**CELESTIAL ADVICE**

**Written by Joanna Lewis, Kristine Songco**

**Produced by Devon Cody**

**Story editing by Joanna Lewis, Kristine Songco**

**Supervising direction by Jim Miller**

**Directed by Denny Lu, Tim Stuby**

**Transcribed by Alan Back (**[**ajback@yahoo.com**](mailto:ajback@yahoo.com)**)**

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a door within the Castle of Friendship. Spike reaches into view and knocks, and a burst of magic turns the knob to swing the door inward. Starlight Glimmer puts her head out into the corridor.*)

**Starlight:** Hey, Spike. (*stepping out*) What’s up?

**Spike:** Just, uh, wanted to make sure you’re ready for your big ceremony today.

**Starlight:** Yep.

(*The next shot frames the area beyond as her bedroom, within which Twilight Sparkle teleports into view for a glance around, unnoticed by Starlight.*)

**Starlight:** Oh, I still can’t believe my friends and I are getting medals of honor.

**Twilight:** (*under end of previous, almost inaudible*) Shhh!

**Spike:** (*to Starlight*) Are you kidding? You totally deserve it! After all, you saved Equestria from…

(*Looking past her shoulder, he trails off and lets his eyes contract to panicked points. A second later he resumes with slightly forced gusto.*)

**Spike:** …Queen Chrysalis—with the help of Trixie and Thorax and Discord, and—

(*Cut to Starlight on the end of this; now Twilight is plying a levitated tape measure against a spot on the far wall.*)

**Starlight:** (*a bit confused*) Uh, yeah, I know what happened. I was kinda there.

**Spike:** Uh, right. (*Pause.*) Uh… so what are you wearing? (*Big grin.*)

(*Behind Starlight, Twilight has brought out a quill and scroll to take notes as she keeps measuring.*)

**Starlight:** Not sure. Why? Am I supposed to dress up?

**Spike:** (*hastily*) No! (*calmer*) I-I mean, you could. It’s like Rarity always says.

(*A quick rub of one palm along his head spines turns them into a decent approximation of the white unicorn’s curls.*)

**Spike:** (*imitating Rarity*) “There’s no such thing as overdressed, darling. You’re just the best-looking pony in the room.”

(*He reverts to his normal voice with a weak chuckle and throat-clearing and lets his spines snap back. A sudden tilt of his head to one side raises Starlight’s suspicions.*)

**Starlight:** What are you looking at? (*She starts to turn her head; he yanks it back.*)

**Spike:** No! Don’t look!

(*Twilight throws him an all-clear signal and vanishes along with her tools; zoom out to frame the entire doorway as Starlight shoots Spike a nasty look. He releases his hold and backs off while she rubs her chin.*)

**Spike:** (*thinking fast*) ’Cause there was a spider there, but it’s, uh, gone now. So, uh… (*hastily*) …thanks, Starlight. Bye! (*He peels out.*)

**Starlight:** (*to herself*) Huh?

(*Walking back into the room, she lets her magic shut the door behind her. Cut to Twilight in her own bedchamber, pacing the floor with quill and scroll floating in her grip. A telescope stands on a tripod at one window, and hanging over a bookcase is a mirror with several photographs affixed to its edges. The doors swing open to admit Spike, who voices a smug chuckle.*)

**Spike:** She had no idea. (*lounging against a wall*) We’re a good team, Sparkle.

**Twilight:** “Sparkle”? (*laughing, tucking quill/scroll away*) Yeah, we are. So, do you think she’ll like it? I want this present to say, “I’m so proud of you, both as a mentor and a friend. Equestria is safer thanks to you.” (*Close-up of Spike.*)

**Spike:** Oh. I thought you were getting her a mirror, like yours.

(*He points in its direction as he says this, and the camera then pans/tilts up to frame it. The photos depict her with various combinations of friends past and present, as do a couple of framed ones on top of the bookcase. Twilight steps into view, regards her reflection, and turns happily to him.*)

**Twilight:** I am!

**Spike:** Uh, maybe you should get her a card, ’cause I don’t think the mirror will say all that. But I think she’ll like it.

**Twilight:** It’s just what her room needs. (*Cut to it; her reflection appears.*) The first thing she’ll see when she wakes up is herself surrounded by all her friends. (*Zoom out slightly to frame her; she turns toward Spike.*) I plan on giving it to her after the ceremony.

**Spike:** Yeah, about that. Don’t you need to get the Castle ready for the celebration?

**Twilight:** Nah. Pinkie Pie’s got that covered.

(*Wipe to a very large and noticeably empty meeting hall elsewhere in the Castle. Pinkie Pie hops into view and runs her eyes over the space.*)

**Pinkie:** Hmm.

(*Reaching up past the top edge of the screen, she pulls one front hoof back down into view with the end of a rope now looped around it. One tug drops tables onto the floor, vases of flowers onto these, and releases a torrent of confetti, which clears to expose a few more instant party preparations. Namely: balloons and garlands lining the walls, a stage at the far end with a small pedestal, and a banner above the lot that depicts a pink heart in a gold setting with a backdrop of a curling white ribbon.*)

**Pinkie:** (*wiping forehead*) Phew!

(*She tranquilly exits the scene as the view fades to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the same meeting hall, now packed with ponies—and a few changelings—from one side to the other. Twilight stands on the stage with Princesses Celestia and Luna, as well as the four who effected Queen Chrysalis’s downfall in “To Where and Back Again”: Starlight, Trixie, Discord, and Thorax. Trixie is wearing her starry hat and cape. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Twilight:** Starlight, Trixie, Thorax, and Discord were brave in the face of danger, resourceful when things got challenging— (*Slow pan across the front row; she continues o.s.*) —and proved that the bonds of friendship, no matter how unlikely, are stronger than any adversity.

