

She's Alive



Fluttershy was dead.

“Fluttershy?” Rainbow Dash asked again.

The Insanity hit her in full force, choking out her thoughts and wrenching at her gut, reminding her that she wasn't Rainbow Dash. For a moment, she withdrew, hiding again inside her hatred and letting the Insanity take control. She would be Wrong from now on, she would be a *good* pony. Rainbow Dash was gone, beaten into submission by the relentless pain of Nihilus's spell. Wrong would do as she was told. Wrong hated her old friends.

Wrong's hatred was an excuse, though, Dash realized. Rainbow Dash would never hate her friends because they hadn't come for her. She knew that attacking Nihilus in Ponyville right away would have been suicide. Wrong was just looking for a reason to feel the hate the Insanity needed, and spare herself the pain. Wrong was a lapdog, a broken mockery of what Rainbow Dash had been. Wrong was pathetic.

The Insanity intensified, and Dash grunted, falling to her haunches before being forced to submit. It had been *weaker*, though. Whereas before she was totally incapable of acting outside of Nihilus's will, now she found that the tiny voice was no longer so tiny. She could resist. She could be Rainbow Dash again, if only momentarily. Fluttershy's stare had weakened Nihilus's spell.

The pegasus lay on the floor before her, however, not moving or breathing. Wrong had choked the life out of her. Rainbow Dash looked at the lifeless pegasus in shock, still barely able to comprehend what she had done. The Insanity nudged her, urging her to feel happiness at her former friend's death, but how could she? She resisted, fighting it until it caused her to fall to the floor again. She would rather feel the pain.

“Fluttershy?”

This time, she got an answer, but not from Fluttershy.

“You.”

Dash turned around sharply and came face to face with Pinkie Pie. The earthpony stood in the doorway, her face covered in blood. She looked from Dash to Fluttershy, then back to Dash again.

“You did this,” she said quietly. Her expression was one of complete horror.

“Pinkie Pie,” Dash said slowly. “What are you doing here?”

The Insanity returned to Dash in full force in response to Pinkie Pie’s presence. She fought it at first, but the buzzing noise built and built, growing until it was too much to bear. It pushed her aside, as strong as it had been when she fought Applejack, forcing her into submission.

Dash could still feel that the spell had weakened, however. It was as though she were an outsider looking in, examining her broken psyche as it bent to do the spell’s bidding. She wasn’t cured, or even close to being in control, but she could feel the spell unravelling because of Fluttershy’s stare.

When the time came, she would be able to fight it again. She would be able to act, if only for moments, and do *something*. She would wait, gathering her strength, preparing to take action at a crucial moment. She hated the idea of not fighting the Insanity with everything she had, but she had tried that before, and it had failed. She receded, slipping back into her delirium. *Wrong* gritted her teeth and looked Pinkie Pie in the eyes.

“I...” Pinkie began to shake, and her breathing quickened. “I came to...” She fell back onto her haunches, shaking her head, looking at the still form of Fluttershy all the while. Tears appeared at the edges of her eyes. “I came to save the day,” she finished, so softly it was almost inaudible.

You will be cruel to others. Wrong took a step towards the pink pony. “You’re too late, Pinkie. If *only* you had been faster. Go ahead. Call me *Dashie*.”

“No...”

“Throw Fluttershy and I a party to make everything all better.”

“No-no-no-no...”

“Tell me you forgive me.”

“No.” Pinkie Pie looked away from Fluttershy, at Wrong. Her mane billowed around her, then fell straight around her head, its edge cutting a smooth line against her neck. The pony seemed to *fade*, her colors diminishing, and her expression came into focus. It was unnatural to

see Pinkie Pie be so still. "I'm not going to throw a party," she said.

Pinkie Pie rose to all fours, bloodied. Wrong noticed that her neck was still bruised slightly from where Wrong had choked her. The earthpony continued to speak, "And I'm not going to call you Dashie. You aren't Dashie."

Wrong stood on her hind legs, using her superior pegasus balance to keep herself perfectly steady. Capturing Pinkie Pie would be easy, really. The pink pony would be no match for the fastest pegasus in Equestria, trained in hoof-to-hoof combat.

Pinkie Pie continued to look her in the eyes. Something about the way Pinkie was looking at her seemed off, however. It was as though something inside of the earthpony had broken. "And I will never forgive you, *Wrong*."

Strangely, the earthpony rose onto her own hind legs. She wiped the tears from her eyes with a hoof, and tried to wipe the blood away from her face with another. The dark red fluid was smeared across her muzzle. Suddenly, the pink pony didn't seem so pathetic. "I'm not going to do any of those things," she said in her eerily steady voice. "I'm going to kill you."

Wrong barely had time to register the hoof connecting with her face before she was thrown to the stone floor. She looked up, astonished, to see Pinkie Pie standing on all fours where Wrong had been only moments before. Pinkie had moved so *fast*, crossing the distance between them in barely the time it took to blink. It wasn't possible.

Wrong got back to her feet. It didn't matter if Pinkie Pie was fast. Wrong was the fastest pony in all of Equestria. She spread her hind legs in a fighting stance again and threw a punch at Pinkie's face.

Within her, Dash prepared to seize control. Trying to stop the Insanity now might end up driving her crazy again, but she couldn't let herself hurt Pinkie Pie. She gathered her willpower, preparing to give Pinkie Pie the chance to run-

Pinkie Pie caught the punch in a high block, then twisted Wrong's leg under her own. Wrong threw another with her other foreleg, and Pinkie caught it too. Then, Pinkie threw her head forward, driving her forehead into Wrong's face. Wrong's head snapped back, and Pinkie Pie headbutted her once again. Wrong brought a hind leg up to Pinkie's chest and beat her wings, forcing them apart. As she regained her footing, however, Pinkie Pie struck her in the chest with a foreleg, sending her stumbling back into the wall.

"You were supposed to be *Loyalty!*" Pinkie screamed, sobbing.

Wrong, frustrated by Pinkie's inexplicable fighting prowess, beat her wings, sending herself through the air over Pinkie's head. She flipped over Pinkie Pie head-down, and Pinkie

tracked her as she moved, her gaze never leaving Wrong's. Wrong landed, and Pinkie Pie struck out with a well-aimed kick from one of her hind legs. Wrong was prepared, however, and caught the kick with her forelegs. She twisted them, and the torque sent Pinkie Pie spinning sideways.

