

SPARKLE'S SEVEN

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Note: All lines marked with one asterisk (*) are delivered as a voice over.

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the School of Friendship during the day. Zoom in slowly as Spike flies into view, looping toward one of the upper windows with scroll in hand, then cut to Twilight Sparkle and Starlight Glimmer in the former's office. She sits at her desk, hoofprint-signing her way through a stack of documents held in Starlight's magic; when Spike bursts in from the hallway, all four eyes pop and the papers hit the floor.)

Spike: *(excitedly)* Twilight! Look at this scroll I just got!

(He lands and unrolls it, the camera zooming in to pick out two key features: a picture of a crown looking as if it were constructed from cardboard and aluminum foil, bearing an eight-pointed star, and Shining Armor's cutie mark in a bottom corner. Twilight is all smiles in an instant, gasping and flaring her wings where she sits, and it takes her just slightly more time to fly across the office for a better look. Starlight puts her horn to work gathering up the dropped pages.)

Twilight: Do you know what this means?

Spike: Uh-huh. *(Starlight crosses to them, papers put away.)*

Starlight: Uh, I don't. *(peering at scroll)* What's so exciting about a toy crown?

Spike: *(chuckling)* Oh, this is no toy crown. It's the hard-won helm of the Sibling Supreme!

Twilight: When Shining Armor and I were small, we competed over *everything*.

(A kite drifts partway past the camera and stops, the view wiping behind it to frame her filly self flying it in a meadow. She has the coiled line in her teeth and a diaper-clad Spike on her back. The breeze tosses her kite this way and that for a moment before a shield-shaped one flown by her brother knocks it aside, sporting the pink star of his cutie mark surrounded by a scatter of small blue ones. Filly TS shoots him a dirty look in response to his smugly raised eyebrow, shifts to dismay when her creation comes down on Baby SP's head and tears apart, and ends up in a humoring smile at the mishap. Both siblings have their cutie marks.)

(Dissolve to an extreme close-up of a lump of clay being worked by Filly TS on a potter's wheel powered by her magic. She quickly forms it into a decent pot and grins, even if the edge is still a bit rough; zoom out to frame Colt SA running a wheel of his own alongside. His attempt at a vessel disintegrates into a pile of mush, though, and she beams and points at it in triumph.)

(A grid chart divided horizontally into two sections—each bearing one sibling's mark—floats past the camera and backs up, held in a magic aura. Behind its trailing edge, the view wipes to the Sparkle family at home, the matriarch maneuvering the page to hang up on a wall.)

*** Twilight:** To keep it friendly, our parents gave us gold stars every time we did something special.

(Each half of the chart receives one, whereupon the view undergoes a star wipe to a close-up of an apple, the transition working from the screen edges inward. As the camera zooms out to frame Filly TS and Colt SA at a picnic table outside, the elder levitates the fruit and splits it down the middle. Filly TS chomps down one half eagerly...)

*** Twilight:** Sharing...

(...but Colt SA takes notice of Baby SP, who has climbed up over the table edge, and divides his piece so both of them can eat. A gold star drifts past the camera; behind it, wipe to Filly TS galloping up to her house's front doors where Mr. and Mrs. Sparkle are waiting with Baby SP. In her field is a scroll, which she opens to show a test paper decorated with gold stars and a smiley face for earning top marks.)

*** Twilight:** ...getting good grades...

(She cranks off a high-wattage grin as Colt SA plods up in rather poorer spirits, floating a scroll of his own. This one is unfurled to show a test covered with red X's and question marks; she winces and he avoids making eye contact with any of the others. Another star floats past the camera; behind it, wipe to the five in the living room. Colt SA telekinetically lifts a lamp off the wagon-wheel coffee table and speaks into it like a microphone as the other four watch from the couch, facing him.)

Twilight: (voice over, laughing a bit) ...even telling a really funny joke.

(The audience erupts in laughter just before a star drops past the camera, wiping the view to a close-up of the chart. Both halves are crowded with stars, but Filly TS has the advantage by three.)

*** Twilight:** And at the end of each week...

(Zoom out as she and her brother study the page; she grins as his face falls.)

*** Twilight:** ...we'd add up the stars.

(Tilt down to ground level, where Baby SP has been sitting and doodling on the wall with crayons. Now the adult Sparkles approach the three, the paterfamilias using his aura to support the crown seen in modern-day Spike's scroll.)

*** Twilight:** The sibling with the most would win the crown of the Sibling Supreme— *(It is placed on the violet noggin; zoom in as Filly TS grins in joyous triumph.)* —and bragging rights 'til next time.

(The view dissolves from a close-up of the enraptured young visage to an identical shot of the full-grown Princess in the here and now. On the start of the next line, zoom out slightly to frame Starlight stepping up alongside.)

Starlight: Guess that explains your love of charts— *(under her breath)* —and so much else. *(Odd look from Twilight, followed by a weak smile.)*

Spike: *(caressing scroll)* I always wanted to be Sibling Supreme one day. *(reading)* “Meet me at Celestia's castle to decide who deserves the crown once and for all.”

(Slightly crazed grins make their way onto both his face and Twilight's, neither of them paying any heed to the befuddled look on Starlight's.)

Twilight, Spike: Race you there!

(They gallop/sprint for the doors; cut to just outside the office doors, which are flung open so the pair can hurtle off down the hallway. Spike has taken wing again and stashed the scroll; both very nearly crash into a passing unicorn and startle her into dropping the books she holds in her power. These are lifted again as Starlight reopens one door and peeks out.)

Starlight: *(calling after them)* Guess I'll...watch the School?

(The victim of the near miss trots disgustedly away as the view fades to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Canterlot during the day. Twilight and Spike fly madly into view toward the city; cut to just inside a set of closed doors within Canterlot Castle. These are magically opened from the other side so these two can continue their flight. Framed in a head-on shot, they drop to the floor and skid to a sudden, panicked stop as a gasp escapes Twilight's throat. Cut to their perspective—they are in the throne room, and three ponies have planted themselves squarely in the middle of the floor. Two are Princesses Celestia and Luna, the younger sister considerably sourer of face than the older, while the third is Shining—wearing an

insufferable smirk, his armor, and the Sibling Supreme crown in place of his helmet. Zoom in to a close-up of this last item, a gleam of light playing off the seamed foil surfaces, then cut to Twilight and Spike.)

Twilight: You're wearing it?!

Shining: Look, I know you've always held a grudge because I left home with this. *(He indicates it.)*

Twilight: Grudge? Pffft! What grudge? Just because you've had it for way longer than you should have and I never got a chance to win it back. *(Strained grin.)*

Celestia: *(crossing to Twilight/Spike)* With the return of Sombra, Princess Luna and I felt it was time to reinforce the castle's defenses.

