

The Snowball Effect

Chapter 3: On Earth for the Duration

Twilight Sparkle looked around her. The light and color faded to nothingness, revealing the giant, metal cylinder around them. The light on the rings built into the cylinder's wall faded, leaving them in almost complete darkness. Under her hooves was grating made of metal that gave off a warm and gentle heat after it had been glowing while the cone of light existed.

She was not sure if she should be frightened or excited about what just happened. All she felt was confusion and a sense of wonderment. The others seemed just as awestruck as they looked around at their strange surroundings.

Her eyes adjusted to the dim light, and she looked ahead to the dim chamber beyond the cylinder. It gave her the settling feeling she was very small as everything was gigantic in their proportions. The control panel on the opposite wall was the size of large building with monitors above them larger than theater screens.

The only thing normal sized compared to them was the ponies. They stood out against the dim, dreary chamber with their pale or bright colors. The three they had chased were gathered around a yellow earth pony with sleek, green hair. Another pony walked off the control panel onto a gantry leading up to it.

"What is this place?" Applejack asked.

"The phenomenon we entered must have been some kind of portal," Twilight Sparkle said, trying to make sense of everything herself. "It transported us from your farm to wherever this place is."

"Which is?" Rainbow Dash asked.

Twilight paused to think. She had never seen or heard of anything like this. She only knew it took them from Sweet Apple Acres to someplace else. Other than that, she was clueless. Who knew where it could have taken them?

"It could be anywhere. We might not even be in Equestria anymore," Twilight Sparkle said. "We could be on a different planet, in a different time, or even in a different dimension completely."

"You're right on the final part," the yellow earth pony said.

Twilight looked in her direction. She walked past the three ponies onto the ramp.

"I'm Magic Star, the leader of the Little Ponies," she said. "Welcome to Dream Valley."

“An earth pony princess?” Rainbow Dash said quizzically.

Magic Star narrowed her eyes and frowned at them. “Is there something wrong with an earthling being in a position of leadership?”

“No,” Twilight Sparkle answered for Rainbow Dash, putting her hoof over Rainbow Dash’s mouth. “There’s nothing wrong with it.”

Twilight Sparkle was also surprised an earth pony was this group’s leader. She was use to Princess Celestia being the high ruler. Though, she found comfort in the fact for some reason. She always wanted to believe Equestrians did not see Princess Celestia as their ruler because she was an apparently immortal winged unicorn demigod if not goddess with power over the sun, but because she was a kind, just, and intelligent leader with best intentions for her subjects. If she was just an earth pony but still the same pony at heart, would they still see her as their princess? Seeing an earth pony as a princess here gave her hope they would.

“Well, I wouldn’t call myself a queen or princess anyway,” Magic Star said. “I’m not royalty or even nobility. I was elected as leader. My official title is Mistress of Dream Castle, but no one uses even that.”

“Oh,” Twilight Sparkle said. She felt a little disappointed Magic Star was not a princess. It sounded more like she was like the mayor of Ponyville.

“Wait a minute, I thought there were nine objects in transit,” Wind Whistler said.

“Nine?” Applejack and Rairty asked simultaneously.

Twilight looked behind her. Applebloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo stood behind them, looking around. They faced forward when they realized everyone was looking at them.

Applebloom laughed weakly. “Hi, sis.” She grinned weakly along with Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo.

“Applebloom!” Applejack scolded.

“Sweetie Belle!” Rarity said in the same tone.

“It was Scootaloo’s idea!” Applebloom and Sweetie Belle pointed at Scootaloo.

Scootaloo folded her front legs and scowled at the two. “Way to blame it on the one filly who doesn’t have an older sister here,” she grumbled.

“What possessed you three to jump into a swirling energy vortex?” Twilight Sparkle asked.

“You did it,” Sweetie Belle, said.

Twilight was about to reply, but had no response. She stood there, probably looking stupid with her mouth half open as she tried to form an argument.

"That's because we're adults," Applejack said sternly. She shot a scornful glance to Pinkie Pie. "We also had to go after Pinkie Pie."

"How could something so bright and colorful be dangerous?" Pinkie Pie said. "It just screamed jump in and have some fun."

"We also thought it might have something to do with our cutie marks," Applebloom said.

