**ROCK SOLID FRIENDSHIP**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to the campus of a college or university whose main building is constructed entirely from stone, with the exception of the windowpanes, doors, and thatched roof. The ground cannot qualify as a lawn, since there is hardly any vegetation on the sandy soil—a match for the rocky, arid landscape that stretches away into the distance. It is daytime, and a stage has been set up here. On it are two figures in academic mortarboards and gowns: an elderly, white-maned stallion at a lectern and microphone, and Pinkie Pie’s older sister Maud sitting in a chair. Two rows of seats have been set up in front, but the only occupants are the other members of the Pie family, namely Pinkie, her other sisters Limestone and Marble, and their parents Igneous Rock and Cloudy Quartz. Zoom in slowly, then cut to the speaker during the next line. Dark tan earth pony, glasses balanced on nose, white dress shirt and dark gray necktie, stole across shoulders, gold trim on robe collar, mortarboard styled as a slab of rock. Both his words and Maud’s are amplified by the microphone.*)

**Speaker:** So in closing, earning a rocktorate in rock studies from the Equestrian Institute of Rockology is no easy feat. I’m proud of each and every one of you. (*suddenly puzzled, glancing toward Maud*) Uh…each of…no…just you, actually.

(*Longer shot, framing Maud dressed in the same fashion. The newly minted graduate blinks impassively, and the camera cuts to a pan across the row of spectators and stops on Pinkie. A tiny chair is partly in view on the seat next to her.*)

**Pinkie:** (*waving pennants with her own cutie mark*) Go, Maud! Woo-hoo! (*chanting, pulling out “#1” foam-finger hand*) Number one! Number one!

(*Limestone reacts with a scowl, Marble with a fearful cringe.*)

**Speaker:** Fillies and gentle-colts…

(*He stares dumbfounded past the lectern; cut to the audience and zoom in on the tiny chair, showing that it is indeed occupied by Maud's pet rock Boulder.*)

**Speaker:** (*from o.s.*) …and is that magnesium-rich basalt? (*Maud waves to it; back to him.*) It is my honor to present our vale-rock-torian, Maud Pie—excuse me, *Dr.* Pie.

(*Limestone and Marble trade a glance, deciding that now is the time to show their pride with a smile—but they are swiftly interrupted by the pink goofball popping up between their seats with an ecstatic gasp. She has done away with her fan gear.*)

**Pinkie:** (*grabbing them both*) Dr. Pie! Dr. Pie! (*slyly*) Rocktor Pie?

(*The pun does nothing to ease either sister’s shaken nerves. Pan to Cloudy and Igneous, the former dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief and the latter patting her shoulder, then cut back to the stage. The speaker steps aside to make room for Maud, whose throat-clearing generates a squeal of feedback through the lectern’s microphone. All the spectators hastily cover their ears except for Igneous, who just lets his eyes pop; she waits to continue until the noise has subsided.*)

**Maud:** I’m Maud. (*Pinkie stands up.*)

**Pinkie:** Yeah, you are! Brilliant speech! (*chanting*) Encore! Encore!

**Maud:** There’s more, Pinkie. (*starting again*) I’m Maud. (*She shifts to the next index card in her notes.*) Pie. Thank you.

(*She steps down and accepts a diploma from the speaker—engraved, appropriately enough, on a flat sheet of stone. He smiles toward the camera as a flash fills the screen, accompanied by a shutter click, but she remains deadpan as ever. The view clears to frame Igneous as the picture-taker, having used a “bellows” camera.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) You are so welcome! (*Longer shot behind the seats, framing all.*) Brilliant speech! (*chanting*) Encore! Encore! Encore!

(*Leaning over her armrest, she gives a high five to Boulder. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a train rolling through the countryside. Pinkie’s long, drawn-out, giddy squeal is heard right along with the engine’s chuffing, and continues as the camera cuts to within one car and she cartwheels down the aisle. The rest of the passengers cover their ears and glare at her until one final leap carries her to land on the seat next to Maud, who has changed back into her usual dress and is tucking Boulder into her collar. The younger sister’s next move is to grab said collar and whirl the older sister so that they end up nose to nose.*)

**Pinkie:** You’re moving to Ponyville! We’ll live together and get bunk beds and I’ll make us fuzzy slippers that say “Best Sister Friends Forever.” Although I probably can’t fit all those words on a slipper, so maybe just “BSFF.” But we don’t have to decide right now, because we’ll be together all the time since when it comes to Ponyville, the doctor is in!

(*She punctuates this gusher of verbiage with a bit of rear-hoof wiggling on the slipper description, then ends it by throwing a foreleg around Maud’s shoulders and pulling her close. After a beat of silence, the geology enthusiast gently pushes her away and sits up.*)

**Maud:** Slow down, Pinkie Pie.

**Pinkie:** Yooouuu’rrre moooviiinnng tooo Pooonyyyviiillle.

(*Taking the suggestion a bit too literally, it seems.*)

**Maud:** I’m not definitely moving to Ponyville.

**Pinkie:** (*normal speed, nudging her*) Of course you are, silly! You said…

(*In an instant, she has transformed her face, mane, and tail into a pink/magenta copy of her sister, complete with eyeshadow.*)

**Pinkie:** (*deadpan*) “There’s nothing left to study back home on the rock farm, so I might move to Ponyville.”

(*Breaking into a big grin, she sticks a front hoof into her mouth and blows hard, causing her mane and tail to pop back to their usual curly state. The eyeshadow disappears just as quickly.*)

**Maud:** I’m also considering Ghastly Gorge.

**Pinkie:** (*laughing loudly*) Classic Maud sense of humor! (*nudging her*) You should do stand-up!

**Maud:** I do, but that wasn’t a joke. (*Pinkie gasps softly, eyes widening.*)

**Pinkie:** Ghastly Gorge? That terrible, awful, no-fun, all-alone canyon in the middle of nowhere?

**Maud:** There, or Ponyville.

**Pinkie:** But Ponyville is so…

(*She finishes the thought by stretching her cheeks into a gigantic grin and adding a peal of squealing laughter.*)

