

DRAGON QUEST

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Note: All lines marked with one asterisk (*) are spoken in a hushed tone or whisper.

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to a very long shot of Ponyville during the day. The sound of digging is heard, and the camera tilts down slightly to a stretch of open land where Applejack and Pinkie Pie are excavating a trench, shovels in mouths. Zoom in on Fluttershy's cottage, which stands in the distance to one side of the road leading to town.)

Twilight Sparkle: *(voice over, pleadingly)* Come on, Fluttershy. It'll be fun.

(Inside, she stands worriedly by the fireplace/stove, watching as Rainbow Dash drags the most unwilling yellow pegasus across the floor by the tail.)

Fluttershy: There's nothing fun about dragons! Scary, yes! Fun, no! *(She breaks loose and gallops back, Rainbow flying after to push her across again.)*

Twilight: But, Fluttershy, the Great Dragon Migration happens only once in a generation. *(Close-up.)* Do you really want to pass up a chance like that?

(Pan slightly to frame the two flyers; Fluttershy has latched all four hooves onto the frame of her open front door, and Rainbow is straining mightily to shove her out.)

Fluttershy: Now that you put it that way... *(Cut to just outside.)* ...yes! *(Twilight teleports onto the step.)*

Twilight: Aw, Fluttershy, we just don't want you to miss out.

Fluttershy: Miss out on what? Dragons? Big, scaly, fire-breathing dragons?

Twilight: Well...yeah.

Fluttershy: Thanks, but no thanks! *(Rainbow stops pushing.)*

Rainbow: Look, Fluttershy. *(pulling out a photo)* I watched that boring butterfly migration with you.

(Close-up of the snapshot on the end of this. Both pegasi wear pith helmets and are in a meadow. Fluttershy sits on her haunches, watching a long procession of flitting butterflies through binoculars, while Rainbow hunches grumpily off to one side. The camera then cuts back to them,

Rainbow lowering the photo and Fluttershy looking quite out of sorts.)

Rainbow: So now it's your turn to watch the Dragon Migration with me. You owe me!

Fluttershy: I...said...*NO!!*

(Executing a lightning-fast 180, she plows the daredevil down to the rug and drives a few too many hooves into her belly. Twilight has time for one shocked gasp before Fluttershy gallops to a rear window with a rising growl. When she reaches it, the half-deranged naturalist stands up on her hind legs, ready to smash the panes to atoms—and then she gives the gentlest push to open them. Cut to outside the window; she leaps out and away with a terrified whimper, and Twilight stares after her with jaw hanging wide open. Inside, she watches Fluttershy gallop across the meadow and turns her attention to the dazed sky-blue pony still laid out on the rug—eyes spinning and butterflies circling her head.)

Rainbow: Okay, I guess I'll let you off the hook this time.

(Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to the same long shot of Ponyville that began the prologue and zoom out to frame one edge of the trench Applejack and Pinkie were digging. A few bushes have been placed here for cover, and Twilight pops up to look through a pair of binoculars. She has donned a camouflage shirt and leaf/branch-covered army helmet, and lowering the lenses reveals mud smeared on her face.)

* **Twilight:** I don't see any dragons.

(Pan slightly to frame Applejack alongside with a set of her own. She too has done up in camo, but is using a poncho whose hood is up.)

* **Applejack:** Me neither.

(Zoom out slightly. Now Pinkie can be seen alongside the pair: camo shirt and leaf-covered cap, binocs to her eyes but turned the wrong way around.)

* **Pinkie:** Me neither, neither.

(Her perspective through the lenses—greatly shrunken in size due to the mistake. The bit of sky she can see is clear.)

* **Pinkie:** Shoot! *(Tilt down quickly to frame Rainbow in the trench.)*

* **Rainbow:** You don't think we missed 'em, do you?

(Cut to all four. The pegasus is attired identically to Pinkie, but her cap has no leaves on it, and she has daubed mud across her cheeks as Twilight did.)

* **Twilight:** No. I don't think so. *(Long shot.)* We're just a little early, and I'm glad we are. *(Close-up.)* This way, we can watch every moment of the Migration without bringing any unwanted attention to ourselves.

Rarity: *(from o.s.)* YOO-HOO!!

(Four startled heads turn in unison toward her voice, just in time to catch sight of a very long red carpet being rolled out toward the steps leading down into the trench. Rarity walks along this in a long overhead shot. She maintains normal volume while the others keep their voices down.)

Rarity: Well...

(Confetti and streamers burst from the end as it reaches full length. In close-up, the designer is seen to be wearing her own version of camo, with the usual greens and browns replaced by a purple background and plenty of bright colors. Yellow ribbons adorn each foreleg sleeve, a matching ascot puffs out from the neckline, and the small hat bears a deep purple feather.)

Rarity: ...what do you think? Am I the toast of the trench or what? *(Laugh.)*

* **Applejack:** You'll be toast, all right, when the dragons see you paradin' around in that getup!

* **Twilight:** *(warming up horn)* You look very nice, Rarity.

(Long shot of the trench. As she continues, she hits the carpet and confetti with a burst of magic, making them vanish while Rarity descends the steps. Only the white unicorn is visible in this shot.)

* **Twilight:** *(from within trench)* But could you maybe look nice down here in the trench with us? *(Close-up of Rarity.)*

Rarity: "Nice" is an understatement. I look fabulous! Who says camouflage has to be drab?

* **Pinkie:** *(from o.s.)* Ahoy, mateys! *(Long overhead shot of all five.)* Dragons, ho!

(As broad winged shadows start to pass over the trench, four pairs of binoculars and one set of opera glasses are brought to bear. Pinkie has hers turned around the right way now, as seen in a close-up.)

* **All five:** Ooooh...ahhhh...

(A cut to just behind their heads frames the plethora of soaring dragons, in a bewildering range of sizes, colors, and body types. One particularly large orange specimen does a loop-the-loop that carries it low over the trench.)