Luna: *(acidly)* I said we could do it ourselves, but some ponies are a bit stubborn. *(Celestia shoots her a hairy eyeball.)*

Celestia: So I asked our old Captain of the Guard to handle the job. *(Shining grins.)*

Shining: I've taken the security here to a whole new level. *(crossing to Twilight, tapping her chest)* The only thing I need now is osmepony to test it.

Twilight: *(gasping, shocked)* You want me to break into Celestia's castle?

Shining: *(nodding)* If you can get past my defenses, steal the crown, and get out, you'll be Sibling Supreme forever.

(Accompanied by the following. Levitate the crown off his head; cut to the royal sisters' thrones as it settles onto Celestia's, then zoom out to frame him pointing at it as Celestia looks on. The next shot is a close-up of Twilight and slow zoom in, her pupils dilating to reflect the battered piece of regalia.)

Twilight: *(totally enthralled)* Forever...

Shining: *(from o.s.)* But... *(Zoom out slightly; he leans in and she snaps back to herself.)* ...if you fail, I keep the crown.

Twilight: *(shaking hooves with him)* Deal! *(Pause.)* Wait. Are you sure this counts? Mom and Dad aren't giving us any stars.

Celestia: *(from o.s.)* I will represent their authority. *(Cut to her and Luna.)* And thank you, Twilight. Your help will reveal if there are any holes in our security. *(Luna huffs contemptuously.)*

Shining: *(to Twilight)* And there aren't. I've designed a multi-tiered, impenetrable, triple-backed-up line of defense.

(A closed trunk floats up to fill the screen and backs away, held in his magic. Behind it, the view changes to put him and Starswirl the Bearded in the courtyard outside. On the start of the next line, the white unicorn sets the trunk on the grass and flips it open so he can show off the full load of dark rock fragments it contains. He is now wearing the helmet to go with his armor.)

* **Shining:** The castle's surrounded by shards of Queen Chrysalis's throne. *(Starswirl floats them out; zoom out to a long shot.)* Thanks to Starswirl, its anti-magic powers are now tuned to stop anycreature from using a spell to get inside.

(During this second sentence, the old mage's field whirls the bits around the structure at increasing speed until they become a close-fitting network of white beams. These fade from sight, after which a battlement slides into view to fill the screen and.)

* **Shining:** You can't fly in, either.

(A unicorn Royal Guard member levitates a large pole-mounted fan into position and starts it up. Zoom out to frame other such units now set up on rooftops/balconies and going full tilt.)

* **Shining:** Giant fans keep anycreature from flying too close to the castle.

(A passing bird learns this the hard way when the air currents send it tumbling with a squawk. Now several bricks fall into view, forming a wall as they fill the screen; zoom out to frame Shining and a pegasus guard looking on as one of the unicorn troops puts on the finishing touches. The new bit of masonry is blocking up an archway set in an exterior wall, the hapless bird tottering dizzily past on the nearby grass. Shining takes his leave following a round of salutes; on the next line, tilt quickly down through the earth to an underground passage within Canterlot Castle. Two unicorn guards make short work of bricking up the archway at the bottom of a staircase, then salute at Shining's approach.)

* **Shining:** Plus, the entrances to the tunnels below the castle have been sealed, so there's no underground access.

(Tilt up quickly to a corridor; as he walks past three guards for an inspection, that many again zip out of doorways to stand at attention.)

* **Shining:** And even if you could get in, which you can't, I've doubled the ranks of security. *(He moves on, finding plenty of others in the entrance hall.)* Ponies protect every hallway and door, which can only be opened with Royal Guard medals.

(Stopping at one set of doors, he magically removes the crest from the breastplate of his armor and touches it to one of the three jewels mounted in a vertical panel next to the frame. They swing open, the crest goes back on, and he strides confidently through. Dissolve to the party of five in the throne room, Shining without his helmet again.)

Shining: *(leading others up ramp toward thrones)* Even if you brought an army, the throne room is the safest spot in Equestria.

(Once on the top level of the dais, he steps aside and gestures toward a large trapdoor visible only as a faint pair of adjacent square outlines on the floor.)

Shining: I rigged a floor trap to activate at the slightest touch.

(A bit of gentle pressure from one hoof, and the hatches drop open to expose the start of a stone-lined shaft. Cut to a point several yards down, the camera aimed upward to capture

Twilight and Spike when they peek into the aperture with a grimace. They are soon joined by the vigilant older brother.)

Shining: *(echoing slightly)* But say you avoid the floor. *(The room again; he is heard normally.)* Still no luck, because I've employed nature's alarm system.

(The camera zooms out on this last to frame the tops of the room's support columns; from behind these, several hostile-looking birds put their heads out. Pink-striped white feathers; white/pink wings; broad pink beaks with rounded ends; beady red eyes with yellowed whites. In no time flat, they have launched into a cacophony of loud, grating honks.)

Spike: Geese?

Shining: *(leaning against Celestia's throne)* You can hear their honks all the way in Ponyville.

(One puts its head up from behind the crown and tries to bite him; he hurriedly withdraws his foreleg.)

Shining: Plus, they bite. *(Fearful chuckle.)*

(Cut to a close-up of Twilight and zoom in slowly as she rubs her chin in the deepest of thought. Behind her, the background dissolves to a blackboard on which notes and figures fade in and out for some time. The camera pivots around her as she runs an eye over the lot, which includes several items taped to the boards—a set of blueprints and photos of her own cutie mark and those of her friends.)

Twilight: So that's what we're up against.

(Longer shot: she is in the throne room of the Castle of Friendship, as are Spike and her usual five partners in world-saving. Easels, drawing boards, and chalkboards line the perimeter; masses of photos and notes have been stuck up on the walls, and the floor and central table are littered with books, scrolls, and papers. All except Twilight and Spike are seated on their thrones. Surprised little exhalation from Applejack.)

Applejack: That's a barrel and a half of obstacles— *(Cut to her and Rarity.)* —plus a bushel and a peck of impenetrability.

Rarity: And all of this is to win some filly-hood competition with your brother?

Twilight: *(magically closing/tossing a book, jumping to table)* It's more than that! *(Pause.)* Okay, it's exactly that.

(Hovering backwards, she uses her magic to bring in a side table that holds a cardboard model of Canterlot Castle, held together with an excess of tape and glue.)

Twilight: *(grinning shakily)* And to protect Celestia's castle.

Fluttershy: If it means that much to you, Twilight, we're in.

Pinkie Pie: I was already in! Come on. (*Rainbow Dash grins.*) Who doesn't want to hang with geese?

Rainbow: Of course we'll help—but how?

Spike: (*flying up, landing on table*) Shining Armor may have come up with some great security— (*Twilight steps to the edge.*) —but he'll never guess Twilight's plan.