"Did we really enter another dimension?" Scootaloo asked with a big, eager grin.

"Yes. We used our rainbow to form a bridge to your dimension for study," Wind Whistler said, walking up the ramp to them.

"Awesome!" Scootaloo cheered.

"Cutie Mark Crusaders Dimension Hoppers!" the three shouted and smacked their hooves together.

"What is a cutie mark?" Wind Whistler asked.

"It's the mark on your flank," Twilight Sparkle said, pointing to the pink and blue whistle marks on Wind Whistler's.

"Oh," Wind Whistler said. "We call them haunch marks."

"So, do we get cool-looking portal cutie marks?" Scootaloo looked at her orange flank, but it was bare as well as the others. All three groaned and let their bodies sink.

"What's going on?" Magic Star walked up to them.

"These three fillies have been trying real hard to find their special talent so they can get their cutie...or rather haunch marks," Twilight Sparkle answered.

Magic Star cocked her head to the side. "What?"

"The ponies in that dimension mature differently than we do," Wind Whistler said. "They're born with their permanent coat and hair color, but lack a haunch mark."

"How does it work in your dimension then?" Twilight Sparkle asked.

"When ponies are born, the filly looks like their mother and the colt looks like their father," Magic Star said. "They grow in their adult coloration and get their own haunch mark when they reach maturity as well as choose their adult name."

"While this session in comparative biology is very interesting," Rarity said sarcastically, "we need to get back. Mother will dye my mane green if she ever found

out about this.”

“You’re going to have to wait,” the white pony next to the control panel said. “The bridging process takes a lot of energy. The system has to cool down and then we can start rebuilding power in the capacitor. The process took about an hour for bridging dimensions.”

“An hour?” Twilight and the others asked.

Some flashed behind them and a loud pop resounded in the tunnel. Twilight yelped and galloped down the ramp with the others. She swung around and looked at the tunnel. Glowing sparks sat on the ramp on the very inside of the tunnel.

“Pony feathers,” the white pony snapped.

“What happened?” Twilight Sparkle asked. She concentrated on her teleportation magic and in a flash she was on the control panel.

The white earth pony leapt from giant control to giant control. “I should have known this would happen. It hadn’t been used in millions of years.”

“What?” Twilight Sparkle asked.

“The mechanism that handles interdimensional travel,” the pony said. She looked at the left most monitor which displayed a purple schematic with a red section and a message in strange symbols under it. “We started it up without calibrating it, and it just suffered a burn out somewhere.”

“Does it affect normal travel?” Magic Star asked from below.

“In dimensional travel is fine,” the pony said. “However, we can’t bow to other dimensions.”

Twilight Sparkle felt a chill run down their spine and her throat go dry. She gulped to wet it. “Does that mean we’re trapped here?”

“It’s going to be awhile before we can send you back at least,” the pony said. “We have to find out what burned out, make a replacement, install it, and run calibrations. I’m guessing twelve hours at least assuming nothing else goes wrong.”

“Get Four-Speed, Steamer, and Salty down here to start work on it,” Magic Star said dully.

Twilight Sparkle teleported to the ground. The others gathered around Magic Star. All of them tried to talk at once in a panic, only drowning each other out.

Magic Star plastered her ears against her head and grimaced. “One at a time!” she shouted.

"We can't be trapped here for half a day," Rarity insisted. "I had to close my store early just run after your ponies."

Applejack shot Rarity a suspicious glance. "You took the time to close your shop?"

"Of course, darling," Rarity replied. "A turn of a sign and a click of a lock, and it's closed." She glared at Magic Star. "However, I have orders to fill and appointments to keep." She glanced to Sweetie Belle. "There's also the problem of getting my little sister back home before Mother finds out. I must get back immediately, if not sooner."

"My animal friends also need attending to," Fluttershy said meekly.

"My family is probably missing me too," Applejack added.

"I'm sorry," Magic Star said. "However, this is out of my hooves. If the rainbow can't send you back, it can't send you back period. We'll work as fast as we can to fix the problem, but until then, you're stuck here."

The three sighed.

"I supposed I can tell my customers I was called away on an emergency," Rarity said. "I'll also think of something to tell my mother."

"My animal friends are pretty smart, I think they can handle things for one night," Fluttershy said.

