

MY LITTLE PONY
Season 9

Sparkle's Seven
EP 904

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SPARKLE’S SEVEN (ALT. The Sibling Crown Affair)

Outline by Nicole Dubuc & Josh Haber

Logline: *Shining Armor gives Twilight a chance to determine once and for all who is sibling supreme when he challenges the Mane Six and Spike to test his defenses on Celestia’s castle.*

TEASER**SC. 1 - INT. SCHOOL OF FRIENDSHIP – TWILIGHT’S OFFICE - DAY**

SPIKE enters with a scroll he’s just coughed up for TWILIGHT. He’s not sure who it’s from or what it means. There’s just a picture of a ratty-looking tinfoil toy crown with a short message: *“Meet me at Celestia’s castle.”* Twilight gasps – she knows exactly who sent this! Her brother, Shining Armor. She explains to Spike...

FLASHBACK – TWILIGHT & SHINING ARMOR’S CHILDHOOD HOME

We see FILLY TWILIGHT and COLT SHINING ARMOR as Twilight narrates the tale. As brother and sister, the two young ponies always had a friendly competition going. To make sure it never got out of hoof, their PARENTS kept a gold-star chart. Twilight and Shining Armor would get stars from their parents for doing chores, getting good grades, helping friends, sharing, or even telling a good joke. At the end of the week, the pony with the most stars would be declared Sibling Supreme. (Spike interjects, *“Guess that explains your love of charts.”*)

With the title went the crown – the same one from the picture, though looking less “used”. Twilight explains that as time passed, the crown went back and forth between both ponies. But just before Shining Armor moved out to be Captain of the Canterlot Guard, he had won the crown for the week. When he left, he took it with him. And with no brother around, her parents stopped giving out stars. Twilight still holds a grudge that she wasn’t able to win it back.

SC. 2 - INT. SCHOOL OF FRIENDSHIP – TWILIGHT’S OFFICE – RESUME

Spike points out that if Twilight had been the last one to get the crown, Shining Armor wouldn’t have been able to win it back either. Twilight sighs – Spike doesn’t have any siblings, he wouldn’t understand. *“Well, you’re like my big sister. Hey! Maybe we can have our own Sibling Supreme challenge,”* Spike offers. Twilight shakes her head – it’s sweet of him to offer, but it’s not the same. Besides, the fact that Shining Armor has sent this picture means he’s ready to reopen the competition! May the best sibling win! She trots off happily, not realizing that she’s hurt Spike’s feelings.

END TEASER**MAIN TITLES****ACT ONE**

SC. 3 - INT. CELESTIA’S THRONE ROOM – DAY

Twilight enters to find PRINCESS CELESTIA, PRINCESS LUNA and SHINING ARMOR waiting for her. He’s wearing the tatty crown, but he takes it off and places it on one of the thrones, telling her, *“I know you’ve always held a grudge that I’m the one that walked away with this....”* *“Grudge? Pfff. What grudge?”* Twilight says, trying to play it cool. *“But here’s your chance to win it back.”* Celestia explains that with the unexpected return of Sombra, she and her sister felt it was time to upgrade their castle’s security system. Luna would have preferred to handle it themselves, but Celestia insisted that they bring back their old Captain of the Guard for the job. Shining Armor preens. He’s pretty proud of what he’s put in place, but he needs somepony to test it. If Twilight can get past his defenses to break in, steal the crown, and get out, she’ll win the Sibling Supreme title back – and he’ll know what he needs to do to fix his security. But if she can’t, he keeps the crown, and stays Sibling Supreme forever.

Twilight jumps at the chance to compete (after checking that it still counts – since mom and dad aren’t judging it, but Celestia says she and Luna will). Besides, how hard can it be to get past one of her brother’s shield spells?

Shining Armor interrupts – oh no. This isn’t just a shield spell. *“The security has to work without anypony around to activate it. That’s why I’ve designed a multi-tiered, impenetrable, triple-backed up line of defense.”* Twilight gulps as Shining Armor shares the details...

STYLIZED “OCEANS 11” MONTAGE OF DEFENSES

Shining Armor explains that the castle is shielded from anycreature teleporting in by a special ground barrier of powdered bits of Queen Crysalis’ throne, acquired from the Changelings. Its magic-dampening powers have been recharged and specially tuned by Starswirl the Bearded to prevent spell-travel into the castle. Anypony entering the castle will have to come through the main gates, which are guarded by Canterlot’s Finest.