Pinkie Pie, in an act of incredible balance, threw out a foreleg and caught herself as Wrong twisted. Supported on one end by a single foreleg, and on the other by Wrong's hold, Pinkie Pie kicked out with her free hind leg, striking Wrong twice in the face and sending her reeling once more.

Inside her twisted consciousness, Rainbow Dash withdrew. She had been prepared to take the Insanity head-on again, but it hardly seemed as if Pinkie Pie needed her help. She, or rather *Wrong*, was losing.

Wrong regained her footing, then stared at Pinkie Pie in disbelief as she threw herself upward off of the ground, spinning several times in the air before she landed perfectly on her hind legs once more. Pinkie Pie did not wait this time, coming at Wrong with her unusual speed.

Wrong blocked a punch from the other pony, then another, then tripped Pinkie as she tried to kick her. Pinkie Pie threw her weight backwards, rolled back to her feet, then narrowly dodged a spinning kick from Wrong. Wrong struck out with a punch as Pinkie recovered, hitting Pinkie Pie on the cheek. Pinkie Pie caught her foreleg before she could bring it back, however, and twisted, using her leverage to throw Wrong towards the ground.

On her way down, however, Wrong wrapped her hind legs around Pinkie's neck, then beat her wings, pushing herself upward and Pinkie Pie down. Pinkie Pie rolled underneath Wrong as she was forced to the floor, then kicked upwards with her own hind legs. Wrong was thrown upward and away, and struck the ceiling, wind knocked out of her momentarily. She forced herself to focus, then beat her wings downward, throwing herself at Pinkie with enormous speed.

When Wrong landed, however, Pinkie Pie had once again spun herself through the air and back onto her feet. Wrong knew she shouldn't have been able to move so quickly. Earthponies weren't capable of such agility. Most pegasi couldn't even move so fast.

Pinkie Pie pivoted and kicked out at Wrong's face with both hind legs. Wrong threw herself onto her forelegs to avoid the kick, then spun and caught Pinkie's hind legs with her own. She twisted, and both of them were thrown toward the ground. Each of them landed an identical roll, however, and came to their feet a short distance away.

Pinkie Pie spat. "You were supposed to come back at the last minute and make everything *better!*" Dash wished she could speak to her hysteric friend. She *had* to wait until her intervention was absolutely necessary, though. She couldn't take on the Insanity. Not yet.

Pinkie Pie *jumped*, throwing herself an incredible distance into the air, legs flailing. She aimed three kicks at Wrong as she came toward her, and Wrong cross-blocked each with her forelegs. As Pinkie landed, Wrong spun on one hind leg, first aiming a kick at Pinkie, which the other pony ducked. Wrong continued along her trajectory, however, spinning so that her hind leg met the ground again and she faced Pinkie directly. As the other pony ducked, Wrong put her in a headlock with her forelegs.

Wrong pushed off with her hind legs and beat her wings, sending both of them forward before Pinkie Pie could react. They struck the wall behind them, Pinkie Pie pinned under Wrong. Her opponent caught Wrong's attempt to punch her with a foreleg, then headbutted Wrong once again. Wrong did not let go of the other pony, but she recoiled enough to let Pinkie Pie bring her hind legs into her chest. Pinkie kicked out, throwing Wrong away, then came at her with another kick.

Wrong caught the kick with one foreleg, then punched Pinkie Pie in the chest. Her opponent weathered the blow, then put all of her weight on the foreleg holding her kick. Pinkie Pie pivoted, using Wrong's hold as a support, to bring her other hind leg across Wrong's face. Wrong released Pinkie, and recoiled.

She looked up in time to see Pinkie Pie running *up* the wall behind her in an act that outright defied ordinary pony physics. Pinkie Pie sprung off of the vertical surface, and this time it was Wrong who looked up as her opponent sailed over her head, their faces inches away from one another. Their eyes met, and Pinkie Pie's expression was one of cold indifference. Wrong knew that she herself was wearing an expression of complete disbelief.

Pinkie Pie was using pegasus magic.

Pinkie made a perfect landing behind Wrong, and Wrong turned to face her opponent. How was it possible?

"Surprise," Pinkie said coldly, as if in answer to her bewilderment. Then Pinkie spun on her forelegs and kicked Wrong in the chest once again with two legs. Taken by surprise, Wrong took the full force of the blow.

She was thrown backward into the wall, and before she could react, Pinkie Pie had struck her across the face. Pinkie hit her, again and again, and Wrong's head was tossed from side to side. She tasted blood in her mouth, and her vision blurred. Finally, Pinkie Pie stopped hitting her, her blows slowing down and losing force before she stepped away from Wrong. Wrong looked up weakly and saw that Pinkie Pie's eyes were once again filled with tears.

"You *killed* her!" Pinkie continued, driving a hind leg into Wrong's chin and causing her head to snap back against the wall. "You tried to kill me! Why do you have to be *Wrong*," Pinkie

Pie sobbed. “Why can’t you be Rainbow Dash!” She aimed a punch at Wrong’s exposed throat.

Her hoof stopped in midair.

“I think that will suffice.” A cold, sinuous voice called out. “Thank you, Pinkie. I wouldn’t have thought you had it in you.”

Nihilus stepped down from the stairway that lead to the ramparts. “Sorry to spoil your fun, but I’d like to keep my favorite toy alive. But again, thank you for punishing her for her absolutely *dismal* failure in subduing you.”

Pinkie was completely frozen in front of Wrong, enveloped by a soft coat of red energy. Nihilus’s horn was glowing. She pulled a gold necklace out of thin air, and watched as the balloon gem it was set with turned black.

“Who would have thought,” Nihilus said with a smile, “that somewhere in there you failed to represent laughter. Don’t feel so bad, dear, it isn’t your fault.” She gave Pinkie what was probably meant to look like a reassuring smile. “Only I can be happy all the time.” The Element of Laughter vanished, and Nihilus closed her purple eye for a moment. Then, she regarded Pinkie Pie, her expression growing cold.

“I am almost finished with you and your friends,” she said. “And I do not want any more *surprises*. I intend to keep you alive awhile longer. Your broken spirit will set an excellent image for the others. Still, to make sure you don’t do anything to hinder my plans...”

Pinkie Pie was thrown straight upward, and impacted the ceiling with a sickening crunch. Then, she was thrown downward onto the floor, still held by Nihilus’s magic. A black lash of energy wrapped its way around the pink pony, digging into her flesh and drawing blood, before Nihilus bound Pinkie in magically conjured shackles.