(*Back to the stage. This shot is close enough to pick out a small cushion resting on the pedestal and four items nestled on it.*)

**Twilight:** By stopping Queen Chrysalis, not only did they save Equestria, they set the changelings free from her reign.

(*The front row again, in close-up. A flash of light splits the air behind them, and the camera tilts up to follow their gazes and frame Discord standing amid the throng, with a “We’re #1” foam-finger hand on his lion paw and a pennant decorated with his own eyes and horn/antler held in his talons. He is wearing a blue athletic jersey and a two-tone fuzzy hat in this same color, complete with the mismatched growths.*)

**Discord:** Go, Discord! Yahoo!

(*The trickster trails off into exuberant laughter as he waves the hand and pennant; up onstage, Starlight stifles a giggle as Trixie rolls her eyes disgustedly. Twilight, meanwhile, narrows her eyes at him but quickly shifts into a slightly ingratiating grin once Celestia steps forward alongside her.*)

**Celestia:** And that’s why we’re proud and honored to give them the Equestrian Pink Hearts of Courage.

(*Close-up of the pedestal on the end of this; one gold-shod front hoof gestures to it. The items on the pillow are medals, each with a pink heart-shaped jewel in a gold setting backed with a pair of wings. Cheers erupt as Luna’s magic lifts them clear and sends them toward the quartet, Discord now back among them and with his fan gear stripped off. All four bow, Trixie’s aura sweeping her hat off her head. The two unicorns’ medals settle around their necks in short order, but Discord makes the job of receiving his own a bit easier by simply popping his head off and then reattaching it once the medal is in place. Thorax poses quite a bit more of a challenge due to the length and curvature of his new antlers, and Luna strains a bit to stretch the ribbon far enough to get past them. Cut to Pinkie, Rarity, and Spike at one table. The general mood shifts from jubilation to tension during the next line.*)

**Pinkie:** Yeah!…Oh…uh…no…

(*A panicked little squeal; cut to Luna, still fighting to make it past the great bend.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) …not quite… (*A nervous little shudder; back to the table. Now she smiles.*) …all right, there it is… (*Pop into place.*) …yaaay!

(*The Princess of the Night has finally managed to bring Thorax’s medal down onto his neck without breaking the ribbon. She is a bit surprised to see Celestia step up and regard him with a proud look.*)

**Twilight:** We are so proud of you all.

(*Trixie has her hat back on by this point. More cheers as she and Starlight regard their new decorations and trade warm grins. Cut to Twilight and Celestia side by side and zoom in slowly on the former for a moment, then dissolve to a close-up of a record being raised and spun in the air on an off-white hoof. A zoom out shows it in the grip of DJ P0N-3, who quickly slaps it down on her turntables and starts a pulsing dance beat. Attendees dance and talk among themselves as the camera pans across the hall, stopping on Trixie as she regales Double Diamond, Night Glider, and Sugar Belle; Starlight and Thorax are talking nearby.*)

**Trixie:** (*full ham mode*) It was the Great and Powerful Trixie’s pleasure— (*Close-up.*) —to save you from your imminent doom. (*Discord’s head/neck materialize to peek over her shoulder.*)

**Discord:** (*teasingly, poking her in the nose*) Yes, because you did it all by yourself.

(*Pan to Starlight and Thorax. She giggles and Sunburst joins them, as do two changelings. The first to speak will later be identified as Cornicle.*)

**Sunburst:** I can’t believe you managed to do it without magic.

**Cornicle:** It was amazing!

**Changeling 1:** No one’s ever stood up to Chrysalis like that! (*Zoom out across the hall.*)

**Starlight:** Oh, I just did what anypony would’ve done. (*Deprecating laugh.*)

(*Twilight catches sight of her on the end of this, and the camera shifts to a close-up of her warmly smiling countenance. Zoom out slightly on the start of the next line, Celestia crossing to her.*)

**Celestia:** It’s a wonderful feeling, isn’t it? Watching your student shine the way you always knew they could.

**Twilight:** (*laughing*) My cheeks are sore! I don’t think I’ve ever smiled this much in my life!

**Celestia:** (*knowingly*) I can only imagine what that feels like.

(*She steps away with a wink; an instant later, Discord pops up out of nowhere and coils around Twilight’s midsection.*)

**Discord:** Yes, Starlight is student of the year, isn’t she? She has so much potential. (*throwing lion-paw forelimb around her shoulders*) So what are we going to do with her? And by “we,” I definitely mean “you.”

(*He pokes her nose with a talon on this last word.*)

**Discord:** Being her mentor and all that, her destiny falls squarely on your haunches.

(*She extricates himself from the coils of his body by teleporting a few feet away; now he stands up on his hind limbs.*)

**Twilight:** Oh, don’t you worry. I’ve planned enough friendship lessons to cover the next three years. (*Hearty laughter from him.*) What’s so funny?

(*It takes a few seconds for him to compose himself.*)

**Discord:** Clearly Starlight is beyond basic friendship lessons. (*pulling his medal briefly out to full length*) She just won a medal, for Equestria’s sake! I thought you were joking. (*smiling, but serious*) You are joking, right?

**Twilight:** (*laughing lamely*) Of course I was. (*He straightens up.*)

**Discord:** Obviously *you* should have a grand master plan for her, the same way Celestia set *you* on a path that eventually made *you* a princess.