Twilight: (*leaning over table*) We play to our strengths, and defeat all of the security measures. That way, if one of us fails, the others will still have a shot at getting the crown. Pinkie... (*Pan quickly to that mare; she continues o.s.*) ...you'll distract the guards with a surprise party.

Pinkie: (*saluting*) Yes, sir, Twilight, sir!

(As each of the next four mares is addressed, the screen splits vertically to frame her.)

Twilight: (*from o.s.*) Applejack, you'll buck your way into the sealed tunnels. (*Massage an orange-tan hind leg.*) Rainbow Dash, if anypony can out-fly those wind turbines, it's you. (*Cocky grin/wink/point.*) Rarity, you'll sew us guard costumes so we can sneak past security. (*A toss of the immaculate purple mane.*) Then Fluttershy will disable the throne room alarm by charming the geese.

(The yellow pegasus' excited little claps are interrupted by a loud belch and a wisp of sparkly smoke that rises into view before the five. This solidifies into a scroll, caught by Spike's hand extending upward into view, and all ten eyes go very wide. Cut to a fullscreen view of the dragon as he lands on his throne, having unsealed the missive he has just burped up.)

Spike: It's from Shining Armor. (*reading, as Twilight crosses to him*) "Dear Twilie: Hope your idea isn't just..." (*She sits; he mumbles his way through several lines.*) "...tunnels"? He guessed your whole plan!

Twilight: *What?!?*

(Her power snatches the letter away so she can skim through it.)

Twilight: Pinkie, party; Rarity, costumes... (*reading*) ..."Signed, the future Sibling Supreme"?! (*It hits the table.*) Oh, come on!

(She slumps in her seat with a petulant grumble as Spike despondently lays his head on the table.)

Rarity: (*from o.s., floating letter away*) Twilight, darling... (*Cut to her.*) ...no pony knows you better than your own brother.

Twilight: So you're saying I should give up?

Rarity: (*gesturing with rolled-up scroll*) I'm saying your brother *will* win. (*Zoom in slowly.*) No matter how brilliant your plan is, no matter how many variations you try, it will be something your brother expects! And he'll always win— (*slyly*) —unless...

(She stands up and begins to pace around the table, leaving the scroll behind.)

Rarity: ...when the perfect chance comes along, you do something he *can't* expect! (*Stop; point at Twilight.*) Then *you'll* win.

Spike: (*dryly*) You've been practicing that speech, haven't you?

Rarity: A little bit. It felt like I rushed. Did I rush it?

Applejack: (*shaking head, slightly strained smile*) Absolutely not.

Fluttershy: Oh, no.

Pinkie: Yeah, it was fast-ish.

Rarity: We have to do the opposite of what Shining Armor expects. Therefore, Twilight cannot mastermind the plan...

(The local Princess reacts as if she has just had a barrel of pudding dumped into her bathtub, and the view constricts to a diagonal stripe that frames the white mare's half-crazed visage.)

Rarity: ...*but I can!*

(Fullscreen: this hard left turn has completely floored the other four ponies.)

Applejack: That's...definitely unexpected.

(Fade to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to an overhead shot of the cluttered throne room and zoom in slowly.)

Rainbow: Uh...how is *you* making a break-in plan the opposite of Twilight doing it?

(Table-side.)

Rarity: Because my plan is for each of us to devise our own unexpected part of it. Allow me to demonstrate.

(Zoom in to an extreme close-up of her horn as she fires it up. The glare subsides to frame a black-and-white close-up of a hanging overhead lamp that buzzes and swing creakily back and forth. Zoom out; it is one of several throwing inadequate illumination over a barroom full of ponies drinking, gambling, arguing, romancing. A winged shadow passes the front window and throws the door open to show itself as Rainbow—now wearing a suit jacket, dress shirt, tie, and bowler hat. The place goes dead silent at her entrance, and she runs a hard eye over the patrons while moving aside to let Rarity step in. The unicorn is channeling her inner Shadow Spade as she did in “Rarity Investigates!”, based on the tone of her voice and her use of the trenchcoat and broad-brimmed hat she wore in that episode.)

Rarity: We're looking for a pony with information.

(The crowd clears out in much less time than it takes to say “liquor raid”—all, that is, except for the stallion tending bar. He polishes the countertop as the two detectives seat themselves on the two closest stools.)

Rainbow: We got questions, and you’re gonna serve us up some answers, juice jockey!

Rarity: Where is the secret entrance to the passages under Canterlot Castle?

Bartender: *(shrugging)* Shining Armor sealed ’em all. There’s no secret entrance. *(Rarity leans hard into his face.)*

Rarity: There’s always a secret entrance! *(Rainbow hauls him up by his shirt front.)*

Rainbow: So make like a glass of OJ and spill!

(Orange juice, that is. A miniature, full-color Pinkie disrupts the interrogation by hopping into the bar from o.s.)

Pinkie: Ooh, ooh, ooh! I know what I can do!

(One mighty leap carries her up to the top right corner of the screen, and she yanks it down and away as if tearing off a sheet of wallpaper. The result is to change the scene to a stretch of clouds in the night sky, with full color restored.)

* **Pinkie:** You’re gonna need a lookout, so I can be your eye in the sky.

(A simplified image of the pink nut dangles upside-down into view from one top corner. She is wearing a full-body jumpsuit, goggles, and a transparent domed helmet that causes her words to reverberate slightly.)

Pinkie: *(waving)* Too low, silly! Up here!

(She hoists herself out of view; pan/tilt up through the clouds and stars to follow both her and her pet alligator Gummy—also suited up—as they cavort among the heavenly bodies. Pinkie leaps away to slide around the ring of one planet, which rotates to present a genial, laughing face as she walks backward on her hind legs.)

Planet: *(male voice)* Oh, Pinkie, that tickles!

(She adds her giggles to his as the view dissolves to a close-up of her at the throne room’s central table, forelegs raised in sheer bliss. Lowering them, she finds herself facing a round of deeply puzzled stares. Long pause, then a close-up.)

Pinkie: Whaaaaaat? *(Cut to frame Applejack on the next line.)*

Applejack: How about somethin’ a little more down-to-earth? Like... *(Zoom in slowly.)* ...I distract the guard ponies with a farewell performance by my alter ego, famous country-western superstar Apple Chord!

(Twilight and Spike trade a glance that gives away their lack of comprehension.)

Twilight: I didn't know you had an alter ego. And why would she be giving a farewell performance?

Applejack: *(blushing)* Well, it's a long story.