**Pinkie:** …and Ghastly Gorge is so…

(*This time, she pulls her cheeks down and lets her tongue loll out, throwing in a sound of revulsion as if someone had just tried to force-feed her a pound of sugarless candy.*)

**Maud:** It’s a rock-based decision.

**Pinkie:** But… (*dropping onto back, waving hind legs*) …what about BSFF’s?

**Maud:** That’s why I’m giving Ponyville a chance. (*Pinkie sits up and lets out a breath.*)

**Pinkie:** So all I have to do is prove Ponyville has better rocks than Ghastly Gorge? (*poking Maud’s shoulder*) Challenge accepted! We’ll drop your stuff off at my place, and then hold on to your world, ’cause it’s about to get *rocked!*

(*After each of “about,” “to,” and “get,” the camera cuts to a still-closer shot of the sisters, Pinkie gradually building in intensity, jabbing a hoof into Maud’s chest, and leaning toward her until their noses touch.*)

**Maud:** Okay.

(*Pinkie’s full-throttle expression gives way to a nearly manic grin. Dissolve to a slow pan that follows them through a cavern whose walls are studded with large, faintly glowing gems; both are wearing hard hats with headlamps attached.*)

**Pinkie:** Ghastly Gorge may have rocks, but our gem cave rocks!

(*Older sister glances upward, taking in the plethora of exposed stones, as an ethereal harp begins to play. She then cuts her eyes to one side, the camera panning quickly in that direction to reveal the instrumentalist as Pinkie herself.*)

**Pinkie:** (*encouragingly*) Huh? Huh? (*pointing past harp*) Oh, and look!

(*A quick pan in that direction picks out Rarity and Spike doing a little gem hunting, Rarity wearing the bow/cutie mark-decorated hard hat she used in “Gauntlet of Fire.” Spike, standing over a basket that contains their haul, finds a small one.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) You’ll never know who you’ll see!

(*The unicorn turns away from her work with a happy gasp as Maud crosses to her.*)

**Rarity:** Maud, darling! It’s lovely to see you again. Oh, congratulations on your rocktorate. What are you doing now?

**Maud:** Talking to you.

**Rarity:** (*caught off guard, sputtering a bit*) Right. (*Giggle, then clear throat.*) Well, if your trained eye happens to see a chartreuse gem, I’m desperate to find one.

(*It is the work of a moment for the stoic mare to turn and pick one up off the ground—yellow with a faint green tinge.*)

**Maud:** I found one.

**Rarity:** (*crossing to her, floating it to basket*) Oh, you’re an absolute darling! This will surely make my gown stand out at Countess Coloratura’s album release party. Do you know how rare this is? (*Pinkie pops up next to Maud.*)

**Pinkie:** Just another day in Ponyville!

(*With a wink and grin, she trots off across the cavern.*)

**Maud:** That’s actually a really common gem.

**Pinkie, Rarity:** Huh/Oh?

(*Not even bothering to shift position, she casually kicks at a rock formation with one hind leg, the strike causes it to fracture and spill out a small flood of chartreuse jewels. Six disbelieving eyes turn her way, but she just redirects hers incuriously toward the ceiling.*)

**Maud:** These are all really common gems. (*Rarity puts a hoof to her mouth in shock and slowly tears up.*)

**Pinkie:** They are? (*laughing, trying to play it off*) I mean, come on! Of course they are! (*crossing to Maud*) That’s why I didn’t bring you here to impress you. (*sweating a bit*) I wanted to make sure you had a chance to, uh, say hello to your old pal…

(*She darts away and returns carrying…*)

**Pinkie:** …Spike! (*Who grins and waves timidly.*)

**Maud:** Hello, Spike. (*Pinkie throws him aside.*)

**Pinkie:** Way to go, Maud! Cross that off the to-do list, you know what I’m saying?

(*A quick reach out of sight, and she produces a pale green gem shaped like a check mark.*)

**Pinkie:** Check! (*Toss it away; push her across the cave.*) Now let’s get moving, ’cause I’m about to show you something that’ll make you yell, “All right!”

**Maud:** All right.

**Pinkie:** See? (*Laugh.*)

(*In the distance behind them, Rarity has collapsed to her haunches and is discarding a few gems from the basket, her mind completely shorted out by Maud’s blunt evaluation. Spike, meanwhile, picks one up from the ground and pops it into his mouth. Dissolve to a stretch of meadowland outside Ponyville proper; Pinkie pushes Maud into view, the latter blindfolded and both having ditched their hard hats. Once they stop, the pink party pony leans in to nip the cloth band in her teeth; cut to Maud’s perspective as it is removed and her vision is restored. They have stopped a short way from the Castle of Friendship, and Pinkie stands up into view with forelegs spread wide.*)

**Pinkie:** Ta-da! (*She backs off to one side.*) It’s a castle made of rocks! (*Back to Maud; she stands up alongside, pushing her own cheeks into a grin.*) Whaaat? Did I just blow your mind? I think I just blew your mind.

**Maud:** A lot of structures are made from rocks, Pinkie. (*Blue eyes pop wide.*) They’re a very stable building material.

(*Younger sister cringes a bit, but recovers quickly and trots a bit closer to the front doors.*)

**Pinkie:** But this place grew out of nowhere after a magical key-filled gem followed a rainbow and buried itself in the ground! (*dropping to hocks*) I mean, have you ever seen rocks like *this?*

**Maud:** Yes. (*Pinkie gets indignantly in her face.*)

**Pinkie:** No, you haven’t!

**Maud:** We literally just saw hundreds of them in the gem cave.

**Pinkie:** (*sputtering*) But…but… (*pointing off to one side*) …oh, look at *those* rocks!

(*She zips away; cut to her rummaging furiously through a bush, then standing up with dozens of burrs stuck to her coat/mane/tail and holding an extra load. Her facial expression clearly broadcasts her fraying nerves.*)

**Maud:** Those are stingbush seed pods.

**Pinkie:** (*eyeing them*) So they are! (*Weak laugh; shake a few away.*) But, uh… (*pointing away*) …look at *that* rock!

