**A ROCKHOOF AND A HARD PLACE**

**Written by Kaita Mpambara**

**Produced by Devon Cody**

**Story editing by Nicole Dubuc, Josh Haber**

**Supervising direction by Jim Miller**

**Directed by Denny Lu, Mike Myhre**

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

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the site of Rockhoof’s old village, at which an archaeological expedition was taking place during Part One of “Shadow Play.” It is daytime, and the camera zooms in slowly before cutting to a pan through the site itself. Ponies are hard at work digging, hauling supplies, looking over items they have recovered; at the center of it all, Professor Fossil—the mare who was in charge of the effort in that earlier episode—lies on her belly at the edge of a roped-off square excavation. She is carefully using a mouth-held brush to dust off a partially unearthed item, but a shovel blade being stabbed into the dirt causes her to drop it with a startled neigh. A massive, wrapped blue-gray hoof drives the edge in a bit deeper; it proves to be attached to Rockhoof, who grunts and laughs his way through breaking a load of soil free and heaving it over his shoulder. Fossil stands up from her work, her eyes and those of the nearby workers popping in alarm.*)

**Rockhoof:** You’re gonna have to work faster than that if you plan to dig up my whole village, lass! Let me help.

(*Down comes the shovel; Fossil yelps and dives in to shield the artifact, seeing the edge punch into the earth just short of it. She stands up with an indignant glare and brushes her shirt down.*)

**Fossil:** Uh, thank you, Rockhoof, but we’re trying to carefully preserve every bit of history here.

**Rockhoof:** (*pacing*) Aye, this place is full of memories.

(*He notices a small sphere embedded in the ground, taps it loose, and starts to bounce it off hoof and rump.*)

**Rockhoof:** Did I tell you about the time our chieftain knocked down five boulders with a kick of a wee ball?

(*Fossil has gone back to plying her brush, this time on a pottery jar, but drops it with a cry and scrambles across to him.*)

**Fossil:** Stop that! (*The ball bounces off his head; she catches it and gives him a sour look, falling to her haunches.*)

**Rockhoof:** But, uh, that’s what this is for.

**Fossil:** (*standing*) Maybe in the past.

(*Drop to haunches again; blow dust off it and examine briefly through a jeweler’s loupe.*)

**Fossil:** Now it belongs in a museum—safe, preserved, untouched.

**Rockhoof:** (*scoffing, pointing over shoulder*) Next you’ll be sayin’ I shouldn’t have used the old sweat lodge.

(*Fossil gasps in shock and very nearly drops the ball when these words sink in. Pan quickly back past the pair to a badly deteriorated hut from which wisps of steam are issuing through holes in the roof. Half of the structure wastes no time in caving in—this sweat lodge has finally seen its last user. From here, dissolve to Twilight Sparkle’s office within the School of Friendship and zoom in slowly. She sits behind her desk, while Fossil paces angrily before it.*)

**Fossil:** So you see why Rockhoof isn’t an ideal fit for my team. (*adjusting glasses, smiling nervously*) Perhaps you could use his, uh, unusual talents? (*Twilight leaves her seat.*)

**Twilight:** Of course, Professor Fossil. We’d be honored to have a Pillar of Equestria on our staff. (*She leads Fossil out.*)

**Fossil:** (*groaning*) Thank Celestia.

(*The headmare’s magic pulls the doors shut behind them. Cut to Rockhoof in a hallway, looking around the place with open wonder and with his shovel slung across his back. A small table at a window holds a basket of fruit and a vase with a flower; crossing to this, he licks his chops and picks up an apple. One bite very nearly causes him to choke, though, and he spits it away.*)

**Rockhoof:** Ugh, that apple’s made of wood! What a horrible trick to play!

(*A deft flick of the head allows him to grab the end of the shovel’s handle and swing for the fences, knocking apple, basket, and vase out the window. He storms off as Rarity descends a flight of stairs and Twilight and Fossil emerge into the hallway.*)

**Rarity:** (*noticing empty table*) Hm. Has anypony seen my decorative centerpieces? They were right here.

**Fossil:** (*smugly, to Twilight, adjusting glasses*) Good luck!

(*She takes her leave of the suddenly confused Princess. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to Twilight’s lecture hall, whose seats are filled with her friends and a great many students, all talking excitedly among themselves. Spike is on hand, standing to one side of the stage on which Twilight and Rockhoof are facing the crowd; the great stallion has his shovel on his back again. Zoom in slowly; the conversation dies away as Twilight begins to speak.*)

**Twilight:** So join me in welcoming Professor Rockhoof to our faculty. (*Cheers and applause.*)

**Rockhoof:** Thank you, thank you all. I know I’m new to your world, but there’s one thing I learned when I saved my village from a rushing river of hot lava.