“I am surprised you’re still conscious, Pinkie,” Nihilus said lightly. “I suppose that’s for the best, though. *Wrong*,” she said sharply, turning. “Grab Fluttershy. It is a long ascent to the central chamber.” Nihilus’s horn began to glow, and her magic lifted herself and Pinkie Pie off of the floor with telekinesis. “Fortunately, I can fly.”



Luna wished Applejack had let her die.

They had lost, and that was that. The plan had failed. That Applejack still clung to hope would have been admirable, were it not for the fact that her stubbornness was costing them the only chance they had left. It was a small chance— even if AJ got free of her cage, the earthpony would have to deal with the two unicorns in the center of the room. It was their only option, however, and Applejack had refused. Luna was going to be fed to Nihilus so that the unicorn could become even more powerful.

Such a thing was supposed to be impossible. While it was true that there were forms of dark magic capable of stealing the abilities of another pony, they all came with severe drawbacks, and required the limbs of the pony in question to be severed. How Nihilus had been able to take Celestia's magic and give it to another, Luna didn't know. It seemed to be just one more magical rule that Twilight Sparkle— and as a result, Nihilus— could break.

Luna fell roughly back to ground as the conjured chains binding her disappeared. She looked up, expecting to see Nihilus, but the anti-Twilight was nowhere to be found. She tried to judge the strength of her cage door. The bars were thick— likely too thick for her to simply break with earthpony strength. She was not as strong as Applejack. She couldn't manipulate the bars themselves with magic, either, or anything outside of them. Even without the chains or the presence of Nihilus, she was trapped.

If she did manage to escape, what then? She was more than a match for the unicorn puppets, but Nihilus? The unicorn could be in every place at once. Luna wouldn't stand a chance of escaping, weak as she was. She sighed, painfully aware of the tiny particles of metal clinging to her face. She had failed the bearers. She had failed Equestria. She had failed Celestia. What made her fail again and again? What was she missing?

Just then, Pinkie Pie, beaten and bloodied, was thrown unceremoniously to the floor through one of the outside doorways. Pinkie looked different, however. Her mane was straight, for one, and the color of her coat seemed slightly off. She sat up just as Nihilus, still wearing Applejack's hat, descended through the open archway to the ground in front of her.

"I see none of you tried to escape in my absence," she said loudly. "I'm glad. I've had enough excitement for one day, I think.

"Not that you could if you tried, of course. We are now far from Cloudsdale, and high above the ground, getting higher even as I speak." The pony stepped up onto the central platform so that she stood between her two unicorn puppets. "Pinkie has so generously given me the Element of Laughter," she continued, "and now sees the futility of your attempts to rescue Twilight Sparkle. Fluttershy was not so cooperative."

As if on cue, Rainbow Dash slowly flew through the doorway, holding the other pegasus. She stiffened her wings, holding them straight so as to glide downward and land before the three cages that held Luna, Rarity, and Applejack. There, she lay the beaten form of Fluttershy.

She wasn't breathing.

All Applejack managed to utter was, "No..." The earthpony rushed forward to press herself against her cage's bars, but did not attempt to break free.

There was no expression in the look that Nihilus gave the ponies. She didn't seem pleased, or amused, or angry. When she spoke, however, her words were tight and strained with barely contained rage. "I'm sure you will all be happy to hear that she spent the last moments of her life feeding me a beautiful lie. I will admit that I underestimated her capacity to cause pain."

Rarity lunged forward and smashed herself against the door to her cage. The door rattled on its hinges, but Rarity was far too weak to break the lock that held it shut. "*Murderer!*" she screamed. She continued to rattle the cage door uselessly. "*Murderer!* I'll *kill* you for this, you hear me?"

Nihilus teleported so that she was in front of Rarity's cage. "You will do nothing of the sort, *Rarity*," she hissed. "I don't know why I hate you so much more than the others. Perhaps I'm predisposed to because of Twilight, or perhaps it's this gash I have on my face. In any case, I'm glad I get to do you last. But first-" She teleported again so as to bring herself beside Pinkie Pie. "I'm going to kill this little firecracker while all of you watch. Would you believe that Pinkie Pie can use pegasus magic?"

Luna threw herself against her bars with all her might, but the lock on the door was too strong. Applejack's attempt at escape met the same result. "You just love it, don't you!?" the earthpony shouted. "Making other ponies feel powerless!"

Nihilus tilted her head and regarded the earthpony. "I used to," she said. "But now I think I'm tired of you all. There isn't any more joy in tormenting you. I'm not going to throw any more taunts, or play any more games. I'm just going to kill you. It is over. This is the end." She turned back to Pinkie Pie.

"Wait!" Rarity cried. "You still need the Element of Generosity!"

Nihilus sighed in exasperation, rolling her eyes, then turned to Rarity. "And?"

"If you kill them, I'm not going to give it to you."

Nihilus laughed humorlessly. "I was just planning on making you my mind-slave, Rarity. I hope you like the taste of books, because when I have the Elements I won't be needing this one." Nihilus pulled a massive tome out of thin air and threw it to the ground in the center of the room. "I'll have the Element of Generosity with or without your consent."

Rarity's horn glowed, and from within her mane a single diamond levitated outward. She didn't aim it at Nihilus, however, instead placing it against her own neck. "Not if I'm dead you won't," she said quietly.

Immediately, Nihilus's eyes widened. "You wouldn't."

Rarity stepped backward to the far back of her cage. "Either you let the others go," she said. "Or I kill myself right now."

Nihilus narrowed her eyes. "You're too selfish. You don't have the guts."

"You can either give me what I want and get everything you want in return, or you can risk everything. Let them go."

Nihilus stomped a hoof against the floor. "You think I'm stupid? If I let them go you'll just kill yourself anyway! Give me the diamond first."

"You think *I'm* stupid?"

"I will give you my word."

"Your word isn't worth anything to me."

"It's all you have. I will spend decades finding a new Bearer of Generosity if I have to, but I will *not* let them go before you give me that diamond."

"Don't do it, Rarity," Luna said. "She's lying. There's only one way to stop her now."

"*Shut up!*" Nihilus snapped at the princess. The unicorn turned back to Rarity. "You're going to take my deal. You're going to do it because these are your friends, and this is the only chance you have to save them. I will give you my word, and when you give me the diamond, I'll let them go. I'll let you go, too, when I'm done, if you want." She shuddered and closed her purple eye for a second. "Twilight says you can trust me, Rarity. All I want is the Elements. Nothing more."

