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MY LITTLE PONY

Season 7

Shadow Play – Part 1

Ep 725

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SHADOW PLAY

Outline by Josh Haber

TEASER:**SC. 1- STORYBOOK OPENING (*a la MLP 101*)**

In first person narration (but in a style similar to the storybook opening of the pilot) STARSWIRL THE BEARDED relates the origins of the PONY OF SHADOWS: Long ago, six legendary ponies were brought together by a seventh who seemed to have the noblest of intentions. He wanted to form a group that would stand for and protect everything that is good in Equestria. Unfortunately, Starswirl and the rest came to believe the seventh pony only wished to add their collective power to his own. Together Starswirl and the other Pillars of Old Equestria cast the seventh out of the group. Spurned, the seventh pony turned to dark magic and was transformed into a being of pure shadow. The Pony of Shadows returned and reigned terror upon the others and on all of Equestria. Desperate, Starswirl and the rest devised a means of defeating him. In first person, Starswirl describes how he hopes it will be enough...

SC. 2 - INT. CANTERLOT – CELESTIA’S CASTLE – DAY

We come out of the storybook to find Sunburst has been reading from Starswirl’s journal. He looks up at Celestia and Luna. “That’s it. That’s where it ends.”

END TEASER**ACT ONE****SC. 3 - INT. CANTERLOT – CELESTIA’S CASTLE – DAY**

Sunburst tells them all (Celestia, Luna, Starlight and the Mane Six) that he’s been studying Starswirl’s journal. Translating it from Olde Ponish was slow going, but he’s finally finished and can’t believe that these Pillars of old Equestria were actual ponies who all knew each other and it looks like The Pony of Shadows was real as well. He’s always wondered what happened to Starswirl, and now that he knows the other legends were real, he’s certain all of their disappearances are related. They must have been successful in defeating the Pony of Shadows, perhaps at a terrible cost. This journal might be the key to figuring out what happened and he’s brought it to Celestia and Luna to see what they know. Unfortunately they were young when Starswirl and the others disappeared. They, along with everypony else, have always wondered what happened. If Starswirl’s journal will help solve the mystery, they encourage him and the others to investigate.

SC. 4 - INT. PONYVILLE – TWILIGHT’S CASTLE – DAY

Twilight and the others discuss with Sunburst how best to go about the investigation and where to start. Sunburst relays an excerpt from the journal that describes the location where Starswirl and the other pillars planned to face off with the Pony of Shadows. He figures that’s the best place to start. Maybe there will be a clue there about what happened. Twilight asks where it is and Sunburst admits he isn’t completely certain, but he’s cross referenced Starswirl’s journal with some ancient maps of Equestria and has found the most likely candidate – a collection of ruins in the very heart of the Everfree Forest. Twilight knows the place and has the answer before Sunburst can even say it – PONDHEDGE.

SC. 5 - EXT. EVERFREE FOREST – PONDHENG – DAY

Sunburst leads them through the spooky forest to the ruins. It's a pillared, circular stone structure (think Stonehenge) with six pedestals surrounding a raised dais. Unfortunately, aside from the runes carved into the massive rocks that surround the site, there isn't much to see. The group fans out to try and find something. Disappointed, Sunburst sets Starswirl's journal down onto one of the pedestals and with a FLASH of light, he looks up to see STARSWIRL standing next to him. The others come running to see each of the PILLARS OF OLD EQUESTRIA, each standing by a different pedestal, each with an object (their artifacts) laid on top. Twilight tries to talk to Starswirl, but he doesn't respond. He shoots a blast of magic from his horn at the central dais. Instantly, darkness spreads out from the center and takes the form of THE PONY OF SHADOWS. Our heroes watch in terror as the Pony of Shadows blasts dark magic at the Starswirl and the Pillars – but the Pillars' magic is able to block it. The Pony of Shadows tells them that they may have been able to summon him, but they'll never defeat him. Starswirl tells him they don't intend to defeat him, they intend to contain him – forever. With that, Starswirl casts another spell, this time at his journal. The beam of magical energy splits out, connecting to each of the other artifacts, surrounding the Pony of Shadows. As the Pony of Shadows shouts for them to stop, each of the Pillars touches their artifact and with a BLAST of magic they all disappear, taking the Pony of Shadows with them. Sunburst and the other ponies all stare at the ruins as the vision fades. Rainbow Dash, "Um... What just happened?" Twilight walks over and picks up the journal from its pedestal. She explains that it and the other artifacts, were part of the spell the Pillars used to banish the Pony of Shadows. It was powerful magic and it left an impression on this place. Bringing the journal back here must have triggered something and allowed them to see what happened – Starswirl and the Pillars sacrificed themselves to save Equestria.