(*Cut to a slow pan across the listeners on the end of this; they gasp as one in quiet anticipation, after which the camera returns to the stage.*)

**Rockhoof:** There’s nothing you can’t do with hard work—and a shovel!

(*Flicking a hoof against the handle, he spins the tool off his back, clamps his teeth around it, and drives the blade deep into the stage. The ensuing gasps are more frightened than eager now, and his broad grin turns into a grimace of fear as the wood creaks and gives way under his weight to drop him out of sight. Dust boils up to fill the screen, then clears to give a view of the core six students and their varied reactions.*)

**Smolder:** (*sarcastically*) Except maybe stand onstage.

(*He has gone in deep enough to leave only his head exposed. Spike clambers up and seizes a double handful of his tunic’s collar, but his efforts to drag Rockhoof up prove fruitless. Twilight exerts her influence to pull the new professor free and set him upright.*)

**Twilight:** So, um…everycreature dismissed. (*The students begin to disperse.*) We’ll…see you in class.

(*Dissolve to just outside the lecture hall doors as they file out.*)

**Smolder:** (*over shoulder, to Yona*) You think that new pony is gonna be the weirdest teacher at school, or just one of the weirdest? (*Gallus fallows them.*)

**Yona:** Yona like new teacher. He big, like yak!

**Gallus:** (*rolling eyes*) And he smashes things like a yak, smells like a yak…

**Yona:** (*accidentally shoving him ahead*) Yes! He perfect!

(*Cut to another classroom, where the six have taken or are taking seats.*)

**Sandbar:** Guys! He’s one of the Pillars! He’s, like, pony history!

**Rockhoof:** (*from o.s., boisterously*) Hello, class!

(*All heads turn in the direction of the door an instant before a crash shakes the camera and a hail of dust and stone fragments lances into view. Cut to the powerhouse pony, who has smashed his way in through the doorway and taken out quite a bit of the masonry with both his bulk and the shovel on his back. He cringes slightly upon noticing the damage.*)

**Rockhoof:** W—um… (*Clear throat; cross to front desk.*) …I’m, uh, your new Theory and Defense of Friendship teacher.

(*He leans a foreleg casually against the piece of furniture, causing it to buckle visibly; it snaps back to its normal height when he removes the limb.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*pulling out a thick pile of pages, setting them on desk*) But, uh, I haven’t had a chance to look at Headmare Twilight’s notes yet. What have you all been learning?

**Ocellus:** We just studied all about how Princess Celestia and Luna used a spell to trap Discord in stone sleep for hundreds of moons.

**Rockhoof:** (*chuckling richly*) So it’s a class about stories, is it? (*A bored Gallus snaps to with faked enthusiasm.*)

**Gallus:** Stories, yeah! And we never, ever, ever get homework.

**Rockhoof:** (*pacing*) Good! The best way to teach colts and fillies is by experience. Like the time I was in the woods and ran across an Ursa Major.

**Silverstream:** (*eagerly*) Really?

**Sandbar:** We’re not doing that, right?

**Yona:** You fight Ursa Major? (*apprehensively*) All alone?

**Rockhoof:** Aye, and I defeated her too.

**Smolder:** Now this, I’m interested in.

**Yona:** How Professor Rockhoof win?

**Rockhoof:** (*chuckling, stroking beard*) Well, that’s quite a tale.

(*Dissolve to Twilight and Applejack walking the hallways.*)

**Twilight:** From what Professor Fossil said, it sounds like Rockhoof just hasn’t settled into modern times yet. (*as both stop*) Our school is the perfect place for that. Plus, we get a new teacher!

**Applejack:** Heh. This may be the fastest friendship problem you ever solved.

(*Their smiles turn into popeyed gapes at the sound of an o.s. crash, and all eight hooves pound along the carpet toward the source. Cut to the classroom, where Rockhoof has just deployed his shovel against most of the items on and behind the front desk.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*acting out his moves*) Dodge! Thrust! Shovel leap! Shovel throw!

(*Cut to the destroyed doorway on the end of this. Twilight and Applejack arrive just in time for the tool to be flung into view, sticking blade down in the floor only a few inches from where they stand. He bounds over, pulls it free with his teeth, and leaps onto the front desk to brandish it again.*)

**Rockhoof:** Shovel whack! (*pointing toward students with it*) Now you lot be the Ursa Major. (*His perspective of them.*) Lots o’ growlin’, mind.

(*Gallus, Silverstream, and Yona, in the front row, oblige him at various pitches. Back to him, laughing and twirling the shovel—and inadvertently knocking down the roll-up projection screen mounted on the wall above the blackboard. It thumps to the ground as the students laugh excitedly and the two mares stare in dismay.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Twilight*) Maybe classrooms were less breakable in the old days?