(*Off she goes, the remaining pods falling away; cut to her, peering intently at a tortoise with head retracted into its shell.*)

**Pinkie:** It’s even got four smaller rocks around it like legs!

**Maud:** That’s a tortoise.

(*Out comes the head in close-up marking this animal as Rainbow Dash’s pet Tank. Tilt up to Pinkie as she processes this earth-shaking revelation.*)

**Pinkie:** (*full force, blowing him o.s.*) *WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON, TANK?!?!?*

(*Dropping back to all fours, she trots frantically in place for a second before a fresh idea hits.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh! (*hanging briefly in midair*) Wait a minute! (*pointing*) What’s that? It’s a rock shaped like Lyra Heartstrings!

(*She is off like a shot. Cut to Bon Bon and Lyra Heartstrings out for a stroll; she nips in behind the unicorn and propels her back to the meadow, plunking her down in front of Maud.*)

**Pinkie:** Total rock!

(*As Lyra is about to voice her absolute bewilderment at this very strange turn of events, Pinkie slaps on a world-class scowl and adds a growl and emphatic head shake to shut her up. The unwilling mare stands paralyzed with fear, being pointed out by Pinkie, until Bon Bon trots across to push her away and give Pinkie an incredibly dirty look. Her latest sales pitch having gone down in flames, the pink pony literally deflates like a parade float balloon and ends up as a boneless puddle on the path. Close-up.*)

**Pinkie:** (*sighing*) I guess you won’t be moving to Ponyville after all. (*Maud’s shadow advances over her.*) Those rocks at Ghastly Gorge don’t know how lucky they are to have you.

(*Older sister helps the younger up, now fully back to herself.*)

**Maud:** Actually, rocks aren’t the only reason I’m considering Ponyville.

**Pinkie:** You said it’s a rock-based decision. (*Cut to just behind her shoulder and zoom in slowly on Maud.*)

**Maud:** I’m obviously passionate about exotic rocks, but I’ve always studied them alone. (*Pinkie’s eyes pop.*) I could handle some less exciting rocks if it meant I’d have somepony to talk to besides Boulder.

(*She holds up the pet rock on the end of this, and she tucks it back into her collar as Pinkie gasps and smiles.*)

**Pinkie:** Are you saying you want…*a friend?*

**Maud:** I wouldn’t mind one. (*Huge gasp from Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** Maudalena Daisy Pie, this’ll be easy! (*She pulls a clipboard out of her mane.*) What are you looking for in a friend? Give me six qualities, assigning each one a numerical importance rating between one and seven, seven being essential and one being “eh.”

(*Realizing that she has forgotten to grab something to write with, she proceeds to belch up a pencil and catches it in her teeth, ready to take notes. Maud regards her impassively.*)

**Maud:** It isn’t hard to meet somepony I like. It’s finding somepony who gets me. (*Pinkie leans in close, the clipboard and pencil gone.*)

**Pinkie:** I get you.

**Maud:** You’re my sister. It’s different.

**Pinkie:** (*smiling, pulling Maud closer*) Maud, you are the best! You never know when the lightning of friendship will strike. (*Move near the Castle doors; gesture at them.*) Somepony could come barreling through that door at this very moment and become your best friend!

(*The next few seconds are taken up by a whole lot of nothing happening.*)

**Pinkie:** You know, I really thought somepony was gonna come barreling through that—

(*Now the doors fly open and Starlight Glimmer hurries down the steps, saddlebags on back and face buried in a book floating at eye level. She runs flat into Maud, sending both of them to the turf in a shower of books that tumble from the carriers; a moment later, Starlight is up to her haunches and rubbing her head.*)

**Maud:** Uh.

**Starlight:** Oh! My fault! (*She levitates the tomes back into her bags.*) Totally my fault. Are you okay? (*Both stand up.*) I should’ve been watching where I was going.

(*She cuts herself off sharply and aims a searching gaze at the unflappable mare.*)

**Starlight:** You look really familiar. Have we met before?

**Maud:** Yes.

**Starlight:** I knew it! (*Pan quickly from them to Pinkie, who freezes in her tracks.*)

**Pinkie:** *Whaaaat?!?*

**Starlight:** No, no. Don’t tell me. Um…

(*There follows a very long pause, during which she thinks hard and Pinkie slowly rises into view between them—eyes saucer-wide, mouth grinning and emitting a tiny little squeal near the top end of the audible frequency spectrum.*)

**Starlight:** Yeah. See, I was really hoping you’d tell me while I pretended to remember. (*Pinkie throws a foreleg around each set of shoulders.*)

**Pinkie:** How is this possible? (*Wild laughter.*)

**Maud:** I traveled Equestria for my rocktorate dissertation.

(*As she finishes this line, the view undergoes a wavering dissolve to a chunk of stone on a patch of barren ground. Her forelegs are visible off to one side, a compass and hammer rest nearby, and a pick swings down into view to split the mass. Zoom out to frame her with the handle in her mouth and a set of saddlebags slung up, filled with mineral samples. She sets the tool aside and pokes at the fragments as Starlight steps into view, visible from the neck down at first. However, her cutie mark is the fake equals sign she wore in “The Cutie Map,” and when the camera cuts to her, it frames her forelock as the straight, evenly divided style she sported in those episodes. Maud straightens up, now with a pencil in her teeth to jot notes on a pad, as the unicorn glances nervously around this area.*)

**Starlight:** Psst! Do you know a lot about rocks? (*Maud puts down the pad/pencil and lifts a pebble.*)

**Maud:** Yes.

**Starlight:** (*smiling, trying to sound casual*) Have you ever come across some kind of super-powerful stone that can store the cutie mark magic of…I don’t know… (*smile vanishing*) …an entire village?

