**PRINCESS TWILIGHT SPARKLE—PART ONE**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a stretch of grassland between buildings in Canterlot during the day. Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, Rarity, and Spike stand at the edge of a stream, looking up at the hovering Rainbow Dash. Twilight Sparkle flies erratically into view toward her, and the two gain a bit of altitude as the violet flyer becomes increasingly unnerved at being off the ground.*)

**Rainbow:** You gotta really flap ’em hard.

(*Twilight does so, generating enough of a draft to push Rainbow back a few feet, and goes into a tumble.*)

**Twilight:** Whoa!

(*Momentum carries her o.s.; a thud, and the camera cuts to the tree branch that has most unceremoniously halted her flight. She hangs dazedly over it, a bird’s nest on her head and its former occupant chirping angrily at her. Here comes the blue pegasus as she pulls herself up to sit on the limb.*)

**Rainbow:** Ooh—maybe not quite that hard.

(*Cut to another patch of sky, where Twilight puts forth her best effort at a controlled descent only to have it get away from her in a hurry. She has shed the nest.*)

**Twilight:** Whooooaaaa!

(*This time, the ground gets the honor of stopping her cold; she ends up sprawled woozily on the grass as Applejack trots over to her.*)

**Applejack:** (*helping her up*) Lookin’ good up there, Princess Twilight!

**Twilight:** (*smiling sheepishly; Applejack steps back*) Applejack, you know you don’t have to call me that.

(*On the start of the next line, pan to Fluttershy and Rarity standing nearby.*)

**Rarity:** Why do you protest so? (*stepping a little closer*) You’ve already given up wearing your crown all the time. The least you can do is embrace your new title.

**Twilight:** (*crossing to her*) If other ponies want to address me that way, I suppose it’s fine, but… (*Zoom out to frame the entire group.*) …not my friends. (*Rainbow lands.*) It just doesn’t feel right. (*sighing, spreading wings*) And neither does all this flying business.

(*Cut to a slow pan across the area; ponies are maneuvering balloons and banners to hang on buildings and boughs—of trees, that is.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) The Summer Sun Celebration is only two days away, and I’m never gonna be ready to perform my part. (*Cut to her, Fluttershy, Rainbow, and Rarity.*)

**Rainbow:** Not if you spend all your time down here, you won’t. Now get up there and show everypony the big finish!

(*Twilight nods, having found new resolve, and stretches every feather as far as it will go. Her takeoff is smooth, her rise crisp, and she gets a round of cheers from the ground crowd. In short order she is zooming ahead, the wind singing in her ears.*)

**Twilight:** Woo-hoo! (*Elation turns to sudden panic; she hits the midair brakes.*) Whoooaaa!

(*Too late to avoid smashing through a line of clouds, though. Once she finally comes to a stop, she coughs out a few puffs of water vapor, then—having forgotten to keep flapping—drops like a four-legged rock. Flailing legs/wings and screaming lungs accompany her plummet, which she turns into a swoop just in time to avoid wiping out the rest of the gang. This in turn gives way to the world’s shrillest loop-the-loop, capped by a belly landing and slide through the dirt that leaves Twilight at the bottom of a very deep trench. Cut to just inside it, the camera pointing up toward the sky, as the other mares and the number-one assistant gather around. All are worried save Pinkie, whose excitement comes through loud and clear.*)

**Pinkie:** Wow! That *was* a big finish!

(*Zoom out slightly to frame Twilight, still face down in the topsoil. She voices a weary groan before the view snaps to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: snap to a stained-glass window within Canterlot Castle: a hovering Twilight wearing her tiara. Zoom out to frame the Ponyville seven regarding this work. At the bottom edge are two open books; one has a quill poised over its pages, and is the volume containing the spell by Starswirl the Bearded that she rewrote in “Magical Mystery Cure,” while the other bears her cutie mark.*)

**Rarity:** (*to Twilight*) You look amazing, darling! They’ve really captured your regality.

**Twilight:** I suppose.

**Rarity:** Oh, don’t be so modest. (*Overhead shot, tilting slowly toward the window.*) It’s everypony’s dream to someday wear a crown and have their coronation ceremony preserved in stained glass for all to see. (*Happy little squeak; cut to a skeptical Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** I don’t know if it’s everypony’s dream.

**Pinkie:** Most of my dreams are about frosting.

(*The idea sends her into a brief, blissful shudder with a lick of the chops and a lot of drool.*)

**Fluttershy:** We’d better get going. We don’t want to miss our train.

**Applejack:** Fluttershy’s right. Don’t know about y’all, but I’ve still got bushels to do to get ready. The official Celebration may be here in Canterlot, but hoo-wee! Has the Mayor put us in charge of one heck of a party back home!

(*One hot-off-the-press Princess lets her head droop dejectedly at the prospect of missing it, but Applejack crosses to lift her chin gently.*)

**Applejack:** Aw, don’t look like that, sugar cube. You get to be right there with the other Princesses when Celestia raises the sun.

**Twilight:** And I’m honored. Really I am. It’s just that the Summer Sun Celebration is what first brought us all together. (*The others gather closer.*) It just doesn’t feel right, not getting to spend such a special day with my Ponyville friends.

**Rarity:** It doesn’t feel right to us either, darling. If the Mayor wasn’t so desperate for our assistance, we’d most certainly stay here in Canterlot. (*Cut to Twilight and Applejack; she continues o.s.*) And of course, we do understand that your royal duties must come first.

**Applejack:** (*touching Twilight’s chest*) The Summer Sun Celebration may have brought us together— (*pointing to her own*) —but it’s somethin’ much bigger that’ll always keep us connected.