Rarity looked at the princess, then back to Nihilus. "You have to swear," she said. Luna closed her eyes. They were lost.

"I swear, now give me the diamond!"

"You have to *Pinkie Pie* swear!" At this, Pinkie Pie looked up from her place on the floor.

"Fine! I Pinkie Pie swear!"

"Say the words!"

Nihilus gave Rarity a look of disgust. *"Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."* She went through the motions as she spoke, placing a hoof over her purple eye. "There," she said, "are you happy?"

Rarity released her hold on the diamond and slid it outside the bars of her cage. Nihilus stepped forward and looked down at the gem. Then she threw back her head and laughed.

Pinkie Pie laughed with her.

The party pony's hair had exploded back into its usual untidy mess, and she rolled around on the floor behind Nihilus, laughing hysterically. She beat the floor with a hoof, tears streaming down her face. She gave no indication as to what she found so entertaining.

Nihilus approached, looking down at Pinkie Pie. "Just *what*," she said quietly, "is so funny?"

"I just got it!" Pinkie Pie exclaimed. "Just now!" Nihilus tilted her head, evidently confused. "I have *pegasus magic*, you guys! I get it! We're going to *win*."

Nihilus did not look amused. "Oh?"

Pinkie Pie continued to talk between bouts of laughter. "Fluttershy!" she called out. "Fluttershy!" The dead pegasus lying in front of Luna's cage did not respond. "Pegasus magic," she said to herself through bouts of laughter. "You are *over*, Nihilus."

Nihilus closed her purple eye. "Fluttershy is dead, you crazed imbecile. I killed her. And now I'm going to kill you too."

Rarity rattled the door to her cage. *"No!"* she screamed

Pinkie Pie laughed even harder. "You're not gonna kill me, silly. You can't break a *Pinkie Pie Swear*."

"Just watch me," Nihilus said, clearly at the end of her patience. Her horn glowed.

A lot of things happened at once.

The first was that Nihilus's spell struck Pinkie Pie directly in the chest. Pinkie was thrown through the air, sailing upward, out the doorway behind her, and over the edge of the balcony. She smiled the whole way, grinning even as she disappeared over the edge to plummet to her

death.

The second, and by far more surprising thing, was Rainbow Dash.

Before Nihilus had even released her spell, The black pegasus was moving. She turned toward Nihilus so fast her mane whipped around behind her. She moved through the air, landing on Nihilus's back, forcing the unicorn roughly to the ground. As she beat her wings and pumped her hooves to cross the distance between herself and the Nihilus, she screamed Fluttershy's name once.

Dash didn't stop there, however. She used Nihilus as a springboard, throwing herself out the doorway and over the balcony. There, the air gathered around her with a ripple and a loud thrumming noise and she shot downward at an incredible speed, chasing Pinkie Pie.

Finally, and most surprisingly, when Rainbow Dash called, Fluttershy *answered*.

The pegasus, lying in front of the Luna's cage, took a single gasping breath. Her eyes shot open as she filled her lungs with air, and she rolled onto her back. She made another huge, gulping intake of air, and her eyes shot into focus. Nihilus was recovering from Dash's blow, and the unicorn puppets were too slow to react. Fluttershy rolled to her feet, towards Luna's cage. Then, she grabbed the lock holding the door shut in her teeth.

It was a massive piece of enchanted steel. Fluttershy yelled in exertion, the sound muffled through the lock she held in her mouth. Then, she simply tore it away, the metal screeching in protest as the strength of Fluttershy's pull snapped it in two. Luna felt her mouth open in disbelief.

Fluttershy was using earthpony magic.

The door to Luna's cage swung open just as Applejack, upon seeing Fluttershy come back to life, kicked her own door off its hinges. Luna wondered where Applejack had found the strength for such a feat.

The unicorns across the room seemed to take in the events of the past several seconds, but it was too late. Luna was free. Applejack was free. Fluttershy was alive.

Luna beat her wings to bring herself across the room, charging at the unicorns. She was surprised to find herself smiling as she travelled through the air.

Nihilus had been wrong. It wasn't over. Not yet.



Rainbow Dash.

The name echoed inside her head as she tore through the air around her. She *had* to resist. She couldn't afford to succumb, not now. Pinkie Pie might have pegasus magic, but she didn't have wings. The pony was a tiny pink speck below her, plummeting towards the ground at an alarming rate. Dash pumped her wings furiously, focusing herself downward.

The Insanity came at her, and her wings faltered for a moment. She ignored it, summoning every bit of willpower she had, taking advantage of the flaw that Fluttershy had created.

Rainbow Dash.

She focused on the flight itself, the air moving past her and grabbing at her mane. She could feel every stream and current around her with her pegasus magic. It was as though the wind itself spoke to her, telling her to beat her wings *just so* and to tilt her tail *like this*. She accelerated, speeding downward.

The Insanity clawed at the edges of her mind, but it faltered. It wanted to punish her for her transgression, but Dash found that she had more than enough strength to fight it. As she moved faster, it seemed to fade away, the buzzing noise in her ears slowly growing quieter. The Insanity might want her to be Wrong again, but it had to catch up with her first.

Rainbow Dash, she thought again. The fastest flyer in Equestria. Like anything can "catch up" with me.

The pegasus magic that let her slide so easily through the air, that made her seem so light when she wanted it to, and that allowed her to defy ordinary pony physics, was building around her. She was moving so fast that her own power gathered in front of her, unable to escape due to her extreme velocity. She saw Pinkie Pie below her, plummeting toward the quickly approaching ground. Rainbow Dash was going to catch her, of course. How could there have been any doubt?

The Insanity beat uselessly against Dash's mind. Fluttershy's stare had rendered it weak, however, and now Dash's desperate flight to save her friend was rendering it impotent. It was so small, so pathetic. It couldn't stop her. Nothing could stop her.

She thrust a hoof forward enough so that it barely dipped into the magical shock-wave gathering in front of her. It split the magical energy, causing it to angle sharply around her and to her sides. Where the tip of the hoof dipped into the shock-wave, it almost seemed to turn blue. Dash smiled. It didn't *seem* blue, it *was* blue. She could barely see Pinkie Pie below her through her teary eyes, barely make out Pinkie's smile.

Rainbow Dash!

The world exploded around her, and Rainbow Dash felt a moment of total clarity. It was as though time slowed down, and her senses picked up every single minute detail.