(She pulls her hat forward over her eyes. Zoom in to a close-up and dissolve to a sepia-toned, slightly scratchy image of her sitting in front of the main barn at Sweet Apple Acres. However, a backward tip of the chapeau reveals her now as a filly, with her mane cut short and not tied back. A zoom out puts an acoustic guitar in her hooves, a hay bale under her rump and still-long, tied-back tail, and an audience of three in front of her: Granny Smith, Big Macintosh, and a baby Apple Bloom on his back. They sway to the rhythm of her quiet melody, which sounds as if it is being played from a phonograph record with a few scratches.)

* **Applejack:** Back on the farm, playin' music was about makin' her family smile.

(Zoom out slightly. A few other ponies have wandered in and are enjoying the show, and Granny picks up a decorated cowboy hat in her teeth and removes the plain one that Filly AJ—or Apple Chord, in this case—is wearing. The new one is plunked on to cover her face in close-up. On the next line, she flips it back to expose a longer mane done in a bouffant, and the camera zooms out to put her on a small outdoor stage among the apple trees and performing for a good-sized crowd.)

* **Applejack:** Word of her talent spread, and soon Apple Chord was playin' real shows.

(Cheers; she twirls in close-up, the camera zooming out on the next line. Now she is playing to a packed house in a theater and wearing a sequined jumpsuit. The birdcatcher spots have faded from the bridge of her nose, marking her growth, and the body of her guitar is now decorated with an apple and musical notes.)

* **Applejack:** The more she played, the bigger those shows got.

(The fading of Chord's smile serves as a counterpoint to the wild applause that drifts her way, and she sits glumly down in the spotlight.)

* **Applejack:** But she missed playin' for her family.

(Once the light goes out, the musical mare touches a hoof to her image in a backstage mirror, having put her guitar aside.)

* **Applejack:** So one day— *(Turn aside; the hat and jumpsuit are flung into a trash can.)* —she gave it all up.

(Chord trots to a door, guitar on back, and knocks it open to exit into the streets of Ponyville. Her mane has grown to its present length and tied-back style. She hops onto the hay bales in front of the Sweet Apple Acres barn and begins to play for her original audience, whose members sway

just as they did before. On the next line, Granny nips up the original brown hat and plunks it over the prodigal granddaughter's face, completing Chord's return to her true identity as Applejack.)

*** Applejack:** Seein' her family smile was all she ever wanted from her music.

(Around a close-up of her half-hidden features, the background dissolves back to the throne room and full color reasserts itself.)

Applejack: *(tipping hat back; zoom out slowly.)* Of course, Apple Chord could come out of retirement for a farewell concert this one time. *(Smirk.)*

Rainbow: Wait. Did you just make all that up, or did that actually happen?

Applejack: *(evasively, averting her eyes)* Ummm...

Rarity: *(standing up in her seat)* Doesn't matter. It's perfect! Fluttershy? Spike? *(Cut to Fluttershy.)*

Fluttershy: Well, I guess the opposite of what I'm good at is... *(Gasp; hunch down shivering in fear.)* ...being in small spaces.

(Zoom out to frame Spike on the start of the next line.)

Spike: I always wanted to be a super-spy. Is that the opposite of anything?

(A length of plumbing pipe zips past the camera; behind it, wipe to a cramped ventilation duct bristling with pipes, valves, and wires. Fluttershy and Spike crawl into view, both wearing dark bodysuits and eye masks, and the little guy hustles ahead to a grate.)

Spike: Special Agent Fluttershy...

(He opens it to reveal the Canterlot Castle throne room beneath the duct—and a network of sweeping laser beams set up as an intrusion countermeasure.)

Spike: ...target detected below!

(Zoom in quickly to a close-up of the crown on Celestia's seat, then cut back to the pair.)

Fluttershy: It's almost too easy.

(A fluid drop and a series of agile bobs and weaves bring her to the dais without incident, and one well-timed kick sends the crown sailing up toward the ceiling. Spike flies out of the grate to catch the thing, then uses it to reflect the beams back so that they blow out the emitters. As Fluttershy steps down from the dais, he tosses the crown overhead so that it knocks out the last two lasers and lands on her head, generating a sizable explosion against which the two coolly exit the room. The smoke clouds fill the screen and clear to frame Spike lost in the grandeur of his imagined exploits, while a perplexed Twilight cocks one eyebrow in his general direction. She

holds the pose for a moment before shifting to a smile and a noncommittal “oh, well” grunt and shrug.)

Twilight: I guess I’m the only one left that still needs a plan. *(Cut to Rarity, at the blackboards, on the start of the next line.)*

Rarity: *(laughing airily)* Oh, no, darling. That is the plan. You shall do nothing.

(The Princess pulls in a lung-bursting gasp of purest shock and claps a hoof to her chest.)

Spike: *(dryly)* Shining Armor definitely won’t expect that.

(Dissolve to a close-up of one tower in Canterlot Castle and zoom out. The fans in Shining’s defense plan have been cranked up to full speed, Royal Guard detachments keep watch from air and ground and battlement, and a helmeted Shining sternly regards the troops from a balcony before retreating within. A curtained stage is wheeled into view in the courtyard, whose guards get a split-second view of Applejack—now dressed/styled as Chord—darting behind it and climbing its steps to disappear from sight. The curtains are pulled open to frame the farmer with guitar in hoof; her jumpsuit is green and white, with a blooming pink flower on the haunch, and the hat is pink with white trim. Zoom in to a close-up as she offers a dazzling grin.)

Shining: Applejack? *(He gallops down and pushes his way up to the stage.)* What are you doing?

(She adopts an exaggerated version of her natural Southern drawl and keeps it firmly in place until further notice.)

Applejack: Applejack? *(Laugh.)* Who’s that? My name’s Apple Chord— *(sitting on haunches)* —and I’ve got a coupla songs to play for you. *(winking)* Clap your hooves if you know ’em. *(stomping time)* And a-one, and a-two, and a...

Cheerful country-tinged acoustic guitar melody, moderate 4 (C major)

(Long shot of the stage, zooming out slowly as more guards congregate in front.)

Applejack: My love is like a barrel, a barrel fulla hay

Music stops with the next cut

(Cut to the road leading to Canterlot. The group’s hot-air balloon is parked here; Fluttershy and Pinkie are aboard, Rainbow studies a map, and Spike lets the breeze turn the stick-mounted pinwheel he holds. He and Fluttershy are now dressed in goggles and dark gray hooded sweatshirts with ears stitched onto the hoods—bunny for Fluttershy, dragon for Spike—and gray gloves cover the clawed violet hands. The balloon’s burner fires up, Rainbow unhooks a mooring line from a stake in the ground, and Spike climbs aboard as Rainbow hovers to keep pace with

the rising basket. Now Gummy can be seen riding with the group, and Spike's goggles hang around his neck. The hop picks out his gray, paw-like shoes.)

Rainbow: The Wonderbolts did a fly-by, and the only way past those giant fans and into the castle ducts is here.

