

Revelatory Filly Skydance
By: Gabriel LaVedier

Act One: The Stargazer Saga

Dramatis Personae

Scootaloo as Skydance
Sweetie Belle as Daisy Dreams
Applebloom as Country Roads
Diamond Tiara as Candy Stripes
Silver Spoon as Judgmental
Twist as Time Tokens
Rainbow Dash as Ace Pinnacle
Zecora as The Violet Witch

Special Effects provided by Twilight Sparkle and Rarity

Stage Management by Fluttershy

Catering by Pinkie Pie (And Sugarcube Corners, in association with Sweet Apple Acres)

The stage was set, and the time was right. All had been prepared and what remained was to get it started. The lights flashed on, and the music swelled, classical and electronic mingling pleasantly in the orchestra pit, while on stage, Daisy Dreams, with a masked chorus, broke into song before swirling images of stargazer lilies.

*“It’s me and you, doing what we do
In the dawn of our lives
A beginning of promise and harmony (It takes a long, long time.)
Gotta tell somebody,
Gotta move my body,
Gotta get out and go,
Oh my friend... Take my revelation.*

*In our starlit garden we held each other tightly
And by the moon and heaven swore we
Would stay friends evermore
It was a dream that was beautiful
And sure to last forever
But no, it melted in our normal lifestyle
Everyday, every time. (Everytime!)*

*Oh, oh no!
Oh do not say
That is how life is.
I’ve seen the truth
I know there’s more
A life for us. (Revelation!)*

*It’s me and you, doing what we do
In the midst of a storm
We are lost and cannot see the glowing way.
Gotta trust somebody
Gotta move out bodies
Gotta run for the sun
Oh, my friend, please follow me.*

*In a desert hot and lonely, fear on every side crawls
We have no one but each other on whom to call
Just our selves and what we found out
And in the dusty, barren expanse, we find a hidden surplus
Of all the courage and the confidence
To get past when we feel so bad
We want to give up (Oh, feeling so bad!)*

*But I see
A cooler clime and I
Know we will be ok
For you and I, for all our fears
Can do it all if we believe (Revelation!)*

*In a maze we run
All around we turn
With no ending in sight
Just the walls and our own sense of liberty
It will not be easy, it will not be fast
But, believe, if we stand together
We will be safe.”*

The music swelled into an extended solo. Daisy Dreams looked out at the crowd and whispered, voice amplified to reach every ear, “Let’s dance together...” She crossed the stage during the solo, approaching the front and thrusting her head out towards the audience.

*“I will go my way and I hope you come
Of your own free will
I can show you where we can both be free
Oh come on with me
Oh come on with me
To a land in the sky
Oh darling, don’t be afraid*

*Take my revelation!
In the fruit of our lives
Past the bloom and the blush and ripening
Together, forever, with no fear at all
We found the land we have sought.*

*It’s me and you, doing what we do
Being honest and true, together in a bedding of lily
Gotta tell somebody
That I love somebody
That I always will
I found what I was missing.*

*This revelation. (This revelation.)
This revelation. (This revelation)
Tell some body!”*

The music ended with a flourish and a sudden shutting off of the lights. There was a good bit of stomping the ground and a few whistles. The stage remained dark while the commotion went on, the scene changing only after it was done. It remained dark, but several light outlines began to move, looking like

shadows moving amid the sea of shade, while Twilight Sparkle narrated.

“Once upon a time there was a young filly, who lost both of her parents on the same day.” The shadows formed the images of a funeral procession, which shed members until nothing remained but a single Pegasus filly. “The young filly cried over this, feeling lost and alone. In the midst of this, she met a prince.” A regal figure strode in from the side, outline hazy and indistinct, moving between unicorn and Pegasus. “The prince assured her that he knew the way to no longer be sad, and how to live a life of strength. He left a small necklace with her, and then walked away into the distance. The young filly never forgot the strength and confidence of the prince. And, with the necklace around her always, she was determined to be just like him. Strong and confident.”

The scenery changed, lights going up to a painted backdrop, which looked remarkably like Canterlot, but with more lilies in planters. The cloth backdrop ran on rollers, which moved the scene to look like the motion of characters or a sweeping panorama in action. Extras, colts and fillies alike, milled around dressed in formal-seeming red uniforms, until there was a general commotion and glances to the left of the stage. From that direction walked Skydance, also in a uniform, but one that looked cut like the colt uniforms, with added epaulettes and additional piping. Beside her bounced Country Roads, in a female uniform sans the extras, looking as cheerful as could be. The colts began to comment to each other, casting jealous eyes at Skydance, while the fillies squealed and reared, following Skydance as she walked along.

Eventually, the colts and fillies scooted off of the stage as Country Roads and Skydance trotted in place before the moving backdrop. “Ah cain’t believe how amazing it is! Yew jes walk around and all the fillies go crazy! Ah cain’t do nuthin’ like that.”

“It’s not all that great. They just NEVER leave me alone. It’s constantly a pain. Sometimes I wish I hadn’t gained this reputation that I have. I guess being a princely filly isn’t exactly the best thing. Colts get jealous, and fillies can’t stop swooning. And this place isn’t even all-girl! I just don’t get it.”

“Awww, come on! You’ve gotta love it. They love ya and respect ya even without a Cutie Mark. Haven’t ya said that that’s why yew lahk this. Maybe ah should try it tew. Yew got another one a them necklaces? It always makes yew look SOOO cool.”