She broke through her own shock-wave. It rippled along her body: first up her foreleg, then past her face, until finally it moved past her tail and broke behind her into a massive explosion of every color imaginable. As it moved over her body, however, it seemed to peel away the spell that Nihilus had used. Her senses took in every individual hair shedding its dark coloring in favor of Dash's natural blue. She knew her mane had done the same.

She saw Pinkie Pie clearly in front of her, grinning wildly and flailing her legs as she fell through the air. It was just so *easy* to move through the air toward her. Dash felt no drag forces as she sped down toward Pinkie Pie, grasping the other pony's hoof in her own. She kept flying downward, decelerating herself just the right amount so that she stopped moving as her hind legs touched the ground.

It took her several seconds. As she and Pinkie Pie touched down onto the ground, they both looked up at the Sonic Rainboom spreading out over them. Pinkie looked at Dash, and Dash looked at Pinkie. She felt her mane billow around her, charged with magical energy. She gave Pinkie Pie a wide grin.

"I'm *back*."

It was all that needed to be said. Dash held out her forelegs, and Pinkie Pie hopped into them. Then, Dash took off, speeding upwards through the air at double the speed she had descended at despite having to fight against gravity. She had performed the Sonic Rainboom; all her power was at her disposal. As a result, she was able to move at what could only be called a *ludicrous speed*.

"*Awe, yeah!*"

Pinkie giggled at Dash's remark. Dash gave her a wink. "I probably wouldn't be able to go this fast without hurting you if you weren't some kind of pegasus-earthpony hybrid, you know."

"Faster!" Pinkie Pie cried. She stuck out her tongue and let it wag in the intense wind.

"Pbfaaaaaasthter!"

"You like to go fast?" Dash redoubled her efforts. "How's *this*?"

She realized too late what she had said. Pinkie Pie giggled. "Did it again..." Dash muttered to herself.

"Gee, Dashie, you sure do know how to show a mare a good time."

Dash gave Pinkie her best unamused look.

It was not long before the speed of their flight brought them to the citadel balcony. Dash slowed their flight, losing velocity as she crested the balcony, then landed just inside the doorway. She had no idea what had been happening while she was gone. Pinkie Pie had made her realize that Fluttershy had earthpony magic, however. Hopefully, the pegasus was alright. Hopefully, she had knocked Nihilus out when she stomped on the unicorn's face.

As she and Pinkie moved through the doorway, none of her worries seemed to bother her, however. Nor did the fact that she had spent the past hour trying to kill her friends. The power of her Sonic Rainboom, her new freedom, and Pinkie Pie had somehow infused her with a feeling of joy that she couldn't shake. She believed Pinkie Pie. They were going to win.

Dash took in the room at a glance.

She saw Fluttershy, alive and awake, in front of the cages. She looked beaten half to death, however, and Dash was surprised she was even able to stand. Rarity and Applejack duelled the two unicorns, forming a two-pony shield around the wounded pegasus.

Somehow, Rarity had reassembled all of her mysterious diamond blade. Dash knew that the unicorns had confiscated it, but apparently once out of her cage they could not keep it from her. It whipped and whirled through the air before her, deflecting red bolts of energy and cleaving thrown metal shards in two. As Dash watched, the blade exploded into its separate pieces, all of which went shooting toward the unicorn opposite Rarity. Each diamond met a force-field that the enemy unicorn erected at the last moment, however, and bounced away harmlessly.

The other unicorn, the one opposite Applejack, threw several metal shards in Rarity's direction. AJ speedily jumped to intercept them, however, the pieces of steel tearing into her flesh. Applejack seemed totally unfazed by the grievous wounds, and charged the unicorn as Rarity reassembled the blade.

Luna was fighting a bloodied Nihilus. The alicorn looked burned and beaten, and one of her wings was broken. It was obvious that there was little fight left in her. Nihilus, again at the

centre of the room, seemed to be favoring a hind leg, and her muzzle was bleeding. A wide gash ran along her back. She fought with her purple eye closed, and its red counterpart burned. As she watched, Nihilus struck Luna with a blast of force, sending the princess sprawling across the citadel floor.

Dash knew that there were still earthpony and pegasi puppets on the lower levels. She knew that Nihilus had the ability to call them with magic, and that given the chaotic situation she probably already had. They could be seconds from being overwhelmed. Dash punched her forelegs together in front of her, feeling the power coursing through her body. It was time for action.

“Help them,” she said to Pinkie Pie, nodding sharply to Rarity and Applejack.

“Right!” Pinkie Pie gave a salute before forward-flipping down the steps toward their friends.

“Hey!” Dash called out towards Nihilus. She turned away from Luna, and a look of shock came over her face at the sight of Rainbow Dash, mane blazing, standing in the doorway. Their eyes met, and Nihilus’s red eye instantly reminded her of what the unicorn had done to her, of what *she’d* done. Her purple eye reminded her that Nihilus still had Twilight. Hopefully Twilight couldn’t feel Nihilus’s pain. Rainbow Dash didn’t bother finishing her one-liner.

Dash crossed the room almost instantly, leaving behind her an energized rainbow trail. She kicked Nihilus in the face with a hind leg, her hoof impacting the unicorn’s face so hard Nihilus bit her tongue. Blood trailed through the air behind Nihilus’s mouth as the unicorn was thrown to the side.

Rainbow Dash was on her before she hit the ground, punching her in the muzzle again, twice. Her third strike, however, hit only solid stone floor as Nihilus instinctively teleported away from Dash. Rainbow Dash spun in a full circle, spotting Nihilus on one of the four balconies lining the room. The unicorn threw a set of magical chains at her, but they seemed laughably slow to Dash’s enhanced senses. She did a perfect back-flip over the chains, then flapped her wings, throwing herself at the unicorn once more.

She crashed into Nihilus, careful not to throw the unicorn over the edge, and shoved a hind leg into her belly before punching her once more in the face. Nihilus teleported again, and Dash found her back in the center of the room with a quick spin. Nihilus did not throw chains this time, but rather sent a huge wave of force at her, clearly trying to prevent Dash from evading this time.

Dash beat her wings so hard that she simply pushed her way through Nihilus’s spell unharmed. She landed on the central platform with a roll, picking up the book Nihilus had dropped earlier between her two forelegs as she came up to face her opponent.

