**THE CUTIE MAP—PART ONE**

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Note: All lines marked with one asterisk (\*) are delivered in hushed tones or whispers.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a stretch of road in Ponyville during the day. Ponies are going about their business in no particular hurry here, and the camera zooms in slowly pat them toward Twilight Sparkle’s tree-styled crystal castle—the end result of her battle against Tirek in “Twilight’s Kingdom.” Dissolve to the upper reaches of the throne room inside and tilt down to frame Twilight and her friends entering. Rainbow Dash, as usual, is the only one of the six airborne.*)

(*A close-up of Spike’s small throne, alongside Twilight’s, shows him to be fast asleep, snoring loudly and lying sideways over one armrest. Behind him, Pinkie Pie hops across the room and onto her own seat. Rainbow flies past next, the camera panning to follow her toward her throne. The motion brings Twilight into view, standing pensively alongside, during the following line. As each mare in turn sits down, the copy of her cutie mark set into the upper portion of her throne begins to glow.*)

**Twilight:** Let’s go through this one more time. (*Rainbow sits.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sighing; hoof to face*) We’ve been over it, like, a million times, Twilight! (*standing on cushion*) We found all six keys, defeated Tirek, and got this sweet castle. End of story.

**Twilight:** Yes, but why? (*Cut to Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** (*crossing to her throne, jumping on*) I don’t know, sugar cube. Maybe it’s just your new house, and there ain’t nothin’ more to it than that.

**Rarity:** (*from o.s.*) I must say… (*Cut to her, taking a seat.*) …speaking strictly on aesthetics, there really doesn’t need to be more to it. It’s all simply divine!

**Fluttershy:** (*climbing onto hers, sitting*) I agree with Twilight, and Rarity, and Applejack, and Rainbow Dash, and Pinkie Pie. (*Close-up of the snoozing Spike; she continues o.s.*) Oh, and probably Spike.

(*Twilight paces the gold central circle ringed in by the thrones.*)

**Twilight:** As Princess, I’ve been chosen to spread the magic of friendship across Equestria. So why would the Tree of Harmony want us to sit in a castle in Ponyville? (*hopping onto her throne*) It doesn’t make any sense!

(*The flare of light on her throne’s mark is preceded by a brief flash from the one on her haunch. As all stare worriedly up at the markings set above their heads, the pink star emits a broad, pale violet beam that lances toward the center of the floor. Five more quickly join it from the other thrones, matching their occupants’ coat colors and forming a six-part circle that completely covers the gold of the floor. Low ridges of jagged crystal facets erupt upward from the periphery and trace in toward the center, the light show fading away at the same time. When they intersect, a broad circular table begins to rise and the screen fades to white.*)

(*Fade in to a close-up of Spike as he finally wakes up from his nap with a yawn, now bathed in radiance from this new phenomenon. He sits up, eyes popping wide in alarm; cut to an overhead view of the table and zoom out to frame the entire room. It now displays a remarkably detailed map, glowing gently in shades of pale blue, and all six ponies are staring in utter disbelief.*)

**Spike:** Is that new? I like it.

(*Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to an overhead shot of the map and the group, now all standing on the cushions of their thrones. Zoom out slowly, then cut to tabletop level. Spike begins to walk across, showing the map to be only an image as his feet pass through the small-scale landscape. Each footstep causes that spot to glow briefly.*)

**Spike:** This is incredible! It’s got all of Equestria! (*Pinkie peers at the site of her family’s rock farm.*)

**Pinkie:** Hi, Mom and Dad!

(*One scaly foot comes down right on that spot, causing the big blue eyes to instantly fill with tears. Before the waterworks can start in earnest, though, Twilight’s cutie mark begins to pulse again; Pinkie’s is next, eliciting a giggle, then Fluttershy’s. Images of all six marks float free and up toward the ceiling, creating a formation with Twilight’s mark being orbited by the other five. This drops back to the table, hovering just above the map and cruising slowly through the simulated terrain to stop at the foothills of a mountain range that runs close to the Crystal Empire. Spike finds himself unceremoniously hoisted away by the Princess’s magic. The two pegasi have left their seats for a closer look, and the marks of all six have quieted down again.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*pointing to spots on map*) But…if this is Ponyville, why are our cutie marks over there? (*Spike now stands next to Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** I don’t know, but it seems like the map wants us to find out. The Tree, the chest, this castle, and now the map. How can we not follow it? (*Rainbow flies over to eye the foothills very closely.*)

**Rainbow:** (*smirking*) You know what… (*crossing to Twilight*) …there’s a ton of room for dangerous adventure along that route. Count me in! (*Applejack/Pinkie/Rarity are all off their thrones now.*)

**Applejack:** Ah, shoot. I reckon you’re right.

**Pinkie:** Well, I *was* planning on organizing my baking sheets… (*grinning*) …but okay!

**Rarity:** (*sighing contentedly*) Very well.

(*These last two lean in toward Fluttershy, who soon finds herself hemmed in from behind by Rainbow.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, maybe I’ll just stay here with Spike. (*The daredevil shoots her a dirty look.*)

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

(*Cut to him, now standing on his throne again. He has donned a big foam-rubber hand whose fingers are cut into claw shapes, and on his head is a helmet with a gem-shaped beverage container mounted on either side. Straws run from these down the back and curve around under the ears to reach his mouth. He is, in short, ready for a day at the stadium.*)

**Spike:** Me and Big Mac have a huge weekend ahead of us, talking hoofball and…and trading hoofball cards, and… (*Back to Fluttershy, cringing mightily, and Rainbow; he continues o.s.*) …arguing about hoofball stats…

**Fluttershy:** (*forcing a smile, stammering a bit*) On second thought, maybe I’d better go with them. (*Rainbow smiles.*) In case they need me.

