**DRAGON DROPPED**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of the knob on a closed door within the Castle of Friendship. A magic glow envelops and opens it, and Rarity puts her head in from the corridor beyond. The room is cast in dim light.*)

**Rarity:** (*singsong*) Oh, Spi-i-ike! Are you in here?

(*Zoom out; she has arrived in Spike’s bedroom, and the top of his head and the end of a busily moving quill are now visible in the foreground. She steps fully through the doorway.*)

**Rarity:** (*singsong*) Hel-lo-o-o!

(*Not getting an immediate response, she shades he eyes to peer intently across at him. The camera cuts to just behind her shoulder, framing him seated at a small desk by a window whose open curtains admit a shaft of daylight. He is wearing a bathrobe.*)

**Rarity:** Spike?

**Spike:** (*distractedly*) Uh-huh?

**Rarity:** Oh, there you are! I was starting to think you weren’t here. I realize this is last minute, but I’ve decided on a quick trip to the gem cave! (*flicking mane*) I am on an urgent mission to find some faceted iridescents for my new design, and I can’t think of anypony I’d rather have along than my favorite basket-holder-slash-bodyguard, Spike.

(*She finishes with front hooves tented under her chin and an alluring little smile—which turns into an irritated grimace as he takes only the briefest pause from writing to scratch his head.*)

**Rarity:** Spike! (*sidling closer*) Spi-i-ike? (*Still nothing.*) SPIKE!

(*Normal illumination resumes in a blink; the bathrobe falls off, its wearer jolted back to reality so sharply that he drops his quill and nearly overturns his desk.*)

**Spike:** What? (*noticing her*) Oh, hey, Rarity. (*She leans in to stare him down point-blank.*)

**Rarity:** Honestly, Spike. It’s almost as if you haven’t been listening.

(*He gathers up the scroll he has been working on, then hits it with his fire to send it on its way as a tendril of smoke out the window.*)

**Spike:** Oh! Uh… (*laughing*) …of course I was, but just to be sure, could you say it all again? (*Dopey grin; cut to Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** (*sighing*) I was saying that I’ve planned on visiting the gem cave, and—

**Spike:** (*from o.s., panicked, pushing her aside*) Oh, no!

(*Zoom in quickly on a bookshelf at the opposite wall; one shelf holds a clock that reads a few minutes before 12:00. Back to the two.*)

**Spike:** Is that the time?

(*He stuffs a few things into a backpack, slings it up, and is flying out the door even before Rarity can finish her indignant yelp. Out in the corridor, he rounds a corner and the unicorn catches up at a brisk trot.*)

**Rarity:** Of course you’re right. This *is* a bit of a late start and those gems won’t pick themselves.

**Spike:** Uh-huh.

(*Cut to just outside the front doors of the Castle, which burst open so Spike can continue his rattled flight—at least until Rarity exerts her field to pull him back.*)

**Rarity:** But the real question is— (*levitating out two wicker baskets*) —which basket do you want to hold?

(*One is considerably larger than the other, with shoulder straps attached to allow it to be worn on the back.*)

**Rarity:** The smaller one, right? (*Laugh.*)

**Spike:** Oh, right. (*He pushes it away, she drops both.*) Sorry, Rarity. Can I take a rain check on…what was that again? (*Another dumb grin.*)

**Rarity:** (*floored*) The…gem cave?

**Spike:** Right. Sounds great. But I need to get to the post office before noon. (*Close-up of Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** (*laughing airily*) All right, very funny. (*magically lifting baskets*) Obviously *you* get the bigger basket, and I sh—

(*The rest of the sentence dies on her tongue as the blue eyes pop in surprise and the containers hit the steps. A long shot reveals that Spike has bugged out.*)

**Rarity:** (*softly*) Spike? (*Zoom out to a long shot of the Castle and School of Friendship.*) Hello?

(*Not another living soul on either set of grounds. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: a patch of sparkles against the black screen, which form the outline for a largish gemstone that fades into view. It is pulled away in Rarity’s magic, the camera pointing out at her through the hole in the rock wall where it had been embedded. She is in the gem-studded cavern that she has visited on occasion in past episodes, and is wearing her bejeweled, blue-bowed, headlamp-equipped hard hat. In addition, she has donned a pale blue blouse with a gem pattern and a broad, light green ribbon tie. She keeps her voice down while in the cavern.*)

**Rarity:** I don’t understand. For as long as we’ve known each other, Spike has never turned down an opportunity to join me here. (*The cavern proper.*) It’s his favorite place!

(*Her magic tosses the stone over her shoulder; it clunks off the floor in close-up and the larger of her two baskets is set down next to it. Over at the wall, Rarity has floated a jeweler’s loupe up to her eye in order to do a bit of detailed examination.*)

**Rarity:** (*pointedly*) Ideally you catch the gems, dear. (*Multiple reflections appear in the facets of another; loupe gone.*) And for a trip to the post office, of all places!

(*This one is wrenched free and slung back, only to ricochet off the basket’s edge and graze a hind leg as it rattles to the floor.*)

**Rarity:** Maybe you should move closer? (*levitating another one loose with effort*) And why would Spike need to go to the post office at all? He sends mail by breathing! Breathing, darling! (*It shatters in her aura.*) Breath mail!

(*The fragments go flying across the cavern as the basket holder—Applejack—steps into the light and manages to catch exactly none of them. One end of a branch has been tied to the crown of the workhorse’s hat, and a lantern hangs on a string from the other to dangle in front of her face. With teeth clamped on one handle, she glowers at Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** Honestly, Applejack. If you’re going to fill in, you *could* make an attempt to hold the basket the way Spike would! (*Applejack spits it out.*)

**Applejack:** (*normal volume*) And how’s that?

**Rarity:** (*pushing lantern aside*) Well, for one thing, Spike knows how to keep things quiet so as not to waken the bats!