Skydance looked down at the necklace and gave it a tap with her hoof. “Yea, this thing is pretty awesome. But, there’s only one in the world. I got it from my prince when he helped me out. And now I’ve come here, to Horsetari Academy, because I heard there was a prince here. But I still haven’t found him. Doesn’t matter. I’m becoming my own, and I guess that’s kinda the same. Thanks for coming with me, Country. It means a lot. I know you wanted to stay at home and go to the local place.”

“Aww, well, yew know. Ah didn’t lahk the local place. Everypony was a-teasin’ me causa mah accent and ‘cause ah lived onna farm. But out here... Shoot, look at me! Ah gots me a fancy uniform and ah go to an Academy! And besides... Ah’ve never told yew but... Ah’ve just always felt lahk ah was bein’ called tew here. Not here but somewhere near here. Ah cain’t explain. But ah felt it when ah was tryin’ tew get in.”

“Ah, I understand. I felt it too. But I thought it was because I’d get a chance to see that prince again. Nothing so far. I just... Hey, what’s going on down there?” The scenery had passed to something resembling a balcony, Skydance and Country Roads coming to the front of the stage to look out over the alleged edge of said balcony.

Rarity lifted her horn and activated her powers of illusion, to show a scene in a small greenhouse of stargazer lilies. Twilight Sparkle also added her power, producing the figures within. A demure Daisy Dreams, in a long and beautiful dress, completely unlike anything that seemed to be in the Academy rules, was sitting beside a very haughty-looking Candy Stripes, who was complaining loudly about a recent exam. “And you said that you were going to tutor me and I’d be able to ace it, and what happened? I flunked!”

“I’m very sorry. But, I told you, you also needed to get some sleep and study again before the test. And, you really didn’t seem to pay attention when I was tutoring you...” Daisy Dreams kept her voice soft and demure, looking down constantly and trying to keep herself small and inconspicuous.

“I didn’t ask for your excuses! You must obey me and I told you to help me with my exam and you failed!” Candy Stripes roughly shoved Daisy Dreams to the ground, standing over her with a hard look on her face. “You’re not supposed to fail...”

“Hey! You can’t do that to somepony! Especially not a filly like that!” Skydance yelled down in front of the stage, while the illusory characters looked up in surprise.

“Shows what you know! This is Daisy Dreams, and I can do anything I want.”

“No you can’t! Just wait until I get down there!” Skydance made a leap that appeared to take her off the stage, the background wheeling rapidly and growing obscured by illusory action lines. When things had cleared, the backdrop was the greenhouse, Country Roads was gone, and the other two were physically on stage. Skydance hovered to the ground, wings beating rapidly to give the illusion of slowing her fall, with the real work done by Twilight Sparkle. “What gives you the right to treat her like that?”

“I don’t have to speak to you, I…” Candy Stripes looked down at Skydance and finally noticed the necklace. “Why are you even asking? You’ve got the necklace too. If you’re so eager to help her out, why don’t you use it? Come to the field on the edge of the Untrotted Forest after classes get out. If you dare.”

“T-too…” Skydance herself also noticed the necklace around the other filly’s neck. It was the same as the one she had received from the prince. “What’s going on here?”

“You’re either gonna show up and lose, or chicken out. I can’t tell which one yet but one is going to happen. Remember me, Candy Stripes, when you’re crying over your foolish loss. Come on, Daisy, let’s move.” With a sharp motion of her head, Candy Stripes and Daisy Dreams set off, with the demure filly giving a parting, soft-eyed glance back.

“Jes whut the hay was that?” Country Roads clopped back onstage from the wings. “Ah was lucky there was some stairs by here. Ah swears, Skydance, yer gonna give me a hear attack at this rate.”

“She had my necklace… How did she have my necklace?” Skydance was looking at the necklace, holding it up with one hoof. “Is he really here? Why would he give something like this to a filly like her? She shoved that filly down! I am SO going out there today…”

“Out where?”

“That locked-up field by the Untrotted Forest, the one that nopony ever seems to go to. Somehow… I think I can get in.”

“Can ah come with ya?”

“No… I’m pretty sure this is something for me only. I’ve gotta… Face this myself. I’ll try not to take too long with it. I don’t know what that filly has in mind, but, I’m gonna beat her at whatever this is.” With that last statement, the lights went down and there was a general shuffling and slight rustling, as the low ambient light showed a new backdrop sliding into position.

The lights went up again and revealed a forest with high, dark and skeletal trees. Beside it was a huge stone gate, carved with the image of a rose. It loomed before Skydance, who looked decidedly small in front of it. “Ok… So now what?” She came forward to tap her hoof against the gate.

A box showed up in the air, to show the close-up of what the special effects were doing on the gate. A beam of light shone from a small circle on the gate, shining upon the necklace and causing a grinding noise and a general shaking of the stage. Slowly, the rock parted, while the rose on it seemed to shed its petals. Behind the gate was a painted staircase, leading up into a glowing unknown.

Skydance stood at the base of the painted stairs for a moment before she moved towards them. The lights flared in a bright flash, the dimming of which revealed the illusion of Skydance trotting up a winding staircase while the orchestra played a portentous, classical-sounding tune that grew faster and louder the higher she went.

Another flash greeted the end of the climb, and revealed a broad expanse, backdrop melding into the illusion on the stage. It was a stone field high in the sky, a light breeze passing over it and sending small streams of dust curling away over the side. Skydance could only look on in awe, glancing over the side to see the Academy and the forest far below.