"I'll tell my family I was chasing my imposter all over hay and gone." Applejack coughed a small laugh. "It's actually a pretty honest answer when you think about it."

"If we are here for the duration, I guess we might as well introduce ourselves." Rarity bowed graciously to Magic Star. "I'm Rarity, Mistress Magic Star."

"Please, bowing isn't necessary." Magic Star grinned sheepishly at the display. "And, everyone just calls me Magic Star."

"I'm Applejack," Applejack said plainly.

Magic Star looked to the other Applejack. "This is going to get confusing."

"How about you just call me A.J. while they're here," the other Applejack said.

"I guess that'll work," Magic Star said. "Applejack wears a hat and A.J. has curly hair."

"I'm Pinkie Pie," Pinkie Pie said excitedly. She took Magic Star's hoof in hers and shook it vigorously. "I'm so happy to meet you. I'm so happy to meet new ponies. When I met your ponies I went [gasp] and had to plan them a surprise welcome party."

Unfortunately, they overheard, so it wouldn't be a surprise."

"She gets the picture," Twilight Sparkle said to Pinkie Pie.

"Oh. Right." Pinkie Pie stopped shaking Magic Star's hoof.

"I'm Fluttershy," Fluttershy said quietly.

"And I'm Rainbow Dash, the fastest and most awesome pegasus in all of Equestria!" Rainbow Dash announced loudly, standing on her hind legs and flexing her front legs.

"Rainbow Dash," Twilight Sparkle murmured.

Rainbow Dash fell onto all four hooves and laughed weakly. "Pleased to meet you."

"I'm Twilight Sparkle," Twilight Sparkle said.

She glanced to the three fillies. "These are Applebloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo, also known as the Cutie Mark Crusaders."

"You've already met Wind Whistler, Gusty, and A.J." Magic Star said. She pointed to the pony on the control panel. "Gingerbread is up there."

"Yo!" Gingerbread called down to them. She quickly descended the gantry to the ground. Now that Twilight Sparkle got a good look at her, she noticed her blue eyes had an iridescent quality to them as they seemed to shimmer in the dim light. Her hair was also the four evenly distributed colors light blue, dark purple, lavender, and pink. She had never seen such features on a pony before except Rainbow Dash who had six hair colors.

"So, since we're here for a while, can we look around?" Scootaloo asked with that eager grin again.

"I would like to be somewhere else as well," Rairty said, looking around scornfully. "This place is absolutely ghastly."

Wind Whistler looked to Magic Star. "I do not believe to would do any more harm to let go topside."

"I suppose not," Magic Star replied.

She turned to Twilight and the others. "This way."

Twilight and the others followed Magic Star to a pair of massive, metal doors next to the control panel. The doors slid apart to let them walk into a huge metal box with a small light in the ceiling. The door slid shut behind them and Twilight Sparkle felt the

floor lift up.

“Did you build all this?” Applejack asked.

“No,” Wind Whistler said. “We believe it was built millions of years ago and abandoned. We discovered it a few months ago and use it to travel to other locations on the planet. However, today we discovered it could also connect dimensions.”

“So you came to ours?” Twilight Sparkle asked.

Wind Whistler shrugged. “We found a record of a bridge to it made eons ago. We figured it was as good a place as any for a test run. We never expected to find ponies like us there.”

“Well, when I woke up this morning I never expected to meet ponies from another dimension either,” Twilight Sparkle said. “It’s like stepping into a science fiction novel.”

“You’ll be in for a shock when you see Dream Valley,” Magic Star said.

The giant elevator stopped and the doors on the opposite wall parted. Light flooded into the elevator. Twilight Sparkle closed her eyes for a second to let them adjust. She slowly opened them and gasped in awe.

They walked out of the elevator into a picturesque valley. Apple trees dotted the rolling, green landscape. A waterfall striped in the colors of the rainbow cascaded down the cliff face next to the doors they exited into a pond. The pond emptied into a stream that flowed past a large, pink castle with blue, cone roofs on the towers at its corner.

“This is where you live?” Fluttershy asked.

Magic Star nodded. “This is Dream Valley.”

“I can see where you got the name, it’s beautiful,” Twilight Sparkle said.

“But, all I see is that one castle. There’s no town or anything,” Rarity said. “How many ponies live here?”