(She indicates a particular spot on her map at the end of this. Cut to her, Fluttershy, and Spike.)

Rainbow: But there's no room for mistakes!

Pinkie: *(from o.s., reverberating)* Just like space travel!

(All three turn in her direction; pan to frame her, now wearing a glass fishbowl as a helmet and plunking one onto her pet's head. Now Fluttershy's dark gray shorts and lighter-colored utility belt and paw shoes can be seen. The reverb stays on Pinkie's voice until further notice.)

Fluttershy: Uh, Pinkie? We're not actually going into space, right?

Pinkie: *(laughing, patting Fluttershy's head)* No, silly! I'm dropping you two off as soon as we're close to the fans. Then *I'm* going into space!

(The balloon drifts upward among the spires; meanwhile, Twilight paces worriedly outside in the courtyard below and runs into Shining without looking where she is going. He has removed his helmet.)

Shining: *(suspiciously)* You're up to something, Twilie.

Twilight: *(smiling smugly, levitating a flower)* Nope, just looking at the flowers. *(Sniff; contented sigh.)*

Shining: *(edging away)* Riiiiight.

(He gives her one last wary glare, which she counters with a smile and wave before turning away and dropping the bloom.)

Twilight: *(giddily, to herself)* Ooooh, maybe Rarity's plan *will* work!

Pinkie: *(from o.s. above, panicked)* Canterlot!

(Purple eyes flick skyward; tilt up quickly to the balloon, now punctured and veering madly through the air. Pinkie and Gummy are now the only passengers, and Rainbow has cleared out.)

Pinkie: We have a problem!

(Twilight takes wing after the screaming pink mare as the craft carries her past the stage, where Applejack has just finished a song.)

Applejack: I know that one's a crowd favorite. What say we play it one more time? *(stomping time)* And a-one, and a-two, and a...

(Pinkie screams her way through a low-altitude pass, followed by Twilight, and is soon caught up in the airflow from the fans. Zoom in on Applejack as she aims a slightly frustrated glower after them.)

Applejack: *(to herself, own voice)* A distraction's a distraction.

(Pressing a hoof on the guitar's bridge causes two jointed metal arms to extend from the sound hole and push the strings out of the way so a suction cup on a line can fire out between them. It connects with the star-shaped medallion on one guard's breastplate and pulls it away, and Applejack doffs her hat just long enough to catch the item under its crown. The suction cup retracts into the guitar, and the arms release the strings and retract into the body. Behind her, Twilight flies backward and out of sight around a corner, towing the deflated balloon in her magic and dumping it, Pinkie, and Gummy in the grass.)

Twilight: Where's Spike and Fluttershy? *(Pinkie sits up.)* Did they make it into the castle?

Pinkie: They jumped out right before the balloon went—

(An extended raspberry serves as a stand-in for the escaping air, but a fair bit of saliva accompanies it and builds up in her fishbowl helmet.)

Pinkie: *(petulantly)* But that's all I could see without being in space, where I didn't get to go! *(Pout.)*

Twilight: Let's hope Rarity and Rainbow Dash had better luck.

(Dissolve to these two making their way down a Canterlot street, Rarity dressed in the Shadow Spade ensemble she imagined herself wearing in the earlier planning session. They stop before a building tucked into a shadowy nook between its taller neighbors; cut to a close-up of its door. Hanging here is a sign showing a time clock with movable hands, the sort used to indicate when an absent proprietor will return.)

Rarity: *(from o.s., pointing at it)* What's this? *(Head-on view of the pair; she reacts with disbelief.)* "Closed"?!

Passerby: Huh. The seedy juice joint is always closed around this time.

Rarity: *(shaking him by his shirt front)* Then how are we meant to shake down ne'er-do-wells for information?!?

Passerby: What sorta information do you need?

Rainbow: Um, the location to a secret entrance to the passages under Canterlot Castle.

Passerby: *(pointing)* You mean that one?

(Rarity turns to follow his gesture, the camera panning to frame two pegasus guards on sentry duty in front of the bricked-up entrance that Shining described in Act One. Zoom in on these, then cut back to the less-than-effective inquisition; Rarity offers an apologetic grin and lets go of the stallion.)

Rarity: *(straightening his bow tie)* Yes, thank you. That will do nicely.

(She sets off toward it, trailed by Rainbow; cut to a patch of bushes as they dive behind it for cover, on the side facing the camera. They risk a glance over the leaves, the camera tilting up to frame two ponies coming in for a landing before the guards. One is Luna, while the other is Fluttershy's younger brother Zephyr Breeze, last seen in "Flutter Brutter." He wears the gold armor of the Royal Guard, but the messy topknot of his blond mane protrudes from the slot on his helmet instead of being hidden by a crest. The pegasi on duty salute and fly away; close-up of Luna, looking around herself with a satisfied smile as Zephyr takes up the post and salutes, then back to Rainbow and Rarity.)

Rainbow: *Zephyr Breeze?!?*

Rarity: *(chuckling)* Oh, darling. This couldn't be more perfect. *(She ducks away, dragging Rainbow with her.)*

Rainbow: How is this perfect? He's the most annoying pony in Equestria— *(pulling at her lower eyelids)* —and he's totally obsessed with me, and we have to come up with a way to distract—

(She cuts herself off upon seeing the brows above the bright blue eyes twitch knowingly upward, and is not at all happy to figure out exactly what Rarity has in mind.)

Rainbow: Ohhh, no. Oh, no, no—no way, uh-uh!

(The view pivots 180 degrees around an imaginary vertical line through its center to bring up an image of a transformed Rainbow. Blue-violet eyeshadow; purple heart-shaped earrings and pendant necklace; magenta gown; part of her mane braided; the rest swept into a style that recalls a Royal Guard helmet crest. A zoom out frames short sleeves and silver shoes for her forelegs and the silver trim/accents on the gown. Rarity claps her approval of the makeover, sitting on her haunches, while its subject/victim wears an expression suggesting that she would rather chug down a barrel of toxic waste. She sighs heavily and lets her wings droop.)

(The green slacker has removed his helmet and is touching up his mane with a bit of saliva licked onto a hoof. Here comes a most unwilling Rainbow, pushed in by Rarity's magic.)

Zephyr: Wha—? *(brightening, donning helmet)* Rainbow! I knew you'd come running when you heard I got this job. *(buffing breastplate, winking)* The mares love a pony in uniform, am I right?

Rainbow: *(sourly)* Not really.

(The sleuth who put her in this mess peeks up over the bushes to wave her off frantically, followed by a coquettish bat of the eyelashes and a flat-eyed stare as if to say, "Get on with it!" Rolling her eyes in disgust, Rainbow injects as much animation into her voice and face as she can.)

Rainbow: I mean, uh, totally! Why don't you step into the light so I can see how...uh...handsome you look in it?