(*She gestures to another window whose lower half is in view: the six mares using the power of the Elements of Harmony to defeat Nightmare Moon, suspended above them in the purifying energy.*)

**Applejack:** Exhibit A!

(*Close-up of the winged unicorn figure, tilting down slowly.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) The six of us are united by the Elements of Harmony. No amount of royal duties is gonna change that. (*Cut to all but Pinkie.*) Right, everypony?

(*Nods and sounds of assent from Fluttershy/Rainbow/Rarity; Twilight looks off to the side, puzzled, and Applejack follows her gaze.*)

**Applejack:** (*testily*) Right, Pinkie Pie? (*Others look this way; cut to her.*)

**Pinkie:** (*dreamily*) Creamy, creamy frosting…

(*Out comes the tongue to lick at her chops again; this time, Fluttershy zips over with a handkerchief to wipe up the drool as she shudders happily.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*over her shoulder*) You should take that as a yes.

(*Pan to the others, who smile confusedly, then dissolve to a close-up of a train whistle as it sounds off. The next shot is a head-on view of the locomotive, panning to frame the group of seven on the platform at the Canterlot train station during the next line. The engineer glances out the window and back toward them.*)

**Pinkie:** We’re gonna write you and give you so many details, it’ll be like you’re in Ponyville with us! Right, girls?

(*Cut to a close-up of Applejack and Rarity, panning to frame Fluttershy and Rainbow on the following.*)

**Applejack, Fluttershy, Rainbow, Rarity:** Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye.

(*Accompanied by the gestures Pinkie used when she first took this oath in “Green Isn’t Your Color.” The view cuts to Twilight and Spike, then zooms out to frame Rarity crossing to her on the start of the next line. The designer has her reading glasses on and is levitating a notebook, scroll, and set of color swatches.*)

**Rarity:** And you *will* be with us right after the Celebration. (*magically opening book, flipping pages*) We already have an appointment on the books to discuss the royal upgrades to your loft décor. (*She floats the items away; whistle blows.*)

**Engineer:** (*from o.s.*) All aboard for Ponyville!

(*There follows a quick group hug administered by all mares except Pinkie; they then head for the train, after which the party pony rockets into view.*)

**Pinkie:** Whee!

(*She tackles Twilight to the platform for a good long hug and hops back toward the train. The violet bookworm stands up in time to see all five waving goodbye as the wheels start to roll; she turns away, letting her head droop with a heavy sigh. Rarity has put away her glasses.*)

**Twilight:** I can’t help it, Spike. They’ve only been gone a minute, and I already feel like I’m missing something. (*A mail-carrier pegasus stallion flies over to her, pink envelope in hoof.*)

**Mail carrier:** For the Princess.

(*Passing it to Spike, he flies away. The baby dragon pulls out a sheet.*)

**Spike:** (*reading*) “Dear Twilight: You aren’t missing anything. Your friend, Pinkie Pie.” (*The two trade a smile.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s, distant*) THAAAT’S MEEEEEEE!!

(*Surprised by her call, the two look out along the track and see the train chugging away, their friends’ laughter carrying back even at this range. Cut to the platform, zooming out slowly.*)

**Twilight:** (*softly*) But I am. I just know it.

(*Dissolve to a close-up of a checklist held by Spike; he reaches into view with a pencil in his free hand.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s., marking boxes*) Check, check, check…

(*Head-on view of him; the list stretches along the floor, that of a bedroom in the castle. Books are stacked up behind him.*)

**Spike:** (*marking more boxes*) …check, and check! Huh, what do you know? We’re way ahead of schedule. (*Zoom out; Twilight drops to a hover alongside.*) I credit your extremely competent assistant.

(*As her forelegs touch the tiles, she very nearly topples forward but manages to get all four hooves firmly on the ground.*)

**Twilight:** So do I.

**Spike:** The Celebration isn’t until the day after tomorrow. We could still fit in a quick trip to Ponyville and be back in plenty of time to finish off these last few things before the main event.

**Twilight:** (*sighing*) That would be nice, Spike. But what if something else came up while we were gone? (*pacing*) What if we were delayed getting back and I wasn’t able to finish everything on that list? (*increasingly flustered, rising toward ceiling*) What if we lost the list on the way to Ponyville and then couldn’t remember which things we’d done and which things we hadn’t done, and then spent so much time trying to figure out what we hadn’t done and what we had done that we ruined the entire Celebration by not doing the one really important thing that we were supposed to do?!?

(*Her half-unhinged rambling and her unplanned ascent both end when she bangs her head into the ceiling, crashing back to the floor.*)

**Spike:** Uh…so that’s a no, then? (*She gets in his face.*)

**Twilight:** These are the first royal duties Princess Celestia has given me. I can’t risk letting her down!

**Princess Celestia:** (*from o.s.*) And I’m sure you won’t.

(*The violet royal throws a fearful glance back over her shoulder; pan quickly in that direction to the open door, where her longtime teacher just stands calmly and walks in.*)

**Spike:** Your Highness!

(*He bows low in front of her, Twilight doing likewise a moment later.*)

**Celestia:** No need for that now, Princess Twilight.

(*Both raise their faces as she speaks, and she gently lifts Twilight up to full vertical with a knee under the chin.*)

**Twilight:** Sorry.

**Celestia:** (*laughing softly*) No need to apologize.

**Twilight:** Sorry! (*Big placating grin; Spike stands up.*)

**Celestia:** (*walking farther into room*) I must admit that it is wonderful to actually be looking forward to the Summer Sun Celebration. (*Cut to Twilight as she finishes.*)

**Twilight:** What do you mean?

(*Celestia gazes out a window, through which the sky is deepening into evening. Across the way, Princess Luna stands on a tower balcony, using her magic to raise the moon. The white sovereign continues in a tone of regret not heard from her in any of the previous three seasons.*)

**Celestia:** For my subjects, it has always been a celebration of my defeat of Nightmare Moon. But for me… (*Heavy sigh; zoom in slowly on the balcony, putting her o.s.*) …it was just a terrible reminder that I’d had to banish my own sister.