(*He gestures toward her to emphasize each “you” and pulls her wings out to full extension as he finishes to hammer the point home. Her response is to stitch on a big shaky grin and start sweating more than she really ought.*)

**Twilight:** Yep.

**Discord:** Oh, good! I’m sure she can’t wait to hear all about it.

(*With a rub of his talons and lion paw, he winks out; in his absence, the violet sovereign utters a scared little moan and adds a shiver on top of her overactive perspiration. Cut to Starlight and Thorax crossing the hall. When he speaks, his voice is exactly the same as it was before his transformation.*)

**Starlight:** So, how’s the whole “ruling a kingdom” thing going?

**Thorax:** It’s a bit…overwhelming, but we’re adjusting.

(*They stop at a table at which Applejack, Rarity, and the two earlier changelings—now slightly confused—have congregated.*)

**Changeling 1:** So…you can’t have friendship without makeovers? (*Rarity grins and nods.*)

**Applejack:** Uh…not—not exactly.

[*Error: #1 speaks in Cornicle’s voice from the previous scene.*]

(*Starlight and Thorax tack on the most reassuring grins they can muster up.*)

**Discord:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, Starlight… (*Zoom out slowly; he stands next to her. The music stops.*) …Princess Twilight has something very important to tell us… (*briefly twisting his head upside down*) …well, just you, really—

(*As he continues, he pulls out a set of Groucho Marx joke glasses and puts them on.*)

**Discord:** —but I’m nosy and I want to hear.

**Starlight:** Okay. (*to Thorax*) Would you excuse me?

(*He lifts her bodily off the floor as she says this, and she has barely finished before they disappear in a flash. The glasses go flying and settle themselves on Thorax’s face; a moment later the two short-hoppers rematerialize next to Twilight as she speaks with a stallion.*)

**Starlight:** (*dryly*) Never mind. (*Discord sets her down; the stallion leaves and she smiles.*) What’s going on?

**Discord:** (*coiling behind Twilight, pushing her forward*) Well, Twilight was just about to reveal her grand master plan—for you!

**Starlight:** Really? I was kind of wondering what we were gonna do next.

**Discord:** Yes, I’d say we were both fairly interested. (*He tosses Twilight a sly grin.*)

**Twilight:** (*trying to sound casual*) Of course you are, and I do have a plan, obviously. (*She floats a cup of punch off a passing waiter’s tray.*) But now’s clearly not the time to do it. You should enjoy your party.

(*As she averts her eyes and takes a sip, the camera cuts back to Starlight and Discord.*)

**Trixie:** (*from o.s.*) Starlight, come on! (*Zoom out to frame her.*) The *Ponyville Chronicle* wants to take our picture!

(*Only after a bit of nervous-excited trotting in place does she notice the draconequus, letting her face fall with a groan.*)

**Trixie:** You too, Discord.

(*As all three head off to find the photographer, the camera pans to frame Twilight still drinking her punch. She lets go with a relieved sigh an instant before a flash of light within the cup deposits a bite-sized Discord within it, throwing her off guard all over again.*)

**Discord:** Psst!

(*Close-up; he has donned a shower cap and is taking a bath in the beverage.*)

**Discord:** I see what you’re doing.

**Twilight:** You do?

**Discord:** You already planned the perfect moment during the party to make the grand announcement to everypony about your plan.

(*Reaching down into the cup, he comes up with a drain stopper on a chain and the soapy punch begins to empty out as if from a bathtub. A split second later he has returned to full size, decked out in a gold-trimmed blue tailcoat, blue top hat, and white shirt with dark gray vest and bow tie. This is the first moment since receiving his medal that he is no longer wearing it.*)

**Discord:** (*clapping*) *Brava*, Twilight! (*Twilight magically sets her cup on a table.*) I can’t wait to tell Fluttershy and the others. (*Vanish.*)

**Twilight:** Discord, no!

(*She jitters her hooves madly in place for a second before magically yanking a door open and galloping through it. Elsewhere in the hall, Spike eyes a plateful of muffins hungrily and licks his chops at the prospect of free baked goods. Just as he is about to chomp into one, the sound of the slamming door yanks his attention away. Cut to another set of closed doors, which open to admit him.*)

**Spike:** Twilight, are you reading during a party—again?

(*Now he is thrown off by the sound of rustling paper; zoom out on the start of the next line to show both him and Twilight in the library. She is half-buried in a mass of opened scrolls and is frantically running her eyes over one after another.*)

**Twilight:** (*tossing one aside*) No, no, no, she’s already good at that! (*Again.*) She mastered this! (*reading a third*) She taught *me* about this one!

**Spike:** (*dryly, crossing to her*) Wild guess. Something’s wrong.

**Twilight:** Spike, I’m a terrible mentor. (*throwing scroll aside*) Why didn’t I come up with a path for Starlight? Princess Celestia had it all figured out for me!

(*She straightens up with a gasp and smile.*)

**Twilight:** That’s it!

(*Her next move is to bound out of the library with a slightly crazed giggle, dragging the end of one ridiculously long parchment across the floor in the process. The other end wraps around Spike’s midsection and tows him along.*)

**Spike:** Whoa!

(*Dissolve to an overhead shot of the throne room, whose central table is set with its magical map, and zoom in slowly. Twilight paces the floor across from her and Spike’s thrones, the camera angle framing only their backs. However, Celestia’s mane waves past the armrest of the larger to mark her presence on it, and Spike can be seen in the smaller. The resident Princess has brought the pile of scrolls with her and is floating one at eye level.*)

**Twilight:** I had years’ worth of friendship lessons ready to go. But when we were captured by Chrysalis, Starlight took charge and really stepped up. (*Close-up; she nibbles her bottom lip and turns the scroll to show Celestia.*) I don’t think friendship lessons are enough for her anymore.

**Celestia:** So you have an overachieving student. Sounds familiar. (*Spike snickers; Twilight drops the scroll.*)

**Twilight:** That’s why I had to talk to you. You of all ponies would know what to do. I mean, you were me and I was Starlight. But for now, I need you to pretend you’re you and I’m me.