* **Twilight:** Wow... *(Close-up of her and Rarity.)* Amazing!

(Pan to Applejack and Rainbow, also awestruck—at least until Rainbow waves it off with a dismissive raspberry.)

* **Rainbow:** Pretty lame move. Is that all they've got?

(A vivid magenta dragon gets sideswiped in midair and unleashes a broad jet of fire toward ground level. All but Rainbow hit the dirt; the flames bathing the area in a lurid glow; in close-up, Applejack is the first to stand.)

* **Applejack:** *(smugly)* What do you think of *that* move, Rainbow Dash? *(Pan slowly toward Rainbow.)* Still think they're lame?

(Stop on the gobsmacked blue face, now smudged with soot from the three-alarm close call. Her cap has been blown halfway off her head, and the fringe of her mane is singed and smoking.)

* **Rainbow:** Uh, not so much. The word "fierce" comes to mind.

* **Rarity:** And "formidable"!

* **Pinkie:** *(hunched down, hooves to head)* And "super-duper scary"!

(Holding out one front hoof, she gets a cupcake plunked onto it by a familiar clawed hand with light violet hide.)

Spike: *(from o.s., normal volume)* Yeah.

(Cut to him, also in the trench, wearing a frilly white apron with a bright pink heart and wheeling a loaded snack cart.)

Spike: Us dragons are definitely a force to be reckoned with.

(He gives Applejack a cookie; laughter from the o.s. Rainbow. Cut to her, toppled on her back and yukking it up as Applejack and Pinkie snack. She has cleaned herself up.)

Rainbow: Yeah, right, Spike. That's one of the scariest aprons I've ever seen! *(All three laugh.)*

Spike: What's wrong with wearing an apron? You won't be laughing when *you* spill blueberries all over *your* scales...uh, feathers. That's one tough stain!

Rainbow: One tough stain against one lame dragon!

(Laugh; the reptilian green eyes cycle from shock to resentment. On the start of the next line, cut to Rarity staring Rainbow down.)

Rarity: You leave him alone, Rainbow Dash! Spike's style is unique. He doesn't have to look like other dragons.

Twilight: Or act like them. *(Rarity jumps over to Spike.)*

Rarity: *(twanging his head spines)* My little Spikey-wikey is perfect the way he is.

Spike: *(puzzled)* I don't act like other dragons? *(Pinkie jumps over.)*

Pinkie: Oh, not even close! *(Applejack steps up.)*

Applejack: But why would you want to, Spike?

Rarity: Yes! You've got something those dreadfully fierce dragons can only dream of.

Spike: *(perking up)* What's that?

Rarity: *(baby talk, pinching his cheeks)* Your cutest wittle chubby cheeks! *(Happy little squeal.)*

Spike: *(shocked, blushing)* Cute?! Dragons aren't supposed to be cute!...Right?

Rarity: Oh, sweetie, you are turning the most delightful shade of red. It is most becoming.

(Zoom out slightly to frame all five smiling mares gathered around the cart. Spike's eyes dart nervously from one to the next, after which he lets go with a furious growl. Cut to ground level; he climbs/jumps out of the trench and stomps away as the dragons continue their flight. Rarity pokes her head up after him, followed by the others in short order.)

Rarity: Oh, isn't he adorable when he waddles off in anger?

Spike: *(now o.s.)* Waddle?!? *(Loud, frustrated yell.)*

(Dissolve to the exterior of the library at night and zoom in slowly on the bedroom window.)

Spike: *(from inside)* What am I?

(Dissolve to an overhead close-up of him in his basket. The lights are out.)

Spike: Where am I from? *(Zoom out slowly.)* Who am I supposed to be?

(The camera movement exposes Twilight, lying in her bed alongside the basket—with a pillow jammed over her head to block out his voice. She puts it back in place with a loud groan.)

Twilight: I don't know! For the last time, Spike, you were given to me as an egg. I don't know who found you or where they found you.

Spike: *(turning away from her)* Seriously? That's all you know?

Twilight: I'm sorry, Spike. *(He sits up.)*

Spike: That doesn't tell me anything about who I am!

(He jumps out of the basket on the end of this. Cut to a mirror at the wall.)

Spike: *(from o.s.)* I need answers! *(stepping into view)* I feel like I'm... *(touching glass; eyes tear up)* ...I'm looking at a complete stranger.

(He sinks to the floor with a dejected moan, the camera cutting to an overhead view and zooming out as Twilight crosses to him.)

Twilight: Oh, Spike... *(close-up, smiling)* ...why don't we do some late-night research? See what we can find out. *(He wipes his eyes; she steps away.)*

Spike: Really? (*Lights on.*) You'd do that?

(*Cut to the inquisitive unicorn in the reading room downstairs; she levitates a book off one of the shelves.*)

Twilight: Of course! I'm sure we can find something.

(*Open the cover. Start reading. Dissolve to this self-same unicorn, now slumped over and displaying the amount of fatigue and dishevelment that is proper for an all-night study session. The shelves behind her are now completely bare, their contents piled up on the floor. Zoom out slightly to frame the full measure of disorder as she floats a book over to herself and magically flips pages.*)

Twilight: Nothing. (*Send it away; another.*) Nothing in this one either.

(*Cut to a long shot of the entire room on the end of this. Daylight can be seen through an upper window, and every single shelf has been cleared. Spike sits among the jumbles and looks through one volume.*)

Spike: Nothing at all about dragons? (*Close-up; he throws it aside.*) This is getting ridiculous! (*Hunker down miserably; eyes tear up.*)

Twilight: (*from o.s.*) I know! (*Cut to her.*) It's hard to believe, but ponies know next to nothing about dragons. Apparently they're too rare and too scary to try to talk to or study. (*A little sob from Spike's direction; cut to him.*)

Spike: I wonder if...dragons...cry.