(*A look of concern passes between bibliophile and dragon.*)

**Twilight:** I guess I’d never really thought about it that way. (*Celestia turns from the window and smiles.*)

**Celestia:** But now it has become a wonderful reminder of her transformation back into Princess Luna and our happy reunion. I am so pleased that you will be playing a role the festivities. I know it must have been difficult to see your friends return to Ponyville without you. (*Cut to a close-up of Twilight on the end of this.*)

**Twilight:** Maybe a little. (*Back to Celestia.*)

**Celestia:** You may no longer be my student, Princess Twilight, but I hope you know that I will always be here if you need me… (*She bends down to look Twilight in the eye.*) …just as I hope that you will always be there when I need you.

(*The two Princesses share a comforting nuzzle, which is interrupted when Spike reaches into view and taps Twilight’s shoulder for attention. The sound of his clearing throat snaps her back to the here and now; zoom out to frame both him and the mail carrier from the train station. The pegasus carries an envelope, this one a normal white rather than pink.*)

**Spike:** I think this guy needs you.

**Mail carrier:** (*stammering a bit*) Message for Princess Twilight.

(*The envelope is floated out of his grip; he leaves the bedroom, and she magically tears it open. What emerges is a burst of confetti and streamers, along with the sound of a cheering crowd, both of which instantly lift her mood.*)

**Celestia:** A letter from Ponyville, I presume?

**Twilight:** Never mind. (*She makes the envelope vanish.*) It’s not important. Spike—where were we?

**Spike:** About to call it a night?

**Twilight:** We should probably go over the checklist one more time.

**Spike:** (*grumpily*) I knew you were gonna say that. (*He whips the very long scroll out from behind his back.*)

**Celestia:** (*exiting*) I’ll leave you to it.

(*As the pair begin to study the list, the camera cuts to the solar princess walking placidly along a corridor elsewhere in the castle. At floor level, the gold-shod hooves pass o.s. and the varicolored tail waves after them—and then a black tendril breaks upward through the tiles. It reels out, thickening as foot after foot emerges into the light, and stretches off in the direction she has gone. The view snaps to black in time with Celestia’s shocked gasp and sharp, short cry of fear.*)

(*Fade in to a shot of Twilight sleeping at a desk, seen from outside the bedroom window, and zoom in slowly. She gradually works her way back to approximately full consciousness, rubbing her eyes with a front hoof and straightening up. After a moment’s bleary staring ahead, those eyes pop wide open.*)

**Twilight:** Huh?

(*Cut to Spike, snoring away and sprawled out in an upscale version of his usual basket, his trusty pencil still gripped in one hand.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Spike?

**Spike:** (*poking pencil at air, still asleep*) Check, check, check, check, check, check… (*Zoom out; she now stands alongside.*)

**Twilight:** Spike! (*He sits up, stows the pencil, and stretches with a yawn.*)

**Spike:** What time is it?

**Twilight:** It’s the middle of the night. (*glancing toward window*) But it could be morning. That’s just it! I can’t tell!

(*Cut to their side of the window as they cross to it. The sun and moon are both visible at once, and the sky is split down the middle between the blue of morning and the purple of night.*)

**Spike:** Whoa. That is *weird!* (*Zoom in slowly.*)

**Twilight:** Come on, Spike. We have to find out what’s going on.

(*The zoom ends with the camera passing through the glass entirely, and it then tilts down into a city street below. The very large crowd of locals gathered here is very close to a full panic, judging from the murmurs flying in all directions.*)

**Mare 1:** What do you think it means? (*Twilight and Spike emerge at ground level.*)

**Mare 2:** (*pointing at them*) Princess Twilight will know!

(*They are immediately beset by a throng of ponies and a torrent of anxious questions.*)

**Twilight:** I’m—I’m sure it’s just…well, there’s certainly a logical ex— (*A unicorn guard leans down to her.*)

**Guard 1:** Your Highness, you must come with us.

(*He backs off and she follows. Cut to just inside a doorway of Canterlot Castle; once she and Spike have entered, the unicorn guards on duty magically close the doors. One of them is the guard who just spoke.*)

**Guard 1:** It’s Princess Luna and Princess Celestia. (*He pauses with a grimace.*)

**Guard 2:** They’re gone!

(*Cut to Twilight and Spike and zoom in as they both gasp sharply, then snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Canterlot on its mountainside under the divided sky. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Twilight:** (*voice over*) But I don’t understand. Where are they?

(*Dissolve to the foursome; the zoom continues. They are in the throne room, gathered near the conspicuously empty seat at its head.*)

**Guard 1:** We don’t know. It seems that Princess Celestia and Princess Luna have simply… (*lowering his voice*) …vanished.

