

Fire Dazzler approached the plaza of the resort city, saddlebag thumping lightly against his flank as he trotted towards the stage. Worker ponies were busy setting up the various lights and sound systems for the celebration. He gulped nervously; Shock and Thunder had set him up with a permit to work on the pyrotechnics so that he could install their ‘distraction’. It was an aluminum rich mixture with a hint of his own special dazzling powder, similar to his regular mixes but with a severely skewed ratio between reactants and stabilizers. There would be a show all right, a five second flare burn that would disorientate and temporarily blind anyone looking at it. And by the time all that was going on, he’d be in his favorite bar trying to forget the whole fiasco and hoping that the trail didn’t lead back to him.

“...And here we go.” He muttered to himself as he approached the foreman. “Fire Dazzler, pyrotechnics.”

The foreman, a short grey Pegasus with a green mane snorted and gestured towards a slender orange earth pony. “Talk to Stone Carver, he’s the FX director.”

“T-thanks...” Fire Dazzler said numbly.

“Hey, you okay?” The foreman said. “You look like someone’s walked over your grave!”

Fire Dazzler laughed nervously. “Oh it’s just nerves! If we’re gonna impress a dragon the fire’s gotta be pretty spectacular!”

The foreman nodded and gestured at Stone Carver. “You better talk to him about that, then. You take it easy now!”

The orange stallion saw him approach and waved him over, leaning in close. “You Fire Dazzler?”

“Yeah.”

He looked around and over his shoulder. “You got the stuff?”

“In my bag.” Fire Dazzler said, cocking his head towards his saddlebag. “Twenty canisters worth, five minute duration each.”

“That’s plenty!” Stone Carver said with a smile. “They were right, you are good with the fireworks!”

“Can we get this over with?” He said with a sigh. “I need a drink.”

“Yeah fine. Just don’t mess this up,” he hissed quietly. “I put a twenty empty cases of the normal canisters under the stage, so you can pour in your mix under there. We don’t want the authorities to think someone switched out the powder. This has to look like an accident, if only for a little while.”

“Got it. So, where do you want them?”

“Five on the front of the stage, five going down the steps, and ten along the runway. They want to run on stage left and exit right.” Stone Carver said, pointing along the route. “That way they got a straight run for the forest once they get across the street and into the alleyways.”

Fire Dazzler nodded and got to work, making his way toward the stage. “I just want to get this done and wash my hooves of it.”

“Under the stage, they should be there in a burlap sack.”

The white stallion ducked under the stage and began to work. He quietly set down

his bag onto the cobblestones. Gingerly he set out the canisters, careful not to set them off. Their effectiveness would also be their greatest flaw, as a stray static charge or spark would set them off in all their glory, and he would be charred to a cinder. He lit up his horn and began to scan around for the empty cartridges, turning his head over some cobblestones, checking around a support beam. A sound like grinding stones and shifting soil drew his attention, causing him to snap around back to his bag. There they were, twenty small black canisters with the company logo plastered on the side. They sat right next to his canisters; he could have sworn they hadn't been there before. No time for speculation, there was work to be done. As he poured the powder into the emptied cartridges he felt a prickling sensation on the back of his neck. He spun around, eyes wide. Nothing. Fire Dazzler sighed and began to turn around before coming face to face with another pony, his brow furrowed and eyes alight. Fire Dazzler squealed in fright before a rough hoof covered his mouth.

“Keep it down, will you!” the pony hissed. “What’s the matter with you?! I’m in on this too, you idiot!”

“Suh-sorry...I’m just a little on edge. Not every day I assist with dragon napping!”

“Yeah well thank Celestia for that, because you stink at keeping a low profile!” he said disparagingly, looking down at the cartridges. “That them?”

“Yeah. Be sure that Shock and Thunder wear eye protection, these’ll be really bright!” Fire Dazzler said quietly, noticing an odd look on the pony’s face. “You did bring eye protection, right?”

He rolled his eyes. “Yeah, what’dya think we are, a bunch of idiots? It’s just that you sure brought a lot of ‘em!”

“I always over prepare.” Frie Dazzler said proudly, nose subconsciously curling at a wet organic stench as it permeated the air. “Worked out this time, Stone Carver said he wanted five for the stage, five for the stairs, and ten for your escape; to cover you across the street and into the forest. Is that where your client is?”

The stallion snapped up at Fire Dazzler. “Yeah...Stone Carver told you, eh?”

“Yeah.” Fire Dazzler said, that smell was really becoming noticeable.

“He’s thorough, I’ll give him that. Telling ponies what they shouldn’t know just so they get it right. Must be why he sent one of our friends in here with you, to tie up the loose end. He’s pragmatic like that.” he said, a somewhat amused tone in his voice. “By the way...sorry.”

Fire Dazzler blinked in confusion, the tingling on the back of his neck was back with a vengeance. “What are you-?”

Fire Dazzler spun around at the familiar sound of shifting rocks and dirt. What he saw caused him to freeze in fright, an enormous green creature rose out of the floor its huge arms open wide. Even though it was still up to its waist in the cobblestone street it towered at least forty centimeters above him, its large orange eyes peering down on him from the floorboards of the stage. Fire Dazzler attempted to flee, hopelessly scuffling on the cobblestones when the beast’s enormous hands clasped around his neck and shoulders. He thrashed and bucked in the grip but it was no use, the muscles and tendons beneath its rank clammy skin were like steel cables. One of the hands moved up his

throat, squeezing it shut just enough to silence any sound he might make while the other kept its iron grip fastened around the terrified pony's shoulders, its single thumb able to restrain both of the stallion's legs.

"Well, it's been nice Fire Dazzler." The other stallion said, picking up the bagful of flash canisters. "Mr. Slag here is going to try and make it quick, quiet, and painless I'm sure."

'Mr. Slag' motioned like he was going to twist Fire Dazzler's head just as the other pony left, stopping the instant he did. Fire Dazzler gurgled in confusion.

"G'un'gles gud." Mr. Slag gurgled through his tongue-less mouth. "S'raag gud?"

"Yes!" Fire Dazzler choked, having had talked to his share of drunks in his time mush-mouth was a second language to him. "You are a very good Grundel, Mr. Slag."

Mr. Slag smiled and donned a worried expression. "S'raag wa' o'd 'oo kiw po'ee. Don' wan' 'oo..." Slag inhaled sharply, two froglike bags expanding on the sides of his throat. "Po'ee s'leep."

He opened his mouth and exhaled, a green smoky fog blasting from his throat. Fire Dazzler coughed and sputtered as the chemical smoke entered his lungs, a burning sensation stinging his eyes and nostrils. "Aah! What...ooh...what're you...do...ing..."