**Spike:** Huh?

**Celestia:** (*chuckling gently*) Go on.

**Twilight:** When I was your student and you were in this place, you… (*softly, suddenly horrified*) …oh, no.

(*The good humor fades from the solar mare’s face, replaced by a downcast expression. Cut to Twilight and zoom in slowly.*)

**Twilight:** You sent me to Ponyville…which means it’s time for me to send Starlight Glimmer away!

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** I can’t believe it! It really is time for Starlight to go, isn’t it?

**Celestia:** (*crossing to her*) Only you can make that decision. It’s a difficult one— (*smiling, touching Twilight’s chest*) —but your heart knows what’s right, even as it hurts.

**Spike:** Where are you gonna send her?

(*The query sends a fresh jolt of sheer undiluted panic through every last neuron in Twilight’s brain.*)

**Spike:** (*sheepishly*) Heh…too soon?

**Twilight:** (*sadly*) No. This is something I have to do.

(*Crossing to the map table, she rests her front hooves on its edge and looks from side to side.*)

**Twilight:** Oh, boy.

(*Cut to a close-up of a very cheerful Fluttershy in the meeting hall.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, boy!

(*Cut to just behind her and the rest of Twilight’s friends, gathered behind a table and facing one window. Discord has contorted his body to fit within its frame, and has done away with his Act One formalwear and put his medal back on.*)

**Discord:** Whatever Twilight’s planning for Starlight is going to be *so* exciting.

**Applejack:** Hmm…wonder why she didn’t tell any of us about it.

**Discord:** Probably because you’re not as close as you think you are.

(*Concerned looks pass among the five mares before he chuckles richly and makes a throwaway gesture with his taloned forelimb.*)

**Discord:** Just kidding. She wanted it to be a big surprise. (*leaning to them*) Just between us, she’s getting ready to make a big announcement! (*Grin; Pinkie squeals out her delight, touching her nose to Rarity’s in close-up.*)

**Pinkie:** That’s so exciting—and surprising. Usually you tell your party planner about all your plans for your party.

**Rainbow Dash:** (*from o.s.*) Well, she definitely has one. (*Pan/tilt up to her, hovering over the table.*) I mean, when has Twilight *not* had a plan?

(*No response from the others. Wipe to an overhead shot of the throne room and zoom in slowly on Twilight, Celestia, and Spike on the far side of the map table.*)

**Twilight:** (*quickly, whispering to herself*) Ooh, gosh, I don’t know, I just don’t want to send her to the wrong place, ooh…

(*Close-up; she sighs and puts a hoof to her temple, resting the other one on the edge. After a bit more sotto-voce mumbling, she pulls in a happy gasp.*)

**Twilight:** I got it! (*Race over to Celestia; Spike follows at a leisurely pace.*) Since defeating Chrysalis, Starlight’s given the changelings an opportunity to revolutionize their society. Maybe I can send her there.

(*She casts a spell that sends hexagonal waves of energy radiating out around the three; the effect is to change their backdrop to a stretch of craggy hardscrabble. All three have become translucent, palely tinted, glowing monochrome figures—violet for Twilight, gray for Celestia, green for Spike. As they look around themselves, a changeling touches down next to Spike and trots clean through him without encountering resistance or taking any notice of his cheery wave.*)

**Spike:** (*to Twilight*) Cool spell!

**Twilight:** If Starlight goes to the changeling hive, she can help them adjust to their new way of life.

(*Across the way, Starlight and Thorax stand facing a small group. Zoom in slowly on them.*)

**Starlight:** Okay! Friendship 101. (*Close-up.*) Thorax and I are going to show you how to compromise.

(*The next two lines are delivered in a stilted fashion, as if being read from cue cards.*)

**Thorax:** I want to have honeysuckle nectar for lunch.

**Starlight:** I would like a sandwich. (*distressed*) Oh, no. What should we do?

**Changeling 2:** (*fiercely*) Attack! The winner gets to choose!

(*Sounds of assent from the audience, which throw the two presenters for a loop.*)

**Starlight:** Or…Thorax and I can talk about it and come up with a solution that works for everypony.

**Thorax:** (*stilted*) Starlight, how do you feel about honeysuckle and peanut butter sandwiches?

**Starlight:** (*ditto*) Why, that sounds delicious!

**Starlight, Thorax:** (*normal tone*) Compromise!

(*They shake hooves and the audience members talk among themselves as the camera zooms in on the three spectral eavesdroppers.*)

**Spike:** Uh, this doesn’t seem like something Starlight and Thorax would do.

**Celestia:** Uh, this is Twilight’s fantasy, Spike. There is no wrong way to fantasize.

(*So this is all a “what-if” scenario that Twilight has conjured up.*)

**Twilight:** (*smugly*) Thank you.

**Changeling 2:** Starlight Glimmer is a most apt and perspicacious pony.

**Spike:** (*irked*) Yep. Definitely a Twilight fantasy.

**Celestia:** This seems like a lovely path for Starlight. The changelings have so much to learn about how to enjoy love through friendships. Starlight would be busy for a very long time, but her work there would be very rewarding.

(*A smile steals over the violet mare’s face, but disappears all too soon as a fresh worry takes hold. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Twilight:** Or dangerous. It would only take one changeling to deviate from the pack.

(*She pivots to find Starlight approaching a clutch of eggs tucked into a niche in the rocky ground. These are levitated into the open and carried off as she trots away; behind her, a changeling peeks up from a ridge, eyeing her with bad intent, and assumes her form in a wash of magic. “She” hurries away, cackling nastily as she passes the trio, and stops to address three changelings, one of whom is Cornicle.*)

**Fake Starlight:** Hi! I’m Starlight Glimmer. What’s your name?

**Cornicle:** Uh…Cornicle?

**Fake Starlight:** (*laughing loudly*) What kind of name is that? (*pulling another’s wings with her magic*) Oh, your wings are so, um… (*peering through one*) …see-through. I’m *so* glad I’m a pony. (*Chuckle.*) Are you, like, bugs or what?