**Yona:** (*waving hoof*) Ooh, ooh, ooh! What happen next?

**Rockhoof:** (*laughing, jumping off desk*) The huge beastie jumped out of the moonlit mist, her fearsome fangs at my throat! But I rolled clear…

(*He suits the action to the word, tumbling o.s. toward the windows. A hearty crash is accompanied by a spiderweb of cracks spreading across the last visible pane, which is partly cut off by the edge of the screen.*)

**Silverstream:** Then what?

(*Cut to Rockhoof, who has fetched up dazedly against the wall and is now framed by an expanse of fractured glass/stone and toppled furniture. Shaking his head clear, he jumps up to stand on his hind legs; he has dropped his shovel.*)

**Rockhoof:** She backed me up against a wall, ready to pounce! (*Gasps from the audience; he paces to the front.*) I looked at her…she looked at me… (*leaning into Yona’s face*) …and I say…

**Twilight:** Uh, Professor Rockhoof?

**Rockhoof:** Nope! Guess again!

(*He clears his throat and turns to the two mares, snapping back from the tale of his derring-do.*)

**Rockhoof:** Uh, oops.

**Twilight:** Sorry to interrupt. (*stepping in*) Class, why don’t we go ahead and take lunch early today? (*They start to clear out.*) Rockhoof, can we take a walk outside?

(*He regards her with no small degree of uncertainty. Dissolve to a doorway as he steps out into the School’s courtyard, shovel on back and a step or two behind Twilight and Applejack. Throughout the following line, he bumps/brushes his head against assorted low-altitude objects—vines, tree branches, the occasional hanging planter—and eyes them with mild irritation.*)

**Twilight:** Our school is about finding your own special way to teach.

**Applejack:** And we can already tell you’re a smash with the class. Heh.

**Twilight:** But maybe you could do a little less smashing in the classroom?

**Rockhoof:** Sorry about that. I did get a bit carried away. The students were so interested in my tale.

(*One bough irks him to the point of grumbling and shaking his head to free it.*)

**Twilight:** I know it’s a big change, but I think you’re gonna fit in just—

(*All three stop short at the sound of an o.s. conflagration, and the camera zooms out to frame it as issuing from a pair of adjacent upper-story windows. The pupils of the blue eyes widen until they almost fill the sockets, an image of a volcanic eruption playing across them—the cataclysm that prompted his heroic trench-digging a thousand years ago.*)

**Rockhoof:** FIRE!! (*He charges; the other two do not move.*)

**Twilight:** Rockhoof, wait!

**Rockhoof:** No time! The building’s ablaze! (*Cut to Twilight and Applejack; he continues o.s.*) We have to get everypony out!

(*Puzzled looks pass between the mares as they hold their ground, showing little if any concern for the inferno raging up above. Cut to the classroom; Yona addresses a stallion.*)

**Yona:** Professor Rockhoof best teacher ever! (*Happy sigh.*) Day cannot get better!

(*And here comes Rockhoof through the windowed wall, smashing glass and stone alike from one end of the other. The students have not had time to leave after Twilight’s early dismissal, with the sole exception of Smolder.*)

**Rockhoof:** Let’s get you outside, wee ones! (*He slides his shovel blade under Yona’s hooves.*)

**Yona:** (*as she is flung out, voice fading*) Day just got better!

(*Silverstream gets the same treatment, voicing a short yell as she is pitched clear. Gallus, Ocellus, and Sandbar are all picked up and launched in a single load.*)

**Rockhoof:** Alley-oop!

(*These last three hit the stone walkway outside on their rumps.*)

**Applejack:** Rockhoof?

**Twilight:** What are you doing? (*He jumps out, shovel in hoof.*)

**Rockhoof:** Savin’ the School!

(*Setting his jaws around the handle, he races to a fountain and shatters its central fixture with one swing. As the water gushes forth unchecked, his next move is to re-establish his hoof grip and angle the blade so that the torrent strikes true on one of the flame-engulfed windows.*)

**Rockhoof:** Just like fightin’ a volcano in the good old days!

(*Once this one is extinguished, he changes position slightly and douses the second. Much of the courtyard ends up awash due to the excess water streaming down from the balconies; at ground level, the camera pans to frame the arrival of a drenched, fuming Rarity on the start of the next line.*)

**Rarity:** Would somepony kindly explain what is the meaning of all this water? (*Pinkie Pie shoves her head into view.*)

**Pinkie:** I’m not sure— (*retreating, then returning on a surfboard*) —but I think it’s “surf’s up”! (*sliding past Rockhoof*) Woo-hoo! Cowabunga! (*He has his shovel on his back now.*)

**Rockhoof:** Sorry, Rarity, but I had to put out the ragin’ inferno.

(*Here come Spike and Smolder, both sopping wet and the latter plenty steamed.*)

**Spike:** Inferno? Where?

**Rockhoof:** Did you not see the smoke and flame?

**Smolder:** Yeah, that was us. You know—dragons having a fire-breathing competition?

**Rockhoof:** *You*—uh, what?

**Twilight:** They do it all the time. That’s what we were trying to tell you.

**Applejack:** We know you’re used to bein’ a hero, Rockhoof, only—what we need here is a teacher.

(*He dips his head remorsefully; on the start of the next line, cut to Rarity, levitating a crumpled, waterlogged quilt.*)

**Rarity:** One who doesn’t ruin an entire class’s friendship quilts! (*Unfurl; it is decorated with pineapples.*) Do you know how hard it is to stitch a pineapple pattern?