His head slumped in the creature's hands, unconscious. Slag looked around for witnesses and back to the unconscious pony in his hands. "G'un'gles gud...no kiw..."

He sunk back into the street, taking the unconscious pony with him.

(Dah-da-da-da/ /dah-da-da-da/ /dah-da-da-da/ /dah-da-da-da etc)

DOCTOR WHOOVES

Episode 2

The Mines of Dragon Mountain: Part 4

Starring:

The Doctor

Twilight Sparkle

Pinkie Pie

Rainbow Dash

Applejack

Fluttershy

Zecora

Rarity

Spike

Featuring:

Zeitgeist Stardust

Litigia Statute

Gabbro

Fire Dazzler

All eight friends trotted merrily through the town, early morning crowds clotting

the cobbled streets with excited ponies. Spike bounced up and down on Twilight's back as they made their way through the crowd, ponies taking notice of the small dragon began to whisper to one another and part the crowd.

"This is great!" Spike said with glee. "All I have to do is watch them celebrate, eat a few gems, and tell them how great they're doing!"

Twilight smiled and looked up at the ecstatic dragon on her back. "I'm sure you'll be the belle of the ball, Spike!"

Rainbow Dash flitted over their heads, letting out an impressed whistle. "Geez! There must be thousands of ponies out today! I guess that whole fiasco with Zeit really put the word out!"

Fluttershy smiled as a squadron of trained phoenixes capered overhead; doing magnificent loops and twirls, their small ethereal feathers fluttering behind them like tiny tongues of flame. "Ooh! Look Zecora! Aren't they beautiful!"

"If we can find those performer's rooms, we may not have to scale Mt. Doom!" Zecora said with a chuckle.

Applejack spied a group of stallions sitting in VIP stands for the show; a collection of well fed and slightly bored ponies. "Ah recognize one a'them ponies over there! Seen 'im in a farming magazine! Ah bet if ah could just get 'im a talkin'..."

"Look there!" squealed Pinkie Pie, pointing erratically. "The caterers have brought an E-Z Bake Magic Oven!"

Rarity hopped from one cobblestone to another, careful to only step on the highest ones to avoid scuffing up her elegant dress she had meticulously put on that morning. "A

magic oven? That means they mix and make the goods out here and the magic automatically prepares it right?”

“For maximum freshness!” Pinkie said excitedly. “...Now if I could just get them to let me use it, I could make some of those alien goodies I’ve been wanting to make!”

“While you’re doing that I’ll be enjoying my time in the limelight! Ah, the photographers, the spellbound ponies, the interviewers! All will be clamoring to meet me, the mysterious mare who flew into their lives like a glittering falling star!”

Twilight cleared her throat curtly, getting all their attention. “Now everypony, this is a big day for Spike and we should be here for him. Try to stifle those ambitions of yours until after the opening ceremony.”

As the group trotted towards the stage the Narragansett announcer took notice and let out a cheer into the mic. “Aaaaaand here they are fillies and gentlecolts! Our honored guest Spike and his seven lovely acquaintances! Let’s have a big round of applause for the 1001st Narragansett Arrival Celebration!”

A rolling cheer rose from the crowd, young native ponies clambering up on their parent’s shoulders to see the proceedings. Twilight carried Spike up the stairs as he waved his clawed hand as regally as he could muster, a large smile on his face.

The energetic announcer bolted over to Spike, holding a mic in front of his face. “So Spike! What do you think of our legendary Valley City hospitality?”

Spike noticed a large bowl of gemstones as it was shoved towards him from behind the curtain. “It’s great! Really, this is probably one of the best festivals I’ve been to! That includes the stuff I’ve been to in Canterlot!”

“Canterlot, everypony!” The announcer said jubilantly, an even larger cheer rising from the crowd. “That’s high praise Mr. Spike, I’m sure we’ll try to live up to that. Won’t we?”

A raucous cheer exploded from the crowd as music and street performers began to do their carefully planned routines. Acrobats and contortionists leapt through flaming hoops as the newest remixes of recent hits blared over the speakers.

“Hey! I love this song!” Pinkie exclaimed. “And this beat seems familiar.”

“Yeah, we know the DJ who mixed this original beat!” Rarity shouted over the music. “Vinyl Scratch was her name I think!”

“Ah loves me some DJ-P0N-3!” Applejack said, hoof tapping to the beat.

Rainbow Dash smiled as she watched the festivities. “Y’know, I think I could get used to this!”

“Mmmh! Me too!” Spike said through a mouthful of chewed gems. Spike reached into the bowl for another handful. Instead, his claws closed around something thin and plastic. “Huh?”

Out of the bowl came a pair of dark black sunglasses. They were wraparound clips with what appeared to be thick deeply tinted lenses; the right arm the sunglasses had a note attached. On the note, scrawled in large messy letters, was the message ‘Put these on. Stand in center stage ;)’

“Well, okay.” Spike muttered to himself, putting the glasses on. “Erhg...can’t see a dang thing in these...”

Spike stumbled out onto the center stage, raising his hands in a double wave. The

crowd laughed and clapped, Spike smiled and waved harder. “Good morning Valley City!”

From five different points what appeared to be suns burst from the edge of the stage. A simultaneous gasp of shock rose from the crowd, followed instantly by panicked screams as a sea of white light washed their sight away. Spike saw the frantic crowd bump into each other, eyes wide but unseeing. He turned to his friends, Fluttershy huddled against Zecora as Applejack and Rarity stumbled around as they blinked violently. Rainbow Dash had her leg over her eyes as she muttered obscenities drowned out by the crowd. Pinkie Pie was nowhere to be seen.

“Spike!” he heard, turning to see Twilight rushing towards him. “Spike, stay away from the-”

Two large black stallions wearing similar glasses cut off Twilight as they burst from behind the stage curtains; one of the stallions skidded up next to Twilight and reared up on his hind legs. “Sorry babe, nothing personal!”

The large stallion shot out his right hoof driving it into the side of Twilight’s head with a resounding thwack. Twilight’s head shot to one side as she was sent sprawling by the powerful blow.

“Twilight!” Spike shouted as he ran forward. “Don’t you touch her you son-of-a-”

Spike ran head long at the tall stallion, sharp diamond-hard claws primed and ready. The second stallion streaked behind the young dragon and snatched him up in a large bag.

“I got him!” the stallion said through a mouthful of bag. “Let’s go!”

The other stallion nodded and the two took off down the stairs, following their trail of blinding flares to a darkened alleyway across the street.