“It’s not that impressive once you’ve been up here a few times. But then again, I guess a nopony like you wouldn’t know anything about amazing things like this.” Candy Stripes and Daisy Dreams trotted slowly from the other side of the stone field. As before, Candy Stripes looked haughty and confident, while Daisy Dreams looked demurely to the side.

“So, I’m here? What kinda challenge do you want to have out here? Football? Field hockey? Whatever it is, I’m not afraid. I’d think an earth pony like you would be more afraid than me…”

“Ahahah. How quaint. Sports. Of course I’d expect that out of YOUR kind, upstart… Daisy! Attach the flowers.” Daisy Dreams quickly moved over to Candy Stripes and pressed something to her upper chest, leaving behind a large and showy stargazer lily. She quickly trotted across the field to Skydance and did the same to her. Before turning to return to Candy Stripes she looked at Skydance with large, liquid eyes, mouth open just a touch as though wanting to speak.

“Ok, so... Flowers. This place really is girly. I thought the uniforms would make us look tough but...”

“Sword of Celestia, grant me the power to achieve my ends!” Without any preamble, Candy Stripes brought her head down to Daisy Dreams’ chest, grasping something with her teeth and creating a flash of light. A prop sword was cleverly levitated low on the stage and slid out from under one of Daisy Dreams’ legs, a coating of seeming making it appear to be a wickedly edged real sword.

“Hey! Wait a minute! Where did you get... And what are you gonna do with..?” Skydance stepped back slightly, closer to the edge of the field. And when she saw Candy Stripes charge her with a gleam in her eye she just started to run.

Candy Stripes was dogged in her pursuit of Skydance, the sword slashing the wind as she charged over the stone field. She was fast, amazingly fast for someone that looked like she never worked a day in her life. She actually managed to get closer and closer, gaining on the retreating Pegasus, her wicked grin growing larger around the sword in her teeth.

Skydance thought about what she was doing. It was completely against her nature. She wasn’t the kind to run. And certainly the prince would not have run. She turned quickly, and kicked out her right leg, aiming low at Candy Stripes’ legs, ducking her body as low as possible, out of the reach of the sword.

Candy Stripes had dueled many a time, formally matching sword-to-sword with well-trained ponies that knew the old techniques and some of the formal varieties of invention and improvisation. But a turn and trip was completely unexpected. It sent her sprawling out, head tucking to prevent a full facial collision with the ground. In the process, the blade of the sword caught the ground at an odd angle and bounced up to cut the stem of the lily, which dropped to the field.

Bells rang out over the scene, clanging loud and long as Candy Stripes lay on the ground, staring at her flower in disbelief. Daisy Dreams crossed the field, a smile on her face, to stand beside Skydance. “Congratulations. You have won the right to me, the Lily Friend. That was... Amazing.”

“Wait... I did... What? What are you?” Skydance looked around. The sword was gone, Candy Stripes was glaring hatefully at her, and Daisy Dreams was pressing against her. “What?”

The stage went dark again, and the backdrop was switched out yet again. In the low ambient light there could be seen a few loft beds being pushed onto the stage. The lights came up to reveal a background that looked like the inside of a bedroom. There was a desk on the painted background, the beds in the foreground, and three ponies, Country Roads, Daisy Dreams and Skydance. Country Roads was in a bed, looking down at Daisy Dreams and Skydance.

“Well this is jes weird! Yew went tew deal with some pony and came back with yer own pet princess.”

“She’s not a pet! And she’s not a princess. I think. I dunno. This is just.. Yea, weird. What did you say you were?”

“I’m the Lily Friend. I go to the winner of the duels. I’m here to make you life come forth as you always wanted. And to help you reveal and maintain your Cutie Mark.”

“Yea, duels... There’s a lot of explanation needed here. A lot of it. What is that place? And what’s with that... Sword?”

“The dueling field has always been at Horsetari Academy. It is where the duels must take place. And the Sword of Celestia is granted to the holder of the Lily Friend. It will cut through the fog and reveal the path for you.”

“And y’all won her? Great. Does she come with an off switch?” Country Roads flumped down onto the bed, staring up at the ceiling.

“Yea... Ok... So, let me get this straight. Duels? Like... More than one? With who?”

“The Student Council. Didn’t you recognize Candy Stripes?”

“No, I’m new here, transferred late. How did I manage to get in on this? I’m not on the Student Council.”

“But you have the necklace. That means you have earned the right to fight for me. Like a prince.”

The statement stunned Skydance, and she could only look to Daisy Dreams, who was smiling at her.

The lights went down again, while the orchestra began to play a very dark tune, heavy on the timpani drums and the intimidating shriek of a pipe organ. Even just a synthesizer version played by DJ Pon-3, it was quite intimidating. The lights came up in a muted form, with gray-tone filters over them to

lend a dark air to the scene. It was a very Gothic-style chamber, containing a round wooden table around which were the members of the Student Council. At the side facing the audience was the back of Time Tokens, holding a stopwatch; to her right was a fuming Candy Stripes; to her left was a smugly-smiling Judgmental; and at the head was a figure in tightly-wrapped illusory shadows, looking larger than the others.

The shadowy figure slowly unrolled a scroll, looking down at it seriously. "I have received another message from The Spaces Between. He is not very... Happy, about the performance of our friend Candy Stripes."

All eyes went to Candy Stripes, who looked even more upset. Time Tokens clicked the stopwatch on some unknown signal. "How was I supposed to know that little upstart would try something like that. And win? It was a fluke. And besides, we were never informed that someone like her would be here. How did she even get a necklace?"