[*Error: Similar to the voice mistake in Act One, Cornicle speaks with the voice of Changeling 1 in both this line and his next one.*]

(*To their very great consternation, she conjures up a giant flyswatter and uses it to smack two of them down at once. She hurries around a corner and out of sight just before the real Starlight walks up, just in time for the two assault victims to regain their senses and Cornicle to gasp.*)

**Cornicle:** There she is! (*Cut to her; he continues o.s.*) Get her!

(*She grimaces in terror and peels out, chased by all three. The waves of Twilight’s spell flare over the scene to return her, Celestia, and Spike to the throne room and restore their normal appearance.*)

**Spike:** Uh, that probably won’t happen.

**Twilight:** But it could! (*pacing a bit*) I can’t just send her off to Celestia knows where without thinking it through!

**Celestia:** Hm. (*smiling*) I was not aware that I was an expression. An appropriate one, of course, for even I don’t know the answer. (*pacing to Twilight*) This is a momentous decision. (*touching her chest*) You must consider all the possibilities.

**Twilight:** (*tapping her own temple*) Rethink, rethink, rethink! (*Back to the map.*) What about the dragons? (*turning to Celestia, Spike*) I can send Starlight to the Dragon Lands! She and Ember would totally hit it off.

(*Ember, recall, succeeded her father Torch as Dragon Lord in “Gauntlet of Fire,” with an assist from Spike. Twilight casts her “what-if” spell again, transporting the three ghostly selves to the stony expanse of the Dragon Lands; zoom out to frame the giant, throne-like formation on which Torch held court. It has been festooned with pennants and enormous red gems, and a blue banner depicting a gout of fire hangs from the front edge of the seat. As dragons wing their way back and forth, the camera cuts to a close-up of Ember, sitting impassively on a ledge and regarding the goings-on. Starlight teleports in several yards away; when she speaks next, her voice carries a distinct surfer tone.*)

**Starlight:** Ember!

(*Who promptly hops down and crosses to her, speaking in like manner.*)

**Ember:** Starlight!

(*One front hoof and one clawed hand seize hold of each other, and their owners do a quick bit of arm wrestling before jumping up to bump chests with a grunting shout.*)

**Ember:** You ready to do some death-defying dragon stuff?

**Starlight:** (*laughing*) Totally!

(*A moment later, the three travelers are alone again.*)

**Spike:** Okay, that doesn’t sound anything like Ember *or* Starlight.

**Twilight:** Who knows what their dynamic would be, Spike?

(*Cut to a vaguely pony-shaped collection of small stacked rocks, which become gravel when a gout of flame hits them. A longer shot picks out several dragons at a firing line, with five more such arrangements placed at various distances—a target range. Starlight and Ember are now among them, the three travelers watching from the sidelines. A purple one takes a turn, then Ember, and Starlight outdoes them by wiping out the last three with a beam from her horn. A scaly fist and a front hoof bump together in extreme close-up, creating a flash of light that clears to give a close-up of one very puzzled baby dragon. He gasps sharply upon looking down, and a longer shot reveals that he, Twilight, and Celestia are now hovering in midair amid thick gray clouds. He clutches at his boss for support, but works up the nerve to pat the “ground” under his feet, generating a couple of hollowly reverberating thuds. Finding it solid enough for his liking, he climbs down.*)

**Spike:** Freaky. (*Dragons fly past.*)

**Twilight:** Starlight will love it in the Dragon Lands! In her letters, Ember said dragons do a lot of fun things. The Feast of Fire, the Dragon Bowl, Claw-chella…

(*She is cut off by a whooping laugh from Starlight, now riding a saddle strapped to a massive broad back. Cut to her mount, Torch, as he flaps mightily through the aerial traffic.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Starlight could be there for a really long time! (*Back to the three; she becomes concerned.*) But then again, not all dragons like ponies as much as Ember does.

(*Tilt down quickly to a cliff on which Garble and his delinquent buddies from “Dragon Quest” have gathered. Starlight and Ember stroll up to the bunch as they start doing high dives.*)

**Garble:** Hey, Twinkle Star!

**Starlight:** It’s, uh, Starlight Glimmer.

**Garble:** (*confused*) Star….kle…Lightstar?

**Starlight:** (*enunciating very carefully*) Starlight Glimmer.

**Garble:** Yeah, whatever. (*throwing an arm around her shoulders*) You want to hang with us?

(*Not waiting for a response, he charges toward the edge of the cliff with her in tow and the pair hurtle into empty space.*)

**Starlight:** What are we diving into?

**Garble:** Lava!

**Starlight:** *What?!?*

(*Cut to a pool of the hot stuff at the base of the cliff, in which several of the other ne’er-do-wells are taking a dip. As Starlight and Garble plummet toward certain doom for one of them, the view zooms out quickly to become a reflection playing in Twilight’s terrified eye.*)

**Spike:** Twilight, this is crazy!

(*She dispels her enchantment to return him, herself, and Celestia to the throne room.*)

**Spike:** Starlight’s really good with magic. She could just stop herself from falling into a pit of lava.

**Twilight:** What if she didn’t realize it was happening?!? You just never know, Spike! (*turning to map*) I just need to think of someplace safe to send her. (*to herself*) Someplace safe, someplace safe, someplace safe…

(*The tiny representation of the Crystal Castle gives her an idea.*)