Deep underneath the valley forest a vast network of tunnels crisscrossed and intersected, connecting the large open areas of a subterranean city. The solid bedrock made excellent tunneling material once the right digging magic was used, the walls and roofs of the tunnels solid and secure. Inside one of the deepest chambers an organization of Grundels gathered. The room was tall and well lit with soft blue light, congregated in the myriad alcoves were several hundred Thinker Grundels all watching the single Thinker Grundel standing behind a podium, Gabbro. He was quite tall for a Thinker at 150 centimeters, and his features were smooth and refined with youth. Indeed he was several decades younger than any of the other Grundels watching him, but it was that very fact that put him ahead of them. They were stuck in their ways, inflexible, unable to cope with the threat they currently faced. They were unprepared to do what it took to ensure that The Great Corruptor remained imprisoned, to ensure the continued survival of all species.

He had grown from a young age with the sword over his head, with the constant threat of total annihilation looming. He had joined the sabotage teams early, coordinating the Workers to carry out plans devised by his superiors. It had become clear to him immediately that they had no idea what they were doing, no idea how to stop these driven creatures from fulfilling the biological urge to hunt gems. At the time neither did he, but one night while he was leading one of his Worker packs through the sabotage tunnels a

bolt of inspiration hit him. It was electric, almost like the thought had not even existed before then, suddenly appearing in his mind like it had simply been dropped there from outside.

Kill them.

Oh, he had taken the indirect route first, ordering the unauthorized collapse of mines, poisonings, all in addition to the sabotage of machinery. The sheer effectiveness of his tactics had allowed his meteoric rise throughout the operation's ranks, soon becoming the executive officer overseeing the whole thing. Times were good, the mining had stopped, and he was famous and respected amongst his peers. But soon the diamond dogs were back, this time with magic that prevented such tactics. Gabbro had felt within him a sense of doom; he had no idea how to proceed now that those anomalous bolts of inspiration had ceased. The diamond dogs reopened all their mines and even began work on a new major mineshaft, all the while Gabbro was struck dumb by their dedication. What to do? Once again, inspiration came as he walked the tunnels beneath the mountain; a small contingent of Workers and another Thinker named Greywacke had accompanied him as they walked. He had been thinking but his mind was too gentle, too Grundel-like to formulate new and lethal strategies. Those bursts of inspiration always had an odd flavor to them, their patterns of thought decidedly alien to his sensibilities; despite their flawless logic they were...horrible. They must have come from somewhere deep within him, away from morality and compassion. A part of him had detested contemplating them, fearing that they would in some way contaminate his conscious mind and turn him into something terrible. In spite of his own conscience he pursued the perverse theories and as

they had done before new ones came, but this time they were far more...direct.

Worker Grundels could crush rocks with a bear hug, and these diamond dogs were but delicate pieces of meat, nothing to a Worker. Conveniently, Workers also had a deep-seated compulsion to obey Thinker Grundels, it took but an utterance and less than a minute later two miners were dead. The Worker had been horrified with his actions, but the result was replicable with other Grundels. Soon, many more miners lay dead and the digging had once again halted. But a new problem had arisen, the Grundel Elders had been growing more and more disgusted with his tactics, seeing the traumatized Workers and disturbed Thinkers had made them look into the operation with predictable results. An uproar seized the tunnels, several Thinker Grundels openly opposing the operation altogether, pleading for other solutions to put an end to the bloodshed. Others still demanded a return to the old ways when the worst a Grundel would ever do is tinker with a machine until it no longer ran. The outcry could not be ignored, and Gabbro was commanded to perform sabotage techniques only, much to his internalized disgust. The tiresome cry of 'Grundels Good' rang throughout as they returned to their fool's errands. What was 'good' anyway? Was 'good' allowing the literal embodiment of evil to be freed based on some petty and outmoded moral code? He thought not. His newest burst of inspiration had brought something up from within him; something driven and flexible, something that could think in ways that were impossible before. Something cold. Something dark. Something...No, don't doubt, no doubt. The evil must be stopped. *He* must be stopped.

He had seen the miners setting up their newest machines, they were big expensive

looking things and they had just left them out in the yard. It was obviously a trap, but it was also very useful. A team would go up there to sabotage it just like the weak-willed Elders wanted them to, but then the trap would be sprung and many Workers would die. A few pretty words, a tear here and there, and he could easily spin this debacle in his favor; work it toward reinstating *his* tactics. But something unexpected had happened; the diamond dogs had *obliterated* the team, killing thirty-eight Grundels in a matter of seconds, including... This was no debacle. This was no error in tactics. This was a disaster. A tragedy. But it was also very, *very* useful.

“My fellow Grundels.” He began, speaking into the amplifier crystal. “Last night a standard sabotage team set out to destroy the dog’s new mining machines, machines my agents suspect to be a dire threat to His continued captivity. However, the diamond dogs were ready for them with weapons the likes of which we’ve never seen before. Losses were...total.”

A collective gasp followed by incredulous murmurs rose from the observing Grundels, Gabbro smiled internally and continued. “Thirty-eight Grundels, including my own personal favorite Cheppu...I’m sorry, I mean Chip. See, I prefer to call my Workers by their pronunciations of their names and I-I...” he raised his hand to his face, covering an expertly crafted expression of anguish. “...Forgive me. It is my personal belief that the diamond dogs are no longer a threat simply because of their mining, but they are now a threat in and of themselves! Any further action against the mine must take this into consideration. We are on the precipice of oblivion and we can no longer afford to make due with sabotage and mischief.”

Elder Granite rose from his throne, the look on his ancient face that of concern.

“What do you propose? It was your policy of murder that brought their weapons to bear. They have shown that they are as capable at combat as they are at mining, I doubt the our ability to resist them!”

“Indeed, the honored and wise Elder is correct.” A Grundel shouted from his alcove. “If it is a war of escalation it is the diamond dogs who will prevail!”

The courtroom exploded into a ferocious cacophony of arguing voices, Grundels shouting at one another from across the room, gesturing heatedly at each other. Gabbro smiled internally and raised his hands. “Brothers...Elders...”

The courtroom died down as Gabbro leaned forward to the amplifier. “I propose that we see the diamond dogs for the threat that they are and that we adjust our tactics accordingly. Thus far we have been combating the mine exclusively, it is my belief that we should combat the diamond dogs with similar vigor. Without them the mine will die.”

“How are we to combat the diamond dogs?” shouted another Grundel. “Isn’t attacking the mine the same thing?”

“No...” Gabbro donned a grim expression and activated an imaging crystal, causing a picture of the valley to appear. “This is our valley. This mountain here is His prison and the location of the mine.” He toggled a few switches and the picture shifted, showing a city. “This is Stardust City, four kilometers to the east outside the valley. It is the spring from which the miners flow. Its population is estimated to be between forty and fifty thousand. I nominate this as our new target. Destroy the hive and the bees will fall.”