**Maud:** Yep. (*Starlight is taken aback; she points.*) In the big cave.

(*A sinister grin steals across the unicorn’s face and she hustles away in the indicated direction. As Maud continues to inspect the stone she has found, the camera zooms out to show that she is on the ridge overlooking the village Starlight used to rule—or will eventually rule, based on the fact that not all of its houses have been built yet and some of the existing ones are half-done. She turns impassively away from the scene as Starlight gallops madly toward her house at the far end.*)

(*Another wavering dissolve brings the action back to the present, Starlight very much ill at ease over the recollection and Pinkie’s mind jammed up but good. The latter forces a loud laugh.*)

**Pinkie:** Hey! I got an idea. (*to Maud*) Let’s not tell anypony that part where you maybe for-sure accidentally helped Starlight enslave a town!

(*Another big fake laugh, which goes bye-bye in a twinkling; zoom in to an extreme close-up as she jams her nose up against Maud’s and glowers for all she is worth.*)

**Pinkie:** *Tell nopony!*

**Maud:** It’s not like she’s enslaved anypony lately.

(*That gives the younger Pie pause, and she backs off to find Starlight averting her eyes with a sheepish smile, laugh, and sigh.*)

**Starlight:** (*to Maud*) Well…great seeing you again. (*walking off*) I gotta run a few errands.

(*The ersatz good cheer evaporates as she voices a heavy sigh and lets her head droop.*)

**Pinkie:** (*to Maud, talking out of one side of her mouth*) Offer to help.

**Maud:** What?

**Pinkie:** (*speaking a little more clearly*) Offer to help! (*Starlight pauses.*)

**Starlight:** You…want to help? (*Pinkie grins.*)

**Maud:** (*to Pinkie*) Do I?

**Pinkie:** (*clapping front hooves*) Of course you do! Go!

**Maud:** Okay.

(*A determined smile steals over the pink face before those hooves ram the restrained mare ahead to catch up with Starlight, who grins as they get on the way toward Ponyville proper. In close-up, Pinkie grins widely and makes a tiny funny happy noise in the back of her throat.*)

**Pinkie:** They’re totally gonna be best friends and then Maud will chose Ponyville— (*hovering in midair, twiddling rear hooves*) —and we’ll get to wear BSFF slippers!

(*The shock of unpleasant realization comes across her face an instant before gravity reasserts itself, and she plunges o.s. to the earth and sends up a cloud of dust. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a block in Ponyville that is thick with vendor stalls, tables, and customers. Maud and Starlight take their time walking through the area.*)

**Maud:** Rocks take on different properties when interacting with magic. With the right stone, you could rule all of Equestria if you wanted to.

(*Both stop short, Starlight throwing her a very funny look.*)

**Starlight:** You’re messing with me.

**Maud:** Am I?

(*Suspicious blue eyes bore into unblinking blue-green ones; Starlight is the first to crack with a hearty round of laughter.*)

**Starlight:** So, other than rocks, what else are you into?

**Maud:** Minerals. Plate tectonics. Oh, and stand-up comedy, of course. (*Slightly uneasy pause from Starlight.*)

**Starlight:** I like…kites.

(*She chews her lip worriedly, but Maud’s expression does not so much as flicker for a long moment.*)

**Maud:** Kites are cool.

(*Starlight sighs with relief and they resume walking. As they pass a bin of asparagus spears, Pinkie’s head breaks through to daylight, concern writ large over her face. Wipe to a patch of clear sky in which a kite swings into view, then cut to Starlight in a meadow, controlling its string with her magic as Maud ambles up. Spare materials are spread on the grass. Starlight no longer wears her saddlebags.*)

**Starlight:** (*animatedly*) The trick with an SLK is not to make the spars too heavy. *But* if they’re too light, you got no ballast, and then good luck tacking against the AOI. (*She relents a bit under Maud’s stare.*) I really like kites. (*Nibble bottom lip.*)

**Maud:** They’re starting to grow on me.

[*Note: “SLK” = single-line kite; “AOI” = angle of incidence.*]

(*Seeing Maud turn her attention to the flying rig, Starlight relaxes and goes back to working it around. However, the sudden arrival of Pinkie throws a brick through the quiet camaraderie. The intruder has now stuck a giant foam pizza slice around her neck and strapped an insulated bag to her back, the sort that would be used to keep the goods warm while making a…*)

**Pinkie:** Pizza delivery! (*Starlight bobbles her spool away; both turn toward her. She feigns surprise.*) Oh! Maud and Starlight? You’re here too? (*crossing to them, laughing*) Whoa! What a coincidence! ’Cause I was just, you know… (*pulling pizza box from bag*) …delivering this pizza to…um…

(*She looks around; cut to her perspective, panning past these two—one of whom is giving her a hairy eyeball. No other ponies are anywhere near here until Derpy Hooves trots over a rise and into view; zoom in on her.*)

**Pinkie:** (*pointing*) …you!

(*Derpy stops, well and truly confounded, and grins as the box is flung in her general direction. Pinkie’s aim is just a bit off, though, as it smacks her in the head and bounces away. However, the prospect of free food quickly brightens her mood again and she gallops off to retrieve it from the bushes.*)

**Pinkie:** (*encouragingly*) So how’s it going?

**Starlight:** Uh, just hanging out. (*Pinkie leans over to her and Maud.*)

**Pinkie:** Hey! You could use this time to bond and talk about feelings! For example, do you feel like you’re becoming friends? (*Cut to Maud and Starlight.*)

**Starlight:** (*hesitantly*) Um, I feel like I don’t want to talk about feelings?

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Great! (*All three again.*) I’ll go next. I feel like I love that you two are becoming best friends!