**Twilight:** I could send her to the Crystal Empire to continue her magical studies with Sunburst!

(*A clatter of hooves, and she is back with the others to cast her spell again. This time, it deposits them in the Crystal Castle’s immense library, and a zoom out and turn of Celestia’s head frame the bespectacled unicorn in question at a table on the bottom floor. As Twilight continues, the incorporeal voyagers turn for a better look from the top of the nearest staircase and Starlight can be seen at the table as well, safety goggles strapped on as she floats a full test tube over a flask of liquid. A second flask stands at Sunburst’s end, and a sawed-off log section rests vertically between them. He leafs through one of two floating books as the camera zooms in slowly; others are stacked nearby on the floor.*)

**Twilight:** It’ll be perfect! Sunburst’s knowledge of magic is only matched by Starlight’s abilities. (*Starlight pours the tube’s contents into her flask; Sunburst checks the second book in close-up.*)

**Sunburst:** I’ve got it! Try placing your horn directly on the potion, and picture the clock you wish to make.

(*His research assistant pours her entire flask over the wood, touches the end of her horn to the purple liquid, and closes her eyes. A split-second spark of light consumes it and subsides to reveal a well-crafted cuckoo clock in its place. As soon as the hands advance to 2:00, a little replica of Flurry Heart pops out from the hatch above the face to announce the hour. On the start of the next line, pan/tilt up to Twilight, Celestia, and Spike.*)

**Twilight:** They could challenge each other into becoming the most talented unicorns Equestria’s ever seen! (*The table again; Starlight’s goggles are propped on her forehead.*)

**Starlight:** We did it! Quick! What’s next? (*Sunburst checks a book.*)

**Twilight:** (*increasingly worked up*) Of course, the study of magic is a lifelong pursuit, and Starlight could be there for a while, especially once they start attempting the really complicated stuff.

(*The two unicorns trot past, book in tow, as she says this; from here, cut to a rather bored Spike.*)

**Spike:** (*counting down on finger*s) Three…two…one… (*Zoom out to frame all three on the following.*)

**Twilight:** What if they become too ambitious?

(*Wipe to just outside a window of Sunburst’s house and zoom in slowly. He and Starlight are inside, poring over an array of documents, as Twilight and company look on. Starlight has removed her goggles altogether.*)

**Starlight:** I never would have thought to combine Starswirl’s apparition spell with Spatium Flexibus. (*Close-up; she flips pages.*) But…what would happen if we added Somnambula’s Tempus Objectus?

**Sunburst:** If we do it just right, it should allow us to materialize an object that was lost in the past.

(*His field brings up a piece of chalk and lowers it to start sketching on the floor. Two concentric circles are quickly drawn, one slightly smaller than the other, as both sets of hooves step up and Twilight cringes in mute horror. Cut to an overhead shot of the drawing and zoom out slowly; it now consists of an intricate combination of circles, triangles, and runes, and Sunburst completes a five-pointed star at the center to finish it up.*)

**Twilight:** (*softly*) No! Don’t do it!

(*Her warning unheard and unheeded, the investigators kick-start their horns. The chalk lines between them fade to deep blue and become infused with a lighter glow—and then a dead black aperture opens at the center of it all and begins to generate an intense suction. Each screams in turn as books, scrolls, and every single one of Sunburst’s material possessions go down the hole, and Starlight ends up being yanked in after them. Cut to just below the surface.*)

**Twilight, Sunburst:** Starlight! (*reaching in futilely after her*) NOOOOO!!

(*The room again. Now it is Sunburst’s turn to get dragged in, and the job finishes with the entire room simply winking out of existence to leave Twilight, Celestia, and Spike standing against a black field. Tears gather in the young Princess’s spectral eyes and run freely down her cheeks.*)

**Spike:** Twilight, snap out of it!

(*She breaks the spell, but the tears are still there.*)

**Spike:** Easy, Twilight. (*She wipes her face.*) It didn’t happen.

**Twilight:** But it could! (*pacing, in close-up*) I just don’t think I can send her anywhere. What am I gonna do?

(*She freezes in her tracks at what, for her, must surely be the last sound she expected to hear at this moment: a peal of laughter from Celestia. Cut to her, rearing up and loving every second of this, then back to a slow zoom in on an utterly gobsmacked Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Are you laughing at me?

(*She grimaces a bit before the view snaps to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to an overhead shot of Twilight, Celestia, and Spike. Zoom in slowly as Celestia continues to laugh herself silly, then cut to a close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** I can’t believe you’re laughing at me. (*The laughter finally stops.*)

**Celestia:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, Twilight, I’m not.

(*She lifts Twilight’s chin gently; cut to frame both.*)

**Celestia:** I’m laughing because I had the exact same fears you’re having.

**Twilight:** *What?!?* (*Celestia sits down on her haunches.*)

**Celestia:** Let me tell you a story. (*Twilight does likewise; Spike hurries to join her.*) Once upon a time, there was a very bright young filly.

(*A wavering dissolve shifts the action to a classroom; she paces behind the front desk as seven unicorn fillies in safety goggles conduct science experiments. Six of them are in pairs—Minuette and Twinkleshine, Lemon Hearts and Moondancer, Lyra Heartstrings and Ruby Pinch—while Twilight’s younger self works alone. This flashback is set during her days at Celestia’s School for Gifted Unicorns.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) She was one of my best students.

(*Close-up of the book in which Filly TS has her nose buried.*)

**Spike:** (*voice over*) Are you talking about Twilight? (*Book down.*) I can’t see what you’re thinking about. (*Filly TS telekinetically mixes reagents.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over, sighing a bit*) Yes, Spike.

(*The last drop causes a flower-shaped burst of blue/yellow smoke to issue from her flask. Filly MI and Filly TW get a small bloom to sprout from their flowerpot, as do Filly LH and Filly MD, the latter jotting some quick notes. Now Celestia glances off in Filly TS’s direction.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) I was constantly surprised and impressed with her discoveries.