“There are eighty-one of us,” Magic Star said.

“That few?” Twilight Sparkle asked. “There are more ponies in Ponyville, and a it’s small town.”

“Check this out!” Rainbow Dash shouted. Twilight Sparkle looked up to see her hovering next to a rainbow extending from the bottom of the falls into the sky. “I guess we found the end of the rainbow.” She chuckled.

“That can’t be,” Twilight Sparkle said. “Rainbows are light refracted by raindrops and are technically circles. They can’t really end.”

“Well this one does,” Rainbow Dash said. “It looks like you could actually touch it.” She reached her hoof out and tapped on the rainbow. She pulled her hoof back suddenly. “It’s solid?”

“It’s not a real rainbow,” Wind Whistler said. “This phenomenon is actually what makes the machine underground work. It connects Dream Valley to another place on earth, originally bridging two dimensions.”

“What do you mean originally?” Twilight Sparkle asked.

“It’s a long and complicated story,” Magic Star said. “Paradise can explain it. She’s our historian and storyteller.”

“I want to hear all about it,” Twilight Sparkle said. She then said giddily to herself, “Princess Celestia won’t believe what I’ll have to tell her.”

* * *

Luna spent much of her spare time reading. After being trapped as a pattern of caters on the moon’s face for a millennium, she had a lot of catching up to do. Today’s book was on the history of Manehattan, currently Equestria’s biggest city by population. She lounged a fluffy, blue pillow, using her magic to turn the pages as she absorbed the information she read over.

A knock on the door broke her concentration. She looked up at the door. “Who is it?” she asked politely.

“It’s Celestia,” her older sister’s gentle voice answered.

“Come in, Big Sister,” Luna replied.

The doors swung open and her sister walked in. She looked concerned about something with her mouth bent into a frown and her eyes looking a little downward.

Luna stood up. “Is something wrong?”

“I’ve felt something very strange,” Celestia replied quietly. “It felt like the very fabric of space and time was punctured near Ponyville.”

“Punctured?” Luna repeated.

Celestia nodded. “It’s as if a momentary hole formed. When it first happened I just thought it was my imagination, but it happened again exactly one hour later.”

“Have you informed Twilight Sparkle and her friends?” Luna asked.

“I sent them a letter asking for them to investigate,” Celestia said. “However, haven’t gotten a reply yet.”

A green flame flashed into existence for a moment above them and left a rolled up scroll. Celestia caught it with her magic and unrolled it.

"Dear Princess Celestia," Celestia read. "I have received your letter. However, I cannot find Twilight anywhere. She and the others chased after a pony impersonating Applejack and haven't been seen or heard from since. You obedient, Spike."

"Do you think what you sensed has something to do with it?" Luna asked.

Celestia paused for a couple seconds. "There's only one way to find out. I must go to Ponyville and look into this myself in secret."

Luna eyed Celestia suspiciously. Celestia could not do anything in secret. Even without her regal wears, she was immediately recognizable. She had both wings like a pegasus and a horn like a unicorn which only she and Luna had. She was also much larger than the average pony, closer in size to a horse because she had lived so long. "You do realize you randomly arriving in Ponyville could cause a stir, right?"

"That's why Princess Celestia is not going to Ponyville," Celestia said. "Don't you remember one of the first spells we taught ourselves?"

Luna's eyes widened as the memory came back to her. When they were very young and just learning to use magic, they were forbidden to go outside the castle grounds. The guards always found them and the ponies always treated them like royalty even if they just wanted to play. Celestia then found a way to solve both problems.

Celestia's long, white horn glowed. The white light covered her body and long, flowing hair. She shrank in size to that of an average pony and her horn retracted completely. Her hair became shorter, but still appeared to be quite long and silky judging by its shape.

The light faded revealing her new form. The almost nonexistent pink tint of her coat was now strong enough to make her appear pale pink. The green, purple, and blue stripes of her hair were gone so it was now all pink and no longer waved as if in a breeze. Her horn was gone and her wings were more like those of a normal pegasus. Even her cutie mark had changed to a simpler sun peeking out between two hills.

"Dawn, your typical pegasus, will," Celestia, or rather, Dawn said. She still had her warm, tender voice. She stepped out of her gold slippers and pushed off her gold chest plate and crown which were now too big for her.