She brought the book across Nihilus's face so hard it sent the unicorn sprawling backward. Dash landed on her, pinning her with her hind legs while she still held the book. Nihilus looked up at Rainbow Dash, and for the first time, Dash saw fear in her eyes.

"I hope you like the taste of parchment," Dash said. She spat into Nihilus's red eye, then thrust the book into her jaw when the unicorn winced. The edge of one of the book's covers found its way between her teeth, and Dash pounded on the spine of the book with a foreleg. Nihilus gave a muffled cry as several of her teeth were knocked loose and her lips split along their edges. Dash snarled as she raised her hoof again.

"Dashie!"

Dash looked up to see that the puppet reinforcements had arrived. She slapped Nihilus with the book again for good measure, then took flight and crossed the room in an instant. She reached out a hoof as she approached the other pony, and Pinkie Pie grabbed her, pulling Dash from the air so that she turned over Pinkie Pie's back and landed on her hind legs. They stood back to back, surrounded by over a dozen earthpony and pegasi puppets, while Rarity, Applejack, and Fluttershy, faced the two unicorns not twenty feet away from them.

The puppets came at them.

Dash tripped the first one to approach, then drove a hoof into its neck, using her wings to add downward thrust to the blow. As she stood on the ground over the dissipating puppet, Pinkie flipped over her back and broke a pegasi's neck with her hind legs. Dash caught a kick from a pegasus puppet, shattered its leg bones with a twist, then caught it in a headlock and broke its neck as it fell to all fours.

A metal shard, encased in glowing red unicorn magic, sped through the air towards her, but Pinkie Pie tossed a pegasus puppet into its path. The shard stuck the puppet in the chest, and the pegasus vanished. Dash spun around on one hind leg, kicking the flat end of the shard before it could fall the floor. Her aim was flawless, and the shard flew point-first through an earthpony puppet's eye.

Dash flapped her wings, gracelessly flipping over another puppet and grabbing it by its head with her hooves. As she came down from her flip, she flapped her wings downwards, smashing the puppet's head into the floor with bone-crunching force and destroying it.

She saw Pinkie Pie trip two earthpony puppets, and they hit the floor. Their eyes met Fluttershy's across the room, and one by one, they vanished. Dash looked over to see Applejack, bleeding from several holes in her side and with one eye slashed out, kick through a unicorn's force-field and send it sprawling.

Rainbow Dash took the opportunity to cross the room with two beats of her wings, her mane blazing a trail behind her. She landed on the unicorn as it threw Applejack backwards, and shoved a hind leg into the back of its neck. Its head bowed, and Dash twisted it toward where Fluttershy sat on the floor. The pegasus *stared* at it, and it vanished into a cloud of dark smoke.

“Ah was doin’ fine on my own, thanks!” Applejack said. Dash didn’t have time to respond. She looked up to see Rarity still dueling the other unicorn between them and Pinkie Pie. Half of her mane was burnt off and a scratch ran along her neck through her scarf. The puppet threw a series of metal shards at her, and she deflected them with her blade. Dash moved towards her.

Pinkie Pie gave a cry, and everypony looked over to see her surrounded by the remaining puppets, a bone in one foreleg bent at an awkward angle.

Rarity shouted, “Jump!” and broke her blade, sending it towards the puppets threatening Pinkie and leaving herself defenseless.

The unicorn between Rarity and the puppets deflected several of the diamonds, but not all of them. Half a dozen went flying past it towards Pinkie Pie and the other puppets.

The unicorn threw another steel shard at Rarity.

Dash moved to intercept it as Pinkie Pie threw herself belly up into the air. Pinkie flipped over the diamonds, and the puppets behind her were torn full of holes as Rainbow Dash batted the steel shard coming for Rarity back towards the unicorn.

Rarity began to bring the diamonds back towards herself as Pinkie Pie landed from her back-flip. Pinkie jumped once more, and one of her hooves was suddenly supported by the flat of one of Rarity’s diamonds. Another diamond pushed against one of Pinkie’s hooves, and she sprung off of them, using Rarity’s blade as a support in midair. A third diamond zipped underneath her face, and Pinkie Pie grabbed it in her teeth.

Pinkie Pie soared head down over the only remaining unicorn puppet, releasing the gem when she was directly above it. Rarity took the cue, sending the diamond speeding downward toward the unicorn puppet’s head. The puppet, focusing its attention on Rarity and Rainbow Dash, did not realize the danger until too late. It looked up, and the diamond tore through its head, causing it to dissipate.

Pinkie Pie landed, skidding to a halt, and nursed her broken foreleg. Rarity reassembled her diamond blade in front of her. Applejack screwed her one good eye shut, and several pieces of metal were forced out of her body as her wounds closed. She brushed a hoof across her slashed eye, and the gore wiped away to reveal that it, too, had fully healed. Fluttershy stood weakly, a huge bruise around her neck. Rainbow Dash folded her wings and looked around at

her friends.

“We kick ass,” she said.

“No!” The entire citadel shook as Nihilus Nix Naught appeared in the center of the room. Her lips were torn at the edges from where Dash had forced the book down her throat, and blood ran down her face and neck in rivulets. The flesh around her red eye was swollen, and the gash Rarity had made along her face had reopened. She stood with a hind leg off of the ground. She had her purple eye closed tightly.

Her horn glowed, and the ceiling cracked. Several chunks of stone tore their way free, held by Nihilus’s magic. “*You will die!*” She screamed, throwing a chunk of stone at Fluttershy. The huge hunk of stone was met in midair, however, by another massive rock, and the two exploded, raining bits of rock down on the entire room. Dash ducked and covered her head. The others did the same.

Luna had intercepted Nihilus’s stone with her own. Dash wondered where Luna could have possibly found the strength to lift the rocks with magic. She had been beaten near to death twice in the past two hours.

Luna blocked another huge hunk of stone, and all the five ponies could do was take cover as rocks as big a hoof rained down upon them. The citadel shuddered. Luna spoke, punctuating every word by knocking another stone out of the air as she limped across the room to stand with them.

“Thou. Shalt. Not. Harm. Them!”

Nihilus snarled. “If not by stone,” she screamed, “then by *fire!*” The air in the room suddenly became searing hot as Nihilus was surrounded by a torrent of deep red flames. The ponies recoiled, but the spinning inferno expanded, pushing outward. From the center of the inferno, Dash heard Nihilus cackling.