(*This one does, at least, so Twilight steps over and levitates a handkerchief to wipe his eyes and nose.*)

Twilight: Aw, Spike... (*He pushes it away and stands up, all determination.*)

Spike: (*crossing room, scrubbing eyes dry*) It's okay, Twilight. I'm gonna discover who I am if it's the last thing I do!

(*The front door is thrown open, exposing Rainbow and Rarity on the step; they speak at the same time.*)

Rainbow: Hey, guys!

Rarity: Yoo-hoo!

(*Back to Twilight and Spike; the latter gets out a surprised yell and dives into the nearest pile of books.*)

Rarity: (*from o.s.*) Good morning! (*She and Rainbow enter.*)

Rainbow: You want to join us for breakfast?

Twilight: That sounds great. (*Cut to Spike; she continues o.s. and he picks a book off his head.*)

I'm famished.

Spike: Count me out. *(He jumps down.)* I've gotta get an early start.

Rarity: An early start? *(He stands at the door; zoom in slowly.)*

Spike: Yes. I'm going on a quest of self-discovery. I need to learn what it means to be a dragon. And the only way I'm gonna do that is to join the Dragon Migration!

Twilight, Rainbow, Rarity: *What?!?*

(Now back inside, he lays a stick and a large square of cloth on the nearest table and steps away as Rainbow approaches.)

Rainbow: Spike, that's nonsense talk! I know that you're a dragon, but *those* dragons mean business!

(Cut to him on the end of this line, retrieving a few items from a pantry cupboard: sandwich, apron, and the apple-patterned blanket he received as a birthday present in "Secret of My Excess." He returns to the table.)

Rainbow: They're big and tough and scary. *(The items are set on the cloth.)*

Spike: *(sullenly)* And I'm small and meek... *(picking up apron)* ...and I like to wear aprons. *(He throws it aside.)* See? This is exactly why I need to spend time with 'em.

Rainbow: All I'm saying is that you could get hurt. *(Rarity joins the two; Spike starts tying the lot into a bundle.)*

Rarity: Darling, this time I really do have to agree with Rainbow Dash. I don't want those big, ugly, nasty dragons— *(to baby talk, rubbing his head)* —to hurt one little scale on your cutesy-wutesy head.

(With the bundle now knotted onto the stick, he hefts it onto his shoulder and stalks off, knocking her hoof away. The show of affection has, if anything, only hardened his resolve.)

Spike: I'm sorry, but I've made up my mind.

Rarity: *(sputtering, to Rainbow)* Quick, do something! Stop him before it's too late!

(The speedster's wings propel her over to the door in no time flat; she gets the bundle in her teeth, starting a fierce tug-of-war.)

Spike: *(grunting)* Hey! *(Cut to Twilight, thinking hard; he continues o.s.)* Give it back!

(She teleports over to stand between the two.)

Twilight: Hold it!

(Two more quick teleports remove them from the spot and rematerialize them a few feet back on either side. Once they and the bundle have all hit the floor, she levitates the impromptu luggage and eyes it ruefully before floating it down to Spike.)

Spike: Really?

Rainbow: Don't tell me you think he should go! (*Spike, now up, gets it on his shoulder.*)

Twilight: (*smiling*) Yes, Spike. (*Zoom in slowly.*) I couldn't answer your questions. My books couldn't, either. I understand why you want to look elsewhere. I truly believe you need to go on this quest. (*sharply, to the o.s. Rainbow and Rarity*) And we have no right to stop you! (*Cut to Rarity.*)

Rarity: I suppose not. (*Zoom out; Rainbow is upright again.*)

Rainbow: I still say you're nutty, but...hey. I've done *lots* of nutty things.

Twilight, Rarity, Spike: (*wearily*) We know. (*Rainbow snarls to herself.*)

Twilight: (*hugging Spike*) Well, then, I guess this is goodbye, Spike. We can't wait to hear about it—when you return.

Rainbow: Yeah! We hope your trip—

Twilight: Quest.

Rainbow: —your quest answers some of your pesky “who am I” questions.

Spike: Thanks, everypony. I know it will.

(*He walks away. Cut to outside the door; the three mares stand on the step and wave.*)

Rarity: Goodbye, Spikey-wikey!

Rainbow: Go get 'em, big guy!

Twilight: We have faith in you!

(*Ear-to-ear grins on all three faces.*)

Rarity: (*aside, to Twilight*) We're following him, right?

Twilight: (*aside*) Of course.

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the hordes of airborne dragons, seen from far below in a clear blue sky, and tilt down to ground level. Spike strides confidently up over a hill in the general direction of their flight, but stops to wipe away the sweat running down his face. A dissolve puts him on an uphill climb through a windswept section of forest, while the next shows him plodding down a grassy incline in the pouring rain.*)

(*Dissolve to a view of the flying behemoths under a bright yellow sky. The camera is positioned just over Spike's shoulder as he looks up at them; cut to two, who bump into each other and let off angry screeches, then to a head-on view of him. He has unpacked his bundle and is sitting on the apple blanket to enjoy some tea and cookies. A spasm of disgust crosses his face—“real dragons don't drink tea!”—and he throws the cup and saucer aside.*)

(*Dissolve to him on the move again, bundle and all, trudging up a snowy mountainside in a*

violent blizzard. As a few rams pass behind him, he stops and puts out a thumb; dissolve to him now riding one of them up the slope. The next two such transitions frame him back on foot, making his way along a sun-baked downgrade...then in a straw hat and helping to pole a raft downriver, alongside a donkey whose dark gray mane is an exact match for the toupee Cranky Doodle Donkey first wore in "A Friend in Deed"...then back on dry land, hiking through a forest as the dragons pass overhead. A pair of phoenixes can be seen roosting on a tree branch in the foreground.)