(*Zoom out slightly on the start of the next line to frame Twilight crossing to the pair.*)

**Twilight:** Looks like it’s time for a road trip. (*Exeunt the trio, followed by Applejack.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) Well… (*Back to him.*) …suit yourself. (*walking across table, smirking*) But he’s got a Hock Fetlock rookie card I plan to sweet-talk right into these hot little claws.

(*Dissolve to a stretch of railroad tracks well outside Ponyville. A train rises into view, topping a couple of hills and racing past; next it chugs across a bridge and through a tunnel, emerging to roll directly toward the camera. Snap to black as its headlight and cowcatcher fill the screen, then fade in to a yellow/black-striped barricade standing in a stretch of desert. The steel rails terminate here, bolted to the surface—the end of the line—and the train pulls into view, braking to a halt with almost no room to spare. There is the sound of clopping hooves, and a moment later the train accelerates back the way it came, exposing the six now standing/hovering on the hardpan. Twilight has a scroll open in her magical grip; after a few seconds of studying, she rolls it up and leads the group away.*)

(*Dissolve to a long shot of them crossing a rope/plank bridge strung across a broad ravine, then to a spot just behind them as they approach a cliff. The camera zooms in past them, putting them out of view. Laid out below them, among the desert rock formations, is a village consisting of two neatly aligned, parallel rows of plain-looking houses spaced closely together. A road winds across the plain, running through the two rows, and a single house stands alone at the far end to face the others.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) That’s it! (*Cut to her, Applejack, and Rarity; the unicorn brushes herself off.*) That’s the place on the map!

**Rarity:** (*walking ahead*) Right. Let’s get down there and find the spa.

(*She is promptly intercepted by a teleporting Twilight, and the others catch up—all except for Pinkie—at the edge of the cliff.*)

**Twilight:** Wait. We don’t know why the map sent us here. We shouldn’t just walk right in. It could be dangerous.

**Rainbow:** (*pumping a hoof*) Yes! (*Pinkie zips up and holds her forelegs out to keep them all back.*)

**Pinkie:** Stay behind me, everypony! (*Extreme close-up.*) I’m on it. (*She leans out over the edge.*)

**Applejack:** Careful, Pinkie!

(*To which the goofball responds by letting gravity do its thing. She drops over the cliff as a whirling pink/magenta blur, then almost instantly comes up behind a rock at ground level to take cover. Throwing a quick glance ahead and a hoof gesture behind, she darts across the plain to crouch under three different rocks in sequence and scout the area. The first two are barely large enough to cover her from head to tail, while the third is at least twice her length and three times her height. It takes her only a bit of effort to hoist it up so she can look out; by this time, the others have made it down from the cliff. Another “come on” gesture is interrupted when the rock slams down on top of Pinkie—but as they begin to move, its slow, grating progress across the baked earth indicates that she is alive and well under there. Once it comes to a stop, she puts her head up from behind for a look, followed by all but Fluttershy and Rainbow; these two choose to hover instead. Pinkie is slightly disheveled from her unconventional reconnaissance.*)

(*Cut to just behind Applejack and Pinkie, eyeing the town, and zoom in slowly. The central road is a broad one, and ponies are going about their normal lives.*)

**\* Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) *This* is where the map sent us? Looks like the most boring place in Equestria.

(*Close-up, panning slowly from one side of the road to the other. The locals, grown-ups and foals alike, have three things in common. One, generally muted mane/tail/coat colors. Two, broad toothy grins. Three, the same cutie mark—a gray equals sign—on every visible haunch.*)

**\* Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) That’s just an ordinary village fulla ordinary pony folk. (*Back to the group.*)

**\* Rarity:** It could certainly use a few more architectural flourishes— (*Funny look from Twilight.*) —or *any* architectural flourishes.

**\* Fluttershy:** I think it’s lovely. (*Cut to Pinkie, now cleaned up.*)

**Pinkie:** I don’t like it. (*Zoom in to an extreme close-up.*) I don’t like it one bit. (*The group again.*) I know smiles, and those smiles…

(*Back to the villagers.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s., scoffing*) …they’re just not right.

**\* Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Forget the smiles. (*Zoom in on one stallion’s mark.*) Look at the cutie marks!