(*Cut to the new acquaintances, Maud cocking her head ever so slightly to one side—“let’s get out of here”—and Starlight smiling to acknowledge on the start of the next line, then back to all three after the first few words.*)

**Pinkie:** I mean, your friendship could be the friendship that makes Maud move to Ponyville! No pressure, Starlight.

(*By the time she finishes, the other two have already cleared out. She only notices this fact after she cracks off a sly grin and finds it without a recipient; cut to a long shot of her and zoom out to frame the pair walking off.*)

**Pinkie:** (*calling out*) Um, hello? Where’d you two go?

**Maud:** (*to Starlight*) Sorry about my sister. There’s no half-excited with her.

**Starlight:** Oh, I know. But she always calms down—eventually.

(*Dissolve to a passage within the gem-studded cavern seen in Act One. The two mares make their way along, both wearing hard hats with headlamps.*)

**Starlight:** Why do you find rocks so fascinating?

**Maud:** Each one has a different story to tell. (*They stop; she holds Boulder up.*) Like Boulder here.

(*Extreme close-up of it; she pokes at a spot as Starlight leans in for a close look.*)

**Maud:** (*from o.s.*) This tells me he’s over two thousand years old. (*Both again; she addresses it.*) You don’t look a day over six hundred. (*Back into her collar it goes.*)

**Starlight:** Wow. You can tell that from a line?

**Maud:** I didn’t get a rocktorate because I can shred on guitar like nopony else.

(*Starlight laughs at this and moves to scope out a particular large gem embedded in the wall. Maud’s reflection appears next to hers in the rough facets.*)

**Maud:** Another reason I like rocks—they don’t exclude you if you’re…different than other ponies.

**Starlight:** They’re beautiful and strong, but they don’t judge you or make you feel less than in any way [*sic*]. (*Chuckle.*) Think I’m starting to like rocks too.

(*As she moves off across the cavern, the earth pony allows herself just a trace of a smile. Cut to Starlight, who has stopped at a large bare patch of wall across the way so she can knock experimentally on it a couple of times. The reverberating quality of the impacts makes her eyes widen as she realizes that…*)

**Starlight:** It’s hollow?

**Maud:** (*from o.s.*) It’s granite. (*crossing to her*) Hollow granite is highly unusual.

(*Starlight exerts a touch of her magic over the expanse, setting off a tremor that shakes the entire cavern and sends a small avalanche of increasingly larger fragments down toward them. They take a few cautious steps backward before the screen fills with dust; when it clears, the camera has shifted to behind them, exposing a new opening that shines with brilliant light on its other side. Maud and Starlight move toward this, and the camera cuts to a long shot of them in this newly opened space and zooms out. They have arrived in a vast chamber with lush foliage, bisected by a river fed with small springs and waterfalls; the light source is a cluster of giant gems that hangs from the ceiling, and small ones are set here and there around the place.*)

**Starlight:** (*awestruck, echoing slightly*) Wow. Have you ever seen anything like this? (*Close-up.*)

**Maud:** No, and that’s unusual…for me.

(*The quiet reverie is smashed to pieces when Pinkie pops up between them, now wearing a hard hat of her own instead of her previous pizza delivery gear. She claps a foreleg around each mare’s shoulders.*)

**Pinkie:** There you are! I thought you went your separate ways, but you can’t imagine how happy I am to find you both together and to witness one of your firsts as friends!

(*As she delivers this vocal barrage, she hops away, returns to set up two photography lights with backing shades, and pulls a scene backdrop into view behind them—a stretch of ocean with dolphins leaping happily about. Her last step is to set a “bellows” camera, aimed directly at them, and trigger it. The flash of its bulb fills the screen and clears to give a close-up of them, mouths slightly open in hopeless confusion. All four pupils contract from the sudden brightness, Starlight covering hers and turning her head aside as Maud blinks to restore her own vision. Pinkie gives them no quarter, though, and rushes in to shove a copy of the photograph at them.*)

**Pinkie:** First time discovering an underground cavern! (*Squeal.*) I can’t wait ’til you’re old and eating pistachios together and telling your grand-foals about this.

(*Starlight floats the picture over to Maud in her aura and fixes Pinkie with a frosty stare, prompting the latter to grimace and turn away.*)

**Pinkie:** (*to herself*) Oh, no! They’re not bonding!

(*Sweat runs down the pink face as front hooves massage temples in a desperate attempt to jump-start her mental processes. Soon enough, a new smile comes over her face.*)

**Pinkie:** I got an idea!

(*With a dazzling grin, she plows straight through the entire photography setup and out of this chamber. Cut to the cavern side, where she hops backward with a small stone, sets it on the ground, and fakes tripping on it and stumbling away.*)

**Pinkie:** (*exaggeratedly*) Whoa! I’m tripping on a rock at this very moment, and now I’m falling down!

(*During this line, the camera pans slowly to follow her toward a dynamite plunger whose wires trail off into the distance. She finishes by slamming the handle down and setting off a blast that drops tons of rock from the ceiling and fills the screen with dust. As the view clears, she straightens up into view with an innocent shrug.*)

**Pinkie:** (*exaggeratedly*) Oh, no! (*Maud and Starlight cross to her; the exit is now blocked.*) My accidental clumsiness has trapped us here! (*cheerfully, pushing them together*) Where you’ll be forced to bond until we’re rescued. (*Away she goes.*)

**Starlight:** (*airily*) Oh, we won’t have to wait for that. (*Maud fishes in her collar…*) There’s gotta be a spell that— (*…and pulls Boulder out.*)

**Maud:** Get us out of here, boy.

(*The chunk is flung sharply upward, hitting the ceiling hard enough to bring down a decent portion of it, expose daylight above, and throw up yet another solid curtain of dust. This one clears to frame the aboveground side, which is in a forest; the two make their way up and out of the fresh hole, Maud now carrying Boulder again.*)

**Starlight:** Boulder, that was *awesome!*

**Maud:** (*putting it away*) No. That was sandstone.

(*Close-up of the hole, through which a sheepishly grimacing Pinkie can be seen. This angle frames Maud’s forelegs and the tips of Starlight’s hooves.*)

**Starlight:** (*from o.s.*) More sand than stone, apparently.

(*Ground level again; the miscreant mare arrives in a tick, having stripped off her own hard hat and knocking theirs away as well.*)

**Pinkie:** (*hanging cowbells around their necks*) I’m thinking you wear these around your necks at all times so I don’t lose you again, you sillies. That way I can track your progress as friends.