(In close-up, the little traveler's face is seen to be covered with a scruffy gray beard now. Coming into the open, he finds a line of smoking volcanoes dead ahead under a red-orange afternoon sky. As the flyers make for one crater or another, his face brightens and he sprints ahead, the beard coming loose and falling to the ground. Whether it was a disguise he brought along with him, an item he put together using the ram's wool, or simply an accumulation of dirt over the long journey, may never be known. He hurries up the steep rock face, trips and slides back down, and scrambles up again.)

(Wipe to just inside the lip of one crater. Spike climbs up, peeks wearily in over the edge, and lets his eyes go wide in pure amazement. Before him, full-grown dragons of all types glide through the hazy air and perch on the rocky ledges; one huge red specimen lets go with a blast of fire that comes within an ace of burning him to a crisp. Only a last-second duck keeps him alive, and he peeks back up to find smoke rising from the impact point and a slab of red-hot rock. As it cools off into black slag, he swallows hard and turns his attention elsewhere. The camera cuts to his perspective of a couple of other full-size beasts, then tilts down to the crater floor, where a half-dozen smaller ones are goofing off amid piles of gems.)

Spike: *(enthusiastically)* All right! *(Back to him.)* Teenage dragons! *(Zoom out; he runs in.)* Now that's more my speed... *(now o.s.)* ...and size.

(He does not notice a rather strange-looking dragon that lumbers up to the lip after him. The hide is green, the neck a lighter shade and sporting a bright magenta scarf, and the ears and back spines display a multitude of vivid colors. In addition, the snout is bright yellow-green and various jewels are set into the thing's carapace; the mouth gapes open and the eyes point in different directions. Quite a few details give it away as a not-quite-authentic dragon: the visible seams and stitches, the legs of Rainbow and Rarity protruding from underneath, the blue pegasus wings sprouting from the back, the eyeholes cut into the chest so Rainbow can see out, and Twilight's head barely visible within the shadow of the open mouth. Various grunts and groans point up the trio's difficulty in moving and balancing.)

*** Rainbow:** *(inside)* I'm telling you, we'll never pass for a real dragon!

Rarity: *(inside)* Oh, pish-posh! This costume is fabulous! One of my finer creations.

*** Twilight:** Shhh! *(Close-up of her.)* We'll never pass if they hear three voices coming out of one dragon. Now come on! Let's go!

(Rainbow takes a step forward over the edge; gravity does its thing and drags the group into the crater. Down below, four of the six teenage dragons cheer as the last two square off for a fight.

One is red, with yellow-orange back/tail spines and head fin and pale yellow underbelly/wings—this is Garble. The other, much fatter one has brown hide, small red wings, thick blue horns, and a spiked ball on the end of a chunky tail. In close-up, Garble gets Brown in a full nelson before Spike's voice cuts in.)

Spike: *(from o.s.)* Um...excuse me? *(Zoom out; he now stands next to them.)* Uh, hi. I'm Spike.

(They stand at least twice as tall as he does. General surprise; Garble drops Brown, and a purple dragon moves in close. This one has pale green hide on his underbelly and the lower surfaces of his wings, along with a shock of blond hair that hides his eyes.)

Purple: *(derisively)* You sure your name is Spike and not Shrimp? *(Laughter.)*

Spike: No! It's Spike! I-I mean, I'm sure about that!

Brown: *(poking him)* You look more like a Pee-Wee to me! *(More laughter.)*

Garble: Hey, guys, come on, seriously. *(crossing to Spike)* Leave him alone, or he might fly away—that is, uh... *(dangling him upside down by tail)* ...if he had any wings!

(He drops the little guy back to the crater floor, prompting a fresh wave of jeers.)

Brown: You flying on your mommy's back during the Migration?

Spike: Not exactly.

Purple: No, no! Can't you see baby Spike just hatched? I bet he still sucks his claw at night!

Spike: No! I haven't sucked my claw in months!

(Laughter; Garble leans down to him and the thumb that has reflexively found its way into his mouth.)

Garble: Well, if you weren't just hatched... *(Spike pulls the digit out.)* ...how come we haven't seen you around before?

Spike: Oh! Well, you see, I live in Ponyville and— *(Cut to Garble, straightening up; he continues o.s.)* —and I'm—

Garble: *(laughing nastily)* Ponyville? That explains it! I knew there was something vaguely pony-ish about you! *(backing him up)* If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were part pony.

Spike: *(really scared)* Who, me? I'm not part pony. *(now backed against a rock)* I'm all dragon. See?

(He lets go with the most vicious roar he can muster up—that is, not very—and thoroughly fails to impress the lot.)

Garble: *(baby talk)* Or maybe you're a pony in a dragon costume.

(The others have a good laugh, not noticing the ersatz bejeweled one that has made its way down here.)

Purple: *(falling against it)* A pony in a dragon costume!

Twilight: *(laughing, deep voice)* Yeah. Hilarious.

(Purple manages a puzzled squeak—“who let this joker in the place?”)

Spike: I *am* a real dragon!

Garble: Oh, yeah? Prove it!

Spike: Well...how?

Garble: By acting like one. *(calling out)* Who's up for a little belching contest?

(Brown and three other crew members—white with pink spines; blue with lavender spines/wing hide and light blue horns, dark gray with forward-swept green hair and brownish-underbelly—cheer this suggestion with gusto. Tilt up quickly from them to frame a couple of full-grown dragons taking notice, then cut to White stepping up. He cuts loose with a jet of light blue flames; up next is Purple, who counters with a green blast of his own. Brown's louder, more sustained effort generates a sheet of orange fire that briefly envelops the spectators and burns the eyelashes off the three mares' disguise. Garble, Gray, and Blue voice their enthusiastic approval as Brown brings up a smoky little cough.)

Garble: *(elbowing Spike)* You think you can beat that, Pee-Wee?

