after her)* If you say so!

(As the junior speedster threads through hoop after hoop, a broadly grinning Twilight pulls into view, leaving the end of her tail cut off by the edge of the screen.)

Twilight: Hi!

(Zoom out slightly to show that Spike has a death grip on the streaked dark blue hank of hair. He waves with his free hand.)

Filly RD: *(uneasily)* Um...hi?

Twilight: You think you can stop for a minute?

Filly RD: Sure!

(She instantly slams on the brakes, but Twilight's reflexes are far too slow to duplicate the move and she barrels o.s. A muffled whump and a few puffy white wisps float back, and here comes the less-than-adept flyer and her rider, both covered in bits of the cloud they have just hit.)

Twilight: I hear you're pretty fast. *(Close-up of the youngster.)*

Filly RD: "Pretty fast"? Please! I'm even faster than that. *(All three again; Twilight and Spike are clean.)*

Twilight: Okay! So, um... *(nudging her)* ...hey, you want to race?

Filly RD: Um, that wouldn't really be fair. *(Big grin from Twilight.)* I mean, you're a full-grown pony, and... wait. Are you an alicorn?

Twilight: *(egging her on, foreleg around shoulders)* Come on. I thought you were fast.

(The baby dragon gives a beaming thumbs-up with the hand not clamped onto her tail.)

Filly RD: *(smiling uneasily, pushing Twilight away)* Uh, actually, I just remembered I have somewhere I need to be.

(Off she goes, but the full-grown pony is quick to pull even.)

Twilight: Okay, listen. You don't have to race me. I just need you to fly fast enough for a Sonic Rainboom. *(Close-up of Filly RD.)*

Filly RD: *What?!?* I can't do that! No pony can! It's not even a real thing. It's just an old mares' tale. *(Zoom out to frame Twilight/Spike.)*

Twilight: But it's not! I know it's not. I've seen you do it, in the future!

(Her calculating grin is met with a cocked eyebrow that says it all about just how much the young aerialist is absolutely not buying this line.)

Filly RD: *(smiling tentatively, pulling ahead)* Okay. I'm gonna...go now. *(Twilight slows to a hover, watching her speed back to Cloudsdale.)*

Twilight: No! Wait!

(Skunked again; now Starlight lowers herself down into view behind Twilight, her best devious grin fixed firmly in place.)

Starlight: *(mock pity)* Gee, Twilight, what's the matter? Couldn't convince her to do the impossible? That's too bad.

(Twilight rounds on her, intent on delivering a comeback that would surely roast the smug unicorn to a crisp on the spot, but ends up gasping in surprise instead as the portal opens up overhead to pull her and Spike in. The camera cuts to a close-up of the map, now reconfigured and tinted a queasy shade of green; the portal's light flares up from above, and they are dumped

onto the table and bounce to the ground. A longer shot reveals that the furniture and damaged thrones now stand in the midst of a clearing amid warped, wildly overgrown trees—the Everfree Forest has apparently claimed some more territory. The passage vanishes, leaving them to get dazedly to hooves and feet for a look around the new neighborhood.)

Spike: *(groaning)* Well, that didn't work. *(A bit of horn magic pulls the scroll from his bag so Twilight can study it. Close-up.)*

Twilight: This is gonna be harder than I thought. We'll have to try again. *(Zoom out slightly; Spike backs up nervously toward her.)*

Spike: Hey, Twilight?

Twilight: *(still reading)* I don't want to live in that awful future we saw.

Spike: *(small voice)* I don't think you'll have to.

(The purple eyes flick up from the parchment just in time to see a half-dozen stone-tipped spears being thrust toward the pair, the camera zooming out several feet in a split-second. She lets the scroll fall, and the camera cuts to a slow pan across the aggressors, a group of ponies spattered with mud and bearing tribal stripes and markings on faces and bodies. Among the grimly set faces are three familiar ones: Fluttershy, Pinkie—their manes braided, Pinkie with her three-balloon cutie mark clearly visible through her stripes—and Berry Punch.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Pinkie? *(Back to her and Spike.)* Fluttershy? *(The deadly sharp tips are pushed even closer.)*

Pinkie: *(from o.s.)* Silence... *(Cut to her.)* ...changeling.

(Pan to Fluttershy. This camera angle exposes the edge of her usual mark under the layer of paint that covers most of her body from the neck backward.)

Fluttershy: All servants of Queen Chrysalis found in these woods must be destroyed!

(Zoom in to an extreme close-up of her face on this last word, then cut back to a fear-stricken Twilight and Spike. She swallows hard as the camera zooms in slowly, after which the view cuts to a "To be continued..." title card and fades to black.)

Continued in Part Two