(*The camera pans quickly here and there, showing that equals sign on every stallion, mare, and foal, then cuts back to the six out-of-towners.*)

**Rainbow:** (*pointing ahead*) Okay. *That’s* weird.

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to an overhead view of the village, close enough to show that every house along the road is identical in appearance to all the others. On the start of the next line, pan away from the tableau to frame the group still hunkered behind their rock.*)

**\* Twilight:** An entire village with the same cutie mark? How can that be?

**\* Rainbow:** I bet there’s some sort of horrific monster behind it.

**\* Twilight:** What makes you say that?

**\* Rainbow:** ’Cause fighting a horrific monster would be super-awesome!

**\* Applejack:** I reckon we oughta just head into town and talk to some locals—find out what’s goin’ on.

**\* Rainbow:** Great idea, AJ. Let’s go.

(*She zooms ahead, the apple farmer and the winged unicorn following, but Pinkie holds her ground.and her suspicions.*)

**\* Pinkie:** Those smiles are bad news!

(*She slinks down and o.s. Cut to an extreme close-up of Applejack’s tail, which retreats from the camera to frame the village as she and the others walk down its road, then to a pan across the area. Normal speaking volume resumes at this point as one resident after another calls out “Welcome!” Those big grins never waver even a particle.*)

**Fluttershy:** This must be the most pleasant place in Equestria!

(*A pegasus mare, Night Glider, flies up to her. Dark blue-gray coat; straight mane/tail striped in white and pale blue-grays; medium blue eyes.*)

**Night:** Welcome! (*Fluttershy giggles; Rainbow groans, hoof to forehead.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sarcastically*) Thanks a lot, map.

(*Street level. A unicorn stallion, Party Favor, approaches the group. Pale blue-gray coat; short-cut mane/tail striped in two shades of medium blue-gray; light blue eyes. A short cloak of rough, dingy brown cloth is tied around his shoulders with a length of rope.*)

**Party:** Welcome! (*to Twilight*) Pardon my forwardness, but…are you an alicorn? (*Twilight grins hugely; Applejack gestures to her.*)

**Applejack:** That there’s the Princess of Friendship.

**Party:** Well, you’ve certainly come to the right place for friendship.

(*He puts a peculiar inflection on this last word, leaning very slightly closer. Now an earth pony stallion joins the gathering; white coat with the faintest gray tinge; short mane/tail in white and pale gray; darker blue eyes than Party’s. This is Double Diamond, whose tone of voice reeks of forced bonhomie.*)

**Double:** What brings you to town?

**Twilight:** We’re not entirely sure.

**Double:** I see. Well, all are welcome here in our little village. My name is Double Diamond, and this is Party Favor.

**Applejack:** Howdy, Double Diamond. I’m Applejack— (*gesturing to others in turn*) —and this here’s Pinkie Pie, Fluttershy, Rarity, Rainbow Dash, and Twilight Sparkle.

(*Twilight wipes the unease off her face with a big grin, and Double leans in to eye her cutie mark, moving to Pinkie’s during the next line.*)

**Double:** And you all have your own unique cutie marks!

(*The fluffy magenta tail flicks forward to cover the three balloons; he backs away, not noticing the general disquiet his scrutiny has raised.*)

**Twilight:** If you don’t mind, has there been any sort of…trouble here lately?

**Double:** Trouble? Why, I don’t think we’ve ever had trouble in our little village.

**Party:** It’s true. You’ll see.

(*He makes a tiny little noise of satisfaction; now the two begin to lead the visitors along the road.*)

**Double:** Perhaps you’d care to speak to our founder, Starlight Glimmer.

**Fluttershy:** I wish everypony in Equestria was as friendly as these ponies are.

**Pinkie:** (*looking behind herself*) I’ve got my eye on them.

(*Her perspective of the grinning faces.*)

**Pinkie:** Something’s rotten in… (*Back to her.*) …whatever the name of this village is that we’re in right now!

(*The two escorts stop at the door of the single house at the far end of the road; it opens at their knock.*)

**Double:** Starlight? (*They lead the mares in.*) We have some new visitors.

(*Cut to just inside. Nothing remarkable about the construction or furnishings in this area, except for a framed picture of an equals sign hanging crooked on one wall. At the far end of this room are a closed door and a flight of stairs leading to the second story.*)

**\* Rainbow:** (*to Applejack*) Be ready to fight. We don’t know what’s gonna come through that door.

(*Zoom in on said door as they face front. It swings open to reveal Starlight Glimmer, who steps out into the light from the semi-darkness beyond. Unicorn mare; light pinkish-violet coat; bright blue eyes with a faint purple tint; deep purple mane/tail with one streak each of lighter purple and light green. The mane is loosely gathered at the back of her head to form a gently curling wave, the end of her tail showing the same contour, and her bangs are split by her horn so that each side contains both additional colors. Unlike the other residents, her coloration is not muted. Her tone of voice is quite cheerful.*)

**Starlight:** Welcome! I’m so pleased to have you here!

(*This pronouncement briefly robs Rainbow of her power of speech through sheer surprise, but she recovers it with a disgusted groan.*)

**Double:** (*gesturing to each in turn*) This is Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, Rarity, Rainbow Dash… (*Close-up of Twilight; he continues o.s.*) …and Twilight Sparkle.