(“Pee-Wee” swallows hard and walks up to the line as Twilight grimaces within the costume's mouth. Now standing alongside White, Purple, and Brown, he lets his cheeks bulge out and forces out a little burp of green fire that solidifies into a scroll. Close-up of this; confused murmurs float down from the o.s. teens, and Garble reaches into view to grab it. Cut to him, now having unrolled the document.)

Garble: *(reading)* “From the desk of Princess Celestia. Dear Spike: Please tell—” *(laughing)* Get this, guys! Spike's pen pals with a namby-pamby pony princess!

(Cut to the mortified Spike on the end of this, then zoom out as the others laugh themselves stupid. The note is balled up and thrown over Garble's shoulder to land in a lava pool, which promptly incinerates it; tilt up to frame the fake dragon looking on. Twilight gasps softly, and the camera cuts to a close-up of her and zooms in slowly.)

* **Twilight:** How can he just throw that away? *(angrily)* That letter could be something important! *(Tilt down quickly to Rainbow.)*

* **Rainbow:** We can't worry about that now, Twilight! We're here to help Spike!

(The violet unicorn hangs into view, upside down, to look her in the eye as the white one nudges up a little closer from the rear.)

* **Twilight:** I know, I know. *(She turns her head 180 degrees to peek out, backing into Rainbow's face.)* But there's no reason to disrespect Princess Celestia that way.

(Outside, Garble has turned back to Spike.)

Garble: Maybe tail wrestling is more your speed.

Spike: Uh...

Other dragons: YEAH!!

(“Barn door wipe” to a close-up of the ends of Blue’s and Gray’s tails looping together; then cut to frame them fully. These two stand back to back with legs braced, while Garble is on hand as referee and the other three watch from the sidelines.)

Garble: Ready? Go!

(Every muscle in both combatants’ bodies kicks into overdrive, trying to drag the other off balance as Spike stares wonderingly. They remain at a stalemate for several long seconds, but one heave from Blue drops Gray onto his belly to end the match.)

Garble: *(lifting Blue’s tail)* The winner!

(Who flexes for the crowd as the loser nurses his freshly kinked tail. Spike, meanwhile, cradles his own with visible unease while cheers ring out around him.)

Spike: Good old tail wrestling. *(Pan to frame Twilight/Rainbow/Rarity behind him.)*

* **Rarity:** *(inside)* We can’t let little Spikey-wikey wrestle one of them! *(Close-up of her and Rainbow inside.)* He’ll get clobbered!

* **Twilight:** *(from o.s.)* Let’s go!

(Cut to the little dragon, whose tightly strung nerves have him jittering and stiff as a board, then zoom out to frame the trio as Twilight speaks up.)

Twilight: *(deep voice)* I challenge Spike to a tail wrestle!

Garble: *(to Blue)* Who’s this weirdo?

Purple: I think he’s Crackle’s cousin.

(Cut to an overlooking ledge, on which a rather strange-looking green dragon is perched. Tiny, light-green wings; matching back spines; thick, stubby blue horns; beady red eyes that steadfastly fail to point in the same direction; jewels embedded in the hide. Crackle lets off a yawp and scratches a spot with one hind leg.)

Garble: Oh. That would explain it.

(Close-up of the two adversaries’ tails as they extend toward each other, with Rarity’s hoof supporting the fake one. In a longer shot, it thumps to the ground as she retracts the limb; another close-up frames it falling over Spike’s tail after another nudge.)

Garble: *(from o.s.)* Ready? *(Cut to him and Spike.)* Go!

(The violet pipsqueak strains but cannot even budge the green appendage hanging limply over his own. Inside the costume, Rainbow and Rarity trade a slightly disgusted glance at his physical shortcomings and drop their heads resignedly; outside, the green counterfeit suddenly collapses to the ground. Sets of white and light blue legs end up in full view, but Garble pays no mind as he hoists Spike upside down by the tail.)

Garble: Spike's the winner! *(Drop; cheers as he sits up.)* Nice going, little Spike. Maybe you are a dragon after all.

(He flicks Spike under the chin and backs off.)

Spike: Yeah! Maybe I am!

(The three mares are upright within their disguise and make their way out of the combat zone.)

* **Rarity:** *(inside)* Rainbow Dash! I can't believe your silly plan actually worked! *(Rainbow nudges her, hard.)* Ow.

(Back to the crater floor; Spike's confidence has now risen quite a few notches.)

Spike: All right. Who's next?

Garble: Getting a little cocky, huh? I like that. So how about you wrestle... *(pointing to one side)* ...him!

(Pan to follow his gesture. On the receiving end of it, hunkered down between White and Brown, is a small and rather scared-looking blue-green dragon with yellow underbelly/horns and a tuft of orange hair. Only the head and upper body can be seen. Spike throws him a taunting smile, which is the cue for White and Brown to step out of the way and the camera to zoom out. The underdeveloped forelimbs are attached to a smallish body that is in turn hooked up to a massive tail, easily three or four times the body length. As a final touch, the last few feet pop out a set of very unpleasant-looking spikes. Cut to Garble.)

Garble: Go!

(Up near the crater lip, Spike's panicked yell cuts the smoky air and the spiked appendage flings him up to smash into the rock face, from which he slowly slides down. As a couple of adult dragons watch the aftermath of what might be the shortest tail-wrestling match in history, the view dissolves to a close-up of a jewel pile's slope; Garble's feet step nimbly up along it.)

Garble: So, Spike... *(Cut to him, carrying Spike.)* ...you haven't exactly proven yourself as a dragon yet...

(Close-up of Spike on the end of this, being dropped onto the top of the pile, then cut to frame both dragons.)

Garble: ...have you?

Spike: But I get an A for effort?

Garble: Uh, maybe. Let's see how you do in this next contest.

(A good shove sends the little guy on a long, bouncing, yelling tumble all the way to the ground and earns laughs from Blue and Brown. Close-up of Garble.)