(She plods away, Zephyr following, and Rarity picks up one of the bushes and maneuvers it toward the bricks while staying as far out of sight as possible. Once the coast is clear, the unicorn jumps out and runs her front hooves over the barrier for a few moments. Focusing her magic on one particular brick, she wrenches it out with some effort; a grin comes over the white face, and she begins tearing others loose. The next words throw a real scare into her, and the camera pans away to frame the speaker and a thoroughly bored Rainbow on the next line.)

Zephyr: I told the sarge that gold kinda clashes with my aura, but apparently they aren't big on input. Still, I totally manage to rock the look, don't you think?

Rainbow: *(forcing a grin)* Yep. You're real guard material. *(Both start to walk, Rainbow out ahead.)*

Zephyr: I'm part of the castle team now, so I'm basically—

(He inadvertently treads on the hem of her gown, causing her to stumble.)

Zephyr: Whoa! We got a swooner!

(He catches her just short of the ground and adopts his best "come-hither" expression and voice.)

Zephyr: It's good you're finally being honest with your feelings for me, Rainbows.

(Although this bit of unwanted flirting very nearly makes "Rainbows" lose her breakfast, she manages to get her gag reflex under control.)

Zephyr: *(pacing ahead, as she stands up)* The truth is such a gift. Like, I had to follow my bliss to see guarding is my calling.

(Caught up in his own story, he fails to notice that Rainbow has stopped following. The mare glances back across the courtyard; cut to just behind her, facing a new and sizable hole in the brick wall. Rarity straightens up into view from the steps leading down to it from ground level and beckons her friend in.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Like, look at me go. *(Him and Rainbow again.)* I'm gonna walk over here and I go, "Whoo! Over there!" And I go, "Yeah." And sometimes I gotta stand like this and look real cool, and I go down the hallway and go...

(This off-the-wall job description is accompanied by a string of bravado-infused gestures and turns, ending with a few grunts in time with marching steps. As before, Rainbow's surreptitious exit completely eludes his attention. Cut to the other side of the undone wall, where she and Rarity are descending a staircase whose walls are choked with spiderwebs, then wipe to the throne room. Not a single living soul is present within the walls except for the geese that are part of Shining's defenses, snoozing atop the columns. Beyond the walls is an entirely different issue, though; two shadows begin climbing down the outside surface of the great circular stained-glass

window above the thrones, and a close-up picks them out as Fluttershy and Spike. One clawed finger cuts a circle through the glass, and the piece slides free and is caught just in time by a gasping Spike, who now has his goggles on. Pan quickly to several geese, one of which stirs briefly from its nap before settling back down. Spike voices a relieved sigh as Fluttershy peeks in over his shoulder.)

Fluttershy: *(hushed)* We'll have to glide to the throne. No flapping.

(A nod from her co-conspirator, and the two leap in through the hole with wings spread to full extension. One wide, gently descending loop...another...and then a goose puts its head up from behind the crown and fixes its red eyes on them with a threatening growl. Spike, who has put aside the cut window section, slams on the brakes and is hit from behind by a gasping Fluttershy; both tumble from the air, waking up the rest of the avians within seconds. Down they come in a tide of angry honks, closing in on the two infiltrators who have landed on the dais. Fluttershy has barely enough time to take one step backwards before its trapdoor opens to dump them out of sight. The geese continue their aural fusillade after it has closed again, and even through the opening of one door so Luna can put her head in.)

Luna: *(voice raised)* Sister! Another false alarm from Shining Armor's guard geese!

(She leaves, closing the door behind herself; cut to Celestia and Shining on a balcony outside, the stallion once again decked out in his helmet. Twilight, hiding around a corner, sees the Princess enter the building and turns away in a tizzy.)

Twilight: We should've heard by now! Something must've gone wrong!

Pinkie: *(from o.s.)* Probably several somethings.

(The fishbowl-induced reverb is now gone from her voice. Cut to her and Applejack on the grass a short distance away; the pink pony sits holding the limp balloon and no longer wears her makeshift helmet, and the orange-tan one has ditched her guitar but still wears her Chord getup. The hole in the canopy has been taped over, and one mighty lungful of air is all she needs to re-inflate it halfway; she grins as Twilight turns away with a scared grimace.)

Twilight: No lookout, no distraction, and no word from the ponies inside. I'm starting to think this whole operation might be a giant flop!

(The screen behind her tiles itself with images of her friends as follows. "No lookout": Pinkie at top left. "No distraction": Applejack at bottom right, with her guitar. "And no word...": a puzzled Rainbow and Rarity at bottom left, the former out of her overdone temptress getup, and a freaked-out Fluttershy and stoic Spike at top right, sitting at the bottom of the shaft under the dais. She chews her lip, one frayed neuron away from a complete nervous breakdown, and the view fades to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to the dais. Shining, sans helmet, gets the clamoring geese in his field; tilt down quickly into the shaft and stop on Fluttershy and Spike at the bottom. The yellow pegasus scrabbles wildly at the walls, hyperventilating as Spike regards her levelly.)

Fluttershy: Oh, no! *(She settles down and shivers, hooves over eyes.)*

Spike: Gee, Fluttershy, I thought your whole “small spaces” thing was just part of the plan to be unexpected. *(Fluttershy uncovers her face.)*

Fluttershy: Once I got trapped in the Castle of the Two Sisters, and Angel bunny and I were separated. Now whenever I’m in a tiny room, it’s all I can think about. *(voice shaking)* I was so worried he felt alone and forgotten.

(A reference to the events of “Castle Mane-ia.” She finishes by crumpling into a terrified little heap.)

Spike: *(pensively)* I know what that’s like. *(Fluttershy sits up.)*

Fluttershy: What do you mean? *(Zoom in slowly on Spike.)*

Spike: I was always excited to be a part of Twilight’s and Shining Armor’s rivalry— *(smiling)*—like I was their little brother. *(Face falls.)* But they never really thought of me that way. *(Zoom out.)*

Fluttershy: *(crossing to him, sitting)* I know they both have a special place in their heart for you. But sibling dynamics are hard. Trust me.

Spike: Right. Zephyr Breeze.

Fluttershy: *(patting his shoulder)* Honestly, he can learn a lot from you about being a little brother.

(A great grinding of stone on stone shakes the entire chamber; cut to one wall, which parts to expose Rainbow and Rarity in a tunnel on the other side. The blue daredevil has triggered the exit by pulling on a wall-mounted scone and is back to her normal self, as seen at the end of Act Two.)

Rarity: *(really fed up)* I am sick of being locked in these slimy corridors too! But you shouldn’t pull every lever you come across! Half of them are traps!

Rainbow: And the other half might open a secret passage to the castle!

(Neither of them notices the emergence of the two captives on the end of this exchange.)