**Spike:** Vanished?!? (*He topples over in a faint.*)

**Guard 1:** This is why we have come to you. (*He and Guard 2 bow.*)

**Guard 2:** We await your command.

**Twilight:** (*greatly unnerved*) *My* command?

**Guard 2:** We’re officers of the Royal Guard. We take our orders from royalty. (*Spike sits up.*) With Princess Luna and Princess Celestia gone… (*Guards and Spike stand.*) …and Princess Cadence overseeing the Crystal Empire now, that means we take our orders from you. (*Bow again, dropping o.s.; Spike goes woozy.*) Princess Twilight…

(*The little dragon measures his height on the red carpet again. Zoom in slowly on the violet winged unicorn, whose eyes dart this way and that as if sizing up her chances to bail out in a hurry.*)

**Guard 2:** (*from o.s.*) …there’s no time to waste. We need to know what you want us to do.

(*A moment’s thought delivers inspiration and a shot of courage, and gives Spike enough time to sit up again. She spreads her wings authoritatively.*)

**Twilight:** I want you to continue the search for Princess Luna and Princess Celestia. (*Guards stand up.*) We have to find them before ponies start to panic. (*folding wings*) There must be some clue that can tell us what’s happened to them. (*Cut to the stolid guards; she continues o.s.*) If you find something, anything, let me know immediately.

(*Only after they have saluted and galloped away does she let out the breath she has been holding—and with it goes the stiff upper lip. Spike gets back to vertical.*)

**Spike:** (*nudging her*) Way to take charge, Twilight. (*She smiles at this; now the doors fly open to reveal a third guard.*)

**Guard 3:** Your Highness! (*galloping in*) News from Ponyville! The Everfree Forest appears to be…well…invading!

(*A gasp from Twilight, and this is Spike’s cue to hit the floor for the third time. Wipe to a ground-level close-up of Fluttershy’s hooves, panning to follow them across the floor of her cottage. The view is partly obstructed by the spooked horde of small animals that have gathered inside the structure.*)

**Fluttershy:** Excuse me…oh, oh, pardon me… (*She stops before a squirrel and picks it up.*) Are you all right?

(*It takes cover within her mane; she moves on a bit farther only to find her path blocked by a wall of fur, which turns out to belong to a rather large bear.*)

**Fluttershy:** My goodness! What is it that has caused you all such distress?

(*The ursine behemoth growls a bit, covers one eye with a forepaw, and points off to one side with the other. Cut to just inside the cottage’s closed front door.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*walking into view toward it; the squirrel has left her mane*) Whatever it is, I’m sure it’s nothing you need to really worry about.

(*One yellow hoof reaches up for the handle; cut to just outside as she opens the door for a look. The blue-green irises contract to points, and she uncorks a shrill scream of terror. A quick zoom out reveals the reason: the entire area around her dwelling has been overgrown by thick, black, spiky vines that do not look at all friendly. The new foliage writhes a bit to drive the point home, spooking her into slamming the door shut. Inside, she has put her back against it.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, no, you were right. You should be worried. Very, very worried!

(*Wipe to a ground-level view of a patch of land, where one of these vines is starting to poke through. Granny Smith leans down to catch it in her teeth and pull, but try as she might, the plant will not yield. It eventually snaps back down with enough force to slam her chin into the ground, leaving her dazed for a moment.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Come on, y’all! Put your backs into it!

(*Zoom out quickly on the end of this line to frame a stretch of Sweet Apple Acres, whose crop fields and main barn are being taken over by the encroaching vines. Applejack and Big Macintosh are in fields some distance away from Granny; the orange-tan pony has just as much luck trying to rip up one of the black shoots, while another is ducking to avoid being snapped up by the red one. Elsewhere, Apple Bloom is pulling on one, only to unearth yard after yard without being able to break or uproot it. Macintosh eyes the tendril coming up in front of him.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup. (*Bite; it ducks away.*) Nope. (*Up again.*) Ee-yup. (*Another miss.*) Nope. (*Up.*) Ee-yup. (*Miss; another one pops up behind, smacking his rump and knocking him forward onto his face.*) Nope.

(*Cut to a long shot of the barn; Applejack’s grunts of effort are heard from o.s., and the camera pans to frame her still struggling with a vine. She lets go after a long few seconds.*)

**Applejack:** Dagnabit! We ain’t never seen this kinda trouble with weeds before. (*Bend down; eye one closely.*) Now that I think about it, I’ve never seen these kinds of weeds at all! (*The other three continue their efforts; Macintosh now upright.*) Have y’all?

**Macintosh:** Nope. (*He takes another hit in the rump and almost falls forward again.*)

**Applejack:** Where the heck are these things comin’ from?

(*During this line, zoom out to a long shot of the fields, now thick with thorny black growths. As she continues, tilt up into the sky, which is steadily filling with threatening dark gray clouds studded with thorns of their own.*)

**Applejack:** And what in tarnation is goin’ on with the sky?

(*One of them drifts past the camera; behind its trailing edge, the view wipes to an overhead shot of the Ponyville town square, also badly overgrown. Rainbow swoops past the town hall.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh, no, you don’t! (*Tilt up to follow her rise; she stops and addresses herself o.s.*) This is Ponyville territory.

(*Longer shot; she is talking to one of the hostile clouds.*)

**Rainbow:** And we aren’t due for rain until *after* the Summer Sun Celebration. (*backing up a bit*) You Everfree clouds need to just head on back to where you belong.