Garble: KING OF THE HOARD!!

(On the end of this, zoom out to frame the prostrate Spike at the base of the mound. Gray, Brown, and Purple yell and charge toward it as he dazedly peels himself up and joins in. Up top, the dragon on the summit flips one after the other off the slope; Spike crawls timidly up as the hooligans go flying past him. Garble and Brown are left to grapple it out.)

Spike: This is my chance. *(Purple makes another run up the hill.)*

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Not so fast!

(The big fat fake green dragon dives across, knocking Purple away and forcing a grunt from Rarity; Spike reaches the top and stands up between Garble's hind legs to knock him off balance. Down he goes, taking Brown with him and leaving Spike alone atop the mound of precious stones. Both eyes are squeezed tight shut, and the sight he finds upon opening one brings a surprised smile to his face: dragons sprawled out senseless on all sides.)

Spike: KING OF THE HOA—

(He trails off into a yell as the gems under his feet give way and send him bouncing down like a scaly Superball. The unceremonious descent drops him on his back at Garble's feet; tilt up to the latter's face.)

Garble: Looks like this is another fail for you, little Spike. Can't wait to watch you fail at Lava Cannonball, too.

(Spike sweats and swallows hard as the camera zooms in on him. Dissolve to a close-up of the bubbling lava pool in which Garble disposed of Celestia's letter, then tilt up to a high ledge on which all six delinquents and the disguised ponies are gathered. Spike peeks nervously out from the far end of the line.)

Garble: Whoever makes the biggest lava splash is the ultimate dragon! *(jumping off)*
GERONIMOOO!

(His landing in the pool throws spatters of molten rock up to the ledge; Spike cries out and flinches to avoid one, and another nearly burns Rainbow's foreleg off. Tilt up to a properly apprehensive Twilight in the costume's mouth.)

* **Twilight:** *(as all back off)* Spike's on his own this time.

(Purple, White, Blue, and Gray leap off in quick succession, each yelling all the way down to the pool and sending up their own splashes. Brown waits for the hubbub to subside before making his move.)

Brown: CANNONBALL!!

(A geyser of lava rockets skyward to mark his impact. Displaying a look that suggests his desire to grow a pair of wings and vacate the premises post haste, Spike steps to the edge. Cut briefly to his perspective, the focus shifting from his feet to the pool and back, then back to him. His arms flail for balance as he gets out a choked cry of terror and backs up, plastering himself against a rock face.)

Garble: *(from o.s.)* What's wrong, Spike? *(Cut to him and the others.)* You afraid the lava will hurt your soft pony hide?

(A round of jeering laughter; cut to a close-up of the huddled, shaking baby dragon and zoom in. The brows above the reptilian green eyes lower in a silent snarl, and a moment later he is back at the precipice. He stands tall, paying no mind to the sweat that begins to run down his face, and the view cuts briefly to his perspective, shifting focus from his feet to the pool. Back to him; now he takes what might be the last hard swallow of his life, puts his hands together, and takes a screaming leap off the ledge. Instead of generating a splash like the others, he strikes the pool surface spreadeagle, face down, and sinks slowly into the bubbling mass.)

Gang: *(wincing)* Ohhhh!

(Close-up; Spike's head breaks the surface and he spits out a mouthful. Zoom out to frame the others looking strangely at him.)

Spike: Uh...was I...*that* bad?

Garble: *(smiling)* No, dude, that was awesome! No pony could live through a belly flop like that! *(laughing, picking him up by the head spines)* You're one tough little dragon.

(Drop; admiring murmurs from the group bring a smile to Spike's face. Dissolve to Gray, who sticks a couple of fingers in his mouth and blows a braying whistle, then to the tails of all but Garble being extended upward at an angle toward each other—three facing two. Tilt down to frame an apprehensive Spike at one end of this impromptu gauntlet; he slowly advances toward Garble at the other.)

Garble: Spike! By belly-flopping so hard, you have proven yourself worthy.

(Close-up of the now-proud little guy.)

Garble: *(from o.s., touching each shoulder with his tail)* I hereby dub you "Rookie Dragon" and will now perform the initiation ritual.

(Cut briefly to him, then back to Spike during this line; the latter is picked up, given a noogie hard enough to dizzy him, and set down as Garble laughs.)

Garble: Now let's party dragon-style!

(The others whoop it up as the camera tilts up from them into the smoky sky. Dissolve to a long shot of the volcano craters, then cut to an overhead view of the six goof-offs plus their new initiate—all sprawled out and sleeping off the effects of their party.)

Spike: Man... *(Close-up.)* ...was that a great party.

Garble: *(from o.s.)* Great? *(Cut to him.)* Heh. Maybe by Ponyville standards. Stick with us, Spike. *(Back to Spike; he thumps a shoulder and continues o.s.)* We still got plenty to teach you about being a dragon.

Spike: I'm not going anywhere. The way I feel right now, I could hang out with you guys forever.

(On the end of this, tilt up to frame the three ponies, watching from within their costume and behind a nearby outcropping. The view then cuts to a three-way split screen of their disbelieving faces: Twilight in the upper half, Rainbow at lower left, Rarity at lower right.)

* **Twilight, Rainbow, Rarity:** Forever?

(Snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a pan across Spike and the lounging teen dragons. Stop on the three-pony fake, which ducks behind the rock in time with a gasp from Rarity, and cut to her inside.)

* **Rarity:** Spikey-wikey is going to stay with these awful dragons forever? *(Pan to Twilight.)*

* **Twilight:** Oh, no! This is terrible! *(Tilt down to Rainbow.)*

* **Rainbow:** I shoulda stopped him back at the library when I had the chance! *(Back to Twilight.)*

* **Twilight:** No, Rainbow Dash. This is all my fault. I encouraged him to go.