SC. 6 - INT. PONYVILLE – TWILIGHT'S CASTLE – DAY

Back home, Starlight prepares to take Sunburst to the train station to head back to the Crystal Empire. It's been a pretty amazing time. Sunburst can't believe they actually solved the mystery of what happened to Starswirl and the other Pillars so long ago. Starlight agrees, though she can't help but wonder what circumstances lead them all to such extents. She wonders what the spell actually did and why they felt it was their only option. They walk into the library to say goodbye to Twilight and find her surrounded by stacks of books. She tells them she thinks she's figured out the spell Starswirl used and what it actually did. The Pillars opened a door to limbo and pulled the Pony of Shadows inside trapping him there, and themselves along with him. Sunburst and Starlight are impressed, but Twilight tells them that's not all she's discovered. She thinks she's also found a way to pull Starswirl and the other Pillars back out!

END ACT ONE**ACT TWO****SC. 7 - INT. PONYVILLE – TWILIGHT'S CASTLE – LATER**

Twilight explains that Starswirl was the greatest wizard who ever lived. If there's even a chance she can save him, she's got to try. Sunburst, Starlight and the rest of the Mane Six (who have now gathered) are stunned. Applejack can't wrap her head around it. The Pillars disappeared ages ago. How can Twilight hope to rescue them now? Twilight explains that in limbo it's like they've been frozen and now she's just

going to thaw them out. She thinks she can reverse the spell that sent them there, she just needs to find the objects they used. Unfortunately, there's no way to know where those artifacts are. It's possible they were taken back to each Pillar's home town and enshrined by grateful ponies, or they could be lost. Twilight's research has come up with a few leads and as they try to figure out how best to organize the search, the ponies realize that the Pillars of Old Equestria bore striking parallels to the Mane Six. Just like the Mane Six, they defended Equestria from danger and each of the Mane Six feels an affinity for one of them: Applejack admires Rockhoof's strength; Dash, Flash Prance's loyalty; Pinkie is drawn to Somnambula's message of hope; Fluttershy to Meadowbrook's natural healing; and Rarity feels a kinship to Mistmane for the sacrifice she made to bring beauty to the world. Twilight and Starswirl are obviously birds of a feather and Dash points out the Starlight is even a bit like the Pony of Shadows, but also totally not, because she's reformed. They decide that while Twilight, Sunburst, and Starlight stay behind to work on the spell, the others will each look for the artifact of the Pillar to whom they feel connected. As Twilight goes over the first lead that her research turned up, her voice switches to VO and we transition to...

SC. 8 - EXT. ROCKHOOF'S VILLAGE – DAY

In VO, Twilight describes how the first location is easy, since Rockhoof's village is well known. Applejack looks out at it, nestled between a craggy, dormant volcano and the sea. She wonders how she will ever locate Rockhoof's shovel, and if it is even here.

SC. 9 - EXT. ROCKHOOF'S VILLAGE – BOARDWALK – DAY

To her surprise, Applejack discovers that the ancient village has become something of a tourist trap. Families of ponies walk along a boardwalk ducking in and out of souvenir shops and Rockhoof-themed restaurants – taking pictures with ponies dressed up as Rockhoof, etc. A tour passes and Applejack tags along. The GUIDE PONY points out several “authentic” sites where Rockhoof performed feats of strength. The tour ends at the supposed exact spot where Rockhoof finished digging the trench that led the stream of lava into the sea and saved the town. But it looks like the site of just another souvenir shop that specializes in “genuine Rockhoof shovels.” Disappointed, Applejack turns to leave, as she does she sees a TINKER PONY lose control of his wagon. The heavy wagon rolls down a small embankment and traps the Tinker. Applejack immediately rushes over and, using her powerful rear legs, lifts the wagon enough to free the Tinker. Bystanders remark she seems just about as strong as Rockhoof himself. Grateful, the Tinker digs through his wares and pulls out an old shovel. He tells Applejack he knows it isn't much, but it's all he has. His family always said it was Rockhoof's actual shovel, but he never believed it. Regardless, it's Applejack's now. Applejack reaches for it, the shovel glows at her touch. Off AJ's satisfied smile...

SC. 10 - EXT. FOREST VILLAGE – DAY

Twilight's research sends Rarity to a village where an Old Horticulturist is said to possess a flower that's been blooming for as long as anypony can remember. Suspecting that it's Mistmane's original flower, Rarity arrives at the old pony's greenhouse, though it appears abandoned. She goes inside to find an amazing array of flowers and plants, but overgrown to the point that it's practically a jungle. Rarity pushes her way through to a small clearing where a single orchid blooms in a shaft of sunlight. As Rarity reaches for the flower, it starts to glow, but suddenly the OLD HORTICULTURIST appears and demands that Rarity keep away from it. The orchid is all that's left of a once amazing collection of plants that had been in her family for generations. She's spent her life caring for the orchid and she'll never let it go.

Rarity looks around and realizes this is why the rest of the place is so neglected. Wasting no time, Rarity goes about restoring the place – pruning, trimming, and cleaning up – and before long she it looking like a first class botanical garden. Shocked at the change, the Old Pony realizes that her family’s collection had been there the whole time, just neglected. Grateful for bringing the place back to it’s former glory, she gives the orchid to Rarity as a thank you.