**Rockhoof:** (*sighing heavily*) My deepest apologies. I’m not used to livin’ with dragons—or much else in this modern time. Professor Fossil made it clear I’m not welcome back in my old village. Seems I don’t belong here either.

(*He trudges away, not seeing Twilight’s tentative attempt to reach out and stop him, and exits the courtyard just before Pinkie makes another pass on her surfboard.*)

**Pinkie:** Whee!

(*Twilight casts a worried look toward Applejack and lets her head drop in defeat. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the Castle and School of Friendship, zooming in slowly. On the start of the next line, cut to a close-up of Twilight occupying her seat in the Castle’s throne room. The central table is bare of its magical map.*)

**Twilight:** So apparently, finding Rockhoof a new job is a lot harder than we thought. Has anypony had any luck?

(*Cut to a slow pan across the table. Her friends are all in their respective seats, Rarity dry and properly groomed, and all offer gestures and verbal responses in the negative. This shot frames Spike in his small throne.*)

**Applejack:** I-I thought you were gonna try him out at the post office.

**Twilight:** (*wincing slightly*) We did.

(*Wavering dissolve to a Ponyville street. Rockhoof races into view on the start of the next line, towing a mail cart and wearing an appropriately marked brown/white cap. He is not carrying his shovel; the same will be true in the flashbacks that follow this one.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*loudly*) Do you know where I can find Cranky Doodle Donkey? (*Stop.*) I need to deliver his medicine! He has a rash in a very embarrassing place!

(*A couple of bystanders bug out, from mortification and/or to get out of the way, as he gallops off again. Watching from a roadside fence are a mare and a figure mostly hidden behind an open newspaper, who lowers it to disclose himself as Cranky Doodle Donkey. He wears a dark toupee identical to the one he first sported in “A Friend in Deed.” Once he notices the uneasy grimace on the mare’s face, he blushes deeply and raises the paper again; she, meanwhile, backs gingerly away from the fence as if fearing that his rash might instantly spread to her.*)

(*Wavering dissolve to Spike in the present.*)

**Spike:** (*shuddering*) I did not need to hear that.

**Rarity:** Ee-yup. Rockhoof’s time as a spa masseuse didn’t work out either.

[*Error: A masseuse is a woman who gives massages; the proper term for a man in this profession is “masseur.”*]

(*Wavering dissolve to a room within the Ponyville Spa. Bulk Biceps lies on a massage table, on his belly with legs stretched and towels over his mane and rump; Rockhoof stands over him, no longer wearing his delivery cap. Lotus stops to check on him, carrying a stack of towels.*)

**Rockhoof:** Now just let me know if this is too much PRESSURE!

(*On the last word, he digs both front hooves into Bulk’s back hard, prompting the beefy white pegasus to let go with a shrill scream of agony. The position shift exposes the light blue jersey Rockhoof now wears, a match for the one Bulk has used during his shifts on massage duty in the past. The scream packs enough decibels to be heard from outside, as heard when the camera cuts to the street, and he bursts out the front door and gallops madly away. The warrior-turned-massage-therapist emerges as far as the front step and stares confusedly out after him.*)

(*Wavering dissolve to Rainbow in the throne room.*)

**Rainbow:** Well, at least Rockhoof’s really strong. Maybe we could find him a job carrying heavy stuff?

**Pinkie:** I tried that already. Zecora needed somepony to help her get supplies, but…

(*She finishes her thought with a shrug and a sound, somewhere between a whine and a grunt, that might translate as “it didn’t go well.” Wandering dissolve to an extreme close-up of a closed wooden door, against which Rockhoof knocks; Zecora opens it from inside—this is her hut—and reacts with great surprise on the next words.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*from o.s.*) I know you said you only needed a few leaves— (*Cut to him, no longer wearing his masseur’s jersey.*) —but I figured, why not bring you the whole thing?

(*Zoom out quickly to show that he has brought her an entire tree, its trunk lashed to his back with ropes. A very large swarm of very angry bees pours out of the foliage and through the door, knocking the zebra off her hooves for a moment. When she gets dizzily upright, her mane is in disarray and nearly every inch of her striped hide is covered with angry red lumps from bee stings.*)

(*Wavering dissolve back to Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** Ooh, how horrid!

**Fluttershy:** None of the other Pillars seem to be having trouble fitting into the modern world.

**Applejack:** Then maybe *they* can show Rockhoof how they did it! Get him used to livin’ in this time.

**Twilight:** Great idea! Rockhoof’s old friends would be happy to help, and I bet he’d love to visit them.

(*Dissolve to a stretch of buildings in Canterlot, the camera positioned at ground level and angled upward toward the rooftops. Twilight, Applejack, and Rockhoof advance into view, Rockhoof with shovel on back; the angle shifts to show the locals going about their business up and down the block.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*sighing*) Even Canterlot looks different from the old days.