(*She charges straight at the offending bit of weather, hits it dead on—and ends up mired in the gray-black murk.*)

**Rainbow:** Whoa!

(*Just as quickly, she falls free of it, managing to pull up out of her plunge just short of the ground and doubling back for another face-off.*)

**Rainbow:** (*menacingly*) Gonna make me do this the hard way, huh?

(*This time, it responds with a lightning bolt that she barely dodges; zoom out to frame several other clouds nearby. The weather wrangler soon finds herself caught in a high-voltage crossfire.*)

**Rainbow:** Whoa…whoa…hey!

(*The glare from one bolt whites out the screen. Fade in to a long shot of the Carousel Boutique, whose surrounding grounds have been thoroughly infested, and zoom in to the sound of Rarity’s humming. The curtains hung inside one window open under her influence to expose her tranquil smile, which turns into a very pensive look once she gazes out.*)

**Rarity:** Hmmm…something strange about the sky.

(*She walks off as the black vines slowly curl up past the window, their tips emitting a pale sparkly aura. Zoom in quickly through the glass to stop in the kitchen, where Rarity approaches the table with a teapot and cup in her telekinetic grip. Just after she sets them down, the sparkles flow into her horn, causing its normal glow to give way to theirs. The teapot is levitated toward the cup and tilted to pour, but the liquid never reaches its mark. Instead, it veers crazily past the rim, describes a jagged loop in front of Rarity’s face, and finally shoots past her. The pot sails after it, and she glances warily around the doorframe and into the showroom—just in time to see the pot spill its contents over a hat parked on a pony mannequin’s head. The bright pink material wilts into a sodden mess as the vessel floats away.*)

**Rarity:** (*walking in*) What in the name of calming chamomile is going on?

(*Her cat Opalescence, doing a bit of grooming, gets both her bow and its tuft of hair thoroughly soaked by a jet of tea; zoom out to frame the pot hovering nearby. She jumps clear to avoid the next burst, aimed at her paws, and runs off with a hiss and angry meow as it gives chase. A mannequin gets bowled over as the pursuit ranges around Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** Opalescence, darling, I’m so sorry! I promise I am not doing this on purpose!

(*Licking a hoof and touching it to her horn, she is able to extinguish the funky enchantment; the crazed teapot falls to the floor and shatters.*)

**Rarity:** It wasn’t me. I swear!

(*Opal growls in her general direction, then stalks off with a feline noise of contempt. Her owner rubs her chin in thought and turns it into sudden indignation.*)

**Rarity:** Ooh, Sweetie Belle! (*addressing the room in general*) If this is some sort of prank you and your little Crusader friends are pulling, I find very little humor in it!

**Sweetie Belle:** (*from o.s.*) Rarity!

(*She comes bouncing down the stairs—upside down on her head, horn sheathed in the same sparkly glow that hitched up her sister’s magic.*)

**Sweetie:** You have to help me! (*now floating*) I think something’s wrong with my horn!

(*It fizzles out; she thumps to the floor, but the magic takes control of a nearby drapery and stretches it toward her. The filly sprints away screaming, prompting a gasp from Rarity as her horn flares up anew; now the fabric pulls loose from its frame and floats after Sweetie. She doubles back toward Rarity, who cries out and starts to flee as well, and the drapery settles down to fill the screen. Fade to black.*)

(*Fade in to a staircase leading to an upper-story entrance of Canterlot Castle. Twilight gallops down, tiara magically in tow and followed by Spike.*)

**Spike:** Where are we going?

**Twilight:** The Everfree Forest is…invading! (*She settles the tiara on her head.*) Whatever is going on, I’m sure we’re going to need our friends and the Elements of Harmony to stop it. I just hope we haven’t missed the train.

**Spike:** (*out of breath*) Uh…Twilight…there is another way for us to get to Ponyville, remember?

**Twilight:** There is?

(*She skids to a stop on a bridge; he slams into her rump, knocking the sense out of himself. As he topples over the side, she instinctively extends a wing for him to grab so he can stay out of the stream below. He is quickly hoisted back onto the bridge.*)

**Spike:** You can fly!

**Twilight:** (*smiling sheepishly*) Oh! Right.

(*She flips him onto her back and lifts off very unevenly, almost tossing him away and accompanied by the sound of an engine struggling to turn over.*)

**Twilight:** Whoa!

(*After her first few flaps, she gets it in gear and begins to fly more smoothly. Dissolve to another area of sky; one of the dark Everfree clouds zooms across, chased by Rainbow, but the situation quickly reverses itself with three of them coming after her and firing off lightning. Tilt down to the town square, where several screaming ponies bug out ahead of the vegetation’s inexorable advance.*)

**Rarity:** (*trotting up, kicking away one vine*) Something very strange is going on, and—

(*The weird magic that brought the drapery after her has faded out. Her protestations are cut off by a sudden gasp as a massive vine erupts in front of her; she gallops up onto the town hall’s porch.*)

**Rarity:** —I for one would appreciate an explanation! (*Rainbow flies down near her.*)

**Rainbow:** (*as clouds/vines move in*) All I know is the sky’s split in two, and these clouds moving in sure aren’t from around here!

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Neither are all these crazy plants!

(*Long shot of the square; she is trying to pull one up, while other ponies scramble every which way.*)

**Applejack:** They’re comin’ from the Everfree Forest! (*A thick vine unrolls near the camera.*) And try as we might, us earth ponies can’t do anythin’ to get rid of ’em!

(*On the end of this, Pinkie slides along the black bends and executes a perfect four-point landing.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Rarity*) Don’t suppose *you* know any magic that might stop ’em from spreadin’?