Rarity: *It’s not worth the risk! (brightly, noticing them)* Oh, hello, Spike. *(snippy, to Rainbow)* Even if we did find our way back to the castle, we’d still have all of those guar—

(Now, and only now, does her brain finish processing the data relayed to it by her eyes. Both organs tell the mouth to shut its trap, and she and Rainbow turn to face their teammates.)

Rarity: Spike? Fluttershy?! *(They cross to her and get a big hug.)*

Rainbow: Uh, what are you guys doing down here?

Spike: We, uh, kind of fell through the floor.

Fluttershy: I don't think our plan is working. *(Rainbow drops out of her hover.)*

Rarity: We've both hit dead ends. Perhaps we should return to the outside and re-evaluate.

(She has barely turned away before a great many mice scamper across in front of her; voicing a sound of high-octane revulsion, she leads the other four along once they have cleared out. Wipe to an overhead shot of the courtyard and zoom in slowly as a high-strung Twilight paces before Applejack and Pinkie; the balloon and guitar are gone, and the winged unicorn is hyperventilating in fine form. In close-up, she stops at a distance and sweats buckets while gnawing a hoof and glancing back at a re-helmeted Shining on the balcony.)

Spike: *(from o.s.)* Psssst!

(She nearly breaks her neck swiveling toward his voice and finds a small ventilation grate at the base of a wall. This is swung open from inside so her number-one assistant can wave her over; cut to a close-up of the worried mare and zoom out as she crosses. The motion backs the camera up through the grate and frames the four under the floor, and Twilight hunches down to look them straight on.)

Twilight: What are you all doing out here? *(Profile of all five, Spike with goggles around neck.)*

Rarity: *(sheepishly)* In retrospect, our plan might have been too unexpected. *(Lame grin; Twilight gasps in fright.)*

Twilight: Every part of it failed? *(hooves to temples, falling on back as Applejack/Pinkie approach)* Oh, now I'll never get the crown! *(Spike climbs out.)*

Spike: Maybe we should go back to doing things the Twilight way.

Twilight: *(very snarky, standing up)* You mean the totally expected way?

Spike: It may not be a surprise, but you have a pretty good record for planning things.

(Two nods from the mares on the surface and three from the ones below it confirm his analysis, and she smiles.)

Twilight: Then I guess it's worth a try. *(patting Spike's head)* Thanks, Spike.

Spike: *(arms spread for a hug)* What are little brothers for?

Twilight: *(turning away)* Okay! *(Her response stuns him.)* You all know what to do!

(Wipe to a long shot of the castle entrance and balcony and zoom in slowly; Shining has quit the area, but plenty of Royal Guards are still on the job. Close-up of two on the balcony, reacting with total bewilderment as a shadow throws itself across them; it proves to be the fully repaired and inflated balloon, on whose canopy Gummy has clamped his jaws. The basket is piled high with presents and has had a megaphone mounted on the rail; once it is nearly at balcony height, the canopy explodes in a storm of confetti and magenta smoke. Behind the rain of colorful paper bits, the view wipes to show the courtyard rapidly filling with gifts and balloons, with assorted refreshments laid out on tables and pennants strung overhead. The two guards, having taken cover behind the battlements, peek cautiously up, then look to each other, and break into broad smiles and gallop for the steps. Within moments, every soldier in the immediate vicinity is getting

into the spirit of this unscheduled party—but a hanging piñata slowly turns on its rope to reveal Pinkie under the papier-mâché. She taps a large box, whose side flips up under Rarity’s magical control so she can step out—now wearing a replica of the guards’ gold armor and the star medallion that Applejack swiped during her Act Two performance as Chord. The box closes again after she has moved out, and soon she is at the closed double doors.)

Rarity: *(floating medallion off breastplate, touching it to locks)* At least one part of our unexpected plan worked unexpectedly.

(The latch clicks, one door opens, and she reattaches the decoration and slips inside, closing the way behind herself. Pan/tilt quickly up to several whirring rooftop fans, against which Rainbow lances upward into view with a rather bewildered Fluttershy clinging to her belly. The animal lover has shed her covert-ops gear, and the flying ace carries her through a series of deft loops among the spinning rotors before dropping into a low pass over the courtyard. By this last, she has built up enough speed to leave her distinctive contrail hanging in the air. She passes the tunnel entrance, which is being resealed by a unicorn construction worker; out in front, Zephyr has shed his Royal Guard armor and is being relieved of his helmet by an irate member of the corps—his “dalliance” with Rainbow has doubtless caught up with him. Neither pony notices the passage of Fluttershy and Rainbow.)

Zephyr: To be fair, it was never made specifically clear to me what “guarding” actually means—*(poking guard in the chest)* —so this is on you.

(He strides away, stubble-covered chin held high. Pan away from the entrance and stop on Twilight, Applejack, and Spike nearby. These three are studying a tumble of boulders near the base of one wall, and both Applejack and Spike have shed their specialized outfits; in addition, Applejack has resumed her normal manner of speech.)

Applejack: *(scratching head)* I’m strong, Twilight, but not even I can buck through solid rock. *(She taps the stony mass for emphasis.)*

Twilight: *(gesturing behind herself)* That’s why I brought a specialist.

(Who just happens to be Pinkie’s sister Maud, stepping out from behind a clump of bushes. The impassive geologist taps a few times here and there, listening intently, then comes up with a piece of chalk in her teeth. She marks an X and points to the spot; in response, a newly confident Applejack limbers up her hind legs and hunches down in preparation for a strike. Cut to a screenful of the boulder’s surface, which rumbles/cracks to the sound of an impact and finally crumbles away to expose Applejack on the opposite side. She has just hit the sweet spot to open a passage, and she steps aside to let Twilight and Spike enter first; the violet horn flicks on a light as the workhorse brings up the rear.)

(Wipe to a pair of closed doors within the castle—the ones that appeared in Shining’s Act One description of his security measures. A guard has been posted here, and Rarity approaches while keeping an eye out behind herself.)

Rarity: *(deep voice)* Next shift! You're on break!

(The stallion salutes and exits; once he is well out of the way, she applies her magic to open a window so Fluttershy and Rainbow can swoop in. The passenger is unceremoniously dropped on the carpet, and Rarity levitates the star medallion off her armor and presses it to the jeweled panel mounted by the frame. Cut to just inside the throne room, the camera aimed at its closed doors, as the click of a releasing latch is heard. The portals swing open so the three mares can enter; zoom out to frame more of the imposing chamber as the geese roosting atop the columns wake up and start raising an unholy ruckus. The doors close again, and Fluttershy rises placidly to address the flock. Rarity has reattached the medallion.)

Fluttershy: *(soothingly)* You've been glaring so hard. Who wants a feather massage?