(*During this line, the camera cuts back to the young bookworm, who adds a drop of mixture to her pot and is met with the emergence of a large, glowing, blue/green bit of flora that stands even taller than she does. Celestia grins proudly, then shifts her eyes to the rest of the room; cut to the area and pan slowly across. The other six students are laughing and chattering over their successes.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) But I noticed that her pursuit of academia was preventing her from reaching her full potential.

(*The monster flower lifts a leaf to give Filly TS a high five, and she goes back to her reading.*)

**Spike:** (*voice over*) You mean it was keeping her isolated and alone?

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) Uh…yes, Spike. (*She looks toward Twilight with evident concern.*) I had a decision to make.

(*As the regal face turns away, the camera pans in that direction to put it out of frame. The view toward which she turns becomes a long overhead shot of Canterlot proper under the setting sun; she stands on a ridge overlooking it.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) Oh, but it wasn’t easy.

**Celestia:** (*on screen, as the sky slowly darkens*) Maybe I could close the library, or throw a party in the castle. Oh, she’d have to talk to the other fillies then. (*Face falls; she glances skyward.*) Oh…

(*Cut to a close-up of the moon, which at this point still bears the crater-pocked likeness of Nightmare Moon, and zoom out to frame Celestia gazing ruefully at it with tears gathering in her eyes.*)

**Celestia:** I must send her away.

(*Dissolve to the pennant flying atop the Ponyville town hall during the day and tilt down to ground level. The camera zooms out at the same time to frame more of the town square; Celestia and Mayor Mare are here for a talk, and the rest of Twilight’s future friends except for Pinkie cross the square. All are grown, indicating that the action has jumped ahead some years.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) I knew there was a special group of fillies in Ponyville— (*Pinkie hops in; all five head off together.*) —but I kept inventing all kinds of reasons why I shouldn’t send you.

(*Cut to a close-up of Celestia’s uneasy countenance on the end of this, hoof to mouth in heavy thought, then dissolve to her pacing the floor in her throne room. Two guards are on duty here.*)

**Celestia:** (*gasping*) What if she runs into a manticore? Or what if she gets pulled into Tartarus? Or worst of all, what if she doesn’t get along with anypony? (*She chews a front hoof fearfully.*)

**Guard 1:** (*aside, to Guard 2*) Are we supposed to say something?

**Guard 2:** (*ditto*) I don’t think so.

(*Dissolve to Twilight and Spike leaving Canterlot by pegasus-drawn chariot—the start of their trip to Ponyville in “Mare in the Moon.” On the next line, zoom out to show Celestia staring after the vehicle.*)

**Celestia:** (*voice over*) I kept you in Canterlot longer than I should have.

(*She turns away, letting a tear dribble down one white cheek, and a wavering dissolve brings the scene back to the present time.*)

**Celestia:** Eventually I realized all the anxiety I felt was because *I* didn’t want you to go.

**Twilight:** (*smiling*) Really?

**Celestia:** (*standing*) I loved having you as a student. You challenged me and taught me just as much as I taught you. I am embarrassed to admit it, but I was afraid if you made friends, you wouldn’t need me anymore.

(*Now it is Twilight’s turn to tear up.*)

**Twilight:** (*standing*) Princess Celestia, that is so not true. (*Spike gets up.*) I will always need you. (*She wipes her eyes.*)

**Celestia:** I think Starlight Glimmer might feel the same way about you—

(*A gentle poke in the chest emphasizes the claim.*)

**Celestia:** —if that is what you’re afraid of.

**Twilight:** Maybe it is, just a little.

**Spike:** (*chuckling*) Oh, it definitely is. Like, a lot. (*Twilight aims a hairy eyeball at him.*)

**Celestia:** Here we are after all these years, Twilight. (*touching her chest again*) We are living proof that letting someone spread their wings doesn’t mean you no longer have a place in their lives.

(*She suits the action to the word on this second sentence by unfurling her wings and using one of them to scoop Twilight and Spike in for a sideways hug. Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Thank you. (*Pan/tilt up to Celestia.*)

**Celestia:** And if you’re still worried… (*stifling a giggle*) …you can always make her write you letters.

(*She tacks on a knowing wink, bringing a snicker from Spike. Dissolve to the meeting hall, where the party is still in full swing; all quiet down, though, when Twilight’s magic envelops the doors and opens them so she can enter. Floating alongside her is a large, flat gift box, which she maneuvers away from herself just before an unexpected spotlight beam picks her out. As she shields her eyes from the glare, a microphone is lowered into view on the end of a long pole, whumping her in the head. A longer shot frames her on the stage, Discord working the equipment and holding the pole, and a movie camera set up to catch all the action. He has removed his medal and changed into a white T-shirt, red jacket, and blue cap, and he wears a set of headphones connected to the mic. Twilight narrows her eyes at the inept operator.*)

**Discord:** I may have let it slip that you’d be unveiling your big plan for Starlight tonight. Silly me. (*tossing mic aside*) But we’re all very excited to hear what you’ve cooked up. (*Big squeaky grin.*)

(*Cut to a slow pan across the room from stage level, framing the expectant crowd and Twilight staring at them all like a deer caught in headlights. She ducks fearfully behind Discord to get out of their line of sight.*)

**Discord:** You weren’t coming up with a plan just now, were you? Oh, dear. This could be pretty embarrassing for you. (*Slightly mischievous grin; close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*sourly*) Gee, thanks, Discord. (*Zoom out to frame him.*)

**Discord:** Anytime. (*patting her hoof*) I really do love being helpful.

(*He and all his gear vanish in a blink, and she levitates an unused spoon and glass off a table. Tapping the former against the latter for attention, she addresses the crowd.*)

**Twilight:** If I could have everypony’s attention? (*gesturing to Starlight; slow pan*) As you all know, Starlight Glimmer’s been my pupil for a while now, and I’d hoped she’d be my pupil for a long time yet to come. But it turns out that’s just not meant to be.