“Are you suggesting that we kill everyone in that town?” Elder Slate said with horror in his voice.

“To stop Tirac?” Gabbro said, about to answer before his messaging crystal came to life, no doubt information regarding his delivery. “...The Elders no doubt require deliberation on this proposal. May I retire for the moment? It has been an emotional day for me.”

“Indeed Brother Gabbro.” Elder Feldspar said, worry creasing his brow. “Our verdict and the collective poll will be ready within the hour. Rest well.”

“Thank you, Elders.” Gabbro said with a bow “May peace be with you.”

Gabbro exited the courtroom and activated his communicator, speaking quietly. “Gabbro, identify.”

“Stone Carver.” said a familiar voice. “I have called to tell you that your package is being delivered. Shock and Thunder will be delivering him to the appointed location.”

“Good!” he said happily. “That is very good indeed.”

“One thing.” Stone Carver said. “I had to get your Worker Slag to kill somepony. He was too close to this thing.”

“Understood. Is there anything you want me to do with our delivery ponies?” Gabbro said coolly.

“At your own discretion.” Stone Carver said ambivalently. “I’d rather you didn’t, but they’re a vicious pair so who knows what they’ll make you do.”

“It will depend on the condition of their sacred cargo.” Gabbro said lowly.

“We’ll see.” Stone Carver said with a sniff. “So long as I get my cut.”

The crowd had calmed somewhat, once their sight had returned the tourist ponies' set upon the resort staff with a vengeance, demanding an explanation for the experience. The announcer was talking to the authorities while Ruby Beryl sobbed into her hooves at the state of her carefully planned celebration. Up on the stage a pair of medic ponies was examining the stage for hazards and treating its occupants for flash burns.

Twilight blinked groggily as her mind returned, the side of her head throbbed abominably. "Urrrg...did anypony get the number of that carriage?" She blinked the stars out of her eyes and snapped to her hooves. "Spike? Spi~ke! Spike?!"

"Twilight Sparkle, save your voice." Zecora said lowly. "Spike is gone, though not by choice."

"What happened?" Rainbow Dash demanded. "Who set up those fireworks?!"

"Why did they grab Spike? What's going on?" Applejack said angrily. "If ah ever get my hooves on those crooks!"

"Where's Pinkie Pie?" Fluttershy exclaimed.

"Shh!" Rarity hissed. "We're not going to get anywhere asking each other! Twilight, what should we do?"

Twilight looked up at her friends, eyes blazing with fury. "I say we investigate. Okay! Applejack, Rainbow Dash, you take the high and the low, start with the alley across the street from the stage, that's the most likely route they'd take. Zecora, Fluttershy, I want you two to ask around the crowd, find anypony who wasn't flashed and ask if they saw anything, get details. Good cop-bad cop, understand? Rarity you stay here

with me, I'll talk with the authorities while you call up Zeit and sweet talk him into giving us a hoof. Everyone clear? We're going to find Spike and Pinkie even if we have to tear this whole valley to pieces to do so!"

Applejack reared up on her hind legs and cheered. "Yee-haw!! Now yer talkin'! C'mon Dash!"

Rainbow Dash smiled and saluted at Twilight. "I'm on it!"

"Come on now Fluttershy, we must find who knows what and why." Zecora said with a hard smile on her face.

"Don't worry Twilight, we'll find Spike and Pinkie in no time." Fluttershy said, the conviction in her voice clear even in her soft speech.

Twilight sighed as her friends scattered to their duties, comforting hoof patted her shoulder, and it was Rarity. "Don't worry Twilight. We'll find him."

"It's my fault!" Twilight said quietly. "I knew there was something weird about this place, but I still let Spike go out there!"

"Twilight, we all knew that there was something wrong. But we were ready to give this whole 'vacation' thing a shot." Rarity said with a sigh. "But that went out the window, didn't it?"

Twilight nodded sadly. "Yeah...I just hope they don't hurt Spike."

"If they know what's good for them, they won't." Rarity said, looking over Twilight's shoulder. "Twilight there's an officer heading this way. You talk to him while I give Zeit a call. I'm sure he'll help us."

Twilight nodded and turned around to the officer making his way up the stairs.

“Hello officer, how goes the investigation?”

The officer made back and forth gestures with his head. “It goes, Ms. Sparkle. However, there’s an agent from the CSS who wants to talk with you.”

“Celestia Secret Service, here?” Twilight said disbelievingly.

“Yes ma’am.” The police pony said with a nod. “And he wants to talk to you, requested by name.”

“Alright. Good, if anyone can help it’s a CSS agent!” Twilight said as she descended the stairs. “What’s his name?”

“Time Line...” said a familiar brown stallion as he walked out from behind the stage. “Celestia Secret Service. Hello, Ms. Sparkle.”

“Doc-” Twilight began, stopping herself as The Doctor made a slashing motion at his throat. “...Time Line!”

“Ms. Sparkle, I’m afraid I must pull you and your team away from this crime scene, there’s-”

Twilight Sparkle caught The Doctor in a tight hug, silencing him. “Oh thank Celestia! Doctor! Something terrible has happened!”

“Yes, I know! There’s this huge problem up at the mine, it-”

“Some ponies kidnapped Spike!” Twilight interrupted. “Just now!”

“What?” The Doctor said incredulously. “Is that what’s going on here?”

Twilight blinked. “You didn’t know?”

“No.” The Doctor said lowly. “They kidnapped him?”

“Yes! Spike was attending the celebration as a guest of honor. As the celebration

got going these big flares lit up and blinded everypony! The kidnappers then burst out, snatched him up, and ran off towards that alley!”

The Doctor pushed his way past Twilight towards the stairs. “Right then, let’s get on that shall we?”

Twilight smiled and began to follow him before remembering. “Wait. What was the problem you were talking about?”

“Something else. It can wait. Besides, I have the sneaking suspicion that they’re connected.” The Doctor said, trotting across the stage, flashing his psychic paper to the police ponies guarding the scene. “Dragons...they’re important to *them* as well...”

He kneeled down and examined the charred remains of the pyrotechnic canisters. “Hmm. Let’s have a look here...” he tapped a canister and licked the tip of his hoof, smacking his lips. “...Aluminum...magnesium...and a certain something...ah...Fire Dazzler.”

“Doctor?” Twilight said as she approached him. “What’s the composition of the flash powder?”

The Doctor rose to his hooves, a serious look on his face. “A specialty mix created by a savant, the perfect balance for its purpose. Aluminum/magnesium mix with a skewed stabilizer ratio and a little something extra for the punch. A real dazzler.”