Luna’s horn glowed, and the princess conjured a thin white barrier that encompassed them all. Instantly the temperature around them felt cooler. Luna grunted, seeming to crumple under the weight of the spell. The Princess turned away from the flames, clearly in pain. She screamed once, and the barrier around them collapsed as her legs buckled under her.

The fire spread outward, and the heat became unbearable. Dash felt her skin blister as she shielded her eyes, backing away only to hit one of the broken cages.

The heat vanished.

A ripple of violet translucence travelled outward from the center of the room,

extinguishing the raging inferno. Dash looked up, to see Nihilus standing tall on the central platform. Her red eye was open, but seemed somehow dim. Her purple eye, by contrast, burned so brightly that it was painful to look at. She regarded the six ponies on the ground in front of her, then her mangled mouth formed a tiny smile. It was an expression Dash knew the unicorn to be incapable of. Nihilus spoke, in a voice that was not her own:

“Enough, Nihilus. This contest is over. You have lost.”



No, Nihilus thought, *not her. Anypony but her.*

Twilight had somehow seized control. It wasn't supposed to be possible; the Sliver of Darkness was made to imprison her. Nevertheless, she had *felt* the other pony inside her overflow into her body and speak. Nihilus gathered her willpower, and threw the other pony away, once again gaining control of their body.

“No!” she screamed. *“I have five of the Elements of Harmony! I cannot lose now!”*

Twilight's mind once again overwhelmed hers. The other unicorn had more willpower than Nihilus could have possibly imagined.

“You think you can control the Elements of Harmony just like that?”

Nihilus had to gather her wits. She had to come up with enough willpower to take their body back. She wondered again how Twilight was even able to take control in the first place.

“Well you're wrong!”

Nihilus focused, forcing herself to take control once again. Twilight's willpower wasn't so strong, really.

She was furious. She had been so *close*, the Bearers had been within her grasp. She was tired of complications, of being denied what was rightfully hers. She tore a chunk of stone from the crumbling ceiling with her mind.

“How!” she screamed, her grip on the stone tightening until it cracked. *“How are you doing this?”* She threw the separate rocks at Twilight's friends, careful to avoid Rarity. She would save Generosity, if she could.

Twilight overwhelmed her almost as soon as she threw the stones. Nihilus felt the other unicorn tap into her reserve of magical energy, casting a spell with Nihilus's power. The chunks of stone in the air all exploded at once.

Nihilus pushed against Twilight with her own will once again, but failed. She felt her lips move as if of their own accord as Twilight began to speak.

"You see Nihilus, when I saw my friends, *together*, fighting to save me, I felt something you can't hope to comprehend. When I saw them there, it ignited something within us. You may be the Sliver of Darkness, but I have the one thing that can beat the darkness *back*."

No! Nihilus thought frantically. She pushed again against Twilight's mind, but it was to no avail.

"*A spark.*"

Nihilus gathered her thoughts. She would *not* lose to Twilight and her group of village ponies. She would become a god. It took extreme effort, but she forced herself back into control.

"You *told* me-"

Twilight batted her away again with barely a thought.

"*I lied*, kiddo. You can't *trick* the Elements of Harmony. They know who their bearers are. They're the five ponies standing in front of you now."

Nihilus couldn't curse, she couldn't even spit or snarl. She *hated* Twilight. She let her hatred burn, using it as fuel for her willpower in addition to her ambition. She would win this fight, just like had won all others.

"Applejack!" Nihilus felt her mouth cry out with Twilight's voice. Across the room, the earthpony puffed out her chest. "Who gave me hope when I believed all hope was lost, represents the spirit of..."

Nihilus felt Twilight pull the Element out of their null-space and send it flying across the room towards Applejack's neck. The gem was once again orange. "*Honesty!*"

Sickened, Nihilus once again threw her willpower against Twilight's, this time focusing on not just her will to become a god, but her desire to crush the ponies that stood before her. She broke through, and immediately tore another slab of rock out of the wall and hurled it at Fluttershy.

“She lied!” Nihilus snarled.

Twilight batted her aside once more. Nihilus didn't know how. Twilight expended a meager amount of magical energy, and the stone turned to water, showering her friends lightly rather than crushing her. They looked quite refreshed.

“Fluttershy!” The way the pegasus snapped to her feet disgusted Nihilus. *“Who showed a creature even as wicked as you compassion, represents the spirit of...”*

Nihilus threw her will against Twilight Sparkle once again, and Twilight winced, falling forward slightly. Nihilus still didn't gain control.

“Kindness!” The butterfly necklace snapped against Fluttershy's badly bruised neck. If it hurt her, she gave no indication.

Nihilus envisioned her willpower as though it were a battering ram, and *pushed* her way into control. She threw a set of dark orbs at Pinkie Pie, but Twilight slapped her aside. A set of matching violet orbs zipped through the air, each perfectly intercepting Nihilus's. How was Twilight able to fight her so well?

“Pinkie Pie!” she continued. *“Who could find joy again after being brought to the brink of despair, represents the spirit of...”*

This time Nihilus did not try to take control. Instead she gathered her will, preparing to strike in a way that Twilight could not counter...

“Laughter!”

The necklace sped through the air, pink gem glittering as it fixed itself to Pinkie's neck. It was almost as though they had rehearsed. She supposed they had done this, before. Nihilus was not about to let them do to her what they did to Nightmare Moon, however.

*“Rainbow Dash! Who overcame your *nightmare* to save a friend in need, represents the spirit of...”*

Nihilus focused all of her hatred together into one tiny pinpoint. Twilight would not stop her from becoming a god.

“Loyalty!” Another Element snapped into place around its bearers neck. Nihilus would have one chance...

*“And *Rarity...*”* Twilight forced them to look at the unicorn, and Nihilus felt sick. *“Who would give her own *identity* and be consumed by one of your twisted spells to save her friends,*

represents the spirit of..."

The last necklace flew through the air to settle gently around Rarity's neck. Nihilus had decided on lightning. Twilight would not be able not intercept lightning. Her friends were as good as dead.

Nihilus threw her will against Twilight once more. She focused on her hatred for each of Twilight's friends, for Luna, and for Twilight herself. She focused on her will to become a god, to be more powerful than any other being in existence. She would see her enemies bend and break beneath her, and they would cry out in despair. Nihilus threw all of this at Twilight to seize control, mentally preparing a lightning spell that would instantly kill her friends.

She failed. Twilight didn't even flinch.

"NO!" She screamed at Twilight from inside her mental prison.