"I'll come with you." Luna ran to a full body mirror. A dark blue winged unicorn with luxurious, light blue hair that covered one blue eye. She was not as big as her sister, as the spell that trapped her on the moon had also frozen her in time. However, her horn was still longer than any unicorn's.

Luna closed her eyes and concentrated on her magic. Celestia had taught her

the transformation spell all those centuries ago. She felt her bodyingle all over until it no longer felt solid. Her horn retracted into her skull with barely a feeling of pressure on it. Her transformation was not as dramatic as only a few changes gave her the build of a normal pony. The tingling sensation faded and she opened her eyes.

A light blue pegasus with dark blue hair in much the same style. She turned around to check her cutie mark. Instead of crescent moon surrounded by a black patch that covered most of her flank, it was a white, full moon surrounded by four white stars.

She turned to Dawn. "Or should I say, Moonbeam will come with you."

Dawn smiled and nodded.

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The blue drawbridge lowered to span the stream. Twilight looked inside Dream Castle through the large opening it had been covering.

Up close, she could see Dream Castle was huge. It could almost hold Princess Celestia's palace inside it. However, being able to look inside gave her a real sense of its scale. The middle was an open, cobblestone courtyard surrounded by buildings on the other three walls. The main building in the back was huge, big enough to have all the amenities expected of a castle and still have enough room to comfortably house a couple hundred ponies at least.

"So, you all live here?" Rainbow Dash asked.

"We sure do," Gingerbread said. "It has everything: a ballroom, a library, a gourmet kitchen, a workshop, and enough rooms for everybody to have their own a few times over."

"Much of it goes unused for the most part, however," Magic Star said. "We'd be working all day and all night just maintaining it."

She walked onto the drawbridge and the others followed. Twilight Sparkle stepped onto the bridge and walked across, her hooves making a series of hollow thuds on the wooden planks.

Several ponies were standing in the courtyard and on the balconies of buildings. All of them stopped what they were doing stared at them. A couple put their mouth to the ear of the pony next to them and apparently whispered something.

Twilight Sparkle felt a sickening feeling her stomach. She knew they were talking about them. They just had to see the two Applejacks and know something was up. It was like her entrance exam into Princess Celestia's School for Gifted Unicorns. All eyes were on her, and she could not shake the feeling they were all examining her.

"I guess we're going to have to call a meeting to explain all this," Magic Star said

quietly. She then shouted, "Whizzer!"

A pink pegasus with four colored hair; purple, blue, green, and aqua; and the same iridescent blue eyes as Gingerbread dashed off a balcony to them. "What do need Magic Star?" she asked in a very hurried voice, practically merging the words into one.

"Your name's Whizzer?" Rainbow Dash bit her lower lip and sputtered a small laugh.

"Yeah, that's my name. I came up with it. It's because I whiz all over the place." Whizzer looked to the side. "One moment I'm over there." She swung her head to the other side. "Then the next I'm over there."

Rainbow Dash burst laughing, laughing so hard she fell off her hooves. Twilight Sparkle looked down at her condescendingly. "She means whiz as in moving fast."

"I know," Rainbow Dash managed to get out as she got control of herself. "It's still funny."

Magic Star rolled her eyes at Rainbow Dash before turning back to Whizzer. "I'm calling meeting. Is everyone in Dream Valley?"

"Hurricane and Atlas just got back from patrol," Whizzer reported, "so that just leaves Jet Streak who went to get Megan. He should be back in a couple minutes."

"That's going to be fun," Magic Star said in her breath. She called out, "North Star!"

A pink pegasus with purple hair galloped to them. "Yes."

"Wait by the rainbow for Jet Streak and Megan," Magic Star said. "Bring them to the meeting hall when they arrive."

"You've got it," North Star said in strange accent. She leapt into the air and flew out of the castle's perimeter.

Twilight Sparkle noticed Whizzer was staring at them. That sickening feeling returned.

"Who are they, and why are there two Applejacks?" Whizzer asked.

"They're what the meeting is about," Magic Star said. "Now spread the word."

"Consider the word spread." Whizzer took off and within a split second she was nothing but a speck in the sky.

Rainbow Dash's jaw dropped. "Whoa. She's fast." She turned to Twilight

Sparkle. "Is my take off that fast?"