Twilight examined the canisters. “They’re company brand, and the technicians wouldn’t usually use containers that had been tampered with. This was an inside job.”

“Very good Ms. Sparkle.” The Doctor said with a smile. “I know the fellow who mixed this powder, and he’s got some explaining to do.”

“What’s going on?”

“I’ll tell you, but we need to get everypony together. Something big is about to happen and we need all the help we can get.” The Doctor said as he walked down the stairs with a canister in his mouth.

“How long have you been here?” Twilight said. “You didn’t just get here, did you?”

The Doctor stiffened. “Uuh...no time for that, better round up the gang and-”

Twilight snorted. “Doctor...”

“Really? Are we going to do this now?” The Doctor said as he tried to walk away.

Twilight followed after him, brow furrowed. “Doctor!”

Shock galloped through the forest at full speed, trying to keep up with Thunder as he plowed through the underbrush. Thunder occasionally shuffled the struggling bag back into the center of his back, ensuring that their cargo remained safe. The whole plan had gone off without a hitch, Fire Dazzler had done his bit and they had done theirs. All in all, this whole thing had gone swimmingly.

As they entered a clearing there was the sudden tearing sound of rending fabric and something purple and green tumbled from Thunder’s back. Shock let out an exclamation of surprise as he trod over it. His legs tangled over themselves which sent him tumbling into the dirt. Shock shook his head as soon as he regained his bearings, rolling onto his hooves and shakily rising. He turned his head to the sound of a groan and saw the small purple dragon as he sat up, rubbing his head with a dazed expression on his

face.

“Thunder!” Shock shouted. “Thunder, he got out!”

Thunder spun around and shot after the dragon, heavy hooves tromping on the ground. The dazed dragon turned to the sound and leapt to his stubby little legs, he tried to run but Thunder was on him in a second.

Thunder tackled the dragon, catching his tail under his hoof. “Ha! Gotcha!”

The dragon growled and spun around swinging his arm as hard as he could. The open handed blow connected with the side of Thunder’s face with a heavy thud. Thick scales and hard bones powered by panicked dragon-strength made the stallion’s head snap to one side, red blood spraying on the dusty ground. Thunder grunted and stumbled away from the blow, collapsing in a heap after a few missteps. The dragon turned around to run away, only to have Shock leap in front of him from above and plant two hooves on the side of his face in a single backwards kick. The little dragon was sent hurtling across the small clearing, bouncing off a tree and landing face down in the dirt.

“By Luna’s rump! That was like kicking a rock! Ow!” Shock said shaking his back legs before turning to his fallen brother. “Thunder, you okay?”

Thunder rose to his hooves and shook his head dazedly. “No! That little parasprite hits like a stallion!” he whined as he spat blood and a few broken teeth out of his mouth. “...Oh Celestia...”

Shock inspected the side of Thunder’s face; the dragon’s claws had dug three deep channels into his cheek, the teeth visible through the middle one. “Ah geez! The little sucker laid into you good now didn’t he?”

Thunder made his way over to the dragon on the ground. “I’ll teach the little turd to mess with me!”

Shock sped over and restrained his brother. “Hey! We won’t get paid if he’s too banged up! Unharmd, remember?”

There was a hiss from behind as the little dragon shot up from the ground and landed on Shock’s back. Shock bucked and kicked wildly as the angry dragon tore at his sides with claws and pummeled his head and neck with furious blows. Shock lurched forward and to the side as the infuriated dragon punched and kicked the back of his head repeatedly, finally opening his mouth to bite with jaws and teeth that could easily crush gemstones. At the last moment a mouth closed around his tail and the infant dragon was swung with full force into the ground. Before he could regain his senses he was lifted again and swung back down in a large arcing motion. In a final blow the now limp dragon was swung around and thrown into a large boulder with a resounding crack, sliding down the side of the boulder and onto his back, not moving.

“Shock...” Thunder said worriedly. “Shock, are you okay?”

Shock groaned and got to his hooves, his flank and haunches covered with crisscrossing scratches and abrasions. A lump was beginning to rise on Shock’s head and his left eye had already begun to swell shut. “Do I *look* okay to you?”

They both turned to look at the dragon, he was largely unharmed but for a single cracked scale and a rivulet of blood running out from beneath it.

Shock spat in disgust. “Celestia’s wings! The little monster did all this to us and we barely scratched him!”

“I got some ropes and stuff in my bag, lets wrap him up tight and get him out of our lives!” Thunder said with a sigh. “I only hope our client is some kind of weird pervert! Anything else’d be too good for the little parasprite!”

Once the unconscious dragon was secured, Shock and Thunder placed him inside a new bag and renewed their trek, now more than ever eager to make the delivery.

Zeitgeist rushed from one end of his office to another, fistfuls of paper flying in the air, his suit top strewn on the floor and the long-sleeve under shirt wrinkled and mussed from a long night. “Where is it?!”

Litigia Statute walked into the messy office with a levitating tray holding two mugs and a coffee pot. “Where’s what?”

“My ‘get out of violating multiple airzones free’ form! I need to fill out about two dozen of them for my trip here!” Zeit said frantically.

“Perhaps they’re in the file cabinet marked ‘legal loopholes’? You know, the file cabinet you open at least once a week?” Litigia said, setting down the coffee on his paper-covered desk.

Zeit halted before running over to the cabinet and thumbing through the files. “Air obstruction, no. Air transport re: unauthorized, no. Air vehicular pony/dog/misc-slaughter, no. Ah! Air zone violations! Thanks Lit, where would I be without you?”

“In jail.” She said flatly “Awaiting execution...with fire.”

Zeitgeist smiled and sat down in his desk. “Sounds about right.”

“I thought you were busy formulating some kind of crippling attack on those underground Gumples or whatever?” She said, pouring her exhausted looking boss some coffee. “Why all the little things?”

“Grundels. Also, I can’t very well die with my paperwork out of order.” Zeit said glibly, scrawling on the legal form with a ballpoint pen. “Get all this over and done with and *then* plan my climactic showdown with the subterranean beasties.”

“Zeit. Get some sleep.” Litigia said imploringly. “You haven’t stopped working since The Doctor and your prisoner escaped last night. Please, you’re not thinking clearly.”

Zeit continued to write and scoffed as he gulped his coffee. “Nonsense! See? All I need is a bit of bean juice and I’m ready to go!”

Litigia walked up to Zeit and looked him in his tired eyes. “Is that why you’ve been writing for the past few minutes with the pen cap still on?”

Zeit looked down at the bare plastic tip of the pen cap and looked up at Litigia. “I was just practicing.”