(*Green eyes flick fearfully up to the cavern ceiling and the dozens of sleeping bats that hang upside down from it. Now Rarity shifts the lantern away with her power so she can address Applejack at close range.*)

**Rarity:** *And* he usually follows me closely so no gem ever touches the ground!

(*Applejack sucks in a sharp breath and has to stop the light from bashing her in the face; meanwhile, a disconcerted Rarity twiddles a hoof over the surface of an outcropping.*)

**Applejack:** (*hushed, crossing to her*) Rarity, Spike’s been followin’ you closely since he got to Ponyville. And in case you hadn’t noticed… (*full volume*) *…I AIN’T SPIKE!!*

(*The increased decibels and the huff that follows them rouse the bats with remarkable efficiency. Cut to outside the mouth of the cavern as both mares exit at a yelping, yelling gallop to keep ahead of the swarm, having left the basket behind.*)

**Rarity:** ACTUALLY, APPLEJACK, I HAD NOTICED!!

(*They and the airborne rodents charge past the camera, the view wiping behind them to a pair of closed doors within the Castle. These are magically swung open to frame Twilight Sparkle hovering in the library, her field holding one book open at eye level and several dozen others in stacks. The interruption startles her into dropping the lot, but she manages a smile nonetheless.*)

**Twilight:** (*descending*) Um, hi, Rarity! What’s up?

(*Cut to the white unicorn at the doorway—accessories gone, mane/tail in a state of general ruination, and voicing a supremely frustrated sigh.*)

**Rarity:** Besides my mane? Well, that is a question for Spike. (*Pout; cut to Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*floating/stacking books*) Oh. Well, Spike isn’t here. I think he’s at the post office.

(*Something large and heavy begins to grind its way across the floor toward her, and a cut to Rarity picks it out as a couch she is pushing.*)

**Rarity:** Again? (*She flops to the cushions on her back.*) What is it with Spike and the post office?

(*She turns onto her belly and buries her face in a pillow as the Princess flies over to sit on the nearest table.*)

**Twilight:** Rarity, what’s going on? (*Rarity flips again.*)

**Rarity:** Spike declined my invitation to the gem cave, and I intend to find out why! (*Pillow over face.*)

**Twilight:** Hmmm…that doesn’t sound like Spike. Did you two have some sort of fight? (*Down; Rarity sits up.*)

**Rarity:** A fight? Goodness, Twilight, what in Equestria would we fight about?

**Twilight:** I’ve had arguments with friends before, and they can put a real strain on friendships.

**Rarity:** Well…certainly… (*lying down on back*) …but I think I’d remember if we had an argument.

**Twilight:** Maybe you didn’t realize it? Do you think you could’ve done something that unintentionally hurt his feelings?

(*The white mare’s eyes go very wide as she sits up indignantly.*)

**Rarity:** Well, if I didn’t realize what I did, how would I know what I have done when I did it?

(*A brainstorm hits under the rumpled purple mane, and she claps hooves to cheeks while voicing a stunned little bray. Off the couch she goes, scattering the stack of books Twilight holds with horn-power.*)

**Rarity:** I wonder if that’s it. (*pacing; Twilight gathers them up*) It certainly would explain his behavior. (*resolutely*) I must apologize!

**Twilight:** For what?

**Rarity:** Oh, pfft. That’s hardly the point. (*overwrought*) Poor Spikey-wikey! This calls for a grand gesture!

(*All four legs kick into gear to propel her out of the library, leaving its resident proprietor sitting confusedly amid the scattered literature.*)

**Twilight:** Okay. Good talk.

(*After a beat of silence, she takes in the extent of the mess and grumbles softly at the prospect of having to clean it up all over again. Wipe to a close-up of two taloned hands being held out across a counter, together with palms up. Derpy Hooves leans into view to transfer a twine-tied bundle of letters onto these from her mouth, after which the camera tilts up to frame the new holder as Gabby. She has barely enough time to grin and salute the pegasus before the sounds of an opening door and Rarity’s labored breathing interrupt. Cut to a longer shot; they are in the Ponyville post office, Derpy on duty behind the counter in her brown/white uniform, and a shadow of considerable size casts itself across them both in time with the grind of weight against the plank floor. A different camera angle frames the source as a large crate taller than either of them, filled to brimming with a mélange of items—gems, toys, muffin tins, comic books, and so forth—and adorned with a large green ribbon tied in a bow. The sight of this behemoth spooks Derpy into yanking down a roll-up door to close off the counter, while Gabby is too flabbergasted to stow the letters in the mail pouches she wears. However, she snaps to with a smile. Rarity has put her mane/tail back in order.*)

**Gabby:** (*hovering, plowing in/through crate to Rarity’s side*) Wow! That’s a big crate of stuff you’re mailing!

**Rarity:** I’m not mailing it. (*She stops pushing and crumples onto her back.*)

**Gabby:** Then why are you pushing it into the post office?

**Rarity:** (*noticing her for the first time*) Oh! I didn’t realize griffons worked at the Ponyville post office.

(*By the time this particular griffon extracts herself from the cargo and flies down to pull the mare upright, she has put the correspondence in her pouches.*)

**Gabby:** (*giggling*) Oh, no, I don’t work here exactly. (*holding up one pouch*) I’m the official mail carrier of Griffonstone. Gabby Griffon. (*Cut to Rarity; she continues o.s., holding out a hand to shake.*) Nice to meet you!