Twilight summoned the final Element, the Element of Magic, and placed it upon their head. She nodded to the five ponies in front of her, and their body lifted into the air. Then, Twilight spoke to her through their thoughts.

"How does it feel, Nihilus? Being powerless?"

Nihilus had no mouth to scream with. *"Please!"* she begged, *"Don't do this!"*

The energy coursing through them burned Nihilus as Twilight's eyes began to glow. The other five Element bearers rose into the air.

"You never deserved a moment of happiness, Nihilus. Every iota of joy you felt was one you took out of our world."

Nihilus didn't understand. Why hadn't she been able to take control from Twilight at the last moment?

A rainbow beam of light shot upward from Twilight's five friends, spearing its way through air before arcing down towards her.

"You know," Twilight said to her, *"I'm not sure if I'll survive this. I'm not an alicorn, you see."*

What made Twilight's willpower so *strong*?

"You want to know what makes me so much stronger than you, Nihilus? You want to know why I'll beat you every time?"

From within them, the other unicorn observed the rainbow descending towards them. She remarked, more to herself than to Nihilus:

“And I thought I had a lot to learn about friendship.”



“Luna,” a voice called out. It seemed as though the sound was coming to her from very far off. Every inch of Luna’s body was screaming in pain, and it was an effort for her to simply open her eyes. The blinding light of the sun greeted her pupils, and she squinted, making out the blurred form of a pony above her.

“Luna,” the voice said again, this time clearer. Luna recognized its owner as Rainbow Dash, the *other* pegasus. “Get up. It’s over. We won.”

Luna gingerly got to all fours. Decades of experience allowed her to endure the pain of her injuries. She noted her broken wing with dismay. It would take days to heal, especially since she was almost completely drained of earthpony magic. The fight with Nihilus had pushed her to her limits. All of them had been pushed to their limits.

She staggered to her feet, wearily glancing around at her surroundings to take in their location. They were in a grassy field someplace, likely below wherever Nihilus had moved her ridiculous flying castle. The sun was out once more, indicating that the moon had stopped tracking it when Luna had fallen unconscious. The scenery around them would have been serene, were it not for the six heavily beaten and wounded ponies that surrounded the princess.

“Is everyone okay?” Luna squinted as her eyes still adjusted to the sunlight. She absent-mindedly told the moon to return to its usual course as she faced Rainbow Dash.

“Twilight is still out,” Dash replied. “But everyone else is fine. Are you sure you’re alright?” she asked as Luna took a step, then stumbled as her leg gave out.

“I’m not,” she said, “but I will be.”

She approached the other ponies, all of whom were gathered around the unconscious form of Twilight Sparkle. Luna couldn’t help but feel a little envy toward the unicorn for the attention she was getting. She wondered why Rainbow Dash had stayed at her side and not Twilight’s.

She spoke up as she neared them. "How did we get down here? What happened to the fortress?" Applejack stood up and turned to her, once again wearing her tattered hat. The earthpony was covered in dried blood, but had no injuries to speak of.

"It fell apart around us as soon as Twilight was done," Applejack said. "We would have died if it weren't for Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash."

Fluttershy looked up from where she had been listening to Twilight's heartbeat. "I really only carried Twilight," she said. "Rainbow Dash got everyone else." She turned back to her examination of the unicorn.

Luna was not startled by the information. Rainbow Dash had turned her mane to pure energy with pegasus magic. That she could slow the fall of four other ponies was hardly surprising. In fact, it was not nearly as surprising as what Fluttershy had done. Luna decided that a full analysis and explanation would have to wait, however.

"She has something in her her mouth," Fluttershy said suddenly. Everypony leaned in as Fluttershy gently pulled Twilight's jaws open. Luna, using a small amount magic, grabbed the tiny object stuffed into one of Twilight's cheeks. She pulled it in front of her and examined it, curious as to what Twilight had decided to preserve before she fell unconscious.

It was an extremely detailed monopyony figurine. A tiny, plain-looking earthpony wearing no clothes spun slowly in front of Luna's face. She had a white coat, a pink mane, and unmistakable facial features. Luna quickly tucked it into her raiment, and Nihilus's voice echoed in her mind:

"The process was much... messier than this, mind. And the result was far less useful."

"Is Twilight fit for travel, Fluttershy? Can she be carried?"

"Um, I don't see why not, but-"

"Grab her, Applejack." The earthpony complied, and Fluttershy helped lift the still unconscious Twilight Sparkle onto Applejack's back. Luna spoke up so that everypony could hear. "We need to move as quickly as possible."

Rarity groaned. Rainbow Dash took to the air and hovered above them. "Why are we in such a hurry? What did Twilight have in her mouth?" she asked.

"We need to get under the treeline so that nopony sees us."

Dash landed in front of Luna, blocking her path. "Answer my other question," she

demanded. "What did Twilight have?"

Luna cocked her head to the side, then pulled the figurine back out and held it in front of Rainbow Dash for her to see. "It's Celestia," she said. "She's alive."

Applejack caught up with them, trotting alongside the Princess with Twilight on her back. "What are we going to do, princess?"

"I told you. We're going to take cover under the treeline."

"But after that? Where are we going to go?"

Luna turned to regard the group of friends. They looked horrible, really. They had been beaten and bruised and put through more than anyone deserved. They had done it willingly, too, performing incredible feats, and, much to her surprise, they had won.

Perhaps that was what Applejack had meant, when they were both in the cells. Perhaps that was what Luna had been missing, was why Luna had lost every time she fought Nihilus. Certainly, skill and power played some part in their fights, but maybe Luna had missed something else, something greater. Twilight's friends had been fighting *for* something.

Luna looked at the Celestia figurine. She had something to fight for now, too.

She reached inside herself, drawing out the meagre amount of magical energy she had left. It was, in fact, only what had recharged since she had passed out in the citadel. She didn't need much to perform the spell, however. She closed her eyes, thought single word, and the magic came back to her as though it had never left.

Nadir.

She knew exactly what happened, even though her eyes were closed. Her blade appeared before her, a beautiful shaft of blazing moonlight. The air around the length of magical energy darkened, causing the sunlight itself to lose its intensity. She held it, not in a fighting stance, but vertically in front of her, so that it extended from just above the ground, to just below her eyes. She opened her eyes before she answered Applejack's question.

"*War*, Applejack. We're going to *war*."

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[Chapter 8: My Name is Twilight Sparkle](#)

[A thanks goes out to The Prereaders](#)