**Applejack:** Aw, I’m sure once you see your old pal Flash Magnus, you’ll feel right at home:

**Flash Magnus:** (*from o.s.; marching hooves are heard*) Trot, two, three, four! Trot, two, three, four!

(*Close-up of those hooves during the second repetition—all clad in the armored shoes that mark them as members of the Royal Guard. As Magnus continues, the camera zooms out and tilts up to frame him leading them; all are in full armor.*)

**Magnus:** Keep it lively, rookies! (*He spots the three new arrivals.*) Visitors on site! Company, halt!

(*They do so with a clash of steel and gold plate, the rookies salute, and Magnus crosses to Rockhoof with a smile.*)

**Magnus:** Rockhoof! You old ditch digger, you. (*He thumps the big guy amiably.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*touching Magnus’s chest*) Flash Magnus! As I live and breathe. (*Cut to Magnus and the soldiers; he points and continues o.s.*) Is this your squadron?

**Magnus:** (*nodding*) After we got out of Limbo, I went looking for work for a pony with experience in the Royal Legion. Once a soldier, always a soldier. (*Cut to Twilight and Applejack.*)

**Twilight:** Princess Celestia was happy to find a new drill sergeant for her Guard. (*Pan to Rockhoof.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*uneasily*) Yeah, heh. That’s great. She really put you in a job that big so soon?

**Magnus:** (*laughing*) This is nothing! You should see what Mistmane is up to.

(*Dissolve to a close-up of Rockhoof, who screws up his eyes against a white gleam emanating from somewhere just o.s. The faceted architecture behind him suggests that he is now in the Crystal Empire, and the camera cuts to the source of the light—a patch of crystalline flowers—to confirm it. The glow fades away as one of them blooms in response to the magic being channeled into it from a gently curving, pale violet horn. A longer shot frames Twilight, Applejack, Mistmane, and Rockhoof standing amid plots filled with glittering flora. Slow pan.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*to Mistmane*) They made *you* the Royal Landscape Artist for the Crystal Empire?

**Applejack:** (*awed*) Wow…

**Twilight:** Your work is beautiful. (*Close-up.*)

**Mistmane:** (*laughing a bit*) Oh, thank you. I’ve never worked with crystal before, but in my heart I know I’m where I belong.

**Rockhoof:** You always could find the beauty in things. But there’s not much demand for shovel-ponies like me nowadays.

**Mistmane:** (*patting his hoof*) Don’t give up hope. See Somnambula. She’ll help you find your purpose.

(*Dissolve to the upper reaches of the pyramid that stands outside the village named for this very pegasus, under an unforgiving gray-brown desert sky, and zoom out quickly to ground level. Somnambula sits on a small platform sheltered by tarps, facing a group in the street that includes Twilight, Applejack, and Rockhoof. All are sitting on their haunches, using individual mats; with the exception of Twilight and Rockhoof, all sit with eyes closed, hind legs crossed, and forelegs raised to chin level at either side.*)

**Twilight:** (*softly, to Rockhoof*) Somnambula’s a motivational speaker.(*Cut to the three.*) Bet they didn’t even have those back in your time.

**Rockhoof:** (*ditto*) Because we didn’t need them. Ponies knew what to do with their lives.

**Somnambula:** (*from o.s., slowly and calmly*) Focus on my voice— (*Cut to her.*) —and feel yourself unlock your potential.

(*She takes two deep breaths—inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth—and the camera cuts to the audience on the second exhalation. Twilight has now adopted the pose, leaving Rockhoof as the odd pony out for a moment until he reluctantly decides to give it a go—but not without some effort.*)

**Somnambula:** (*from o.s.*) Imagine everything that troubles you as one big cloud. Now, let it float away. (*Back to her.*) You are relaxed, free to do anything you wish.

(*The thump of a body hitting the ground and a loud snore jolt her back to the here and now, and she opens her eyes to find that Rockhoof has toppled onto his back and is fast asleep. The mare seated directly behind him is pinned under the weight of his head, and all the other locals have backed off to a safe distance.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Twilight*) Guess he wished he could take a nap?

(*Twilight looks worriedly from her to him. Dissolve to the twisted old tree at the edge of Hayseed Swamp that used to be Mage Meadowbrook’s home, seen in late afternoon as ponies make their way to the front door.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*voice over*) Mage Meadowbrook!

(*Inside, the camera zooms in on these two and Applejack, standing near a wall of shelves in a space that has been completely renovated and cleaned up since Twilight and Fluttershy visited it in “A Health of Information.” Meadowbrook’s descendant Cattail ambles past a table stocked with remedies in the foreground, and nearly every cubic inch of storage space is crammed with bottles, boxed and loose supplies, and scrolls.*)

**Rockhoof:** Your home looks just the same as the old days! (*under his breath*) Wish I could say the same for mine.

**Meadowbrook:** Well, I’ve had to expand my clinic a bit. (*passing a bottle to a mare*) Many creatures need healin’ in this modern world. (*gently, seeing his low spirits*) Aw, looks like you could use some too. What’s got you heartsick, Rockhoof?