(*Rarity demurely smiles and offers a hoof, only for Gabby to seize it in both hands and deliver a bone-rattling, mane-mussing shake. Both pouches are strapped to her sides again.*)

**Rarity:** Ah, yes, well. (*patting mane back in place*) Uh, these things aren’t for sending, they’re for apologizing to Spike.

**Gabby:** Oh! Spike was just here! He went to go make us a— (*Close-up of Rarity on the end of this.*)

**Rarity:** That’s perfect! It’ll give me a chance to practice. (*pushing Gabby back a step*) Uh, you stand there and tell me if I hit the right apologetic notes. (*She climbs up and roots around in the crate.*)

**Gabby:** What are you apologizing for?

**Rarity:** Darling, I don’t see why that matters.

(*Her magic pitches a few items down for the out-of-towner to catch, followed by several dozen more that bury her completely. Talons flick a pair of loose jewels away to clear a field of vision for the blue-green eyes as the lights are switched off to cast the room in semi-darkness. Rarity rises to her hind legs, holding a crank-operated phonograph above her head, and drops to her hocks as a spotlight beam picks her out and a melodramatic orchestral score begins to play. The music is a perfect reflection of the tone she uses for the next line.*)

**Rarity:** And that is why I simply cannot bear the thought of having hurt you! (*Throw the player aside; stand up.*) And even though I don’t know what it is that I did, I want you to know that it doesn’t matter! (*Drop to hocks.*) Because I am prepared to do anything to make it right!

(*She throws herself full length on the floor with a shuddery sigh, holds the pose for a moment, then rises to her hocks.*)

**Rarity:** (*quietly*) And scene.

(*The spotlight and music shut off and the normal light level re-establishes itself. She gets on immediate response except for a string of indistinct mumbles from the junk pile covering Gabby.*)

**Rarity:** (*crossing to her*) Oh, sorry, dear. (*She levitates some of it away so Gabby can sit up.*)

**Gabby:** I said, “That sure sounds genuine.”

**Rarity:** (*needled*) Well, of course it sounds genuine. It *is* genuine! (*Gabby winds up buried again.*)

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

(*Pan to him at the open door, backpack gone and an ice cream cone in each hand.*)

**Spike:** What are you doing? (*He walks in.*)

**Rarity:** (*casually*) Obviously I’m working on my apology to you, Spike. (*leaning on pile*) I don’t know how I could be more genuine. I mean— (*Huge gasp; she realizes he is here.*) *Spike!*

(*An instant later, she has darted away, dimmed the lights, and dropped to hocks in her spotlight with phonograph above head. The soppy music and manner of speaking resume.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, Spike, I am so sorry! Please forgive me!

(*Standing up on her hind legs, she hurls the player to one side; a crash and cat’s affrighted yowl drift back, and the music stops.*)

**Rarity:** You have to forgive me! I don’t know what I did or why you are mad at me! (*Down to hocks again.*) Just please say you forgive me! (*sobbing, throwing herself at his feet*) Pleeeeease!

(*Tilt up from her to his hopelessly flummoxed visage.*)

**Spike:** Of course I forgive you, but, uh, what are you apologizing for? (*Spot off; lights on; she straightens up.*)

**Rarity:** (*angrily*) Why does everypony keep harping on that— (*catching herself*) —wait. Don’t *you* know?

**Spike:** No. I’m not mad at you about anything.

**Rarity:** B-But—but I don’t understand. If you’re not upset with me, why in Equestria would you refuse to go to the gem cave?

**Spike:** Uh, because I had other plans? (*Gabby bursts out to hover above the pile.*)

**Gabby:** With me!

(*She touches down next to the baby dragon, beaked and scaly faces beaming with delight—but those last two words cause Rarity’s mental machinery to seize up in a flash. She pulls in a lung-bursting gasp and gnaws a hoof in terror before the view fades to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the three and zoom in slowly.*)

**Rarity:** I don’t understand. You two know each other?

**Spike:** Gabby and I are sort of pen pals.

**Gabby:** Yeah! (*rapid fire*) There was this whole thing where I pretended to get a cutie mark because griffons don’t get cutie marks, so Princess Twilight had Spike send a bunch of letters off to Griffonstone about the first griffon ever to get a cutie mark— (*sheepishly, normal cadence*) —which I really didn’t have.

(*A highly condensed re-telling of the events of “The Fault in Our Cutie Marks.” She emphasizes the essential bits by first pointing to the clip on one of her pouches—given to her by the Cutie Mark Crusaders, and styled after their own marks—and then holding up Spike.*)

**Spike:** Gabby wrote back explaining things, and after that, we just started writing back and forth.

**Gabby:** (*taking an ice cream cone from him*) Turns out we have a lot in common! We both come from cultures that don’t have the friendliest of reputations.

**Spike:** (*licking his own*) And we’re both in the message-sending business!

**Gabby:** (*nodding*) Uh-huh!

(*They clunk their treats together in a toast and proceed to hork them down in one bite each.*)

**Gabby:** I sure wish I could send scrolls with my breath!

(*She and Spike share a hearty laugh, the camera zooming in on Rarity as she stare coolly at the pair and offers a little artificial mirth of her own.*)

**Rarity:** Yes. Now I understand why you didn’t come to the gem cave. Having a friend in town is a rare treat. (*Gabby and Spike gather up the spilled contents of the crate.*) Look, since you’re busy today, maybe we can do something tomorrow. Fabric shopping? I know how you love to pick out the colors.