"I guess so," Twilight Sparkle said. "It would be interesting to see you two in a race."

A grin crept onto Rainbow Dash's face. "I might just challenge her to one."

* * *

Megan felt Jet Streak lean to his right a little. "Are you alright?"

The blue pegasus righted himself. "I'm just having trouble keeping my balance with you sitting that way."

"Sidesaddle is the traditional and dignified way a woman wearing a long skirt rides a horse," Megan replied.

"Yeah, well, whoever came up with it obviously didn't have pegasi in mind," Jet Streak said.

Megan fought the giggle form in her throat at his statement. She simply smiled. "Obviously."

"It's fine if you have all four hooves on the ground," Jet Streak said. "However, in flight I've got to balance you myself."

"Is there anything I can do make it easier?" Megan asked.

"I think you're compensating a little too much for your legs being on one side," Jet Streak said. "Sit up a little more straight."

"Like this?" Megan shifted her weight slightly to the left.

"That's much better," Jet Streak said. "We're also here."

Jet Streak started to descend, following the sharpening incline of the rainbow. North Star was standing at the edge of the pond. Jet Streak landed next to her and Megan dismounted.

"Hello, North Star," Megan said cheerfully.

"Hello, Megan," North Star replied. "That's a nice outfit."

"Thank you." Megan looked at her outfit. It was a denim overall skirt and long-sleeved white with red hearts blouse. "I just got it."

"You're probably already design a matching saddle blanket for Sundance," North Star said.

Jet Steak rolled his eyes and shook his head. "You two have the strangest

hobby.”

North Star glanced at Jet Streak with mocking scorn. “So says the pegasus who has a collection of palm tree pattern shirts.”

Jet Streak coughed in response.

Megan grinned at the exchange. It seemed like the ponies had adjusted to living in her world. Though, the sudden appearance of intelligent penguins, harpies, Atlantians, and who knows what else probably made them feel more at home.

“Magic Star has called a meeting,” North Star said to change the subject. “They’re waiting on us.”

“What’s it about?” Megan asked.

“You’ll have to see it to believe it,” North Star said.

* * *

Twilight Sparkle eyed the ponies sitting the benches. All of them stared at her and the others. Most had a curious expression while a few had a hard expression of mistrust. Apparently, they had not seen other ponies in a long time.

She decided to return the favor and examine them. Aside from the dozen ponies with iridescent eyes, they looked pedestrian. There was nothing differing them from the ponies in Equestria. If she met them on the street in Ponyville, it would never occur to her they came from another world. In fact, Gusty and Wind Whistler stepped into her library, and she just thought they were new ponies in town.

However, now that she could see all of them, she noticed some patterns that made them different. All the unicorns who did not have iridescent eyes had a color streak in their mane while earth ponies and pegasi had a solid hair color. The foals were also smaller versions of their parents like Magic Star had said. It was amazing ponies so similar and yet so different had evolved in a completely different dimension.

The door in the back opened. North Star and a blue pegasus stallion with hair a couple shades lighter blue walked in along with a strange, slim creature like nothing Twilight Sparkle had ever seen before.

Twilight Sparkle figured she was female by her style of attire and rounded features. She stood on her hind legs with feet and her slim arms ended in what looked like claws only not as sharp. Her pale skin was apparently hairless except for long, blond hair growing out the top of her head and tied in the back with a red ribbon and in very thin lines above her blue eyes.

“What’s that?” Twilight Sparkle murmured to Magic Star.

“That’s Megan,” Magic Star answered quietly. “She’s a human, the dominant

species on this world.”

“She sure is a weird looking thing,” Applejack said. “I’ve never seen anything like her.”

“I think she’s cute,” Fluttershy added.

“Hey, Megan!” a white earth pony mare with pink hair called out. “You can sit here.”

North Star, the pegasus and Megan sat down on a bench towards the back next to her. The room filled with whispers. Magic Star stamped her hoof on a wooden block that made a loud pounding sound, and everyone fell silent.

“Now that everyone’s here,” Magic Star said, “let’s start the meeting.”

She turned to Twilight Sparkle and the others standing in line with in the front. “The first order of business is introducing you to Twilight Sparkle, Rainbow Dash, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, another Applejack...”