**Rarity:** (*horn sputtering*) Alas, this whole “raging forest” situation seems to have left my horn on the fritz. (*Pan to frame Fluttershy, hovering nearby, on the start of the next line.*)

**Fluttershy:** We have to figure out something. I don’t know how much more of this Ponyville can take.

(*One hind leg gets snagged; she pulls up as far as she can with a cry, and Rainbow blasts across to kick the snare apart. The camera tilts up to follow the rise.*)

**Fluttershy:** I don’t know how much more *I* can take!

**Applejack:** (*now o.s.*) The forest is expandin’, y’all. (*Cut to these three and Pinkie, who is stomping down one vine.*) And judgin’ by how fast it’s movin’… (*She pins down another one.*) …it doesn’t seem content just takin’ over Ponyville. (*All five look worriedly around the area.*) I reckon before long, it’ll cover half of Equestria!

(*Zoom out slowly past the tangled black brambles to a long shot of the square. A few new coils snake into view, blacking out the screen.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to Twilight in flight. She sails past one Everfree cloud, then dodges another that nearly causes her to spin out; when she rises back into view, Spike has fallen off her back and is clutching her tail for dear life.*)

**Twilight:** Whoooaaa…

(*His cheeks take on a queasy green tint as he regains his seat, but he fights back the urge to lose his lunch and pulls out a seat belt. Looping the ends around her rump and his waist, he buckles himself in place and tightens the slack.*)

**Spike:** (*woozily*) I’m starting to wish we’d taken the train!

**Twilight:** Almost there. Come on, Spike. We need to get the Elements of Harmony and find the others.

(*She goes into a dive, bearing down on the library.*)

**Spike:** INCOMING!!

(*The speed demon’s reckless confidence yields to panic when she realizes that she has no good way to stop in a hurry…*)

**Twilight:** Whooooaaaa!

(*…so she teleports away, leaving Spike to follow her original trajectory toward one of the upper-story windows. Cut to inside the reading room, strewn with stacks of books being perused by five diligent friends; she materializes in a screaming violet tumble and rolls o.s., a thud and scatter of literature marking her landing. Spike arrives a moment later, thumping spreadeagle against the window behind Fluttershy, and she drops her book and turns to look just after he slides down out of view. His boss puts her head out of the scrambled books, badly disoriented by the hit she has taken; the seat belt is gone.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, thank goodness!

**Fluttershy:** Oh, I hope you know we wouldn’t normally go through your books without permission.

(*As Twilight shakes her head clear, the front door opens and Spike crawls in.*)

**Spike:** (*half-delirious*) Sweet ground! (*He kisses the floor repeatedly.*) Sweet, sweet, wonderful ground!

**Twilight:** (*grumpily*) Okay, I get it! (*More kisses.*) I need to work on my flying! (*Pinkie zips over, bumping into Rarity.*)

**Pinkie:** I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but the Everfree Forest is just a teeny tiny bit out of control.

(*Her tail chooses this moment to twitch madly—the “watch for falling items” warning of her Pinkie Sense—and she hits the deck. A thorny vine punches across the room, missing her but plowing Rarity away; pan quickly to the open window where it has barged in. Applejack stands on a stack of books alongside.*)

**Applejack:** (*reaching to sash*) Guess it turned out you were missin’ somethin’ here in Ponyville after all.

(*With some effort, she gets the window closed and cuts off the length inside the building; a dazed Rarity stands up and shakes some sense into herself.*)

**Rarity:** But perhaps *you* already know what’s causing all of this calamity. (*Rainbow flies over, followed by Fluttershy.*) Has Princess Celestia sent you to dispel it post-haste? (*Cut to just behind Rarity; zoom in slowly on Twilight and Spike.*)

**Twilight:** (*with growing unease*) Not exactly. You see, Princess Celestia is…well, she and Princess Luna are both… (*Zoom out quickly.*)

**Spike:** *They’re missing!*

(*Two clawed hands clap over his mouth as he realizes that he has spilled way too many of the beans. The outburst earns a five-way gasp from the rest of the audience.*)

**Twilight:** I don’t know who has taken them, but I’ve got a hunch we’re going to need the Elements of Harmony to get them back.

(*On the second half of this line, she turns her attention to the glass case by one wall that holds the other five Element necklaces—seen in “Magical Mystery Cure”—and levitates its cover away. Cut to Fluttershy and Rainbow as their necklaces are floated over and clasped on.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh, yeah! Just like old times!

(*Rarity gets hers next, smiling fiercely, then Pinkie; Twilight walks over to her pink friend.*)

**Pinkie:** (*high-fiving her*) Ah, boo-yah!

(*Last is Applejack; now the violet Princess steps over to her.*)

**Applejack:** (*touching Twilight’s chest*) I told you we’d always be connected by the Elements. (*Sigh.*) Now we just gotta figure out who to aim these bad boys at— (*A vine inches up behind her.*) —so we can get Celestia and Luna back and keep the rest of Equestria from becoming plant food!

(*One orange-tan hoof pins the unwelcome flora to the floor on the end of this.*)

**Applejack:** Any ideas?

**Twilight:** Hmmm…

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) I haven’t found squat in any of the books I’ve been looking through!

(*Quick pan to her—hunkered down on the boards with a couple of coloring books and a box of crayons.*)

**Pinkie:** Oopsies! Missed a spot.

(*So she grabs a crayon in her teeth and plies it on the offending page. Cut to a window, through which the bizarre sky, weather, and weeds can be seen.*)

**Twilight:** (*standing up into view, gazing out*) Half day, half night…strange weather patterns…out-of-control plants… (*Some of them start to reach toward the group.*) …I think I’m starting to get a pretty good idea of who we’re up against.