**Spike:** Uh, actually, now that there’s a griffon at Twilight’s school, Gabby’s here all the time. (*Surprise from Rarity.*)

**Gabby:** (*dumping a load into the crate, dusting off palms*) Grandpa Gruff asks for a lot of updates about how Gallus is doing. (*Groan.*) Speaking of which… (*Hover down to Rarity/Spike.*) …I better get going!

**Spike:** (*dropping his armload, hovering up to her*) I’ll fly with you.

**Rarity:** Well, all right. You two fly along. I’m sure Spike and I can do something some other—

(*She stops short, realizing that they have exited the post office while she was talking. Cut to an overhead shot of its entrance, zooming out as she steps out to watch the two winged pen pals soar away, then back to a close-up of her.*)

**Rarity:** (*deflated*) —time?

(*Her entire demeanor crumbles into verge-of-tears dejection as she slumps against the doorframe. Dissolve to an extreme close-up of two lengths of cloth in nearly identical shades of purple, both held in her magic. These are pulled apart and away from the camera to frame her in a fabric shop; she glances indecisively from one to the other.*)

**Rarity:** I cannot decide which shade of purple is the most royal!

(*They are rolled back onto their spindles and tossed into a pile on the far side of the showroom that seems to shiver of its own free will. Next she brings down a pink bolt from an overhead cabinet.*)

**Rarity:** And there’s the pink! How will I ever choose?

(*A tilt of her head on the end of this line reveals that the weighty accumulation of textiles is being supported on Rainbow Dash’s back, with considerable difficulty.*)

**Rainbow:** (*straining a bit*) Too bad Spike’s not here. I bet he could help you narrow it down.

(*Cut to one window, through which Gabby and Spike can be seen delivering a package to a unicorn mare at her home. Rarity, dismayed, steps up and puts her face to the glass; close-up of her, seen from outside.*)

**Rarity:** (*muffled by glass*) He is a good sounding board, isn’t he?

(*Punctuated by the blue daredevil finally collapsing under the load she carries. Rarity turns her face away and fires up her horn to lower a set of blinds, blocking out the view; however; she cannot resist making a small gap for one last forlorn peek. The view undergoes a wavering dissolve to a softly focused, extreme close-up of her eye intently studying a tray of loose gems with the help of her loupe. One piece is magically lifted away; cut to her in a jewelry shop, standing across the counter from the impassive earth pony who runs the place, and zoom out. Spike is here with her, and he confidently pokes at her mane to get her to drop the gem into his waiting hands. A lick at the gleaming surface prompts a grimace of revulsion, and he passes it back with a disdainful shake of the head. Rarity in turn shoots a hard sidewise glance at the jeweler, who grins and sweats nervously at having been bowled out for offering poor-quality goods. Her field returns the reject stone to the tray and brings out a different one, which causes Spike’s eyes to pop wide open as soon as it touches his tongue. He delivers his verdict in the form of a grinning thumbs-up; Rarity grins in reply, and the jeweler smiles in relief and wipes his forehead dry.*)

(*Dissolve to a normally focused extreme close-up of her loupe-magnified eye going over a tray of stones, then cut to the counter. A different pony is in charge of the store now, this one an earth pony mare, marking the previous sequence as a flashback in Rarity’s mind. The unicorn sets the loupe aside, floats up one gem, and aims a smile behind herself—but the camera pans to frame only an empty patch of floor. Her face falls at the absence of her favorite assistant, and she puts out her tongue for a tentative lick at one facet that gives her no useful information whatsoever. Glancing out the window, she spots Gabby delivering a letter to Gallus, who tucks it away in the bags slung across his back. She is accompanied by Spike, he by Silverstream and Yona. Gabby pulls a camera from one pouch, passes it to Gallus, and pulls Spike close so he can snap a picture of the two. Gallus hands over the photo that slides out, and Gabby and Spike smile broadly over it. Zoom out through the window to frame a discomfited Rarity, who absently plunks a sack full of coins on the counter with her field and leaves with all the gems, to the jeweler’s delight.*)

(*Wavering dissolve to another softly focused flashback, this one of the exterior of a different shop, and zoom in on Rarity as she opens the door and emerges onto the step. A small shopping bag floats under her power, and she flicks her mane and trots serenely away so Spike can follow, carrying a very tall pile of much larger parcels. He stumbles at the edge of the step, but Rarity extends her influence to steady the lot. Smiling at his helpfulness, she leads him away down the block.*)

(*Another wavering dissolve shifts the view to the exterior of the same shop, normally focused and in the present day. The door swings open again so Rarity can exit, this time relying on magical muscle to move some purchases and her back to transport the rest. Despite her best straining effort, the load ultimately proves too much and she goes flat in a rain of boxes and bags. Across the way, she spots Gabby and Spike seated at a table outside the Ponyville Café to enjoy a pair of ice cream sodas. The glasses clink together in a toast, and griffon and dragon slurp down their drinks through straws. Once these are gone, Gabby pulls out the cherry that had topped hers and holds it out to Spike by the stem so he can take a bite. Rarity scowls at the display of camaraderie from her prone position on the step.*)

(*Wavering dissolve to a softly focused close-up of her lying on a lounge chair in the Ponyville Spa, wearing a robe and with a towel wrapped around her mane. A beauty treatment is slathered into her face, and her eyes are hidden behind cucumber slices—one of which is promptly yanked away by a tongue snaking into view from o.s. The exposed eye pops open in surprise and trains itself in that direction; cut to a longer shot framing Spike on the next chair over, having already gulped it down. He too is outfitted in robe and facial treatment, and he reads a magazine as Lotus files one of his head spines and Aloe does likewise with one of Rarity’s hooves. Both customers smile over the swipe, and Rarity’s corona plucks the cucumber from her other eye and passes it over so he can eagerly continue snacking.*)