"Ours is not to question. It is just to win." Judgmental coolly responded to the question with a smile. "We may no longer be Blank Flanks but that's only half the riddle. We must use the Lily Friend to move our ambitions forward, to grasp what we most desire. We just need to fight her and win."

"And we will. The Spaces Between has sent word. Time Tokens, you will be the next to face her." All eyes turned on Time Tokens, who clicked the stopwatch and then let it fall to the table.

The music concluded with a flourish as the lights faded out. The backdrop changed and the actors shuffled, returning lights revealing Skydance and Daisy Dreams walking along the exterior of the Academy. "So, even though they all have their Cutie Marks, they're still fighting over you?"

"It's not over once you get a Cutie Mark. That might even be the easy part. I can bring any dream to life if it is focused properly. I exist to serve the end of whoever is my champion. I'm like a bridge out, to something new and amazing."

"Who made up that rule? It's no fun serving someone. Don't you want to be free?"

"I am free. Free to serve whoever has me. I like the fairy tale ending, being swept away by a great warrior, a handsome prince, who can make my dreams come true. So, I don't mind serving as the Lily Friend."

"I don't think that's how it works. You can't just wait for stuff like that. You've gotta work for it and go after it if it really means that much to you."

"But, that's not how the old stories work. You're supposed to wait and get what it is you want most. It will happen eventually without you doing anything. Every Cutie Mark comes along sooner or later."

Skydance was going to comment when she stopped in her tracks. There before her was Time Tokens, stopwatch in hoof. "The duel hath been thet. Today, I will have the Lily Friend and you will learn not to meth with fortheth you cannot underthand."

"Are you kidding? I thought this was over!"

"No, you will have to duel the Student Council, and defeat them all. I pass from winner to winner. No one has kept me before and no one has won against the entire Student Council."

"This is going to get weirder and weirder." With that statement the lights dropped once more and the scenery was hastily changed in the darkness. The return of light brought the dueling field, with Skydance, Daisy Dreams and Time Tokens standing on it.

"Seriously? Again? I know that you said so, but come on..." Skydance stared incredulously at the cool and calm Time Tokens while Daisy Dreams placed a lily on her uniform.

"The Student Council works on their own time and schedule, it's not anything that anyone else understands." Daisy Dreams pinned a lily to Time Tokens, who looked on impassively, stopwatch in a hoof.

"Ok, so, now... Swords. I mean, real swords? There was that magic one and I had nothing. So do you not get..." The question stumbled as Time Tokens drew a sword from her loose uniform, the prop made to look like a real epee. "A real... One... Ok. Now... Magic sword..."

Daisy Dreams trotted back to Skydance's side and lifted her head. "You must draw the sword forth, calling out to it, Sword of Celestia. Tell it what you desire. You're like me. I saw. You want something very specific. So tell it." A bright flash of light shone from the chest area, the handle of a sword appearing to emerge from it.

Skydance looked at the handle dubiously, but still called out, "Sword of Celestia... Grant me the power to bring Cutie Mark location!" Taking the handle in her teeth she drew it swiftly out with an audible

metal scrape. She took what she thought was an appropriate fighting stance, looking hard at Time Tokens.

With the click of the watch, Time Tokens charged, sword held steady in her mouth, steel flashing and swinging with audible slashes in the air. She wasn't as brutally ruthless as Candy Stripes had been; what she was, was efficient. Every strike was done with a purpose, often chained together in an attempt at moving Skydance in a certain manner or getting her sword into a particular position for another strike at the lily.

As before, the chains and single strokes were designed to function best against somepony who had been trained for them. Even when fighting, there were certain ingrained responses with sufficient education and practice. Skydance was making it up as she went along, and barely managing to do that. Her head waved side-to-side so much she was afraid she'd make a milkshake out of her brain. But it was helping. She wasn't being stricken; the practiced moves worked to a point, when a random motion deflected some piece of the chain, or even the coup stroke.

Time Tokens tried to look impassive but slowly started to sweat. Her eyes narrowed and her force increased. She pressed her attacks when she had the chance, often left cutting air when Skydance dashed out of her way and made a break for a more open, central position. Adjusting the sword in her teeth, she made a grand lunge for the wide-eyed Pegasus.

Skydance turned the blow with a quick twist of her head and struck again under the the liften sword to slice off the huge lily. It hit the stone ground with a light thud, prompting Time Tokens to click the watch once more, and similarly drop it to the ground. "Thith ith impothible... I wath chothen by... How could I lothe?"

"How in the hay did I win?" Skydance dropped the sword to the dueling field's floor, staring at the flower-less Time Tokens. The sword slowly vanished, leaving behind nothing but an oddly-lumpy patch of ground, illusion laid over the actual prop.

The lights went down again, with the normal shuffling of the scenery, the lights coming back up to reveal the dorm room. Country Roads was sitting before a vanity, looking at herself in a mirror. Her face was rather garishly made up, overmuch lipstick, too much blush, piles of eye shadow, great globs of mascara. "Oh ah'm a pretty lil filly, ah'm a citified country gal..." She sang slightly off-key, smiling at herself. It wasn't that big, but she smiled anyhow. Too much makeup was what she saw a lot, and so she tried to make it work for her. "Ah'm a pretty lil filly, and ah loves mah new look..."