(Cut to a close-up of the funky green head and zoom out quickly to frame the real bunch on the start of the next line. Assorted stretches and yawns, including Spike.)

Garble: You know, Spike, I think you just might be ready for a real dragon raid. *(Cheers all around.)* There's a nest full of phoenix eggs nearby, and we're gonna swipe 'em. *(Spike voices an unsettled little squeak.)*

Brown: Heh. Aren't you totally psyched to go on this raid? *(He shoves Spike down to the ground.)*

Spike: *(standing up, with false bravado)* Oh, yeah. I'm excited. I mean, I-I'm psyched!

Garble: All right, then. Let's fly!

(The unwilling accomplice can only glance at his own wingless back as Garble, Brown, and Purple lift off.)

Spike: *(calling after them)* Uh, sorry, guys! I guess I'll meet you back here at the crater—after the whole raid thing's over? We'll totally hang then!

(Brown swoops down and snatches him, eliciting a scared yell; zoom out toward ground level.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Oh, no! *(now in view; peeking from costume mouth)* They took Spike! *(ducking away)* We gotta go after them!

(Without waiting for a consensus, the overeager pegasus does her best to lift the rig off. All she does is get the middle section a couple of feet off the ground, so that Twilight and Rarity are dragged along; Rarity's terrified squeal is heard from beneath the gaudy green costume. The head unicorn looks forward, and the camera cuts briefly to her perspective of the rapidly approaching lava pool dead ahead. She screams; back to the trio.)

Twilight: *(from inside)* Rainbow Dash, stop! We can't fly! *(Close-up of Rarity inside.)*

Rarity: And you're ruining my fabulous costume!

(They skid to a stop with only inches to go before plunging into the smoldering liquid. Cut to Rainbow and Rarity inside.)

Rainbow: I'm sorry, but we gotta help Spike! *(Tilt up to Twilight.)*

Twilight: Well, we're just gonna have to hoof it!

(Cut to the lip of the crater and zoom out to frame the flying crew as the earthbound one looks out after them. Evening has come. From here, dissolve to a close-up of the phoenix couple and their nest, seen during Spike's journey to the volcanoes in Act Two, and zoom out.)

Garble: *(from o.s.)* All right, Spike. Since you're our rookie dragon...

(On the end of this, the camera backs up through an opening in a bush, being held open by Garble; he, Brown, Purple, and Spike are hunched down here. Garble closes the hole.)

Garble: ...you get to lure the parents away from the nest.

Spike: *(nervously)* Heh. Lucky me.

Garble: *(shoving him into the open)* Well, go on, then!

(A beat and a half of silence follows.)

Spike: *(calling overhead, waving arms)* Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Phoenix! I was hoping I could have a

word with you? *(They trade a confused little caw.)* Um...I'd, um, like to ask you some questions, actually! *(Garble peeks out.)*

Garble: We haven't got all day, Spike!

(A rock is picked up and dropped into the violet clawed hands; Garble ducks away and Spike hauls back for a throw.)

Spike: *(tauntingly)* Hey, you birdbrains! Come and get me!

(He lets fly on the end of this. Cut to a close-up of the nest's edge; the rock drops nearly inside, a loud bonk is heard, and two annoyed phoenixes sit up. The fresh lump on the male's head tells the tale, and he lets go with a growling caw that spooks Spike into a full retreat. What comes down after him is a pair of fully ignited firebirds whose flaming wings fill the screen as they swoop down after this impudent interloper.)

(After they have gone, the three teens fly up from their bush and hover by the nest. Close-up of a surprised Garble, zooming in.)

Garble: What the—?

(The nest proves to be full, not of eggs, but of five brand-new, happily cheeping hatchlings.)

Purple: The eggs have hatched!

Brown: What do we do now? *(Zoom in to a close-up of Garble.)*

Garble: *(menacingly)* We take the hatchlings, of course.

(All five screech and scatter, leaving him to grab only a handful of air. One pops up behind his shoulder and zips ahead, dodging his straight-arm grab—and then two more emerge out of thin air and perch on that limb. A dual dive through Garble's legs has him snatching at nothing under his tail; next three appear on his head and split up as he tries to slam his jaws closed on them. The sum total of all these contortions is to leave his whole body tied in a knot; he topples onto his back as the five baby firebirds blow a hearty raspberry and bug out. Brown and Purple get him untied.)

Garble: Get 'em!

(The others take off, and he—now back on his feet—gets a running start out of the nest to catch up. His motion causes part of the structure to crumble away and sends an intact egg tumbling over the side. Its shell is a glossy orange and streaked with yellow flames, and it bounces from limb to limb, skims off a spiderweb, and drops from the end of a low branch into some bushes before rolling into the open.)

(Spike, meanwhile, continues his frantic getaway from the two hot-tempered parents. The male comes within an inch of chomping his tail off before the hatchlings' distant shrieks cut in. When Spike trips on a rock and goes face first in the dirt, he looks up to find the pair doubling back

toward the distress call. At the chase scene, Garble and company are hot on the quintet's tails; he tries to munch one down, only to get a huge lick of fire across the kisser instead. This clears to leave his face smudged with soot and no hatchlings in sight; he looks around, groans loudly and charges ahead as one of the adults streaks across his path.)

Garble: GET THEM!!

(Now all seven birds have regrouped and shifted their wings into fourth or eighth or twelfth gear to stay ahead of the marauding dragons. A nasty laugh drifts up to them, and he very nearly snags a couple of incandescent tail feathers in his teeth. The male's counter-move is to turn and face them while hovering backwards, his wings spread to full length; an intense sunburst issues from his body, blinding them so that they run flat into a tree. Cut to a close-up of Garble and tilt down to frame first Brown and then Purple, all having embedded themselves in the trunk. A frustrated growl floats down from the boss; cut to a long shot of all three.)

Garble: They got away! I hate that!