(*Dissolve to a normally focused close-up of Rarity receiving the same pampering in the present. She floats the slice off one eye and o.s., but hears only a plop, and sits up while moving the other one away to see what has happened. Zoom out to frame the empty chair where Spike had lain; the first slice has landed on its pillow, and she glumly lies back down and begins to munch on the second.*)

(*Dissolve to an extreme close-up of a length of fabric being run through her sewing machine, the occasional pin being removed by her horn-glow, and zoom out to the sound of her pitiful little moan. She is working in her upper-story workroom/living quarters within the Carousel Boutique and has donned her tinted reading glasses. A few pins drift away and o.s., sticking themselves into a pincushion in close-up, and she pauses in her sewing.*)

**Rarity:** Could you bring the pincushion a little closer, dear? (*grumpily, bringing more up*) I suppose now that Spike’s always so busy with Gabby, I’m just now realizing how much his presence has meant to me over the years. (*A moment’s rumination.*) Even closer, darling. (*The pins are driven into the cushion.*) I don’t want to prick you.

(*Now she restarts the machine, her aura removing one pin as she continues but leaving others in place and causing the cloth to tangle up.*)

**Rarity:** I have to admit, everything feels a bit “less than” without him.

(*The cushion is thrust into her face, balanced on a light yellow hoof.*)

**Rarity:** Too close!

(*She topples to the floor; cut to frame her lying near Fluttershy, who has been pressed into duty as her assistant. The pegasus offers her free foreleg.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, darling, it’s no use. (*She allows herself to be pulled up.*) Thank you for trying. (*Fluttershy sits on her haunches.*) I’m just accustomed to the help of a small, highly attentive dragon.

**Fluttershy:** Maybe you should let Spike know how grateful you are for everything he’s done for you.

(*The designer’s mouth curves into a calculating little smile. Dissolve to a long shot of the Castle and School that night, zooming in slowly, and cut to Spike asleep in his room. The curtains are drawn, the lights down, and the zoom continues toward the snoring, nightshirt/nightcap-clad dragon before the view shifts to a close-up. A single-horned shadow casts itself over his form, disturbing his slumber; he rubs and opens his eyes, then utters a cry of fear and pulls the blankets up to his nose. A longer shot establishes the intruder as Rarity, who kindles a point of light at her horn tip; she stands on the bed, hunching down toward its occupant with a half-crazed grin, and is no longer wearing her glasses.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, I am sorry, Spike. I didn’t mean to frighten you.

**Spike:** (*drowsily*) Rarity? What are you doing here?

**Rarity:** (*hastily, sitting on haunches*) Well, I realize it’s late, or rather early— (*laughing*) —but I have a surprise and I just couldn’t wait to share it.

(*She fishes out a brochure, unfolded to expose a map marked with photos of gem clusters.*)

**Rarity:** The Great Gem Crevasse of the Crystal Mountains!

(*Big grin; he takes it from her, climbs out of bed, and crosses the room to turn on a lamp so he can study it properly. She douses her horn at the same moment. Reptilian green eyes widen at what he finds.*)

**Spike:** (*awestruck*) Whoa!

**Rarity:** It is only accessible once a year, and I thought a little day trip would make a wonderful thank-you for all the help you’ve given me over the years.

**Spike:** Oh. But…I’m supposed to meet Gabby today for her rounds.

(*Rarity’s good cheer turns brittle with remarkable speed.*)

**Rarity:** (*levitating/folding brochure*) I see. (*crossing to door*) Well, there’s always next year.

(*Stuffing it into a bucket of loose gems, she makes to let herself out.*)

**Spike:** You know what? (*pulling it out*) I’ll just write her a note. (*Rarity wheels back to him, all smiles again.*)

**Rarity:** Are you sure?

**Spike:** Absolutely!

(*He climbs up onto a stool at a desk, plucks a waiting quill from its inkwell, and begins to write as Rarity claps and grins blissfully. Dissolve to a long shot of the Ponyville train station, seen from across the tracks. It is now the following day; as a train pulls in, the camera cuts to the platform and one car door opens to let Rarity and Spike out. Both are now dressed in cold-weather gear, Rarity sporting a pair of sunglasses to boot, and Spike is hauling a large backpack stuffed to bursting with gems. He sets this down with a thump once all feet and hooves are on the platform.*)

**Spike:** Wow. Rarity, you weren’t kidding. The Gem Crevasse was amazing! I’ll be snacking on these for a week.

**Rarity:** What did I tell you?

**Gabby:** (*from o.s.*) Hey, Spike!

(*Zoom out to frame her, standing at the ticket window and passing in a few letters.*)

**Spike:** Gabby! (*crossing to her*) You won’t believe where I went today!

**Gabby:** Actually, I think I will. (*She pulls a scroll from her pouches.*) I got your scroll. The Great Gem Crevasse sounds a *lot* better than doing my rounds.