(*He plops his haunches down, shaking the entire place and jolting a couple of bottles off a shelf so that Meadowbrook has to dive to catch them.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*as she gives something to another pony*) Thing is, I can’t do my old job like Flash, or adapt like Mistmane, or succeed at something new like Somnambula, or go home like you. (*Cut to him and her.*)

**Meadowbrook:** Give it time. Even Starswirl’s still learnin’ about friendship.

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Yeah. (*Cut to her.*) A-And I bet Stygian took plenty of time to fit in.   
**Twilight:** (*trotting over, carrying a book in her field*) Hey, look what I found! (*lifting it higher*) *Me and My Shadow*—the third hit novel by former villain Stygian!

(*During this line, the camera cuts to a close-up of the cover—the old-school bookworm and his alter ego, the Pony of Shadows, grimacing as they stand back to back.*)

**Twilight:** (*flipping pages*) I’m impressed. He’s really thriving.

(*This update sends Rockhoof’s spirits even lower into his outsize hooves; he voices a heavy sigh and begins to trudge off.*)

**Twilight:** (*closing book*) Rockhoof, where are you going?

**Rockhoof:** I’m not sure. Maybe I just don’t belong in this modern world.

(*Exit on very glum earth pony. Dissolve to the tree-stump chandelier in the Castle’s throne room and tilt down on the next line to frame Twilight and company in their seats, along with Spike. The table’s map has manifested itself, and Twilight has not brought her book in.*)

**Applejack:** Now this here’s a right mash of apples. ’Stead of solvin’ Rockhoof’s problem, we made him feel even worse. (*Rainbow hovers off her throne.*)

**Rainbow:** I’ll tell you the real problem here. We haven’t given Rockhoof the chance to be who he really is. (*She sits; pan to Pinkie on the next line.*)

**Pinkie:** A pony with a metal shovel and a heart of gold?

**Rainbow:** (*scoffing*) A hero! What we need to do is find him a job that’s as epic as he is.

(*Cut to an extreme close-up of Mount Aeris on the map, then zoom out to frame a thoughtful Twilight on the start of the next line.*)

**Twilight:** Hmmm…I might know just the thing.

(*Dissolve to a ship slowly pulling away from a misty dock under a night sky filled with stars. Two armored hippogriff soldiers are watching it depart, and others are visible aboard—the voyage is beginning from the shores of Mount Aeris.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*voice over*) I’m honored to serve in the hippogriff navy, General Seaspray.

(*Cut to a close-up of him aboard, shovel gone and wearing a white sailor suit with a blue collar and red bandana tie, along with a white cap displaying an anchor.*)

**Rockhoof:** I promise I’ll prove my worth.

(*Salute; cut to frame the entire main deck. General Seaspray, who escorted Silverstream to the School in “School Daze,” wears armor in gold and bronze and has acquired a few facial scars since then, while each of Rockhoof’s foreleg sleeves bears a blue stripe near the cuff. Twilight and Applejack have accompanied him on this deployment.*)

**Seaspray:** Think nothing of it. I know how hard it is to adapt to a new home. After our many years below the waves, land customs seemed strange.

**Rockhoof:** Like you didn’t fit in, no matter how hard you tried?

**Seaspray:** As though the world had moved on without us. (*patting Rockhoof’s shoulder*) Never fear, Rockhoof. We shall be as brothers in this bright future above the waves. (*Pan to Twilight and Applejack on the next line.*)

**Applejack:** (*whispering, to Twilight*) Uh, why do the hippogriffs need ships if they can turn into sea ponies?

**Twilight:** Maybe they just like cruises?

**Female voice:** (*urgently*) General!

(*Eyes turn to the speaker, a crewmember standing on the elevated poop deck near the stern.*)

**Crewmember:** The fog’s too thick to see our way out of the harbor!

(*Sure enough, the mists have started to roll in fast around the vessel.*)

**Seaspray:** Heave to, swabbies! Halt the ship, and hold her ’til the fog passes!

**Rockhoof:** Wait, General! We can navigate the same way my Coltic ancestors traveled through the Selkie Mists. We’ll look to the stars!

(*Cut to a particularly bright cluster.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*from o.s., pointing at them*) There in the northwest sky is the constellation Robidle’s Pelt.

(*Glowing lines fade into view, connecting one star to another; back to the deck.*)

**Rockhoof:** Steer the ship toward that.

**Seaspray:** You heard the pony, crew! Make full sail!

(*They set to their tasks and the ship picks up speed rapidly.*)

**Applejack:** (*rearing up briefly*) Yee-haa! (*Long shot of it; she is heard from behind the railings.*) Rockhoof did it!

(*An instant after the camera cuts back to the ship, the forward progress comes to a jarring halt and a splintering crash very nearly throws ponies and hippogriffs alike down to the planks.*)

**Rockhoof:** What the—?

(*A long shot tells the whole story: the craft has run aground on an outcropping of jagged rocks.*)

**Rockhoof:** I don’t understand! The stars have always steered me true!

**Twilight:** (*to Applejack*) Oh, no! Stars can move slowly over time. They must look different now than over a thousand years ago. (*Rockhoof dips his head before Seaspray.*)

**Seaspray:** (*gravely*) It was an honor serving with you, Rockhoof, but it seems our paths lie in different directions.