(*Wipe to a pan through a street, following her purposeful trotting, and zoom out to frame all six mares moving by hoof and wing. They gather in an open area that is not too badly choked with vines, and Twilight throws her horn into high gear. The energy spreads to her tiara, a brilliant white glow building around its star jewel and throwing off magenta rays, and the gems in the others’ necklaces ignite as well and lift them clear of the ground. Ribbons of rainbow light lace from one to the next in both directions, finally curling around Twilight and connecting to her tiara before swirling across the screen in a varicolored tornado.*)

(*The view clears to reveal Discord sitting in a bathtub under a running shower and scrubbing various bits of his crazy-quilt anatomy with a soapy brush.*)

**Discord:** (*singing*) Winter Wrap Up, Winter Wrap U— (*noticing the six*) —ooh!

(*Throwing the brush away, he conjures up a towel and wraps it around himself with a slightly embarrassed laugh. The shower stops, and he steps out of the tub.*)

**Discord:** Now, Twilight, you know Princess Celestia said that you were to give me a heads-up before you summon me— (*tapping her tiara*) —with that little spell she gave you. (*vanishing tub, drying himself off*) In case you haven’t noticed, I was in the middle of a particularly invigorating shower.

(*On the end of this, cut to Twilight, who reacts with first disgust and then anger at having a length of snaky brown body thrust into her face.*)

**Twilight:** Enough! (*She shoves him away and starts to back him up.*) Release Princess Celestia and Princess Luna, and stop the Everfree Forest from invading!

(*In a blink, she finds herself thoroughly wrapped up in a heavy black vine whose end stops inches in front of her face. The growth transforms into Discord, looking her straight on from point-blank range.*)

**Discord:** (*chuckling innocently*) Why, whatever are you talking about? (*Here comes Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Don’t you play dumb with us, Discord! We know you’re the one behind all of this! (*He slithers away and reappears at roof level behind a house; the towel is now gone.*)

**Discord:** Don’t get me wrong. (*pulling out a camera, taking pictures*) I absolutely *love* what you’ve done with the place. (*He sidles up to Fluttershy; camera gone.*) But I couldn’t possibly take responsibility. I’m reformed. (*nudging her*) Don’t you remember?

(*Down comes an irate Rainbow to get in his face.*)

**Rainbow:** Yeah, right! This has got your cloven hoofprints all over it!  
**Discord:** (*offended*) I’ll have you know that I have only one cloven hoof.

(*The hind leg to which said hoof is attached hops its way up his body, swings itself in an arc, and connects squarely with the blue flyer’s rump. Limb and draconequus both disappear in a flash, then rematerialize in front of the group; he paces away, the leg back in place.*)

**Discord:** (*feigning hurt*) Such accusations. And here I thought we were friends. (*He gives them the big sad soulful eyes; cut to Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** Drop the act, buster! (*Zoom in; she squints his way.*) We’re on to you.

**Discord:** (*from o.s., putting one lion-paw digit to her mouth*) Ladies, ladies! (*Cut to him.*) I’m innocent! Would I lie to you?

**All but Fluttershy:** Yes!

**Fluttershy:** Um, maybe? (*Long pause; Discord hovers just off the ground.*)

**Discord:** Well, then, it seems we’ve reached an impasse. I’m telling the truth, but you think I’m lying. (*Cut to Twilight; zoom out to frame him leaning down to her.*) What do friends like us do in a situation like this… (*poking at her tiara*) …Princess Twilight? *(He throws a forelimb over her shoulders.*) Congrats, by the way, on the promotion. You *totally* deserve it.

(*He pinches and stretches her cheeks on “totally” and scratches her nose, working one of her last good nerves. Zoom out to frame Rarity and Rainbow nearby.*)

**Rainbow:** I say we blast him back to stone! (*Applejack crosses to them.*)

**Applejack:** Works for me.

**Rarity:** Hear, hear!

(*These three warm up their Elements, ready to crank off a bit of petrifying vengeance, but Fluttershy moves to intercept.*)

**Fluttershy:** Hey! We can’t do that! (*Power down.*) What if he really *is* telling the truth?

(*Discord stitches on an ear-to-ear grin, a halo appearing above his head to drive the point home. It disappears as he speaks next.*)

**Discord:** Well, finally! Somepony willing to give me the benefit of the doubt. (*Cut to him, reaching o.s. with one forelimb.*) The rest of you could learn a lot about friendship from my dear friend Shutterfly here.

(*On the end of this, he reels in the limb—wrapped around an irked Rainbow. The yellow pegasus flies up on his other side.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, it’s Fluttershy. (*He throws Rainbow aside and puts the other limb around her shoulders.*)

**Discord:** Oh, right, whatever.

**Twilight:** If you’re not the one responsible, then help us figure out who is!

**Discord:** I suppose I could— (*turning away, crossing forelimbs*) —but after all the hoof-pointing and besmirching of my good name— (*producing knitting needles, stretching out vine*) —I just don’t know if I’m up to it.

(*He passes the time by doing a little crocheting; Twilight voices a loud, frustrated groan that just makes her nemesis’ smirk a bit wider in close-up.*)

**Discord:** Why don’t you ask your zebra friend if she knows anything?

(*Zoom out on the end of this; he has knitted a large arrow pointing off to his left, and the camera pans in that direction to show Zecora trudging into view. She is hitched to a cart piled high with some of her belongings, and the rest are held in a bindle tied around her neck. Twilight smiles hopefully.*)

**Twilight:** Zecora!

(*The six mares gallop over as the zebra drops to her haunches. Fluttershy and Rainbow airlift the bindle away, and Applejack and Pinkie unhitch the cart and roll it back.*)

**Zecora:** From my home I’ve had to flee.

(*standing*) The forest has grown too wild even for me!