**Spike:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm.

(*He doubles back, pushes the overstuffed pack closer, and undoes one flap to show off the mineral bounty within.*)

**Gabby:** Wow! (*rising briefly to hind legs*) It was definitely better! (*hovering*) I gotta get back to Griffonstone, but you *have* to tell me all about the Crevasse tomorrow! (*She flies off.*)

**Spike:** Absolutely!

(*He gets the pack settled on his shoulders with a grunt.*)

**Spike:** Thanks again, Rarity. (*walking off*) What a great day.

(*She does not answer him, having become lost in her own thoughts as she gazes after the departing griffon. A bit of magic pulls the sunglasses down slightly, and the blue eyes shift worriedly in his direction. Dissolve to the exterior of Sugarcube Corner, the adjoining stretch of road thick with market stalls/carts and customers.*)

**Gabby:** (*from o.s.*) Okay.

(*She and Spike swoop in side by side, both free of their respective encumbrances; Spike has also shed his winter wear.*)

**Gabby:** Start from the beginning, because I want to hear everything!

**Spike:** Well, to get to the Crevasse, you have to climb across a rope bridge because the air’s too thin to fly! (*He does a lazy roll; Gabby turns to face him while still flying ahead.*)

**Gabby:** That is amazing! Then what?

(*Her failure to pay attention to the road leads to a collision with Rarity when the latter tries to cross it, having done away with her own warm clothes.*)

**Gabby:** Whoa! (*Rarity falls to her haunches, briefly dazed; Gabby helps her up.*)

**Spike:** Uh, sorry, Rarity!

**Rarity:** (*smiling, dusting herself off*) Oh, no apology necessary, Spike. In fact, I was just looking for you. (*He and Gabby touch down.*)

**Spike:** You were? Why?

**Rarity:** (*lighting horn*) Because I just acquired…*these!*

(*“These,” brought out as she says the word, are a pair of badges clipped to lanyards that depict a pegasus in superhero attire. After a moment’s close inspection, Spike’s eyes pop and a huge grin bisects his face.*)

**Spike:** Passes to Power-Pony-Palooza? For today? (*Rarity nods with a giddy, lip-chewing little squeal.*)

**Rarity:** I know we just went to the Crevasse, but I feel I’ve barely scratched the surface of expressing my gratitude for all you do.

(*The badges settle into his hands at nearly the same instant that Gabby’s spirits sink to roughly ten feet below ground level.*)

**Spike:** Well…of course I want to go, but… (*to Gabby; she instantly perks up*) …that’ll be two days in a row we haven’t hung out.

**Gabby:** (*laughing*) Are you kidding? It’s Power-Pony-Palooza. You *have* to go. And… (*Tiny hitch of breath; she holds up two talons.*) …now you’ll have two things to tell me about.

**Spike:** Okay! Come on, Rarity! Let’s go!

(*Four legs and two wings carry them away; Gabby waves goodbye brightly, but deflates all over again and slinks off down the street once they are out of range. Dissolve to the front steps of the Castle, where Spike is slowly hauling in a cart overflowing with souvenirs from the event and wearing a few more—shirt, cap, eye mask similar to the one he wore as Humdrum in “Power Ponies.” He blows out a breath and sits on the bottommost step, massaging his feet.*)

**Spike:** Are my claws sore!

(*Here comes Rarity, tricked out in a few keepsakes of her own that include a headdress styled as the wild green coiffure of the Mane-iac, the Power Ponies’ nemesis in that same episode.*)

**Rarity:** Indeed! I had no idea how much walking there is at a Power Pony convention.

(*She sits during this line, after which Spike lifts off and circles to the rear of the cart. An effort to get it up the steps fails when the harness struts swing down far enough to catch against the edge of the first one; he drops to the turf with a groan as a squeaky toy falls out.*)

**Spike:** I know I told Gabby we’d hang out tomorrow, but I might need the whole day to rest.

**Rarity:** (*sighing*) I know what you mean. (*lifting cart in her field*) Perhaps you could, uh, just send her another note.

(*Muscle and magic wrangle the load up to the doors.*)

**Spike:** (*laughing*) I think maybe you’re right.

**Rarity:** Honestly, I might need to spend tomorrow putting my hooves up as well.

(*Laughing, she gives him a brief hug and departs; he pushes the cart on in, knocking one door open with its front end. Dissolve to a long shot of the Castle and School at sunrise of the following day, zooming in slowly, and cut to just inside the closed front doors. A knock brings a very sleepy, nightshirt/nightcap-clad Spike on the wing; he pulls one door open to find an equally fatigued, swag-free Rarity on the steps.*)

**Rarity:** I hadn’t counted on Power-Pony-Palooza being quite so draining, but… (*levitating a boxed game out from behind herself*) …I thought we might spend the day recuperating together. (*Spike grabs it, forgetting his tiredness.*)

**Spike:** No way! Ogres and Oubliettes?

**Rarity:** Well, I know how much you enjoy it, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity for you to teach me the game.

(*Recall that this is the role-playing game that Big Macintosh, Discord, and Spike played in “Dungeons & Discords.” Grinning broadly, Spike leads her into the entrance hall. Wipe to a long shot of the Castle and School, the doors now closed, and zoom in slowly as Gabby loops into view with a thermos bottle in hand. It is now later in the day, and she homes in on the Castle doors before the camera cuts to the hall and she opens one to peer in.*)

**Gabby:** (*voice raised, echoing slightly*) Spike! I got your note! (*stepping in*) I figured I’d come by before my rounds with a bowl of energizing turnip soup!

(*No response; she flies through the hall and along a corridor, eventually picking up the sound of distant laughter by Rarity and Spike. Cut to an extreme close-up of a shut door, the next line sounding muffled at first but then becoming clear when Gabby opens it. She is treated to the sight of a now-rested Rarity and Spike sitting at a table loaded up with game paraphernalia in the library; the little dragon has changed out of his sleepwear.*)

**Rarity:** (*dramatically*) Can Princess Shmarity use her Shield of the *Coiffure* to defend herself from the Purveyor of Poor Color Coordination now?