(*Zoom out slightly; the Princess grins sheepishly as Starlight runs a critical eye over her. The village founder bears the same equals-sign cutie mark as all others here.*)

**Starlight:** Forgive my bluntness, but I’m assuming it’s *Princess* Twilight Sparkle? We don’t get many alicorns around here.

**Twilight:** Yes, but “Twilight” is fine.

**Starlight:** So, how did you hear of our little village?

**Twilight:** It’s kind of a long story. Let’s just say we found it on a map.

**Pinkie:** Technically, it’s a tree-chest-castle map!

(*Her bubbly demeanor instantly shifts to deepest distrust as she pulls her head ever so slowly out of view, but Starlight seems not to notice.*)

**Starlight:** Well, however you found us, we’re happy to have you. We’re happy to have anypony who wants to experience true friendship for the first time.

(*Her last six words are enough to drain the good vibes from the faces of Twilight, Applejack, Fluttershy, and Rarity when the camera cuts back to them.*)

**Applejack:** Say what?

**Starlight:** (*pacing*) Oh, indeed. That’s what’s so unique about our village, you see.

(*Close-up of the crooked picture.*)

**Starlight:** (*from o.s., reaching into view to straighten it*) Around here, we don’t flaunt our special talents— (*Pan to her.*) —because we don’t have any special talents to flaunt.

**Twilight:** Is that why you all have those cutie marks? (*Zoom in to a close-up of Starlight’s as she finishes.*)

**Starlight:** Perhaps it would be easier to understand if I gave you a tour of the village.

***Military drum cadence, stately 4***

***Second bar punctuated by a drum major’s whistle***

***Woodwinds and brass enter on third bar (E flat major)***

(*Cut to just outside the closed front door, which opens to let her out, and zoom out as she emerges onto the road, hooves falling in time to the beat. A couple of others stand nearby.*)

**Starlight:** Heads high, ponies! Marching proud! (*They fall in.*) All together now, every one of you! (*Others follow suit; she addresses a closed door.*) Nopony left behind!

(*It opens; two more join the formation, as does a third from nearby.*)

**Starlight:** Life is so grand in our town

(*She stretches her cheeks into a huge grin.*)

We’re always filled with cheer

(*shading her eyes to look back and forth*)

We never have to look around

To know that we’re all here

(*The locals march a circle around the group, none of whom is at ease anymore.*)

**Ponies:** In our town, in our town

We don’t have to wait

(*Starlight nods her head confidently, keeping the beat.*)

To find out that our destiny

Is just to emulate

**Starlight:** (*marching past a line*) Let’s see those big happy smiles!

(*Face after face complies. Cut to a close-up of two stallions side by side; around their grins, the screen fades to light blue.*)

**Starlight:** Life is a smile in our town

(*The two sets of teeth whirl around each other in a circling blur and resolve into the equals sign.*)

Our cutie marks the same

(*Zoom out. It is the mark of one pony marching in the formation. They stop, pivot, and face forward in a line.*)

Because we do not separate

Ourselves by more than name

(*Rainbow finds a pegasus stallion flying up on either side of her.*)

**Ponies:** In our town, in our town

(*Each lays a hoof on the shoulder nearest to him.*)

We dare not compete

(*Pull her gently down to the ground.*)

Winning only breeds the worst

Ego-filled conceit

(*The flummoxed flyer gets a scare thrown into her when Starlight pops up immediately behind.*)

**Starlight:** You see? Now everypony wins!

***F major***

(*She marches on down the road.*)

**Starlight:** Life is a joy in our town

We’re all equal here

(*She eyes a unicorn mare whose mane hangs free and magically braids it to match the style of the one next to her.*)

No one is superior

And no one shakes in fear

(*The populace processes past the Ponyville contingent.*)

**Ponies:** In our town, in our town

We work as a team

(*Assorted negative reactions from all except Fluttershy.*)

You can’t have a nightmare

If you never dream

(*Pinkie’s scowl is directed just past Fluttershy, but the yellow pegasus misses it as Starlight comes up on her other side and begins to slink behind them.*)

***E flat major***

**Starlight:** Other ponies argue

Do you ever wonder why?

(*She moves toward Twilight and Rarity.*)

When you think your talent’s special

(*running a hoof over Twilight’s horn, pushing her head down*)

You don’t see eye to eye

(*Elsewhere, a line of four mares is dancing, one of them out of step.*)

***Modulate to F major over the next four lines***

**Starlight:** There’s just too many differences

That lead to disarray

(*This one catches sight of the founder and hurriedly corrects her rhythm.*)

But when you learn to act as one

It’s like a holiday

(*Five of the six friends are really having trouble buying any of this now.*)

**Ponies:** In our town, in our town

(*Fluttershy bobs her head blissfully…*)

We don’t complicate

(*…but stops upon getting an eyeful of Pinkie’s squinting glare and head shake. The blue-green eyes go big, sad, and soulful in a twinkling.*)

When you learn to simplify

Life is oh so great

(*Overhead shot; the ponies are describing a large circle around the six.*)

Join in our utopia

Come out of the dark

(*They rearrange into two parallel lines, one to either side of the group.*)