All of a sudden there was a small tendril of sparkling violet curling up from among the makeup, a moist cloth clutched in it. Country Roads watched in shock as the tendril-held cloth gently started wiping at her face. Despite the great variety of cosmetics on her face, the cloth wiped it all away perfectly, leaving her in her pure, natural state. And from within the mirror, there came a hazy outline, and a soothing, calm voice. "You will never need this affected stuff, your natural beauty is enough." The makeup gone and message stated, the tendril and image both vanished.

Country Roads stared at the mirror, slowly extending a shaky hoof to try and touch it. Before she could, there was the sound of an opening door, Skydance and Daisy Dreams walking into the room a moment later. "Oh, hey there, gals. How did it go?"

"Well, she's still doing to be taking the spare bed in here, so I guess it went well. It was still weird. I had to fight someone. With a sword, and cut a lily from their uniform. This is the weirdest thing I've ever done."

"Weird stuff is happening all over." Country Roads commented, looking to the mirror. It now looked exactly like it had prior to the event. The only thing somewhat confirming the event was the cloth, smudged with removed cosmetics and showing to have been held around the middle by a single, long appendage.

"How long does it take between duels? That was a day, I don't know if I can handle this every day." Skydance slid into her bed, the lower of the free beds.

"The Student Council does what they are told. They get direction from somewhere, at random. They can lay low and not do much but be ordinary students for a long time, or they can have a flurry of matches. No matter what, to the winner goes... Me." Daisy Dreams slid into bed beside Skydance, pressing close against her.

"Errr, yea... I see. Umm... Your bed is... It's the top one." Skydance wriggled uneasily against Daisy Dreams' touch.

"I don't like to be alone. I'm glad you won me. Maybe you won't leave me alone like the rest of

them did..." Daisy Dreams looked sadly down, head settled against Skydance's neck.

Skydance looked completely lost, looking down at the sad unicorn pressing against her. A glance to Country Roads garnered only a shrug and a motion of her legs to indicate some kind of action. One leg lightly came up and around Daisy Dreams. "H-hey, it's alright. If you need to sleep here, you can."

"Thank you." Daisy Dreams remained cuddled up against Skydance, breathing slowly, almost seeming to sigh as her head rested there. Country Roads tilted her head a bit, but Skydance just gave her a smile and said something, sotto voce, not heard by the audience. "I need closeness. It's the one thing that makes me happy."

"Then... Come on. Let's go to sleep." Skydance and Daisy Dreams curled up in the bed, back-to-back. This left Country Roads to trot over to the light and flick it off, dropping the lights to a low level before she climbed into her bed and flopped down.

Over the darkened scene there appeared a pair of barely-visible eyes, which scanned across the sleeping fillies. A soft voice spoke out before the lights went down completely, "This fear you all attempt to hide, is born because you lack a guide."

The background shuffled, shifting once again to the imposing Gothic setting of the Student Council meeting room, with the appropriate background music swelling as the shadowy figure glared down at the rest of the members of the Council. All were cringing save for Judgmental. "Two. Two defeated. First by an unarmed filly, then by a spastic flailer. Are you sure you're worthy of this position? To fight for the Lily Friend? Well, we shall see. There has been no word from The Spaces Between. Keep your heads low and your snouts clean. Until we get word, we must respect the holder of the Lily Friend."

Candy Stripes lifted a hoof. "Just how much... Respect, should we give her? She humiliated us, and has taken what rightfully belongs to the Student Council, not some upstart..."

"All respect possible. By no means do you need to be polite. Avoid them if you can. But nothing too overt." The shadowy figure nodded and moved its head. "Go then. Prepare for what is to come."

The music and lights dropped completely, the only sound being a rather busy and hurried scuffle in the background, dim ambient light showing a huge amount of work going on in the darkness. Furniture being scooted in, backdrop changed, extras trotting onto the stage.

The lights came back up, with the orchestra playing a light classical tune. The scene was one of some kind of a party, illusion adding touches to make it look even more authentic. There were tables at the edges of the stage, lined with food and punch, while at the centers fillies and colts danced with each other.

From the right side of the stage emerged Country Roads, Skydance and Daisy Dreams, dressed in their normal attire, as that was apparently the dress code for the gathering. Country Roads immediately went for the snack table, to consume apple cupcakes and drink the apple punch. It was on-script, but her enthusiasm made it quite the messy affair.

Skydance shook her head subtly at the overly-enthusiastic consumption but went on with her lines, speaking aside to Daisy Dreams. "A dance? Seriously? This is weird. At my old place we had once at the end of the year. But you said this is the third one? I didn't think I came in that late."

"Oh, we have lots of dances here. This Academy was founded by someone who was very connected to royalty and loved the grand balls and wonderful gatherings of the nobility. So it was decided that there would be frequent dances, according to the taste of the leader of the Academy. Typically once a week, with grander ones every so often. This is a very informal one."

Skydance looked at the colts and fillies carefully dancing together, in perfect step, the choreography aided on by subtle magical cues keeping them in time and place. "Wow. I hope I missed the grand ones."

Daisy Dreams pressed in against Skydance, pulling her lightly towards the center of the stage. "There's still some left to come. Now please, dance with me. You promised me you wouldn't leave me alone."

Skydance attempted to duck away from Daisy Dreams' motions, but was pulled into the center of the dance floor, finding herself in the limelight, stared at by the other dancers. Daisy Dreams started to move, hooves and body moving in a manner that was smooth and easy. Skydance, for her part, moved in a jerky, uncertain fashion. It looked entirely scripted, but she pulled it off well enough.