(The tree decides that now is the perfect time to fall over. Cut to a long shot of the fleeing family and tilt down to the scattered twigs and eggshell fragments that mark the remains of the nest. The lone egg rests on the ground; Spike walks up.)

Spike: Huh. What have we got here?

(He picks it up, whereupon the three vandals land facing him, having separated themselves from the timber.)

Spike: What happened?

Garble: They got away! *(surprised)* Hey. *(leaning down to Spike)* You stole an egg?

Spike: Uh...

Garble: Well, I guess the raid wasn't a total waste after all.

(Brown and Purple cheer; he claps Spike on the back, causing him to almost drop the egg.)

Garble: Nice going, Spike. *(Brown leans in close.)*

Brown: Well, what are you waiting for, Spike? Smash it!

Spike: Smash the egg?

Brown: *(laughing)* Yeah!

Purple: Yeah! Throw it on the ground as hard as you can!

(Cut to his perspective, panning across the three as they laugh and start into a chant of "Smash it! Smash it! Smash it!", then back to him. Uncertainty gives way to determination as he raises the egg overhead, ready to dash it against the rocks. The trio falls silent...the green eyes squeeze shut and reopen under a sweaty brow...they leer down at him...he tenses himself for the throw...and then he stares levelly up at them even as tears start to well up in his eyes.)

Spike: *(yanking egg away)* No! It's just a defenseless egg, like I was! And I'm not gonna let you hurt it!

Garble: What did you say?

Spike: I said no!

Garble: *(leaning threateningly over him)* No one says no to me.

(He starts to back Spike up with a snarl; the little guy runs into something green and jeweled, with an eye peeking out through a hole. Pan/tilt up quickly to frame the multicolored back spines and the open mouth of the three mares' disguise. Now, though, the spines and teeth both gleam viciously in the dim light, having been upgraded to rather sterner stuff than the original costume sported. Zoom out quickly to frame the whole thing, which throws off a burst of brilliant light that causes all three teens to yelp softly rethink the idea of attacking Spike, at least for a moment. It is then flung away; on the start of the next line, cut from Garble's crew to the Ponyville contingent. All three ponies have their forelegs up, ready to slug it out; Twilight and Rarity stand on their hind legs, while Rainbow hovers above Spike's head.)

Rainbow: No pony's gonna lay a claw on him! *(Close-up of Twilight.)*

Twilight: That's right! *(Pan to Rarity.)*

Rarity: *(smoothing her mane)* Fighting's not really my thing, I'm more into fashion... *(with sudden ferocity)* ...but I'll rip you to pieces if you touch one scale on his cute little head!

(Bewilderment gives way to a gale of mocking laughter.)

Garble: Ooh, scary! *(chuckling)* Spike, are these namby-pamby ponies your friends?

Spike: Yes! They are! And they're better friends than *you* could ever be! *(walking to Garble, jabbing a finger in his underbelly)* Now, if you don't back off, you'll see what us ponies do when confronted by a huge group of jerky dragons!

Garble: Oh, yeah? *(He snorts smoke into Spike's face.)* What's that? *(Pause.)*

Spike: RUN AWAY!!

(Which he does with enough speed to break every Olympic record ever set, leaving only his frantic, echoing cries and Garble's growl to mark his exit. The mares are quick to catch up, but the dragons waste no time in closing the gap from above. Twilight warms up her horn, a spot of white light appearing on her body and each of her friends', but it quickly fizzles out. As the snarling red dragon bears down on the quartet, she has another go and teleports them all away in one swift flash. The dragons barrel ahead and o.s.; a crash, and they have wedged themselves into another tree, which promptly topples over.)

(Wipe to a clear patch of grassland outside the forest. A second flash goes off at this spot and clears to show the group emerging safely. While the others slow to a stop, Twilight crashes down on her belly and slides ahead as if trying to steal second base. Spike takes a moment to catch his breath; the egg is still unbroken.)

Spike: That was a close one. Thanks, you guys. *(Twilight gets up.)*

Twilight: Of course. What are friends for? *(Close-up of Spike; zoom in slowly.)*

Spike: You're more than friends. *(tearing up)* You're my family.

(Zoom out as all three give him a group hug and Rarity voices a happy little squeal, then dissolve to the sun in a clear blue sky.)

Spike: *(voice over, dictating)* "Dear Princess Celestia..."

(Birds fly across; during the next line, zoom out slowly until the camera has passed through a window of the library. Spike sits here, writing this message in the reading room.)

Spike: *(voice over)* "Seeing the Great Dragon Migration made me wonder what it meant to be a dragon. But now I realize that *who* I am is not the same as *what* I am."

(The zoom continues until the phoenix egg comes into view in the foreground, resting in a cushioned basket on the floor.)

Spike: *(voice over)* "I may have been born a dragon, but Equestria and my pony friends..."

(Cut to a pan across a shelf of framed photos: Twilight as a filly, with the newly hatched Spike; the two in costume and dancing during Nightmare Night in "Luna Eclipsed"; Twilight, Rainbow, and Spike enjoying mugs of the Apple family's cider; a picture of the six mares celebrating Twilight's birthday in Canterlot in "Sweet and Elite," with a scrap pasted in that shows Spike.)

Spike: *(voice over)* "...have taught me how to be kind, loyal, and true. I'm proud to call Ponyville my home, and to have my pony friends as my family." *(Back to him.)* "Yours truly, Spike."

(He looks up from the parchment; cut to the egg, which hatches right on cue. Unlike the other hatchlings and the adult phoenixes, this one is entirely deep yellow, with no orange or red plumage.)

Spike: *(from o.s., affectionately)* Aww... *(He leans down to it and laughs.)* Hey, welcome to the family, Pee-Wee! *(It perches on his hand.)* Stick with me. *(rubbing his cheek against its head)* I've got plenty to teach you about being a pony.

(“Iris out” to black.)