**Spike:** (*shaking dice*) Uh, she can try.

(*Gabby’s eyes widen in mingled shock and disappointment, but neither player takes notice of her as Spike rolls the bones behind a cardboard screen.*)

**Spike:** (*hovering briefly*) Success! Shmarity’s shield holds against the green-eyed monster’s attack, and that—

**Gabby:** (*entering*) Spike?

(*The interruption freezes him in his tracks for a second.*)

**Spike:** Oh. Hi, Gabby. Uh, we were just—

**Gabby:** (*pulling out a scroll*) Your scroll said you were too tired to do anything today—but I guess you were just too tired to do anything with me!

**Spike:** N-No, no, no, no, that’s not true! (*climbing down from stool, crossing to her*) I-I can come with you on your rounds right now! (*She puts out a palm to stop him.*)

**Gabby:** I don’t think so, Spike. (*thrusting thermos toward him*) Maybe I’ll just handle the rounds on my own from now on!

(*She lets it thump to the floor and flies off, taking the scroll with her; he picks it up and considers it dispiritedly as Rarity floats a sheet of notes off the table.*)

**Rarity:** Ooh! Princess Shmarity uses her Prismatic Beam to change that poor monster’s color to a more pleasing shade of purple!

(*By the time she finishes, the slit-pupiled green eyes look ready to uncork a flood of tears. Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a shelf loaded with fabrics, the camera pointing out through them and into the fabric shop Rarity visited in Act Two. She leans into view, pushing a couple of samples aside and finally exerting her telekinesis to extract one; cut to her and a down-in-the-mouth Spike holding a basket. A second specimen is brought out and held alongside the first—s single color versus a pattern of white polka dots.*)

**Rarity:** What do you think, Spike? (*indicating each in turn*) Solids or prints?

**Spike:** (*sighing heavily*) Prints, I guess. You already have a lot of solid colors.

(*The single-colored textile goes back on the shelf.*)

**Rarity:** Ooh, you are so right. (*dropping the dotted material in his basket*) Prints it s. (*They cross to the sales counter.*) So nice to have you back, Spike.

(*She maneuvers the whole thing up to the countertop for a unicorn mare clerk to ring up, while the little guy turns to a window in close-up and espies an equally glum Gabby plodding down the street, pouches slung up. On the next line, she pulls out her camera, aims it at her own face, and snaps a picture of herself grinning and flashing a V-for-Victory sign with her free hand.*)

**Rarity:** (*from o.s.*) Although I hope you’re able to reconcile with Gabby.

(*The griffon’s false cheer evaporates as she pulls the photo from its slot, tosses it down, and bags the camera before trudging away.*)

**Spike:** I’m pretty sure she doesn’t want to.

(*The tiniest of whines escapes his throat and he looks as if he might melt into a puddle of high-proof misery on the spot. Dissolve to the pair in the jewelry shop seen in Act Two; now without her basket, Rarity looks over a tray of loose gems being shown to her by the jeweler. She selects two with her aura, one at a time, and brings each down to rub against Spike’s tongue for a taste test. Receiving only an apathetic shrug, she returns them to the tray and grins apologetically to the jeweler.*)

(*Dissolve to the exterior of the shop she visited in that same act. The door swings open under her control so she can trot out with a bag; several seconds later, Spike emerges at a glacial pace, towing a stack of considerably larger boxes. The purchaser aims a worried frown his way as she adjusts her pace to match. Another dissolve shifts them to side-by-side lounge chairs within the Ponyville Spa; both are kitted out in robes and facial treatments, and Rarity has towels on her mane and cucumbers on her eyes. One of these is floated away and waved in front of Spike, whose lethargy does not shift even one iota even after she parks it on his eye and it slides off.*)

(*Dissolve to the entrance hall of the Castle, the two stepping in through an open front door and without their spa accoutrements. Twilight backs slowly into view, pulling a couch piled with full trash bags in her field.*)

**Rarity:** I quite enjoyed our day together, Spike.

**Spike:** (*woodenly*) Yeah.

**Twilight:** Hi, Spike.

**Spike:** Uh-huh.

**Twilight:** (*to Rarity*) Hmmm. I’ve never seen Spike this sad before. (*Rarity slaps on an artificial grin.*) Do you know what happened?

**Rarity:** (*clearing throat*) Yes, well, perhaps he’s still just tired from Power-Pony-Palooza.

**Twilight:** I don’t think that’s it.

**Rarity:** (*stretching her words out*) I suppose it’s possible it could have something to do with— (*under a cough*) —Gabby not wanting to spend time with him anymore. (*Twilight’s eyes pop.*)

**Twilight:** What? I thought the two of them were hanging out all the time.

**Rarity:** They were! (*floating a couch over to herself, flopping onto it*) Honestly, it took everything I had to convince him to spend any time with me at all. (*smiling*) But between crystal gem crevasses, Power Pony conventions, and a marathon game of O-and-O, I managed to get some time in.

**Twilight:** (*scowling*) It sounds like you made sure he didn’t have any time to spend with Gabby at all.

(*Now the blue eyes pop in indignant surprise.*)

**Rarity:** What? Pfft! (*sitting up, turning away, crossing forelegs*) I certainly did not.

(*A cocked-eyebrow gaze from the resident Princess causes her to relent a bit.*)

**Rarity:** Well, I…suppose I may have monopolized him a teeny bit. (*She sighs deeply as Twilight climbs onto the couch.*) I’ve just grown so used to having Spikey-wikey around. I wasn’t prepared for how much I’d miss him when he wasn’t.

**Twilight:** (*patting Rarity’s shoulder*) Friendships change. (*smiling*) But just because Spike made a new friend doesn’t mean he stops being yours.