(*Cut to Starlight, Sunburst, and Trixie, their shocked gasps joining with those of all the others.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Starlight… (*Back to Twilight.*) …you have proved yourself to be a kind, loyal, strong, honest, and truly magical friend. (*Pan across the room; she continues o.s.*) Just looking around this room at all the new friendships you’ve made, I know there’s nothing more I need to teach you. (*Stop on her, looking at a perturbed Starlight.*) So we have a second reason to celebrate today. Three cheers for Starlight Glimmer on her graduation day!

(*That catches the unicorn student upside the head; meanwhile, the crowd goes wild and Pinkie lets go with an ecstatic squeal, knocking her front hooves together.*)

**Pinkie:** What a great surprise! (*The blue eyes go big and brim with joyful tears.*)

**Twilight:** (*to Starlight*) Your future’s in your own hooves now. (*Close-up of Starlight.*)

**Starlight:** Wow. I was not expecting this.

(*Zoom out; Trixie and Thorax stand to either side, and they are quick to sandwich her in a hug as Sunburst gives her a gentle smile. Back to Twilight.*)

**Discord:** (*from o.s.*) Darn it.

(*He leans into view, having ditched his work clothes and put his medal on again.*)

**Discord:** I was hoping you’d send her to my realm. We could’ve been roomies. Way to not pick up what I was putting down.

(*The only response he gets is a sidewise eye roll before Twilight walks away.*)

**Trixie:** (*to Starlight*) How do you want to celebrate? Girls’ trip to Las Pegasus?

**Thorax:** We can throw you a changeling gorb-fest! (*Starlight cringes a bit.*) Uh, it’s more fun than it sounds.

(*He manages a shaky grin; Starlight responds with a much broader one before a lion-paw digit taps her shoulder. She turns to face Discord.*)

**Discord:** Or we could go cause a little mischief. I know a trick that’ll turn Celestia’s castle into cheese. Do you think it’s a Gouda idea? (*Laugh.*) That’s just the first of many cheese jokes, if we go down this path.

**Starlight:** (*laughing*) That all sounds wonderful. But, um, give me a minute, would you?

(*She mounts the stage, where Twilight, Celestia, Luna, and Spike are enjoying themselves, and Twilight turns to her.*)

**Twilight:** Congratulations.

**Starlight:** Thanks.

**Twilight:** So, how do you feel?

**Starlight:** Happy, surprised, overwhelmed… (*Weak chuckle.*) …I mean, not that I’m not grateful, but…are you sure?

(*Twilight looks to the other three for support and finds what she needs in their six eyes.*)

**Twilight:** Believe me, I’ve thought long and hard about this.

**Starlight:** Of course you did.

**Twilight:** Starlight, trust me. You’re ready.

**Starlight:** (*forcing a smile*) Yeah. (*She paces away, then returns deflated.*) No, I’m not.

**Twilight:** What are you talking about?

**Starlight:** (*loudly*) I’m not ready to leave! (*Twilight grins and hugs her.*)

**Twilight:** Oh, good! ’Cause I’m not ready for that, either. Here. (*She floats the gift box over.*) I got you this present.

(*Snap to black, which resolves into the interior of the box as the lid is lifted away so Starlight can get an eyeful of the contents. She stares popeyed for a moment, then lets her mouth curve into an ear-to-ear smile while her magic lifts something to block out the entire screen. From here, snap to an extreme close-up of a photo tucked into the edge of a mirror frame, then move slowly around the perimeter to frame others during the next line. They show Starlight with various combinations of the friends she has made in Ponyville.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) It was going to be a “congrats on getting a medal of honor” present, but then I was afraid it would have to be a going-away present, but now it’s an “I couldn’t be happier you’re staying” present!

(*Zoom out to frame the whole thing as she catches her breath. The mirror is styled identically to the one seen in Twilight’s room during the prologue, and Starlight’s puzzled reflection appears in the center portion of the glass. A wobbly smile comes over the pinkish-violet face.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) It fits perfectly over your dresser! (*Cut to them both; Starlight floats the mirror aside as her eyes water up.*) I know. I measured.

**Starlight:** (*softly*) Thank you.

**Twilight:** I may not know what comes next for you, but whatever it is— (*Starlight dries her eyes; Twilight touches a hoof to her chest.*) —I promise I’ll always be there for you. (*They embrace.*)

**Starlight:** Ooooh…

**Twilight:** Ohhh…

(*The royal sisters nod their quiet affirmation of the lessons that both have learned, and the buzz of conversation resumes as the camera zooms out from the stage. Fade to black.*)

(*Snap to the hall, now empty of guests and littered with trash and dirty dishes—the party is over. Pinkie hops into view, takes a good look at the mess, and comes up with a brainstorm. She disappears back the way she came in a pink blur; after a moment, she rolls an upright canister-style vacuum cleaner into view. It has a smiling face painted on one side, and the hose is attached at the point where the nose would be. Pinkie switches the rig on, causing the hose to flail all over the hall and suck up absolutely everything—junk, balloons, tables, banners, the works—with the exception of the stage. Within seconds, the place is as spotless as it was when she set up the party in the prologue. However, the vacuum is so overstuffed that it looks as if it may burst at any moment, and the face’s cheeks have swelled to ludicrous proportions.*)

**Pinkie:** (*wiping forehead*) Phee-yew!

(*Snap to black.*)