(*She smacks both rumps, causing them to face forward and start walking away together—Starlight now getting really fed up as Maud glances levelly back at Pinkie from the corner of her eye. After only a few steps, though, Pinkie races up and wheels to walk backward facing them.*)

**Pinkie:** Ooh! And tomorrow, we can have a friendship brunch! What’s your favorite kind of omelet cupcake? (*whispering, to Maud*) Mine’s jalapeño red velvet!

**Maud:** Uhhh… (*All stop, Starlight putting a hoof over Pinkie’s mouth.*)

**Starlight:** Yeah, um, I-I don’t know if I can make it.

**Pinkie:** (*singsong, poking her nose*) You’ll change your minds when you smell the yummy food! (*hopping ahead*) Come on!

(*Once she is well out of sight, Starlight weaves a quick spell to snap the loops of rope holding the cowbells on and pitch the lot into the undergrowth.*)

**Starlight:** (*innocently*) Oops.

(*As she walks off, her unlikely companion again lets her mouth curve into a tiny smile. Dissolve to the exterior of Sugarcube Corner that night, all its windows brightly lit, and zoom in slowly.*)

**Pinkie:** (*voice over*) Tomorrow’s brunch is gonna be the scrump-chiest, brunchiest, munchiest brunch ever!

(*Cut to her bedroom, framing Maud at a mirror in a head-on close-up—wearing the pony equivalent of “footie” pajamas in dull gray-green and putting curlers in her mane. Pinkie’s tail and the quilt on her bed are visible in the background.*)

**Maud:** Yeah, about that.

(*Zoom out slightly on this line to frame the rest of her younger sister lounging on the bed, dressed in blue pajamas with pink polka dots. Sheets of notes are spread out before her, and she has tied most of her mane back in a loose bun.*)

**Pinkie:** The problem is, while you two were alone— (*Maud pivots slightly; her tail is in curlers as well.*) —I couldn’t get data points on your friendship probabilities. Were you making Starlight smile? (*holding up a graph*) How was Starlight’s smile-to-frown ratio? Anything over five to one is great.

(*Close-up of the mirror; Pinkie’s reflection pokes into view behind Maud’s.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, and how many times did you smile like this? (*Big squeaky grin; Maud turns toward her.*)

**Maud:** Zero times.

(*She turns back to the glass as the pink image’s mood deflates. Cut to frame both again, Pinkie now half-risen to her hooves on the bed.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, Maud, don’t be so hard on yourself. (*jumping in place*) You’ve got the best friendship maker in Ponyville on the case. I’ll be by your side the whole time!

(*Cut to the stoic sister, who straightens up from the mirror.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, speaking of which— (*She drapes one of the cowbells around Maud’s neck.*) —your bell fell off, silly.

**Maud:** Pinkie Pie, I appreciate what you’re trying to do, but—

**Pinkie:** (*expectantly, leaning toward her, pushing her down and o.s.*) Buuuuuuut…?

(*Overhead shot of the pair. Maud has landed on the mattress, and Pinkie slides in next to her and pulls the quilt up over them.*)

**Maud:** (*sighing*) Never mind.

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry, Maud. When you see this brunch, you’ll realize everything’s gonna be okay.

(*She rests her head on the pillow; cut to Maud’s side, the camera aimed across the back of her head.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) And then, I have amazing bonding activities planned for the next seventeen days!

(*Older sister turns over during this line, her unchanged countenance somehow managing to convey the degree of frustration taking hold in her mind.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) You and Starlight will be besties in no time!

(*The gray lips part as if to deliver a response, but the camera cuts to an overhead shot of them before she can get any words out. Now they are face to face again.*)

**Pinkie:** Good night!

(*A kiss on the forehead, two claps, and the lights go out. She does the same without even lowering her forelegs and is snoring loudly within less than one second. Cut to a longer shot of the bed and zoom out slowly as Maud lies awake, pondering this decidedly bizarre and not entirely welcome interference.*)

(*From here, dissolve to a close-up of Pinkie, forelegs still raised, as the morning light advances across her face and birdsong is heard outside. Just as quickly as she conked out, she snaps her eyes open, sits up in bed, and throws off the covers.*)

**Pinkie:** Friendship brunch!

(*She aims a big grin toward Maud’s side, but it vanishes into a look of bewildered disappointment. Cut to that other pillow, with nothing but a note and the cowbell resting on it. Pinkie bends down to scrutinize these two items, then sits up with the note. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Maud:** (*voice over, dictating*) “Pinkie Pie: Thank you for trying so hard to help me make friends. But my decision has to be rock-based.” (*Pinkie bites her lip.*) “And Ghastly Gorge has such great rocks. I won’t even have time for friends. It’s better this way. Sorry it didn’t work out. Maud.” (*Throw the note aside.*)

**Pinkie:** Maud!

(*She bounds off the bed. Long shot of Sugarcube Corner, seen from down the street. The front door flies open and out she comes at a full gallop, having shed her sleepwear and untied her mane.*)

**Pinkie:** Wait!

(*Cut to the train station, a train pulling away; she gives chase briefly, but stops in front of the platform.*)

**Pinkie:** Maud! (*whimpering softly, voice breaking*) Maud…

(*She fights to hold her composure as the view fades to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of Starlight fast asleep in her own bed. As she shifts position, the camera zooms out quickly to frame Pinkie standing on the mattress.*)