Banded by equality

(*Ground level, zooming out from Starlight and between the two lines.*)

By our cutie mark

(*Several pegasi rise into the air above the display, and two fly ahead carrying the ends of a banner displaying the equals sign.*)

***Song ends***

(*The moment is broken by raucous laughter from the o.s. Rainbow; cut to her in midair.*)

**Rainbow:** You’re kidding, right? Give up our cutie marks? No way!

**Fluttershy:** (*from o.s.*) Rainbow Dash! (*Cut to her on the ground; Rainbow descends to her.*) Don’t be so rude. I don’t think we should judge them. (*smiling*) They all seem perfectly happy with their choice. (*Pan to frame Pinkie on her other side.*)

**Pinkie:** Don’t believe their smiles, Fluttershy. (*Cut to Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*addressing the o.s. Starlight*) I’m sorry, I guess we’re just a little confused by all of this. (*To Starlight.*)

**Starlight:** We have no judgments here in our village. (*The ponies behind her nod.*) Each of us was confused once as well—blinded by the false promise of our cutie marks.

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) Whoa-whoa-whoa. (*Cut to her.*) Is she for real?

(*Now it is Twilight’s turn to shut her down with a hard look. The winged unicorn then faces front with a slightly puzzled smile and steps ahead.*)

**Twilight:** When we were sent to this village, we assumed it was to help in some way. But…well…it doesn’t seem like you need any help.

**Starlight:** (*crossing to her*) Have you considered, perhaps, that you might have been sent here so *we* could help *you?*

(*She taps a hoof to Twilight’s chest on this last word to drive her point home.*)

**Starlight:** (*turning away*) After all, nopony has ever come to our village and wanted to leave. (*Slow pan across the Ponyville six; she continues o.s.*) Why should you be any different? (*Back to her.*) But that is entirely your choice. (*walking past them*) Please, enjoy our little corner of Equestria. We’re all quite fond of it.

(*She stops and aims a knowing glance back at the six.*)

**Starlight:** No doubt you will be as well. Double Diamond, please help our guests with whatever they might need.

(*Cut to the guests on the end of this; Double steps up, his smile in place as ever.*)

**Double:** Of course.

(*They are a bit taken aback by his unrelenting good humor. Pan from them to frame Starlight looking on with perhaps a trace of smugness; she turns away after a moment.*)

**Starlight:** (*to herself*) Well… (*walking off*) …this will certainly provide a boost to our little community. When the rest of Equestria sees that a princess gave up her cutie mark to join us… (*Zoom in slowly to an extreme close-up, the eyes narrowing.*) …they’ll finally understand what we’re trying to accomplish.

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the six walking along the main road. Five ill at ease, one smiling tranquilly as before. Calls of “Welcome” greet them as they pass.*)

**Twilight:** (*to herself*) A cutie mark is a representation of a pony’s unique talents and skills. How is it possible to—

(*Her musings are sharply cut off by a horrified gasp from Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** (*pointing ahead*) What in the name of Equestria is *that?*

(*Pan quickly ahead to a rack of cloaks standing outside one of the houses—all as shoddy and grungy as the one worn by Party. A zoom out frames this rack and a duplicate in front of a building marked by a hanging sign that has been carved and painted to match these garments. The proprietor, a bulky earth pony stallion, stands at the racks and wears one of his own.*)

**Shopkeeper:** Welcome! Care to sample some local fashion? (*flicking his hem*) We’ve got cloaks this month!

(*His toothy grin is met by Rarity’s bulging cheeks and a mighty strain to keep herself from vomiting at the sight of this sartorial incompetence. She finally gets herself under control, letting her tongue hang out and a strangled noise of disgust escape her lips, and slaps on a queasy smile.*)

**Rarity:** Wha—? Oh, uh… (*chuckling, backing away slowly with Twilight*) …perhaps another time, good sir. Thank you.

(*They join the other four at a table outside a building whose muffin-shaped sign suggests a bakery.*)

**\* Rarity:** (*to Applejack*) No wonder nopony’s wearing anything! (*Pan to Fluttershy, on Applejack’s other side.*)

**\* Fluttershy:** (*reprovingly*) Really, girls! They may do things a bit differently than we’re used to, but that’s no reason to be rude.

**\* Rainbow:** No, the reason to be rude is that they all keep staring at us!

(*Cut to her perspective on the end of this, panning slowly across the road. Her rough assessment proves to be an accurate one; every passerby’s eyes are turned toward the gang. Cut to Double at a table outside a different house; nearby is a unicorn mare, Sugar Belle. Light pinkish-gray coat; purplish-gray mane/tail, the former in a bun; deep red-violet eyes; battered white apron tied in place around her midsection with a piece of rope. She holds an order pad in one front hoof.*)

**Double:** (*waving*) Need something?

(*Pan to frame the mares; they are seated directly across the road from these two.*)

**Twilight:** (*forcing a grin*) Uh, no. We’re good. (*to the others*) Fluttershy’s right.

(*Sugar emerges from the bakery and crosses behind them, unnoticed and no longer carrying the pad.*)