**Rarity:** (*petulantly*) I know, but now I have to share him! (*gradually shifting to a smile*) Which I suppose I’ll have to get used to. (*Gasp.*) Right after I fix this mess I’ve made!

(*She is off the couch and out the door like a shot.*)

**Twilight:** (*nodding, satisfied*) Good talk.

(*Realizing that the intended recipient of these words has left the building, she rolls her eyes wearily and lies down with hoof to forehead. Wipe to the post office, whose window is open for business and staffed by Derpy; she passes a batch of letters to Gabby, who slips them into one of her pouches with a heavy sigh. She turns to leave; cut to just outside the closed door as she opens it and steps out. A blip of record static brings her up short, issuing from a phonograph held aloft by a most contrite Rarity on her hocks. Scattered around the mare are various items from her activities with Spike; the melodramatic music from her Act One visit to the post office begins to play.*)

**Gabby:** Rarity, is all this stuff for Spike again? (*turning away huffily*) Wouldn’t it be easier to just give it to him? And why are you even here?

**Rarity:** (*throwing phonograph aside; music stops; sheep’s alarmed bleat from o.s.*) I am here to apologize, actually, more to confess. And all of this stuff isn’t for Spike. (*overwrought*) It’s the evidence against me!

**Gabby:** (*puzzled, turning to her*) Evidence? For what?

**Rarity:** (*standing*) For my acts of utter selfishness!

**Gabby:** I don’t understand.

**Rarity:** (*leaning toward her, pushing a hoof-load into her chest*) These are the items I used to lure Spike into spending as much time with me as possible!

**Gabby:** They are? (*pushing her back*) You did?

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

(*Cut to him, walking up and carrying an ice cream cone.*)

**Spike:** What are you doing?

**Rarity:** (*calmly*) Well, obviously I’m apologizing to Gabby so the two of you can renew your friendship, Spike. (*to Gabby, melodramatically*) Now, please, even if you can’t forgive me, you simply must forgive—

(*Once her brain fully registers his presence, her performance comes to a grinding halt in the form of a huge gasp, and she drops all the goodies she holds.*)

**Rarity:** *Spike?!?* (*composing herself*) Oh, I actually owe you an apology too.

**Gabby:** You apologize a lot. (*Rarity sighs as Spike gulps down his cone. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Rarity:** I wish I didn’t need to, but the more time you two spent together, the more I missed my time with Spike— (*gathering up a few comics*) —and the more I used every means at my disposal to get it back. I am truly sorry. (*Spike gently pats her foreleg; close-up of the two.*)

**Spike:** You really missed spending time with me?

**Rarity:** (*dropping comics*) Oh, of course!

**Gabby:** (*from o.s.*) I have to say— (*All three again; she is addressing Spike.*) —after not hanging out with you, I understand why. (*beaming*) You’re kinda awesome! (*Rarity flinches; she continues calmly.*) And…I know what it’s like to miss that now, too.

**Spike:** So…do you think maybe we could start hanging out again?

**Gabby:** Absolutely!

**Spike:** (*blushing, scuffing a foot against the ground*) I don’t suppose you’d like some company on your rounds right now?

**Gabby:** I sure would!

**Rarity:** Wonderful! (*Close-up.*) I can’t tell you how pleased I am that the two of you have—

(*Words fail her in time with a cut to an overhead shot of the area; the two flyers have lifted off together and are flapping away. Back to ground level.*)

**Rarity:** (*laughing*) —reconciled.

(*She walks away. Dissolve to a close-up of a section of wall in the gem cavern, a pick chipping at the stone under her influence, and zoom out to frame her on the start of the next line. She is wearing a new mining outfit in shades of light/medium pink and blue: sun hat with headlamp and band tied in a large bow, blouse, shorts, neck scarf patterned with white diamonds. The next five lines are delivered in hushed tones.*)

**Rarity:** I suppose Twilight is right. (*She floats a stone free.*) Friendships do change.

(*It is directed back over her shoulder and o.s., but the near-simultaneous sounds of its fracture and bats’ chittering cause her to wince in fear.*)

**Rarity:** (*chiseling another one out*) Of course, Spike and I will always be friends— (*setting pick down*) —and I *can* get used to sharing him.

(*She propels this one behind herself after a lick, only to hear a string of nervous yelps from the direction. Pan to follow her glance across the cavern; here stands Pinkie Pie, headlamp-fitted hard hat over the magenta curls and a small basket of gems sitting nearby. She is up on her hind legs and bobbling this one back and forth, finally throwing herself onto her belly to catch it just short of the ground.*)

**Pinkie:** Sorry. I just didn’t want to drop another one and wake the bats.

**Rarity:** (*crossing to her, levitating basket*) Darling, catching the gems is what the basket is for.

(*This shot picks out the yellow edging on the sleeve cuffs of her blouse.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) Wow. You two need to be a lot quieter.

(*Cut to him, jumbo basket slung on back, headlamp strapped to forehead, and sliding down a rope that hangs down from the edge of a hole in the ceiling. He and Rarity approach one another, returning to normal speaking volume.*)

**Rarity:** Spike! How wonderful to see you! (*They embrace.*)

**Spike:** Yeah. Gabby and I had a great day— (*clasping her hoof*) —but I’ll always still want my Rarity time.

(*Her power brings the pick up from the floor, knocks a gem loose with one strike, and drops it into his basket. Now Pinkie hangs upside down into view from above.*)

**Pinkie:** (*slyly*) Ohhh, so *that’s* how it works!

(*All three trail off into a cacophony of shrill cries and screams as the bats wake up and swarm across the screen.*)

**Pinkie:** The bats! Get outta here!

(*Wipe to black behind them.*)