(*At his salute, the instantly discharged seafarer removes his cap and holds it sadly over his chest in close-up. The background dissolves around him to frame a stretch of meadowland outside Ponyville proper behind him, his uniform fading away in favor of his usual outfit and slung-up shovel. He trudges gloomily along under the daytime sky; on the start of the next line, zoom out slightly to show him on the walkway leading to the School over its perimeter lake. Twilight and Applejack are accompanying him.*)

**Twilight:** Hey, mistakes happen. We’ll think of something else for you to do.

**Rockhoof:** Oh, there’s no need, lass. I already know what I want to do next.

**Applejack:** Really? What? (*All stop.*)

**Rockhoof:** I heard there’s a statue spell that sends creatures into stone sleep. (*to Twilight*) I want you to cast it…

(*Cut to her on the end of this line, one great hoof being thrust into her face, then back to both.*)

**Rockhoof:** …on me.

(*The Princess draws in one of the biggest gasps of her life and recoils as if he has just asked her to down a glass of hemlock straight, no chaser. Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Spike in his bed within his room in the Castle, grumbling restlessly in his sleep. The next four lines are heard from outside and somewhat muffled by the walls.*)

**Twilight:** No!

**Rockhoof:** Yes!

(*The little dragon jams his pillow over his face to block out the noise.*)

**Twilight:** No!

**Rockhoof:** Aye!

(*He sits up and puts the pillow aside, exposing dark-ringed eyes that tell of just how restful his night has not been. Cut to a set of closed doors, the voices coming through clearly now.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) No!

**Rockhoof:** Aye! (*Spike lets himself n.*)

**Spike:** Hey, guys. You need me to help you decide something?

(*He walks through, a longer shot putting him, Twilight, and Rockhoof in the Castle’s library.*)

**Twilight:** Rockhoof wants me to cast a spell to turn him into a statue! (*to Rockhoof*) The answer is no!

**Rockhoof:** Well, it should be aye—because I wouldn’t even be here to be turned into a statue if Twilight hadn’t cast a spell in the first place!

(*A stomp shakes the whole room and the audience of two, slamming Spike to full wakefulness in a split second.*)

**Spike:** Whoa. I thought you were arguing over ice cream flavors.

**Twilight:** The answer is still no! Why would you want to be turned into stone?

**Rockhoof:** (*despondently*) Because I’m a relic of a bygone age. I belong in a museum—safe, preserved, untouched. (*Cut to Twilight; he continues o.s.*) I don’t belong in this time. (*pointing to her*) It’s up to you to make that right! (*All three again.*)

**Twilight:** (*stomping*) But there has to be a better way!

**Rockhoof:** (*pacing*) Twilight, please understand. I want to be remembered as the hero I was—not the disappointment I’ve become.

**Twilight:** But you’re not! (*hurrying after him as he leaves*) Rockhoof, wait! (*Stop.*) Spike, can you teach my class today?

**Spike:** Eh—you’re not really gonna turn him to stone, are you?

**Twilight:** Only because it’s temporary. As soon as I think of a new solution, we’ll wake Rockhoof up. I know he has more to offer the world as a pony than a statue.

(*Dissolve to the classroom Rockhoof wrecked, once again full of students ready for a lesson.*)

**Sandbar:** Did you hear that Rockhoof caught all the bees in the Everfree Forest amd gave ’em to Zecora as a gift?

**Silverstream:** Wow! Terramar said Rockhoof called down the stars and sunk the whole hippogriff navy!

**Smolder:** He’s definitely weird, but in a fun way. You never know what’s gonna happen next with him.

**Yona:** Professor Rockhoof best pony!

(*In walks a decidedly listless Spike through the remains of the doorway.*)

**Spike:** Hey, class. Welcome to the Theory and Defense of Friendship.

**Gallus:** (*aside*) Another sub? (*to Spike, smiling/leaning back in chair*) Let me start by telling you that we don’t get homework and we only do field trips.

(*The scaly sub climbs up into the chair behind the front desk.*)

**Spike:** (*dryly*) Yeah, nice try. (*normal tone*) Uh, Twilight sent me to tell you she won’t be in today ’cause she has to cast a stone sleep spell on Rockhoof.

(*Eyes pop and mouths gasp from front row to back.*)

**Ocellus:** Like Discord? But why? Rockhoof isn’t a bad guy!

(*To which Spike replies with a noncommittal grunt and shrug before pulling out a sheet and reading it over carefully.*)

**Spike:** Your instructions are to write an essay on heroism and what it means to you.

**Yona:** (*anguished*) No!

**Spike:** Aw, don’t worry. It doesn’t have to be a long essay.

(*Not caring that he has completely missed the true cause of her disconcertment, he casually begins to read a newspaper. Dissolve to a close-up of Rockhoof and zoom out to put him at the base of a flight of stairs in the Castle’s entrance hall.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*trying out poses with his shovel*) Maybe like this? Or on three legs? Hmmm…what will give the wee birds fewer place to, uh, mmm…decorate? (*Sound of a door being bashed open.*)

**Yona:** (*from o.s.*) Professor Rockhoof!

(*Cut to her, standing at the now-open front entrance. The night sky is visible outside.*)

**Yona:** Dragon said you want to turn into stone! (*She gallops up to him.*) Yona not believe it!

**Rockhoof:** Aye, I’m afraid it’s true, lass.

**Yona:** (*hugging his leg*) But…pony need finish Ursa Major story for class!

**Rockhoof:** Oh, it’s sweet of you to try to get me to stay, Yona. But I’m afraid old stories like mine… (*Sigh.*) …aren’t worth anything in this day and age.