**Twilight:** If we’re gonna get to the bottom of why the map sent us here, we’ll need the help of these ponies.

(*This shot frames Sugar’s eyes as red-violet; she ends up standing among them, still not drawing any attention to herself.*)

**Applejack:** I think we ran off to the end of Equestria before we even knew what that map was!

**Pinkie:** If we were at the end of Equestria, we’d be sitting on a big A! (*Giggle.*) Get it?

(*Her wordplay goes over like a lead balloon.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, please, Miss Pie. This is hardly the time for jokes. We’ve come all this way, and for what? (*Sugar walks off, worried…*)

**Twilight:** Maybe you’re right. But we’re here now. And it sure feels like something’s wrong. (*…and ends up between Applejack and Fluttershy.*)

**Applejack:** (*dryly*) That and two bits’ll get you a cup of cider.

**Sugar:** Is this a bad time?

**Fluttershy:** (*not noticing her*) We shouldn’t be bickering like this in front of our new friends. (*icily*) Really, Applejack, you’re almost as bad as Rainbow Dash!

**Rainbow:** Don’t drag me into this!

(*A little way down the block, a stallion and mare put their front hooves over the ears of three foals to keep their little minds untainted by this contention.*)

**Sugar:** (*to Rarity*) Is your friendship ending?

**Pinkie:** Are you crazy? We’d never let a disagreement get in the way of food!

**Sugar:** (*a bit rattled*) Okay, well…my name is Sugar Belle. What can I bring you? (*She levitates her pad up to eye level.*) We have muffins…

(*The inflection on this last word suggests that she is about to begin a list of items, but there are no more words coming—as the mares realize once the silence begins to drag out.*)

**Twilight:** (*smiling uneasily*) Then I guess we’ll take six muffins.

**Pinkie:** (*eagerly*) Make that twelve! (*Funny looks from the other five; Sugar heads off.*) Whaaaaat? I’m hungry!

**\* Twilight:** Come on, girls. We’ve gotta stick together. It doesn’t matter what happened before. We’re here now.

**Applejack:** (*smiling briefly*) Ah, I guess you’re right. And the sooner we figure out why, the sooner we can go home.

(*Order up: a plate piled high with irregularly shaped, thoroughly unappetizing-looking muffins. The curls of vapor rising off their tops are closer in color to smoke than steam, and the overall appearance of this repast is enough to make Applejack think two or three times about biting into them. Sugar has returned to the table and put her pad away.*)

**Sugar:** Forgive me for overhearing, but just a moment ago you were disagreeing, and now it sounds like you’re agreeing.

**Applejack:** (*dryly*) Uh-huh.

**Sugar:** Well, you had such differing opinions—and cutie marks.

**Rarity:** (*airily*) We have differing opinions all the time, darling.

**Sugar:** But you look like you’re friends.

**Twilight:** We *are* friends. A simple disagreement wouldn’t change that.

(*On the end of this line, pan to Double at the table across the street. He is pretending to read a newspaper, but the slip of his grin gives away his intent eavesdropping. Sugar struggles to keep her own composure, throwing him a sidewise glance.*)

**Sugar:** I’m sorry, I’m just having a hard time understanding. (*as if reciting from memory*) Different talents lead to different opinions, which lead to bitterness and misery. (*normal tone*) So, why aren’t you bitter and—

(*On the beginning of the recitation, cut to a slow pan across the table; only Pinkie is having a go at the muffins, but they are clearly not up to her usual standards. Back to Sugar for the final sentence; she stops short when the o.s. pink party pony spits out the one she has been chewing on. At the table, her retch of utter revulsion draws a round of confused/dirty looks—so she gets a great big smile in place across her crumb-speckled cheeks.*)

**Pinkie:** Mmmm! (*Chuckle.*) Good! (*There are bits stuck to her teeth as well.*)

**Sugar:** It’s all right. I know I’m not a very good baker—at least, I’m not any better than anypony else in the village.

(*A glance of barely contained panic over her shoulder, the camera panning to follow; Double is now listening very carefully. High-strung nerves come through loud and clear in her next words. Pinkie’s face is now clean.*)

**Sugar:** Well, I hope you enjoy our little village.

(*As soon as she turns to enter the bakery, Pinkie lets her tongue hang out and begins scrubbing madly at it to remove all traces of the offending pastry residue. She has barely cleaned it all away when Sugar returns to the table, no hint of a smile or fake cheer in evidence.*)

**\* Sugar:** Come inside before you go. Meet me downstairs.

(*Throwing a grin to the hard-faced Double, she whisks inside.*)

**Rainbow:** Okay, that was weird too.

\* **Twilight:** (*floating a muffin up*) Let’s all sit here and eat these muffins and act normal. (*glancing away*) I think we’re being watched.

(*The camera pans quickly from place to place, picking out the fixed grins and wide eyes, then cuts back to a close-up of Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sarcastically*) You think? (*Pan to Twilight on the start of the next line.*)

**\* Twilight:** No, not like that. (*cocking an eye and an ear*) I mean, somepony here doesn’t want us talking to Sugar Belle.