“Zeit.” She said sternly.

He sighed and rubbed his tired eyes. “I tried to sleep, honest. But I just couldn’t stop thinking. About the Grundels, about The Doctor, about the mine, about everything!”

“Let me handle that.” Litigia said softly. “Sit down on the couch.”

Zeitgeist slowly made his way across the room and sat down on the soft upholstery of the couch. Litigia walked behind the couch and reared up on her hind legs, placing a hoof on each of Zeitgeist’s shoulders and began to massage, tension kneading

out of his shoulders.

Zeitgeist exhaled in relief and rolled his head back. "...And you wonder why I never approve your requests for a transfer..."

"Even if you did I wouldn't follow up on it. After ten years who else could keep you in line but me?" Litigia said before quietly adding. "And who would put up with you but me?"

"We have such fun, you and I." Zeitgeist said drowsily, raising a paw to her face. "If I weren't so professional..." From behind a sharp telltale whistle of Zeitgeist's ECC sounded, causing his ears to perk. "What's that?"

Litigia clicked her tongue and whispered in his ear. "Hold that thought. And stay put, I'll take care of this."

She trotted over to the ECC, activating its caller hold function and its caller display. Up popped the perfectly proportioned face of a familiar white unicorn mare, Rarity. Her large azure eyes saturated with distress and worry, giving her a vulnerable and endearing look that only added to her appealing visage. There was no way Zeit would relax upon seeing her indigent expression; he'd be out to spend away whatever problem plagued her, which was no doubt her intention in Litigia's mind.

"Who is it?" Zeit called from over the couch, his voice still somewhat lax.

"I'll take this into the hall, you just relax." Litigia said, levitating the ECC from the desktop and leaving the room. Once in the hallway she sighed and opened a channel, sure to deactivate her own video feed. "Mr. Stardust's office, how may I help you?"

"What?" said Rarity, "I thought this was his personal...anyway, I need help!"

Please tell Mr. Stardust that something terrible has happened!”

“I’m sorry Miss, but Mr. Stardust is indisposed at the moment, may I take a message?” Litigia said, trying to keep the satisfaction out of her voice.

“Yes! Please tell him that our young friend Spike has been kidnapped and we need his help right away!” Rarity pleaded, the distress in her voice and on her face almost genuine sounding.

Litigia fought the urge to roll her eyes and responded. “You do realize that this is a mine, don’t you? Have you tried contacting the authorities? This sort of thing is more suited to their expertise.”

“Don’t you use that tone with me!” Rarity said ferociously. “How *dare* you!! This is an emergency and we need Zeit’s help to get our friend back!”

Litigia suddenly became aware of the veracity of her predicament and quickly changed her tone. “...Alright, what kind of assistance were you seeking?”

“I was hoping that Mr. Stardust could lend a few of his security people to our search party or maybe a search airship, but anything you can do would be much appreciated!”

“Very well.” Litigia said. “I’ll send a few agents to help and an ornithopter to search the surrounding area. You’ll hear back from Mr. Stardust in a few hours.”

Rarity sighed in relief and smiled. “Oh thank you! Really, anything you can do is more than enough! Thank you!”

“Your welcome.” Litigia said flatly as the line went dead.

She reentered the office and set the ECC down on a table. “It’s been taken care of

sir. Now, as you were saying..."

Zeit sat with his head stooped forwards, eyes closed and an unmistakable snore emanating from his slightly open mouth. Litigia smiled and quietly made her way over to him, telekinetically laying him down on the couch, placing a pillow beneath his head and draping his suit top over his sleeping body. She leaned over his face; his usually animated features now serene and still.

She leaned in closer and nuzzled his forehead. "Sleep well Zeit."

Litigia quietly exited the office, turning out the lights and softly closing the door. Once down the hall she activated her communicator. "Feist. Come in."

"Yes, Ms. Statute?" Feist responded.

"Take Hahnenkamm and two other agents in Ornithopter Three to the Valley City Plaza. There has been a kidnapping and the suspects may still be visible from the air. Search the area and assist in any way that you can." Litigia said sternly, sure to not let any softness into her voice. "Understood?"

"By your command."

Gabbro rose from the ground in the secluded clearing, the daytime light dimmed by the thick canopy but he still needed to drape a thick black cloak over his head and shoulders to protect his eyes and skin. His sensitive ears could detect the rustle of bushes and underbrush as his delivery ponies made their way to him. Everything was going according to plan; the Elders would soon reinstate his tactics and give him the authority he needed to carry out his scheme. The dragon would be the key to it all, the key to the

diamond dog's destruction and His eternal imprisonment. All that stood between him and his goals now was time.

A large black stallion broke into the clearing, his single open yellow eye locking onto Gabbro, the other one having been swollen shut. "...Hey...you Gabbro?"

Gabbro nodded. "I am. The dragon?"

The stallion snorted and gestured at his severely scratched flank. "Yeah. I tell you, if you tick off a dragon it doesn't matter if it's an adult or a baby, it will give your flank a spanking."

"The dragon." Gabbro repeated.

"Oh." The stallion said flatly. "Yeah, we got him. Hey Thunder, bring him out!"

Thunder walked out of the bushes dragging a burlap bag with a rope tied around the end, the left side of his face already starting to swell from his injury. "Hey, we better get paid extra for this! This little parasprite almost killed me an' Shock!"

"You will be paid." Gabbro said shortly, a sort of indignant rage boiling in his belly. "The dragon is...unharmd?"

Shock bit his lip and pulled the bag off of the heavily restrained dragon, stepping back as Gabbro rushed in to examine him. "Well see, there was a bit of an incident. He got free and we tried to catch him again and...the important thing is that he's alive."

Gabbro ran a hand over the cracked scale on the infant's forehead, moving his hand over his mouth to feel for breath. "Yes, he is. And he is very healthy too."

"Yeah, that's for sure." Thunder grumbled. "Healthy and *strong*!"

Gabbro undid the ropes binding the dragon's limbs and removed the bandana that

held his mouth shut. “Good nutrition has given him length of bone and a metabolism that’s advanced for his age. Judging by his appearance I’d say he’s little more than a decade old, and yet he’s already metabolized enough gemstones to partially mineralize his bones and skeletal structure.”

“Is that why the little sucker’s so tough?” Shock said, rubbing the swollen lump on his head. “Also payment.”

Gabbro reached into his cloak and produced a small bag. “Red diamonds, twenty half-carat stones. Now leave.”

Thunder took the bag in his mouth and placed it in a saddlebag, looking over at Shock with an unpleasant smile on the uninjured side of his face. Shock walked up close to the kneeling Grundel, casting his imposing shadow over him. “Now, in light of recent circumstances, I think a bonus is in order.”