“There goes the neighborhood,” a dark gray pegasus stallion with dark blue hair joked. Many of the ponies erupted into loud laughter.

Magic Star stamped the block to get everyone quiet again. She turned to the line again. “...Rarity, Applebloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo. They’re our ‘guests’ for the day, so make them feel welcome and keep them out of trouble. Also, refer to our Applejack as A.J. to avoid confusion.”

Some quiet greetings came from the group.

“Our second order of business is how they got here,” Magic Star said. “We discovered the rainbow can reach other dimensions and accidentally brought them back when we explored their dimension. However, we ended up burning out the equipment that handles interdimensional travel and it needs repair before we can use it again.”

“Let me guess,” a powder blue earth pony stallion said, “you want us to fix it.”

“Once this meeting is concluded,” Magic Star said. She looked to Twilight Sparkle and the others with her eyes slightly sunken in a concerned expression. “They’re trapped in this dimension away from their lives and loved ones. The sooner it’s fixed, the sooner they can go home.”

“We’ll get it up and running as soon as we can,” the stallion said warmly.

Magic Star turned back to the other ponies. Her mouth curved into a determined frown and her eyes narrowed. “The third order of business is interdimensional travel itself. I’m personally against it. Just one little hour long ‘jaunt’ caused all this trouble.” She focused her glare on Wind Whistler who looked away shamefully and shrank back

a little on her bench.

Magic Star turned her attention back to the group in general. "We can't risk getting involved in the affairs of other worlds. There are enough problems here. Due to restrictions made by the original builders, we cannot use it to return to our home dimension, so I see no constructive use for it. After we send Twilight Sparkle and her friends home, I'm forbidding use of the interdimensional capabilities of the rainbow. Is that clear?"

There were some hushed conversations amongst the group. However, everyone eventually nodded in agreement.

Magic Star's expression softened. "Now that that's through, let's get on to more normal business. Has anyone heard anything about harpies?"

"Not so much as a peep," a white pegasus stallion with dark red hair said.

"They're probably still licking their wounds after the Atlantis incident," a pink pegasus mare with blue hair said boastfully.

"Or, they could be planning something," Wind Whistler said to her. "We should remain vigilant."

"I'm with Wind Whistler," Magic Star said. "Keep your ears to the ground. I don't want them catching us unawares."

"There's nothing else happening that we should concern ourselves with," a blue unicorn mare said.

"Then if there are no questions, I'll adjourn the meeting," Magic Star said.

Everypony was silent.

"Alright, you're free to go." Magic Star stamped the block.

Everypony got up and filed out of the room. Megan and a white pegasus mare with orange hair walked up to Magic Star. "You wanted to talk to me?"

"I was thinking you could give our guests a little history lesson," Magic Star said. She turned to Twilight Sparkle. "This is Paradise."

"Pleased to meet you," Paradise said.

"Hi, I'm Megan," Megan said warmly.

"Hi, Megan," Fluttershy replied.

"I was hoping to see your library too," Twilight Sparkle said. A castle this size had to have a huge one filled with history and literature.

"You're in luck," Paradise said. "I spent much of my time there."

"Actually, I'm hoping to stretch my wings and explore a bit," Rainbow Dash said. "I also want to see just fast..." She bit her lip and sputtered a short laugh. "...Whizzer is."

"I want to see what kinds of cute and cuddly creatures live here," Fluttershy said.

"I'm more interested in the fashion of this place, personally," Rarity said.

"Sundance and I were about to take up a sewing project with Buttons," Megan said. "Do you want to come with us?"

"That'll work," Rarity said. She and Megan walked out of the room.

"I'm not much on history," Applejack said. "I'm going to check this place out myself."

"Same here." Pinkie Pie hopped out of the room.

"Hey!" one of the foals called out. "Do you three want to play polo?"

"That'd be great," Applebloom said. She turned to Applejack. "Can we?"

"I don't see why not," Applejack replied. "Just stay out of trouble."

"Cutie Mark Crusaders Polo Players, YAY!" The three smacked their hooves together before following the other foals out of the room.

"Do they do that all of the time?" Paradise asked.

"Seems like it," Twilight Sparkle said dully. "So, where's your library?"

"It's this way." Paradise walked towards the door and Twilight Sparkle followed.