(*A slight flick of her head across the road, and the camera pans to Double at his table, eagerly chomping into a badly made muffin of his own. A round of hard thinking on the mares’ part ends when Applejack is first to speak.*)

**Applejack:** I got an idea—but you gotta eat all of them muffins, Pinkie.

**Pinkie:** (*shocked, hunkering down, pulling mane over face*) Me? Why me?

**\* Applejack:** You got a stronger stomach than any of us. And that filly in there might be our best chance of findin’ out what in the hay is goin’ on around here.

(*Cut to a close-up of the tray, framing the pink mare behind it eyeing the contents as if she has just been asked to gulp down a barrel of toxic waste, and zoom in on it. One dissolve later, there is only a single muffin remaining—and a sweating, green-faced Pinkie slumped so far down that only the table edge under her chin is keeping her from keeling over altogether. One trembling foreleg reaches up to collect this last vile item and stuff it into her mouth.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s., loudly and a bit stilted*) I can’t believe you ate all our muffins, Pinkie Pie! (*Cut to frame the entire table; all but Pinkie grin widely.*) We’d best go inside and get some more!

(*Inside the bakery, the five spectators descend a staircase into shadows.*)

**Twilight:** Nice work, Pinkie!

(*The equine garbage disposal—literally stuffed to bursting—tumbles down after them. Her face has lost its sickly hue.*)

**Pinkie:** (*weakly*) I’ve accidentally eaten cardboard tastier than that! (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Hello? Sugar Belle? (*Zoom out to frame all six; Pinkie has recovered her normal dimensions.*)

**Sugar:** (*from o.s.*) Thank you for coming.

(*She steps out from a dim recess of this basement, eyes desperately at odds with her artificial grin.*)

**Twilight:** Why did you want us to come down here?

**Sugar:** (*eyebrows lowering*) So nopony could see what’s about to happen.

(*Sudden panic takes hold in the Ponyville crew’s minds, fueled by the emergence of Party and then Night from opposite sides. As they and Sugar close in slowly, Twilight tenses herself and prepares a spell—but lets it fizzle out when Party leans toward her, all friendly again.*)

**Party:** Are you really the Princess of Friendship? (*Night does the same.*)

**Night:** Do you know Princess Celestia?

**Sugar:** (*lifting Pinkie’s rump*) I *love* your cutie mark! (*Night hovers next to Fluttershy and Rarity.*)

**Night:** How can you be friends with different cutie marks? (*She lands.*) Don’t you end up hating each other? (*Close-up of Fluttershy.*)

**Sugar:** (*from o.s., reaching to examine her mark*) Oh, look at this one! (*She leans into view.*) This one’s great too! I’d love to have my special talent back, even just for a day. (*sadly*) Make something besides those disgusting muffins.

**Rainbow:** So what’s stopping you? Go get your cutie marks back.

**Party:** Daydreaming is one thing— (*Sugar crosses to him and Night.*) —but you mean…actually having it put back on? (*Night chews her lower lip fearfully.*) That seems extreme. (*A grimace from Rainbow.*)

**Sugar:** I’m not sure Starlight would like that. She wants us all to be happy in our sameness.

**Twilight:** How do you take somepony’s cutie mark, anyway?

**Night:** (*smiling blissfully*) The Cutie Un-Marking is a beautiful experience. Starlight uses the Staff of Sameness to magically take them away and replace them with these.

(*On these last five words, she, Party, and Sugar pivot proudly to display their identical marks.*)

**Twilight:** But…nopony should keep you from your cutie mark. It represents such an essential part of who you are.

**Night:** Oh, we’re not kept from them. They’re in the vault, up in the caves. We can visit them anytime we like— (*Cut to a slow pan across the six, dismayed/irked; she continues o.s.*) —to remind us of the heartache of a life with special talents.

(*The magical prodigy chews this over a few thousand times within a second or so, then smiles shrewdly.*)

**Twilight:** Can we visit this cave?

(*Dissolve to an uphill stretch of a mountain trail. Starlight leads Twilight and company into view.*)

**Starlight:** I’m delighted you’re interested in our cutie mark vault. We hope someday, everypony in Equestria will make a pilgrimage here to our little village, to have theirs removed too, and our message of perfectly equal friendship can finally spread across the land.

(*She passes out of view shortly after the beginning of her second sentence; Rarity throws a suspicious glance back down the trail and finds Double following the group. After this, the camera cuts back to Starlight and remains on her until the second half of the sentence, when it returns to the six. Her last few words fade into the background as Twilight begins to address the others and Rainbow drops out of her hover to walk alongside.*)

**\* Twilight:** This must be the reason we’re here.

**\* Pinkie:** Pilgrimage-ing?

**\* Twilight:** No. (*Close-up.*) Helping those ponies get their cutie marks back.

**\* Fluttershy:** (*from o.s.*) Oh… (*Pan to her.*) …are you sure, Twilight? Maybe they miss them a little, but even they didn’t seem all that unhappy.