**Pinkie:** Starlight! Wake up! (*Starlight snaps awake and slides backwards.*)

**Starlight:** (*half-scrambled*) Where are the kites?

(*Down and o.s. she goes, shaking the camera once she meets the floor.*)

**Starlight:** Huh? (*She sits up and sees Pinkie.*) Oh. If this is about brunch, I-I, uh…uh… (*Back in bed and under the covers; blunt tone.*) …you know what? Jalapeño red velvet omelets sound gross. I-I just can’t. (*Head meets pillow; close-up of it.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Maud left in the middle of the night! (*That wakes her up.*)

**Starlight:** Oh. (*Sit up.*) I guess Ghastly Gorge really does have the best rocks.

(*She hunches down into herself as Pinkie sits on her haunches by the foot of the bed, sniffling miserably with teary eyes.*)

**Pinkie:** Why couldn’t you two just be friends? (*Starlight leans over to her.*)

**Starlight:** Pinkie Pie, I like Maud.

**Pinkie:** You do?

**Starlight:** Yeah! (*laughing a bit*) She’s weird.

**Pinkie:** *Hey!*

(*The force packed into that one word sends Starlight tumbling back onto her pillow.*)

**Starlight:** (*sitting up*) No, in a good way! (*Zoom in slowly.*) She sees the world in a totally different way than anypony I’ve ever met. She accepts me for who I am. She taught me that a rock is never just a rock, and… (*laughing*) …she can make *anything* funny. We never had to say it, but…we got each other. (*Pinkie sits up with a hopeful smile.*)

**Pinkie:** You really were becoming friends?

**Starlight:** I think so. But you kinda sorta…got in the way.

(*Pinkie backs away with a deep gasp, and Starlight pulls in a little one of her own upon realizing just how much of a shock to the system this is.*)

**Starlight:** You’re right. Too harsh. Let’s go with “you ruined everything all the time”?

(*She offers a weak smile, but all she gets is a piteous whimper.*)

**Starlight:** (*sighing*) That’s worse. What I’m trying to say is— (*Pinkie snaps upright to her hind legs and turns her face away.*)

**Pinkie:** (*sobbing*) I have to go! (*Gallop o.s.; sound of door opening/closing.*)

**Starlight:** (*lamely*) Ta-da! Friendship lesson…learned?

(*Referring to her experience in holding back her irritation toward Trixie in “All Bottled Up.” She lets her head drop with a weary sigh, realizing that she has made a total hash of the situation. Flopping back down onto her bed, she magically yanks the blanket all the way up over her head. Dissolve to the floor of a long canyon with winds whistling unceasingly through its rocky terrain. A campsite has been set up near the base of one wall: tent, cooking fire, mineral samples/tools/containers—it can only be Maud’s new home base in Ghastly Gorge. Pan away from this area toward the opposite wall, where she has donned her dress and hard hat, removed her mane/tail curlers, and taken up a position to gaze into a lightless horizontal shaft bored into the rock. Next to her is a small stool piled with fragments. She has a small pick in her teeth and begins to tap it against the stone; cut to a close-up as she works a bit of it free. Setting the tool down, she nips up the specimen and carries it over to add it to the pile.*)

**Maud:** Sigh.

(*She raises a hoof to shield her face from a strong gust, which blows the just-added rock off the stool and across the hard-packed earth. Hurrying after it, she gallops along the length of the gorge; in close-up, it clicks off an egg-shaped lump shot through with green and gray streaks and comes to rest. The bluish-gray hooves step up to it, and a longer shot frames her near the mouth of another cave.*)

**Maud:** (*bending down to the second rock*) Emerald jasper?

(*A quarray eel—one of the fearsome reptilian beasts inhabiting the walls, as seen in “May the Best Pet Win!”—extends slowly from the hole, saliva streaming from the massive mouth.*)

**Maud:** This must be my lucky day.

(*The jaws open wide with a soft growl, poised to make a midday snack of this little pony. Cut to a water tank on a platform alongside a set of railroad tracks—a bare-bones station. The train Pinkie tried to chase pulls in, stops for only the briefest moment, and then gets rolling again to expose her now on the platform and wearing her hard hat. A flock of crows roosting in a nearby dead tree takes flight with a riot of cawing, flying toward the camera until their plumage fills the screen.*)

(*As they disperse, the view changes to a long shot of Pinkie walking through Ghastly Gorge. Once past Maud’s campsite, she stops at a trail of hoofprints leading in the direction she is moving. One of them gets a good sniffing over, followed by a nibble at the dirt in which it is impressed.*)

**Pinkie:** Maud tracks!

(*The maker’s identity confirmed, she gallops on for a few hundred yards, then slows to a walk and puts her nose back to work in close-up. Two things bring her up short: a puddle of greenish liquid and a most inhospitable growl. Zoom out to reveal the source of both at the slavering quarray eel that sneaked up on Maud—but she is nowhere in sight. Pinkie stares fearfully at the beast and is greatly surprised when it opens its mouth to expose her sister on its tongue. Maud is not only still in one piece, but has picked up the egg-shaped rock she found and is squinting at it through a jeweler’s loupe screwed into one eye.*)

**Maud:** Hello, Pinkie Pie. I found emerald jasper.

(*The great jaws slam shut, scaring a cry out of Pinkie. She peels out at top speed and promptly returns with an automobile jack, which she wedges between the teeth. A few quick pumps of the handle are all she needs to lever them apart, and she ducks inside to push Maud to safety.*)

**Pinkie:** Are you okay, Maud? That eel almost ate you! (*It strains against the jack…*)

**Maud:** What eel?

(*…and snaps it apart. They jump a little farther away from it, Pinkie yelping in fear and Maud dropping her rock and loupe, and get doused in drool when it roars down at them. Without any further words, they bail out and are barely able to stay clear of the lunges of other eels. They become clean as soon as they start to move.*)