All of a sudden the ring of other dancers was broken by Candy Stripes, who trotted self-importantly through to the stunned Daisy Dreams and pushed at her. "I don't care what happened, you're still mine."

“Hey! I don’t really care about all this Student Council junk, but you can’t just treat somepony like that.” Skydance was in Candy Stripes’ face right away, shoving hard against her.

“Skydance...” Daisy Dreams looked almost taken aback by the whole thing. She moved in close behind her, gently placing a hoof on her back. “Don’t. What would it prove other than she can make you mad and mess up your concentration?”

Skydance scowled hard and seemed to be ready to push into Candy Stripes’ face. But she just turned aside and looked with a bit of surprise at Daisy Dreams. “So what if she does? Why shouldn’t I let her get to me? We’re fillies. We can mix it up.”

“But do you want to? It’s you, I know. It’s who you are. But is it worth it? To lose me to a jealous beast?”

“Beast?! Why you...”

“No.” Skydance glared back at Candy Stripes. “I think I’ll keep you around a while longer.” Skydance trotted away from the dance floor, moving her head slightly. “C’mon, let’s get some snacks before Country Roads eats them all.”

The two left Candy Stripes seething at her inability to move Skydance to an unscheduled fight. Judgmental moved up beside Candy Stripes and watched the two fillies moving off. “So this is the new respect. I had no idea it looked so much like belligerence.”

“We were to be respectful but not polite. I was... Expressing a view. I still think she was mine. She had no right to fight me. No right to challenge me at all. So her ownership isn’t sure.”

“Didn’t you challenge her?” Judgmental grinned smugly.

With a scowl from Candy Stripes, the lights went down. After a quick shuffle of scenery, the lights came up on the dueling field, Skydance holding the Sword of Celestia, facing down Judgmental who was looking at a lily on the ground. “I see. Even with your inexperience I never had a chance. I guess it’s true. You’re something special indeed.”

Skydance released the sword, which vanished before it hit the floor. Skydance dropped to the ground, sitting with a disbelieving stare at the severed lily. She had thought it would be impossible to beat one more Student Council member. “How do I do this? What’s keeping me from losing?”

Daisy Dreams softly pressed her head against Skydance’s cheek, pushing her slowly towards the stairs down from the dueling field. “You do it because you’re focused on a real goal. You want your Cutie Mark. And because of that you have guidance from the Sword of Celestia. It makes little motions that make all the difference.”

“Oh... So it’s the sword that does it...” Skydance slowly walked along the stairs and down the path towards the campus proper. “But why me? What’s so special about me that made this kinda thing happen? I was just walking by when I saw you with Candy Stripes.”

“You didn’t have to stop. But you did.” Daisy Dreams pressed up close to Skydance and rubbed her nose under the other filly’s chin.

Before Skydance could reply, both of them were faced down by an older mare. She was dressed in an Academy uniform as ostentatious as Skydance’s own, and similarly stallion-styled. She had rainbow-divided mane and tail with a sky blue body. A set of powerful wings lightly unfolded and folded on her back. “You’ve been doing good. It’s very impressive. I suppose you deserve some congratulations.”

“Who are you?” Skydance looked on the new arrival with a mix of caution and subtle awe.

“That’s the President of the Student Council. Ace Pinnacle. She gets all the messages that say who will fight who. She’s still waiting to be told to fight.”

“Wait’s over. I got the message right after the one that sent Judgmental at you. We’re gonna be fighting.”

“Us? You’re a full-grown mare! How did you even get on the council anyhow?”

“It must be headed by someone like me. Keeps things in line. Besides, I think it was fate. We’ve met before, you know. You know me, even if you don’t remember. I’m your Prince. I can be really convincing as a colt.”

There was a sting of music and a sudden flash of light, an illusion suddenly focusing on Skydance’s huge, disbelieving eyes, covering the entire stage. “Wh-what?” Her voice boomed, a waver added to it that made it sound like an internal monologue. “My... My prince? What? I mean... I don’t remember if he was actually a he. Or a Pegasus or unicorn or earth pony. I don’t remember. Suddenly, she seems familiar. Maybe I do remember. There’s something there...”

“So how long has she been like this?” The illusion faded out, leaving the stage visible, showing the dorm once more, Country Roads peering at the stiff Skydance, while Daisy Dreams mopped her head down with a cool, moist towel.

“Ever since she saw Ace Pinnacle. She’s technically the President of the Student Council, but I’m not sure what she actually is. She’s not really a teacher, a student, an administrator. She’s just... Here. And she said that she was Skydance’s prince in disguise.”

“Really!? Wait a minute. Yew mean this whole time that prince was really a princess? What does that mean? How does that even work?”

“It’s like Skydance. She dresses like a colt but she’s a filly. And she said she’s good at looking like a colt when she wants to.”

“I think...” Skydance suddenly spoke. “I think I remember. I remember her, twice. I remember the prince as a dim, little memory. But I also remember a rainbow mane and tail, saving me when I was trying to fly. It was a heroic moment. Very... Prince-like.”

“So you mean, it might be true? She might be that there prince yer all crazy over finding’?”

“I don’t know. But I should at least find out. I’ve gotta fight her anyway. So I’ll ask about that and whatever she says, well... I at least remember a little something now.”

“But can you trust what you remember? The Student Council wants me back. And Ace has never been good at losing. She’ll do anything she can to avoid it.” Daisy Dreams softly placed her head on Skydance’s shoulder, looking up with large, liquid eyes.