SC. 11 - EXT. DRAGONLANDS – DAY

Twilight tells Dash to head to the Dragonlands, hoping to find a clue about the location of Flash Prance’s shield. SPIKE goes along and they are joined by EMBER, who Spike contacted for her help. As they travel to one of the possible locations (according to Twilight’s research), Ember explains that they need to be on the lookout for a group of rouge dragons. A small band has been ignoring her decree to make peace with pony-kind. Somehow they’ve been able to resist the power of the bloodstone scepter which compels all dragons to obey her and she doesn’t know how. Spike tells Ember he’d like to help her with dragon politics, but he hopes they don’t run into the group all the same. As soon as Spike finishes talking he slips and falls, sliding down the side of gorge and right into the middle of a camp of dragons. They stand up and demand to know if he’s been sent by Ember to spy on them since they’re refusing to make peace with ponies. Suddenly, one of the dragons steps forward. It’s GARBLE who recognizes Spike and tells the others that Spike practically is a pony. As the dragons surround him we...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SC. 12 - EXT. DRAGONLANDS – DAY

While Spike fears for his safety, Ember and Rainbow Dash watch from far above. Ember doesn’t understand why these dragons are able to resist her decree. Whoever holds the bloodstone scepter is ruler over all dragons. Regardless this is something for her to deal with. She suggests that Dash continue looking for the artifact and she’ll take care of Spike. She starts to head down, but Dash tells her there’s no way she’s going to just leave them to deal with these dragons alone. Then Dash notices something about Garble. It looks like he’s wearing something on his back – it’s Flash Prance’s shield. Dash tells Ember the artifact must not only protect against Dragon Fire, but against Dragon Magic as well. Ember doesn’t know what to do, but Dash has a plan.

MOMENTS LATER

Garble and the other rogue dragons finish tying up Spike when Dash swoops in. She tells Garble she’s glad he doesn’t want to make peace with ponies. That way she can keep flying rings around him. She takes off, taunting Garble into following her. As soon as Garble and the shield are gone, Ember appears and uses the bloodstone scepter to make the other dragons untie Spike. Meanwhile, Dash actually does fly rings around Garble, since he’s weighted down by the shield. She tricks him into taking it off, then leads him right back to Ember who is able to command him once again. Ember thanks Dash and Spike for their help and wishes them good luck. Dash takes the shield and heads home.

MONTAGE

In VO, Twilight relates more of her research into the whereabouts of the remaining artifacts. In a quick montage we watch as she describes Fluttershy's relatively simple task of traveling back to the bayou and asking Cattail for his family heirloom – Mage Meadowbrook's mask. In similar fashion we see Pinkie Pie return to the Mysterious South where, with the help of Daring Do, she is able to retrieve Somnambula's blindfold from the pit of green slim in the ancient Pyramid of the Sphinx. As Twilight finishes her narration we transition to...

SC. 13 - INT. PONYVILLE – TWILIGHT'S CASTLE – DAY

As the Mane Six gather in the throne room with their artifacts, Twilight and Sunburst continue to work on the spell that will release the Pillars of Old Equestria from limbo. As they put the finishing touches on the spell, Starlight wonders if they are doing the right thing. Twilight and Sunburst are shocked – they're working to free some of the greatest ponies who ever lived from an eternal prison. What could possibly be wrong with saving Starswirl the Bearded? That's just it, Starlight reasons. Starswirl and the other Pillars were the bravest, most-selfless, smartest ponies ever – if they decided the best way to save Equestria was from them to be trapped in limbo, maybe that's where they should stay. Twilight understands Starlight's logic, but insists that she knows Starswirl probably better than anypony else. If there's a chance that they can succeed, she feels certain that Starswirl would want them to try.

SC. 14 - EXT. PONDHEDGE – DAY

Twilight and the rest arrive at the ruins. Each of the Mane Six place the artifact they found on one of the pedestals surrounding the central dais. Sunburst and Starlight stand to the side as Twilight starts the spell. She shoots a blast of magic at Starswirl's book and the energy travels around the circle connecting to each of the other artifacts. On Twilight's cue, the other ponies all touch their artifact at the same time and in a FLASH OF LIGHT the Pillars of Old Equestria appear – standing next to their Mane Six counterpart! As the light fades the Pillars look around disoriented. STARSWIRL turns to Twilight and asks where they are. Excited, Twilight tells him they're in Equestria. She explains how she was able to reverse the spell that trapped them all in limbo. She's brought them back! Starswirl looks at her in shock. "You did what!?" Assuming Starswirl's shock is of the impressed variety, Twilight starts to explain the details of the spell, but Starswirl stops her. He tells her she has to undo it. Twilight doesn't understand, because it sounds like Starswirl is asking her to send them back to limbo. Starswirl insists that's exactly what he wants – but before Starswirl can even finish talking, a ball of light appears over the central dais. It grows and suddenly turns black as darkness spills out and coalesces into the form of THE PONY OF SHADOWS! As Twilight and the rest look on with horror we...

END PART I