

What Lies Beneath

Beats by Michael Vogel

TEASER

The students are all in class and Twilight is going over her last lesson before FINALS. She's discussing (in very broad terms) the Tree of Harmony and what it is. She explains that no one knows everything about the Tree and it always works in mysterious ways. End of teaser we see crystal roots growing out of the school grounds.

ACT ONE

The students are at the library studying for finals. Cozy Glow is there (she volunteered to be the Student Librarian) and is doing her typical Cozy Glow stuff, but is not the catalyst to anything. It is actually the student's stress about the upcoming test that creates the tension. They are all getting on each others nerves (Gallus didn't study at all and is useless, Smolder gets annoyed that Ocellus knows ALL the answers, Silverstream tries to help but keeps getting everyone more confused, even Sandbar is getting annoyed). Finally Sandbar DOES lose his cool and says that maybe the upcoming summer vacation is what they need. They could all use a break from each other. He storms off (embarrassed he actually lost his temper) and trips over crystal roots growing out of a grate on the floor. The students examine it and discover a path leading down underneath the school. They hear somepony calling to them specifically and go down to investigate...

They find themselves in strange Crystal Catacombs. More surprisingly they find Twilight Sparkle – they only see her reflection in the walls, like she's always just ahead of them as she leads them deeper into the catacombs. Twilight tells them that their final has begun. The students are confused, what does she mean? The final isn't until tomorrow! Very seriously, she explains that their final IS in fact right now. They all need to get to the exit and return to the library in ONE hour's time (a cool hourglass or something can be used to visualize the ticking clock). It has to be all six of them, together. If one fails, they ALL fail. They will be expelled from the school (and .. you know... trapped in the caverns forever). Gallus points out that the exit is LITERALLY right behind them. "Is it?" she says. The crystal walls all twist and turn magically, hiding the exit from sight. The crystal floors tilt as well, splitting the friends up!

ACT TWO

The friends each find themselves alone in different parts of the cavern. Wherever they are, the hourglass is present, showing them time is of the essence. It all seems pretty straightforward, no big deal. Unfortunately, each of them is faced with their BIGGEST fear as an obstacle to rejoining their friends. We will intercut back and forth as time ticks away and they get closer and closer to failing. But the gist of it is that they all have to overcome their fear and work through it so that they don't let their friends down.

GALLUS: Has to solve a series of puzzles, each one causing the cavern to get smaller and smaller, bringing up his fear of enclosed spaces. He needs to use his CLEVERNESS to get back to his friends without getting trapped forever.

SILVERSTREAM: Hears (SUPER production friendly) sounds of The Storm King and the Storm Guards coming after her. She hides, paralyzed by fear. But as time ticks away she realizes she has to be there for her friends. She amps herself up and uses her over the top ENTHUSIASM to greet The Storm King and the Storm Guard, but by embracing her fears she quickly finds there's no one there.

YONA: Rushes down a spooky cave. NOTHING is going to stop her from getting to the exit! Until she runs through a web. And then another one. Yona HATES webs. Webs mean.... spiders! Yona HATES spiders. As spiders of all shapes and sizes appear in the cavern, Yona has to use her TENACITY to push through and find her friends (we play up the comedy of the huge tough yak being afraid of tiny little spiders).

OCCELUS: Finds herself in a room of mirrors. In each one she sees her reflection staring back. But she isn't cute innocent Occeus. She has reverted back to an evil changeling. The images get worse and worse as she deals with her fear that no matter how nice she is, there's an evil monster inside, just waiting to get out and hurt the creatures she loves. She can't let her friends see her like this, but she also can't let them down. In the end, the INNOCENCE of her spirit helps her to decide to help her friends escape, even if it means showing them what she is most afraid of.

SMOLDER: Wanders through the caverns and comes upon... a tea party?! Yes. An adorable tea party with adorable ponies doing adorable things. It's literally SICKENINGLY sweet. She tries to leave but the ponies make it clear. She isn't going anywhere unless she dresses up and leads the tea party. As embarrassing and upsetting as this is to her dragon sensibilities, Smolder has the COURAGE to step out of her comfort zone and do something she HATES for the sake of her friends.

SANDBAR: Wanders the caverns and comes upon the rest of the Mane 6 (no Twilight). They tell him they need his help to find Twilight! She's lost in the caverns! Sandbar of course wants to help his idols, given how much he looks up to them. But as time keeps passing he gets more and more concerned that he won't be there for his friends. The Mane 6 keep coming up with reasons for him to stay, ultimately telling him that he's better than the other students anyway and he doesn't need them. Sandbar finds the inner PEACE to overcome his fear of confrontation and stands up to his heroes. Telling them that they are wrong and that he has to be with his friends.

ACT THREE

GALLUS, SMOLDER and YONA will make it out of their fears first and get to the exit (finding it almost completely covered over with crystal, making the stakes clear). But when the others don't show, they will split up to find them. GALLUS will help

SILVERSTREAM with confronting her Storm King fear and SMOLDER and YONA will help OCELLUS realize that there is no chance of her ever being evil.

They will all find Sandbar just as he gives a speech to the Mane 6 on his and the others' friendship and how strong it is which will really sum up the emotion of the episode. He basically says that he is actually sad they're all going home for vacation and he doesn't know what he would do without them. Being with them feels like where he belongs. When Sandbar finishes his speech the Mane 6 will disappear and the path to the exit will be clear. They all rush back to the exit together.

Reflection Twilight shows up again, congratulating them on passing their test. As she fades away she tells them that passing this proves they're ready for any future tests that might come their way and with that the exit out re-opens. Ocellus will realize in some TBD way that Reflection Twilight was the Tree of Harmony talking to them. Apparently the Tree DOES work in mysterious ways. Gallup says this particular way was pretty harsh, he would have preferred a kinder gentler tree like in the lessons REAL Twilight taught them. The others agree that whatever the Tree needed to teach them must be pretty urgent.

They crawl out and find Cozy Glow. She asks where they've been but they say she wouldn't believe them if they told her. Once she leaves, they all discuss what happened and it's clear that they've learned their lesson: They are stronger together and belong together. Friends For Life. They decide that they should keep this quiet until they know what, exactly, the Tree was doing and why it chose them.

The next day, the EXHAUSTED students show up for a pop quiz in Twilight's class. It's a test... about the Tree of Harmony. As the students all groan we end the episode.