“Hey, you said it yourself. The Sword knows what I want. And it helps me win. So there’s no worry. I’ll do this easily. You’re kinda starting to grow on me. By the way, sleep the other way. You poked me in the nose the other night, about an inch from getting weird.”

Daisy Dreams placed her head softly on Skydance’s chest, looking happy and content. “Whatever you say...”

The lights went down once more and the scene shifted to a very foggy dueling field, Skydance facing down Ace Pinnacle. She was just drawing out the sword. “Sword of Celestia, grant me the...” She looked to the smugly-smiling Pegasus mare, even more sure she recognized her. “The power to bring...” She HAD been the one that saved her life. “To bring Cutie Mark location.” She must have been the prince.

“Good luck, kid. Even if there’s no use. After all, I’m the prince.” With a flourish of her sword, the duel began.

Daisy Dreams stood to the side, watching the heavy drama build, as the fog rolled in even more thickly, leaving the audience able to see only silhouettes. “Don’t forget what you’re fighting for!” She cried out, desperately staring into the thick cloud.

The silhouettes rose into the air, magically projected onto the fog. They circled one another warily, swords held high in their mouths, ready to be brought to bear. Skydance made the first move, dashing forward hard and cutting at Ace Pinnacle’s chest. The blow was turned and returned with ease, the extra strength in the larger mare sending the filly sailing across the sky.

Skydance righted herself and turned to where she last saw her opponent. There was nothing there. She rushed towards that point, just to keep moving and turned her head just in time to block a heavy diving strike. She tumbled through the fog again, quickly regaining her balance and going on the attack once more.

As the heavy blows were traded in midair, a double illusion panel appeared in front of the stage, one showing Skydance’s face, the other showing Ace Pinnacle’s face. The fight raged and the faces remained mostly steady, both fixed in serious scowls of focus. But as it continued, Skydance began to soften her features, eventually coming to regard her opponent with a wide-eyed look. On the other side, Ace Pinnacle went from serious to confident, smiling and giving a long, smooth stare.

With a slide of metal-on-metal and a quick wisp of sound a lily was severed and fell to the ground. Bells rang out triumphantly as both figures came to the ground. The tolling of bells cleared the fog, revealing the tableaux. Daisy Dreams looked on in stunned disbelief, as Ace Pinnacle touched down with a look of triumph before a cowed-looking Skydance, sans lily.

“H-how... How did I lose..? The sword was leading me. The sword was supposed to...” Skydance looked down at the sword as it faded away.

“The sword only guides you to your heart’s desire. It moves to help you win. If you want to win.” Daisy Dreams whispered the words, slowly clapping to Ace Pinnacle’s side.

“You didn’t want to win. You couldn’t bring yourself to want it. Couldn’t bear to beat your prince.

That's why you lost. You just didn't have it in you. Don't feel so bad, kid. There was no way you were going to win anyhow. Come on, let's go. I won you fair and square." Ace Pinnacle motioned with her head, leading Daisy Dreams away down the stairs.

Skydance, looked down at the fallen lily, and hung her head in shame as the lights went down. However, a single spotlight remained focused on her. Around her head, an illusory conversation was carried out, between herself and Country Roads.

"What do ya mean she's not gonna be livin' here no more?"

"It's just what I said. She's not going to be here anymore."

"But why?"

"Why do you think? Because I lost her, that's why!"

"'Lost her'? She's not yer keys or a book! She's another filly! She's prob'ly alone and scared and sad, just like she used tew be! She trusted yew! What are yew gonna dew?"

"..."

"Well?"

"What AM I gonna do?"

Skydance stood up suddenly, a bright flash of light illuminating the stage. There was no backdrop, just a black expanse. She marched boldly to the side, where Ace Pinnacle stood beside a dejected Daisy Dreams. "Hey! Ace! I don't care if you are my prince or how I remember you! Daisy said she was never happy with the Student Council but she LOVED being with me! I don't care if it's against the rules, I'll challenge you again. Just you and me, right here and now."

Ace Pinnacle laughs, long and loud, the sound amplified to make it far more obnoxious, and confident. "Really? A day of moping and suddenly you're a super warrior? That's not really how it works, kid. But fine. Come to the Dueling Field. Anytime you're ready, I'll be there. Oh, and bring a sword. You won't keep getting lucky."

Skydance was returned to primary focus, and moved back to the center of the stage. She looked upwards into the light, while a disembodied voice spoke. "We got a message from the president of the Student Council. Congratulations on being accepted to the fencing club, even late. She wanted us to release this foil to you. No need to tell you to be careful, if they're letting you in, they've seen you fight. No more practice swords, eh?" A plain, unassuming, knob-blunted foil came down, and was taken up by Skydance, who walked forward.

The lights went up again to reveal the stone door of the dueling field. She boldly moved up to face it, greeted by the familiar flash of light, grinding of stone and peeling of the gate's petals. Once more, the appeared to take to the stairs, while special effects and strongly orchestrated music made the travel seem real.

At the "top" of the stairs were Ace Pinnacle and Daisy Dreams, as promised. Ace already looked like she had won, and was wearing her lily on her chest. "You never should have come here. This isn't your fight. It's none of your concern. It never was. You were a mistake, Candy Stripes' own attitude getting the better of her. So, go on. Leave. Save yourself the trouble."