**Yona:** (*angrily*) Fine! If pony no want tell Yona story, then Yona tell pony story!

(*She produces a scroll and throws it to the carpet, where it opens to expose lines of writing.*)

**Yona:** From class report. (*reading*) “When Yona come to pony school, Yona not fit in. Pony ways strange. But Yona find friends. Yona meet Professor Rockhoof! Pony brave and strong as yak! Not afraid! Hero!”

(*Cut to the now-smiling stallion on this last word, then back to the young yak.*)

**Yona:** “When Yona grow up, Yona want to be just like Professor Rockhoof.”

(*A dip of her head, and she has caught the handle of a gardening trowel in her teeth to emulate him as best she can.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*ruffling her hair*) Well, uh, since you went to the trouble of writin’ somethin’ that nice, I suppose the least I could do is tell you the rest of the story.

(*A huge grin comes across the shaggy brown face; she drops her trowel and leads him back to the doors, which have been closed since they started their conversation.*)

**Yona:** Yona tell whole school Rockhoof is best!

(*As she continues, she knocks the doors open to reveal dozens of ponies and students gathered on the lawn under the stars.*)

**Yona:** Now all want to hear story!

(*The sight of the crowd sets Rockhoof’s eyes to brimming with tears of gratitude. Dissolve to a close-up of the front doors, once again closed and seen from outside. They swing open under Twilight’s control to frame her stepping out, very much down in the dumps and with eyes cast toward the floor.*)

**Twilight:** Okay. I have the spell. But will you please reconsider? (*She looks up and is instantly bewildered.*) Rockhoof?

**Rockhoof:** (*from o.s., animatedly*) The Ursa Major tried to grab me by the gullet!

(*Outside, he stands facing his new audience, with shovel thrust into the earth.*)

**Rockhoof:** But I ducked her claws. (*Gasps from all; he somersaults to a new spot.*) She had me cornered. So I look at her…she looks at me…

(*He thrusts his face toward Fluttershy and Yona with a growl, prompting the timid pegasus to gasp in fright and cover her eyes.*)

**Rockhoof:** …and I say… (*Grab up the shovel.*) …“Sorry you won’t be havin’ any dinner tonight, lass. Guess you’ll just have to grin and bear it!” (*The onlookers laugh at the punchline.*) And then I tossed her away with my shovel! (*Cut to them; he continues o.s.*)High into the sky!

(*Cut to the cluster of stars by which he tried to navigate in Act Two; the shovel blade is lifted toward these.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*from o.s.*) And she’s been a constellation up there ever since—or so I’m told.

(*Tilt down to frame him on the second half of this line. He finishes off with a shovel twirl.*)

**Rockhoof:** (*proudly*) And that’s the end of my story. (*Twilight ad Spike stand behind the back row.*)

**Crowd:** (*chanting*) One more story! One more story!

**Rockhoof:** (*slinging shovel onto back*) No, no. Thank you for listenin’, but it’s time to say goodbye.

(*He moves through the ranks to stop in front of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Wait. You said there wasn’t anything in this time you were good at. What about telling stories?

(*The pony out of time looks around himself with some perplexity before addressing her.*)

**Rockhoof:** It was just a tall tale.

**Twilight:** One that captured the hearts and imagination of everycreature here.

**Yona:** Plus, pony stories super-fun! (*Enthusiastic agreement from the listeners.*)

**Twilight:** As the Princess of Friendship, I’d like to appoint you as Equestria’s official Keeper of Tales!

**Spike:** (*scratching head*) Can you do that?

**Twilight:** (*to him, shrugging*) Eh.

**Rockhoof:** I, uh… (*Small groan.*) …that’s very kind of you, but I still think these old bones are more suited to a museum display.

**Twilight:** You are a living record of our history. Your stories can inspire and teach generations to come. If you’re a statue, that’s all lost.

**Rockhoof:** But will I ever really belong in your world?

**Yona:** Rockhoof Yona’s friend, so Rockhoof belongs.

**Rockhoof:** (*smiling, stroking chin*) You know, that reminds me of another story. (*He strikes a new pose.*) Once there was a small yak that knew more than a great hero.

**Smolder:** H-Hey! Don’t forget the dragons in this one! (*Zoom out slowly; the crowd again hangs on his every word.*)

**Rockhoof:** Aye, there were dragons. And ponies! And plenty of hippogriffs, plus a changeling and a griffon!

(*Fade to black in time with his laugh.*)