**Maud:** You didn’t need to come. I’m having a great time on my own.

(*Pinkie cannot come up with a response, stunned as she is that Maud could so casually ignore these sources of mortal peril.*)

**Maud:** I even made a new friend.

**Pinkie:** Is it a rock?

**Maud:** Yes.

(*An eel snaps at them, sending them tumbling off the narrow ledge they have been following. Pinkie yells in fright as they drop o.s.; cut to a close-up of her landing flat on a small outcropping among the howling winds, her hard hat bouncing away. One of Maud’s hooves has clamped onto the edge of this precarious perch.*)

**Pinkie:** MAUD!!

(*Zoom out slightly to frame the geology buff hanging from the edge, having lost her headgear as well. Pinkie seizes the grasping front hooves. The next seven lines are delivered in raised voices to be heard over the wind, Maud speaking almost imperceptibly louder than normal.*)

**Maud:** I don’t belong in Ponyville. It only proved I’m better off all by myself, like I always have been.

**Pinkie:** Don’t say that! (*as an eel passes from one cave to another overhead*) It was all my fault! I—

(*She trails off into a yell and covers her head as debris stirred up by the monster’s passage rains down. Zoom in slowly once the air has cleared.*)

**Pinkie:** I thought I knew everything about making friends, but I didn’t even know my own sister! I forced you to do things my way— (*Her perspective of the impassive face.*) —but my way isn’t your way!

(*Maud glances briefly down below herself.*)

**Maud:** This way. (*Profile of both.*)

**Pinkie:** Exactly!

**Maud:** No.

(*She lets go, dropping into free fall among the maelstrom of air currents—and stops with her head still in view above the bottom edge of the screen.*)

**Maud:** (*pointing behind herself*) This way.

(*As she walks calmly away, the camera zooms out to show that the flat on which they have fetched up is only a few feet above the floor of the gorge. Cut to the campsite, the two emerging into view from around a bend to approach it and leaving the turbulence behind.*)

**Pinkie:** Maud, I thought you couldn’t make a friend without my help. (*They stop.*) But it turns out you couldn’t make a friend *with* my help. I underestimated you, and I’m sorry.

**Maud:** (*raising Pinkie’s chin*) I know you did it out of love. (*Her perspective of the downcast pink visage.*) You’re my Best Sister Friend Forever.

(*Pinkie chews her bottom lip, trying to keep from crying—and very quickly failing. Cut to frame both; she has fallen to her hocks and let her forelegs dangle.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, Maud, I love you bigger than all Equestria!

(*She stands and wraps Maud in a tearful hug, a bluish-gray foreleg landing gently on her back.*)

**Maud:** And you melt my heart more easily than sodium-rich plagioclase feldspar. (*Pinkie pulls away, wipes her eyes, and rests her front hooves on Maud’s dress front.*)

**Pinkie:** I don’t know what that means— (*shaking her gently*) —but please, please, please, please, *please* give Ponyville another chance. But more importantly, give *me* another chance—to leave you alone. (*Long pause.*)

**Maud:** (*addressing herself back and o.s.*) What do you think, Boulder?

(*Cut to a close-up of the pet rock, resting on a chopping block next to an axe and a pile of split firewood and wearing a tiny knit cap, then dissolve to a patch of tranquil blue sky. The kite Starlight flew in Act Two swings into view and is soon joined by a second one that leaves something to be desired in the technical details of its construction. Cut to Starlight in a meadow, spool held in her magic, then zoom out slightly as she notices Maud standing alongside, the other kite’s string pinned under a hoof.*)

**Starlight:** You’re back!

**Maud:** Mmm-hmm.

**Starlight:** (*grinning hopefully*) For good?

**Maud:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. This doesn’t mean we need to start talking about feelings, does it?

**Starlight:** (*laughing, relieved*) No way.

**Maud:** Maybe after this, we could decorate my new place.

**Starlight:** Totally! Where is it? (*Tilt up slowly toward their kites.*)

**Maud:** Well, it’s not in Ponyville. More like Ponyville-adjacent.

(*The camera motion puts them out of view on the second half of this line. From here, dissolve to the forest in which they surfaced after their Boulder-assisted escape from the Act Two cave-in. The hole is still open, and a mailbox and front walk of stones have been set up leading to it. The camera then cuts to the chamber Starlight opened; part of one riverbank has been comfortably outfitted with furniture, hanging lanterns, and a large fabric canopy as a ceiling. Gems and crystals of assorted size and hue have been placed for accents. Maud and Starlight advance into view, the former wearing Pinkie-head slippers on all four hooves, and Starlight goggles at the radical redesign that has already taken place. Zoom out slightly to frame a couple of small docks now attached slightly farther downriver and a flight of rough-hewn steps leading down to them from the living area, then cut to the pair.*)

**Starlight:** It’s perfect. (*Pinkie drops into view between them.*)

**Pinkie:** (*forelegs across both their shoulders*) *Yes!* My sister’s totally staying in Ponyville! (*Squeal.*) I mean, Ponyville-adjacent!

(*Her wild peal of laughter is met by a testy look from the unicorn and an unblinking stare from the new resident, and she quickly withdraws her limbs.*)

**Pinkie:** (*hastily*) Sorry, sorry, I’m leaving, I promise. I’m not even here.

(*That claim goes out the window when she spots Maud’s slippers and lets out a joyous yell.*)

**Pinkie:** You’re wearing the slippers! (*backing off toward river*) Okay, now I’m really leaving. (*galloping away*) Bye-bye!

(*A moment later, she trots back the way she came with an embarrassed little laugh, now heading toward the entrance that Starlight broke open.*)

**Pinkie:** Wrong way.

(*And now she peels out in a pink/magenta blur. Maud and Starlight glance bemusedly after her as the view fades to black.*)