(*As she finishes, zoom out to a long shot of the tableau—and the writhing vines that are moving in from the fore. The next cut is to a close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Any idea why all this is happenin’? (*A vine steals her hat; cut to Twilight and Zecora on the start of the following.*)

**Zecora:** I’m afraid it is a mystery to me as well.

But…

(*Zoom out to frame her cart; she crosses to it.*)

I may have something that, if combined with a spell…

(*A bit of rummaging is followed by a close-up of a bottle being set on the ground. Its contents are a vivid purple. Zoom out slowly.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) I do not dare to use it myself. (*now in view*) The results would be tragic.

(*The mares eye it cautiously; Applejack has her hat back on.*)

It only responds to alicorn magic.

(*Two purple eyes flick upward to the tiara resting above their owner’s horn, then back to one spreading wing.*)

**Zecora:** Princess Twilight, you can turn the potion from purple to white.

(*Tilt down slightly to focus on the bottle as she finishes, then cut back to her.*)

**Zecora:** After a sip, you may see why the sky is day and night.

(*On the end of this, zoom out to frame both sun and moon; she gestures to each in turn. The Princess in question drops into a half-crouch with magic boiling around her horn—the same green-rimmed purple aura favored by King Sombra in “The Crystal Empire.” After a long, pained groan of effort, she fires a beam of black energy into the potion and its purple hue fades away as Pinkie leans down for a closer look.*)

**Pinkie:** Ooooh!

(*The other four onlooker mares are stunned beyond words at this display, but Twilight just floats the bottle up to head level. Zecora steps over with a nod and nudges its trailing edge up with her nose, positioning it for the mage to take a long swig. Cut to a pan across the five mares and one zebra, trepidation stenciled across every face except the striped one, then back to Twilight as she stops drinking. A lot of nothing proceeds to happen as she licks her lips.*)

**Twilight:** (*shrugging*) Doesn’t seem to be worki—

(*The lack of action comes to a screeching halt; her wings spread to full extension and her eyes blaze white, the potion bottle dropping to the ground. Zoom in quickly until the screen is filled with the ocular brilliance, then out to frame her in a place that is definitely not that Ponyville street. Two side-by-side flights of steps are visible behind her. She shakes her head and eyes clear, realizing that she is nowhere near home base, and the camera zooms out quickly to frame the new surroundings.*)

(*She is now in a torchlit throne room, and the steps lead up to a pair of thrones, which she is currently facing away from. The end of a banner showing sky and clouds hangs above each—blue on the viewer’s left, yellow on the right, to match the thrones’ colors. They stand on separate daises, connected by a short walkway. In addition, the carpet under Twilight’s hooves depicts a sun nestled within a crescent moon. She looks around herself.*)

**Twilight:** Where am I?

**Luna:** (*emerging from behind blue throne*) Not another step!

(*Her voice reverberates in the stillness. Zoom in to frame her in close-up, putting Twilight out of view. The Princess of the Night is in a foul mood indeed.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Princess Luna! (*Cut to her, approaching the dais.*) I don’t understand. (*Sit on haunches.*) Where are we? Why did you and Celestia disappear?

**Luna:** (*every word soaked in venom*) Did you really expect me to sit idly by while they all basked in your precious light?

**Twilight:** (*puzzled*) “Precious light”? (*Luna steps onto the walkway.*)

**Luna:** There can only be one Princess in Equestria—and that Princess *will be me!*

(*This last word is accompanied by a blaze of white from her eyes and a rear/stomp that pulverizes most of the walkway’s railing. Tilt up along the wall behind her as a jagged crack races up the masonry and shadows stretch toward the ceiling. The fracture reaches a stained-glass window showing a white tree and shatters it, exposing the sun and a patch of blue sky beyond the wall. The uppermost sections of the two banners can now be seen; the blue one—for Luna—displays planets, stars, and a crescent moon, while the yellow—doubtless for Celestia—shows a multitude of suns.*)

(*Twilight cringes before the shower of masonry fragments and can only watch, gobsmacked, as Luna rises slowly off the walkway and raises her forelegs. The moon rises into view outside to eclipse the sun, instantly darkening the sky into night. Rays of black radiance flood into the throne room, catching the dark sovereign off guard when they encircle her. The view blacks out completely in the process, then fades in to a close-up of a sphere of whirling, red-rimmed yellow/gray/white energy that slowly backs away from the camera. A fearful Twilight hunches down a little farther into herself as the core of the ball goes yellow…then totally black…then assumes the appearance of an all-too-familiar blue-violet vapor. This explodes outward to both sides, forming the mane and tail of a winged and horned silhouette that now floats against the red remnant of the energy sphere.*)

(*One eye in the deep blue-black face opens to reveal a blue-green iris and a pupil that contracts to a catlike slit. The edge of a blue helmet is visible around the eye. Next the mouth opens for a scornful laugh, every tooth lengthening and taking on a deadly point, and two armored hooves hit the broken stone of the formerly intact walkway. A wisp of shadow drifts away, exposing the crescent-marked breastplate, and the camera zooms out to frame all of the cackling, exultant Nightmare at last. Cut to Twilight and zoom in as she only stares silently, her wings folding down to her sides as she tries to force her mind to come to grips with the reappearance of the foe who became her first trial by fire.*)

(*Cut to a “To be continued…” title card and snap to black.*)

**Continued in Part Two**