(Cut to a close-up of them, the decibel onslaught petering out to a few confused honks, then tilt down quickly to frame Twilight, Applejack, and Spike moving along a passage under the castle. Twilight angles her glowing horn to illuminate the sheet in Spike's hands.)

Spike: We mapped this out when we got lost down here. The lever to the secret hallway entrance...should be... *(jumping up to a wall sconce)* ...here!

(A hard pull causes the stone blocks sealing off the nearest archway to slide apart, revealing a staircase beyond, and the three begin to climb. Cut to a close-up of a hanging tapestry; Spike pushes it aside from behind, showing a doorway set into the wall at which Twilight moves up for a quizzical look. She has extinguished her horn, and he has put away his map. Zoom out quickly to show the source of her puzzlement: Fluttershy, Rainbow, and Rarity sitting in the middle of the throne room floor, each petting a contented and utterly silent goose. Pinkie drops into view from above, dangling from a wire and still in her piñata disguise; a moment later, the three tunnel rats are on the floor and crossing to the goose wranglers. The hidden doorway proves to be several feet above the floor.)

Rainbow: I can't believe this worked! *(Close-up of Spike.)*

Spike: I guess sometimes the best plan is the one you expect.

(Tilt up to Twilight, a smile stretching from ear to ear as her widened pupils reflect the image of the crown. Cut to a close-up of it, zooming in slowly; back to her on the start of the next line.)

Twilight: All I have to do now is fly over and take the crown— *(rearing up)* —and I'll be Sibling Supreme forever!

(She spreads her wings, tenses to lift off—and stops short at the sight of Celestia, Luna, and Shining stepping out from behind the dais. He has ditched his helmet.)

Shining: Not exactly.

(Zoom in to a close-up of his supremely smug grin, then cut back to the crew. Pinkie has shed her papery shell, and they are upright and no longer petting the geese.)

Twilight: *(exasperated)* Oh, come on!

Shining: *(walking down to her)* Gotta admit, it was unexpected for you to do everything exactly how I thought you would. *(Close-up.)* But you should know by now, there's no way to beat the true Sibling Supreme!

Celestia: *(crossing behind him to face Twilight)* I am sorry, Twilight, but it looks as though Shining Armor has truly won the crown.

Spike: *(from o.s.)* That's the thing about looks.

(All three turn back toward his voice, looking as if a bucket of superglue has just been dumped into their mental gears. Cut to the pint-size dragon; in the fore, Rainbow has gone back to stroking one of the birds.)

Spike: *(pulling crown from behind back, putting it on)* They can be deceiving.

Twilight: *Spike?!?*

Shining: How in Equestria did you do it? *(Now Fluttershy has a goose in her lap as well.)*

Spike: *(flying to them)* Come on. You two don't think you have the only sibling rivalry. *(gesturing toward thrones)* I had an inside pony help.

(Princesses and Prince turn to look in the indicated direction; cut to the dais, where Luna now sits haughtily on her throne, petting a goose. The camera next shifts to one side of her, aimed down at the gathering, and pans slowly away from her.)

Spike: It wasn't hard to miss there was some disagreement on the whole security thing.

(Wavering dissolve to w white-ringed flashback from Act One: Luna glowering to herself as the camera zooms in slowly on her.)

* **Luna:** I said we could do it ourselves, but some ponies are a bit more stubborn.

(Shining describes his defensive innovations, while Spike crosses unnoticed in front of him and Celestia and whispers in Luna's ear. Her eyes pop, but she quickly smiles and nods.)

* **Spike:** So, while Shining Armor went on and on about all his improved security measures, Luna and I struck a deal.

(The sealed tunnel entrance, Act Two: Luna and Zephyr arrive so the latter can relieve the pair on duty, while Rarity watches from the bushes.)

* **Spike:** She put Zephyr in charge of the catacombs— *(Inside the castle; Luna closes a set of doors and accompanies Celestia away.)* —and helped keep Celestia out of the castle hallways.

(The balloon afloat, Act Two: Fluttershy and Spike, both suited up for stealth, fly out from its basket as a fishbowl-helmeted Pinkie stays aboard. The pegasus dives o.s.; the dragon remains hovering.)

* **Spike:** Once Luna was on board, I just had to do my part—

(Said part consists of raking a claw along the canopy to tear a gash in the fabric—the cause of the Act Two wipeout. Next: close-up of him with goggles around neck, reassuring Twilight that her original plan is worth following. Zoom out to frame the other five nodding from the grass and the open vent grate.)

* **Spike:** —and make sure we stuck to Twilight’s plan so we’d all get to the throne room at the same time. *(The throne room; Twilight stops short at the emergence of Shining and the royal sisters; slow pan behind her.)* I knew Shining Armor would let it play out until the last possible second.

(Close-up of both pairs of siblings, Shining delivering his victory monologue with relish. The crown is visible behind them, but Luna floats it up and makes it go bye-bye.)

* **Spike:** Then, while everyone was distracted by his gloating— *(The other four mares stare dumbstruck and so do not see it reappear and drop into his hand.)* —all Luna had to do was float the crown over to me.

(On the end of this, he slips it behind his back and the camera zooms in to a close-up of his calmly triumphant smile. A wavering dissolve shifts the view back to him in the present; from here, zoom out quickly to bring six members of his audience into frame. Twilight, Fluttershy, Pinkie, Rarity, Celestia, and Shining stare wordlessly at the master planner, while Luna strolls up with a pleased little smile, having let go of her lap-goose.)

Celestia: *(clearing throat, slightly forced tone)* I, um, apologize for not listening to your concerns, sister. It seems we need to make adjustments to account for threats *inside* the castle as well as out. If you agree...?

Luna: *(same tone)* If you think it’s worth discussing.

(They depart with squint-eyed grins as stiff as their gaits; now Rainbow’s bird has deserted her as well.)

Rainbow: So...if Twilight *and* Shining Armor failed, who gets the crown?

(Spike removes it with a dejected little sigh, certain that he will have to give it up, as Twilight and Shining trade a look and smile.)

Twilight: *(stepping forward, levitating it)* The true Sibling Supreme. *(Close-up of it, she continues o.s. as it descends onto the head of...)* Spike.

Spike: Huh? *(Zoom out; brother and sister step to his sides.)*

Shining: The little brother we've always had.

(A seven-way group hug follows, complete with a plethora of affectionate coos and laughs but free of any geese. "Iris out" to black, the aperture star-shaped and centered on his beaming countenance.)

(The usual closing theme does not accompany the credits. In its place is the music that played behind Twilight's outline of the group's original plan in Act Two: quiet, suspenseful, vaguely Middle Eastern instrumentation and chord structure with electric bass, fast 4. The melody shifts quickly between A, E, and D, ending on an E chord.)