“A bonus?” Gabbro said incredulously. “That bag alone is worth a million bits! I warn you not to get greedy equine.”

“A million is pretty good...” Thunder said, advancing on the Grundel. “...But two would be even better! As compensation for, uh, injuries sustained in the field of duty.”

Gabbro stood up, they were smaller than him and in a one on one situation he could easily dispatch the average pony, but the two of them at once combined with the viciousness he sensed in their hearts gave him pause before resorting to confrontation. “...But of course. A twenty carat cerulean gem.”

He held out a large blue gemstone, Shock leaned in to grab it before Gabbro intentionally snapped his hand back with a cry and the gem fell to the dusty ground.

“Forgive me. My people startle easily.”

Shock and Thunder were too busy trying to gather the stone to answer. Thunder began to mutter. “I swear it’s times like this I really wish I had thumbs, you know? ...Say, do you smell someth-?”

Thunder was cut off as a huge hand wrapped around his neck from behind. Both Shock and Thunder were hoisted far off the ground as a 190-centimeter Worker Grundle walked into the clearing.

Gabbro turned from the still unconscious dragon and smiled. “S’raag! Good of you to join us. Ponies, this is S’raag. He is a very good friend of mine.”

Slag motioned at the squirming ponies in his grasp. “Po’ee ba...baa...baaa...no gud?”

Gabbro gestured at the unconscious dragon lying on the ground. “No S’raag, they are not good ponies, not at all. Look what they have done to this poor little baby dragon.”

Slag growled at the ponies in his grip. “Ba’ po’ees!”

“Indeed.” Gabbro said, lifting the dragon off the ground. “Kill them.”

Without a moment’s hesitation Slag jerked both his wrists to one side, a crisp snapping noise rang through the silent forest. Slag gasped and dropped the limp corpses causing them to collapse in a heap on the ground. He shivered and whimpered as he raised his hands up to his mouth. “I s’ry! No wan’ kiw po’ees!”

Gabbro sighed and walked up to the distraught giant, patting him reassuringly, mentally willing the two corpses to sink into the earth as they were clearly upsetting Slag. “There there S’raag. They were very bad ponies, they would have hurt this little dragon

much worse if hadn't told them not to, and they would have hurt me very badly if had not handed over your identification gem. They were dangerous."

'I know.' Slag looked down at Gabbro, wiping tears away with one hand and signing with the other. *'I just don't like it. Please stop making me do it.'*

Gabbro smiled warmly and gestured at the baby dragon in his arms. "Don't you worry S'raag. This little guy will guarantee that there will be no need for a Grundel to kill ever again!"

'He will? How?'

Gabbro held the unconscious baby out in front of him. "It's all part of my plan. You'll see."

Slag ran a huge finger over the infant's smooth scales, a warm smile spreading across his features. *'He's so cute!'*

"I know!" said an upbeat voice from behind them. "It's hard to imagine how big scary dragons started out so cutesy-wootsy!"

The two spun around to see a bright pink female pony standing in the clearance; she had large blue eyes and a comically poofy mane of dark pink hair, an enormous jubilant smile on her face.

"Who are you?!" Gabbro sputtered, clutching the dragon to his chest.

"Hi!" she said springing over to the confounded pair. "I'm Pinkie Pie! I just love meeting new people, even if they're not crazy about meeting me! Actually, I was just looking for two stallions who took a friend of mine without asking! But I can see that you've already found Spike! That's so nice of you, I think I'll throw you a party!"

‘Is she dangerous?’ Slag signed.

“Of course not silly-billy! Whatever gave you that idea?” Pinkie said before turning to him, her infectious smile spreading to him. “What’s your name?”

‘Slag, but my friends call me S’raag. Pleased to meet you Pinkie Pie.’ Slag gestured amicably.

“Likewise S’raag! And you?”

Gabbro cleared his throat. “My name is of no consequence equine!”

Slag made a small sideways gesture to Pinkie, she laughed nodded. “He does take himself a bit too seriously doesn’t he?”

Gabbro huffed indignantly before he realized what was going on. “You understand the Worker Sign? How?!”

Pinkie snorted and laughed. “Oh that? The TARDIS can psychically translate any form of communication. I once made friends with a sentient colony of gastrointestinal worms that communicated through gas emissions! Oh, he had such a way with words...”

Gabbro sighed and pinched his nose. “Speaking of gas, S’raag!”

Slag inhaled sharply, gasbags on the sides of his throat inflating, leaned forwards and belched a green cloud of gas into Pinkie’s face.

Pinkie coughed and sputtered. “Well that was rude! And stinky! Oh...unless that’s your custom, in which case...” Pinkie rushed up to Gabbro and belched into his face.

“...To you too!”

“You are supposed to be unconscious!” Gabbro shouted.

“OooOOOoooh...” Pinkie said, her hoof to her chin. “Okay!”

The energetic equine abruptly toppled forwards with her face landing on the ground, kicking up a small cloud of dust.

Gabbro grabbed a stick from off the ground and prodded the unconscious mare, Slag laughed and clapped his hands, signing. *‘I like her! Can we keep her?’*

The exasperated Thinker Grundel looked up at the hopeful expression of the Worker’s face. “Yes...it’s either that or we kill her.”

‘Please no!’ Slag signed desperately.

“Don’t worry S’raag!” Gabbro said calmly. “I was just sussing out the options. In fact, she said she was a friend of the dragon. If we bring her along I may be able to use her to get the dragon to work with us.”

Slag clapped his hands and gingerly picked up the unconscious mare. Gabbro walked up to him and looked at Pinkie. “I hope I don’t regret this.”

The two shapes sunk into the ground and the forest noise of birds and animals once again returned.

Zecora walked through the crowd with Fluttershy, the dazed and confused ponies had been less than forthcoming even with Fluttershy’s reassurances. She shook her head and looked over at Fluttershy, who was just barely holding back the sadness that she felt over the sudden loss of Spike. The obstinate and often belligerent resort ponies weren’t helping matters either, most of the time they would be too stunned to answer questions, other times they would request a lawyer before they’d say anything, and others still would be directly hostile. For this reason alone Fluttershy had to restrain Zecora from

trouncing the fat old ponies on at least four different occasions.

“Zecora, what do you think those ponies wanted with Spike?” Fluttershy murmured.

Zecora shrugged and said. “Their intentions for Spike is something we’ll learn, their actions are now my primary concern.”

“Yeah...but what if they want to hurt him? Or sell him?” Fluttershy said worriedly. “Or-or-or-”

“Enough!” Zecora said sternly. “If we wish to find him soon, we cannot afford thoughts of doom!”