**\* Twilight:** Then why did they want to meet us in secret?

(*Pan back from her on this line, putting her o.s.; Rarity again throws a hairy eyeball at the trailing Double. The camera then cuts back to Twilight.*)

**\* Twilight:** And why did they ask us not to tell Starlight who told us about the vault? Something’s not right.

(*Cut to Starlight, who has stopped at the entrance to a cave.*)

**Starlight:** (*waving*) Just through here!

(*In she goes, the others following at a distance; cut to just inside and zoom out to frame her, now stopped and bathed in a bluish radiance from something just ahead o.s.*)

**Starlight:** Behold!

(*Twelve eyes pop in purest surprise, Twilight’s mouth falling open in close-up, and the camera tracks around her in a semicircle to stop behind the group. A zoom out frames the source of the light: a vast grid of square compartments, a cutie mark housed in nearly every one. The entire assembly is held within a vertical frame, mounted at the far end of the cave and topped by a blue-glowing equals sign. In front of this vault is a pedestal, on which a wooden rod is balanced; the upper portion of its length is carved as a thick spiral and splits into two parallel tines, similar to a tuning fork.*)

**Starlight:** Our cutie mark vault!

(*Cut to an extreme close-up of the grid, panning/cutting here and there to clearly display the multitude of pictures that used to adorn various ponies’ haunches. A sheen of reflected light suggests that they are being kept under glass.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s., awestruck*) I’ve never seen anything like it! (*Cut to the pedestal.*)

**Starlight:** (*approaching*) And here is the Staff of Sameness. (*floating it away*) It was one of the great Mage Meadowbrook’s nine enchanted items.

(*Cut to Twilight and Pinkie; the latter gapes at it, but the former gets a thought working.*)

**Starlight:** (*from o.s.*) We are incredibly fortunate to have it here. (*Back to her.*) This is the tool that allows us to free ourselves from our marks. (*smiling cheerfully*) I’m curious. How *did* the subject of the vault come up? (*Cut to Twilight/Applejack/Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, some ponies were telling us how much they missed their cutie marks, and— (*Dirty looks from Twilight and Applejack.*)

**Twilight:** (*sharply*) Pinkie!

**Pinkie:** (*front hooves over mouth*) Oops. (*She hunkers down.*)

**Starlight:** (*from o.s., gasping in fake surprise*) Were they?

(*Cut to her, magically hefting the Staff of Sameness.*)

**Starlight:** (*crossing to group, twirling it*) Well, it seems you inspire all sorts of free thinking… (*sharply*) …don’t you?

**Rarity:** (*chuckling nervously, stammering a bit*) Oh! Well, well, we—we certainly didn’t intend to cause any disruptions to your charming little— (*Starlight leans into her face.*)

**Starlight:** Good. Let’s just make sure of that, shall we?

(*Rarity backs away cautiously during this line, the camera panning to follow her and put Starlight o.s. She remembers Double’s presence only after colliding with him—and he is no longer alone. Ponies begin to advance inexorably from the periphery, every face frozen in a wide-eyed grin.*)

**Twilight:** It’s a trap!

(*As the new arrivals steadily close ranks, she warms up her horn and teleports herself to a point several yards above the cave floor. Before she can crank off another spell, however, Starlight levels the tuning-fork end of the Staff and fires a double beam that nails the airborne Princess square in the gut. Its effect is to quell her battle readiness and leave her “standing” frozen in midair; another bit of concentration from the unicorn, and Twilight’s cutie mark begins to pull away from her haunch. She cries out in pain, sweat trickling down her face…the group of stars detaches, connected to the light violet hide only by a thin wisp of energy…and then this breaks and the mark floats away. Twilight falls silent as it floats down to stop between the Staff’s tines, and Starlight shifts the implement toward herself so she can regard the captured mark with a crazed grin. A flick of the Staff sends it hurtling over the shoulder toward the vault; the glass cover on an empty compartment slides open to receive it, then snaps shut again.*)

(*Twilight’s flank remains blank for only a moment before the gray equals sign fades into view on it. At the same time, her coat/mane/tail colors lose some of their brightness, taking on a subdued appearance similar to those of the other villagers. She thumps insensate to the ground, and Starlight wastes no time in using the Staff against her five friends; they choke back their own cries of torment, and their marks are all too easily separated and locked away. Cut to Fluttershy/Pinkie/Rainbow, being re-marked and with their colors faded and belligerence gone. Back to Starlight on the start of the next line, crossing to the group—all similarly afflicted.*)

**Starlight:** (*mock pity*) Oh, I don’t blame you for what you tried to do here today. (*Twilight stands up.*) You’ve spent your whole lives thinking those marks are a good thing.

**Twilight:** Give them back!

**Starlight:** (*walking away*) Well, now you can spend the rest of your lives here, with us. (*floating Staff onto its pedestal*) And we’ll teach you just how much better life can be without your cutie marks.

(*Cut to a long overhead shot of the assembly and zoom out. The extra goons have formed a double line to hem the six mares in on left and right, and Starlight and the pedestal stand at the end of this tableau that is closer to the vault. The camera rotates 90 degrees during the zoom to frame the two lines horizontally; at the same time, the white bars of an equals sign superimpose themselves on these and the screen fades to black behind them. Snap briefly to black, fade in to a “To be continued…” title card, and fade to black.*)

**Continued in Part Two**