Daisy Dreams slowly approached Skydance, a lily in her mouth. As she clipped the flower to the other filly's chest, she looked up with tear-stained features, eyes red and raw. She spoke a few words, some unheard by the audience, two amplified enough to carry. "Rescue me..."

Skydance's wings flew open, a commanding 'woosh' imposed on the scene to enhance what little material there was to work with. "She's not a thing. She's a pony. And she doesn't want to be with you."

"What she wants doesn't matter. She's the Lily Friend. She'll do this until we're told to stop. Like I said, it's not your concern. You're a matter to be handled." Ace Pinnacle leaned down to Daisy Dream's glowing chest. "Sword of Celestia, grant me the power to bring ultimate understanding!"

Skydance leaped up and began to rise, as did Ace Pinnacle. The two pegasi stared at one another, neither one seeming eager to make the first move. Then something stirred Skydance. She streaked towards the older mare with a gleam in her eye.

The Sword of Celestia was a real sword, a mystic blade with a wicked edge wielded by a trained and experience warrior; the other sword was a mass-produced steel foil without an edge or a tip. Therefore it was no surprise that the contact between the two was short and tragic. Skydance made contact near the tip of her weapon against the middle of Ace Pinnacle's. Both of them swung so hard the blunted tip was sheared clean off.

Skydance quickly whipped around and stabbed rapidly at the lily before her. The sliced foil had become a perfectly pointed stabbing implement. Rather than sweeping, she could stab rapidly, any sweep in danger of missing and leaving the lily open to further picking. Ace Pinnacle narrowed her eyes and used the force of her wings to try and propel herself into Skydance, to no effect save a change in the place of battle.

“I told you to give up! Don’t make this harder on yourself. The sword will do as I tell it.” Ace Pinnacle mouthed her lines around the handle, the words pre-recorded and played back by the sound system.

“I don’t care! You’re not going to hurt Daisy anymore!” Skydance twisted her head around and around, swirling her foil with the Sword of Celestia and pushing forward with all her might. That made Ace Pinnacle push back, exactly as intended. She couldn’t dislodge the sword from the mare’s mouth, but she used it as an anchor point, focusing on keeping her foil against it to guide her in. With a flick of her head, which gave the game away, the point of her chopped foil dug into the flesh of the flower and pulled it from the uniform.

Bells exploded into clanging as the impaled flower waved on the tip of the damaged foil. Both of the soaring pegasi came down to the floor of the dueling field, Skydance met by a crying Daisy Dreams. “I knew it! I knew you could do it! I knew you wouldn’t leave me with them. You saved me...”

“Hey, I promised. You’re kinda growing on me. And you’re getting good at not poking me in the nose with that thing when you turn in your sleep.” The two fillies touched their muzzles, looking into one another’s eyes.

“What I wanted, and how to win... Two different things entirely. I get it now.” Ace Pinnacle hit the ground and looked over to the two fillies. “I guess it just takes focus. Fine. Unauthorized duel, surprise win. I’ll get a notice about what to do in a bit. Enjoy your little victory.” She smiled, sheepish but sincere. “Hey, I mean it. Enjoy it. I don’t really lose. Ever.”

“I’m taking her away. Somehow. I won’t let you take her to do weird stuff anymore. All this fighting and Student Council stuff... It’s not normal. And she deserves better.” Skydance and Daisy Dreams walked off the stage to the left.

“Keep telling yourself that, kid...” Ace Pinnacle was left on the stage, the background fading and a spotlight growing brighter overhead. She placed her hooves down and there was a flash of light. The hooves impacted a table, around which was the Student Council. “So... This is unnatural.”

“Does this mean its over? Finally?” Judgmental looked hopefully to the head of the table, and shot a quick glance down at Candy Stripes.

“No! It can’t be over! I never got what I wanted out of this deal! I jumped through all the hoops, and I will NOT leave this empty-hoofed!” Candy Stripes petulantly pounded the table and shook her head, tears pouring down from her eyes.

“Calm down. We’ll find out what’s going on. I have a new message from The Spaces Between. Our newest instructions for what to do about this situation.” She unrolled a scroll and began to read from it. “You have all... Failed. The duty was simple, to keep the Lily Friend in your grasp. The actions of one upstart destroyed all that work. Could you be that pathetic and worthless?” As the others started to react to the words, they failed to notice the deep, royal blue mass that was arranged around the table, and was snaking tendrils up along their bodies. “Because of this, it seems that the best solution to all of this is to take such matters into my own hooves.”

Time Tokens was the first one to notice the tendrils snaking up her body. She had only enough time to click her watch and drop it before the tendrils wrapped around her limbs and over her face. That was enough to attract the notice of the others, save Ace Pinnacle, who read on. “To that end, I will be taking possession of all the resources previously delegated to you.” None made a sound. Their mouths were shut with the blue tendrils, all their limbs taken up, like marionettes on colorful strings. “There is no room for failure. You will become far more effective...”

The blue slid up Ace Pinnacle’s legs, unfelt as she said the last words. “Because I will guide you as I always should have.” The scroll fell down to the table as the Pegasus struggled against the now-encroaching tendrils. “We had a deal! We had a deal! You can’t do this to me! You promised me..!”

The words were silenced by blue wrapping around her mouth. She was swiftly pulled into the darkness around the table with the rest of the student council. An illusory image of the table’s top was shown to the audience. It was embossed with the image of a stargazer lily. But the blue swept across the surface, leaving the image of a calla in its wake, right before the curtain came down.

Entr'acte