Fluttershy bit her lip and nodded. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Zecora smiled and shook her head. “Do not fret my gentle friend, all will be well in the end.”

A sharp crack was heard that turned the heads of all ponies in attendance. It was a bright glittering ball of energy that fizzled and spat; the coloration was dark purple, blue, and pink. Twilight Sparkle. Zecora and Fluttershy exchanged knowing glances and rushed over to the stage, Zecora shouldering her way through the crowd of dumbstruck ponies while Fluttershy floated above them. As they approached the stage they saw Twilight speaking with a tall slender built stallion, her expression was stern and his was somewhat defensive.

“Doctor!” Fluttershy exclaimed, swooping in from above. “You’re back!”

The Doctor smiled and turned to Fluttershy. “Fluttershy! It’s good to see you! Oh it’s been a while, well, it has been for me.”

Zecora approached them and smiled. “Doctor, it is not even the afternoon, I did not expect to see you so soon.”

“Hey Zecora! Yeah, well, something came up...” The Doctor said rubbing the back of his head timidly.

“He’s been here since last night!” Twilight said indignantly. “He saw us come in and he didn’t even say hello!”

“Oh excuse me for wishing you a relaxing vacation!” The Doctor retorted. “I swear, every time I try to be nice...”

“Nice?” Twilight said rolling her eyes. “More like arrogant! You thought you didn’t need our help!”

“But now I do!” The Doctor said sternly. “I need all of you! You, Rarity, Zecora, Fluttershy-”

A loud cheer cut off The Doctor as an orange earth pony caught him in a large hug. “Professor! If you ain’t a sight fer sore eyes!”

“Applejack...” The Doctor croaked.

“Ahem!” said a voice from above, Rainbow Dash looking on from up high.

“...Rainbow Dash...” The Doctor said, freeing himself from Applejack’s greeting before looking around. “And...no? Hmm.”

Twilight turned to the group of assembled ponies. “Alright girls! What’s your report?”

“Um, a few of the ponies in the crowd saw a couple of stallions running into the alleyway across the street, one of them had a bag over his shoulder.” Fluttershy said in

her best approximation of a stern professional voice. “That’s about all we could get.”

Applejack nodded and looked up at Rainbow Dash. “That plays into the tracks Dash and I found in the alley way, it went along for a while and we was followin’ it when we saw your signal Twi.”

“Yeah!” Rainbow Dash cut in. “From the look of the tracks they were heading for the woods.”

“Good.” Twilight said with a nod. “Doctor, what do you think Doctor...Doctor?”

The Doctor was up on the stage, running his sonic screwdriver over the bowl of partially eaten gems Spike had been given. “...And there we go.”

“Doctor, what are you-” Twilight began before The Doctor leapt from the stage.

“Hmm? Oh, just getting Spike’s DNA signature as a precaution. And to get this!”

The Doctor said producing a spent pyrotechnics canister.

Twilight blinked in confusion. “Okay...what are you going to do with Spike’s DNA signature and a spent flash canister? And why?”

“Because of this.” The Doctor said quickly.

Rarity turned the corner, a large relieved smile on her face. “Alright, Twilight I’ve called Zeit and he’s sending some people over to help us look for Spike. Oh! Hello Doctor, I didn’t see you there. What luck too, between Zeit’s dogs and The Doctor we’ll have Spike back in no time!”

The Doctor chuckled nervously. “Uh yeah, about that...we should run.”

Rarity blinked. “Whatever for Doctor?”

“Well...” The Doctor said, ears perking up at the sound of an approaching

ornithopter. “Last night I enjoyed the company of our mutual acquaintance Jareth the Goblin King and...”

“And now you’re on the run from the security forces of one of the richest and most powerful people in Equestria?” Twilight said flatly.

“How did you guess?” The Doctor said with a bashful smile.

Twilight sighed and rubbed her temples. “With you, first impressions with powerful people either result in imprisonment or imprisonment awaiting execution.”

The Doctor winked and clicked his tongue, looking over to Rarity. “Would you be a dear and think up a baseline locator spell?”

Rarity rolled her eyes. “Doctor, what’s going on?”

The loud insect-like thrum of the ornithopter’s wings began to ring in their ears as a clearly mechanical shape became visible in the sky, The Doctor turned to Rarity with a pleading look in his eyes. “The quicker the better, Ms. Rarity!”

The small boxy craft thrummed over the rooftops, its 4-meter long wings a blur of motion and sound. It hovered over a relatively empty area of street, loudspeakers commanding ponies to make way for the landing aircraft. Once its wings had ceased their frenetic flapping four hulking diamond dogs exited the fuselage of the craft.

“Uh-oh.” The Doctor muttered. “I was kind of hoping for a new face...”

“What?” Twilight said as the dogs made their way to the stage.

“That there is Ziggy’s right-hand-dog, Feist.” The Doctor said with an exasperated quality to his voice. “Just my luck he sends the meanest of his crew who can also identify me by sight.”

“What do we do?” Twilight said anxiously.

“This.” The Doctor said, throwing the little black canister out in front of the diamond dogs, he then jumped out with the sonic screwdriver in his mouth, pointing it at the canister.

“You!” Feist said, reaching for his sidearm. “Stop right there!”

The Doctor smiled and activated his sonic screwdriver, a high pitched whir emanated from the tip and the spent canister lit again, a bright white light exploding from the casing. The diamond dogs yelped and raised their hands up to shield their eyes. As the chemical residues in the canister finally broke down, the diamond dogs lowered their hands from their eyes. The Doctor and his acquaintances were nowhere to be found.

“Damn it...” Feist growled. “Search the area, they can’t have gone far!”

The Doctor peered out from the alleyway, watching as the diamond dogs sniffed out. “Even with all the chemicals in the air its only a matter of time before they pick up my scent.”

He turned to his friends and smiled. “So, we better get around to finding Spike, hmm? Rarity, can you still think up a basic location spell?”

Rarity closed her eyes and concentrated, her horn beginning to glow. “Yes...what do you need to find?”

“This.” The Doctor said glibly as he activated his sonic screwdriver and pressed it against her horn. “Oh, this may feel a little weird.”

Rarity’s horn began to spark and whirl. Rarity gasped in shock as her horn began

to drag her around. “Doctor! What have you done?!”

“A bit of a messy software patch I’m afraid!” The Doctor said with a smile. “You are currently being drawn to Spike’s DNA signature.”

Rarity squealed while she was dragged horn-first down the alleyway.

“DOOOOCTOOOOOR!!”

The Doctor smiled and turned to the other ponies. “Follow that unicorn! Allons-y!”