Even if somepony were able to get inside (which they aren’t), they’d be caught immediately by the Guards posted at every door and hallway. Shining Armor has enlisted so many new Castle Guards, there isn’t a square foot of the castle that doesn’t have somepony posted at it *and* every locked door can only be opened with a Royal Guard medallion.

And if you were somehow able to get inside the impenetrable castle and past the impassible guards – the throne room itself is the safest place in Equestria. The room is ringed by GEESE, nature’s alarm system, who will alert the guards with their honking cries if anypony enters. Plus, the thrones are protected by a magical force field that’s triggered by the slightest hoofstep– causing a pit to open in the floor, trapping any intruders.

Twilight says it sounds like there’s no way to get in by hoof, but Shining Armor knows what she’s thinking... *“You can’t fly in either,”* he smirks. Giant wind turbines have been set up around the castle roofs, to blow away any flying creatures that might try to access the castle from above. And all the entrances to the catacombs under the castle have been sealed, so getting in from below is out too... WIPE TO:

SC. 4 - INT. TWILIGHT’S CASTLE – THRONE ROOM – LATER

PULL BACK from several black boards filled with intense diagrams and blueprints of the castle defenses. Twilight has just finished explaining them to Spike and the rest of the MANE SIX. Shining Armor may have come up with great security, but he’ll never expect Twilight’s master plan. She explains how they’ll play to their strengths: PINKIE PIE will provide a party distraction outside, APPLEJACK will buck her way into the caverns, RAINBOW DASH will fly past the wind turbines, RARITY will provide Guard disguises, FLUTTERSHY will befriend the Alarm Geese, etc. But the second she finishes talking, Spike coughs up a note from Shining Armor in which he correctly guesses the plan Twilight just laid out and hopes she can come up with something he won’t expect.

Stymied, Twilight considers giving up – nopony knows her better than Shining Armor, but Rarity steps up and explains that’s exactly how they’re going to beat him. With a quick transition into SHADOW SPADE, Rarity informs them that Twilight can’t be the mastermind behind the Great Crown of the Sibling Supreme Heist, because that’s exactly what Shining Armor would expect. Instead, they need to do the opposite of that – which means she’ll be running the show. And as the leader of the mission, she encourages each of them to plan their own role, even if it plays *against* their strengths!

FANTASY SEQUENCE

As Rarity continues we shift into a humorous, over-the-top sequence where:

- Dash and Rarity (as Shadow Spade) in Film Noir-style, burst into a Canterlot “dive-bar” and shake down a few NE’ER DO WELL PONIES for the location of the secret entrance to the caverns under the Castle. Ne’er Do Well: *“But, Shining Armor sealed them all. There is no secret entrance.”* Rarity: *“THERE’S ALWAYS A SECRET ENTRANCE!”*
- Pinkie volunteers herself as their “eye in the sky” – she’ll take a hot air balloon all the way into OUTER SPACE, because A) she’s always wanted to go there, and B) that’s where you get the best view!
- Applejack volunteers to distract everypony outside with a farewell performance of her as yet unheard of alter ego and famous country western super star, APPLE CHORD (also taking time to detail her backstory: the hard road along her rise to stardom, her inevitable setback dealing with celebrity, the success of her redemptive, comeback tour, etc.).
- Spike and Fluttershy will make their way through the Castle’s ventilation system as the most daring, acrobatic spies the world has ever known. Fluttershy points out she doesn’t love small spaces which is why it will be totally a surprise!
- And Twilight won’t be involved at all because that’s the last thing her brother would ever expect.

SC. 5 - INT. TWILIGHT’S CASTLE – THRONE ROOM – RESUME

Resume to see the master plan has been added to so much it can no longer be contained to the blackboards (based on a true story, BTW). Ridiculously over-complicated charts and arrows and

graphs have been drawn all around the room, filling up all the available space. Rarity points at it all, triumphant, and Twilight has to agree. Shining Armor will *never* expect this.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SC. 6 - EXT. CANTERLOT – NIGHT

High on a hilltop overlooking Canterlot, the team assembles and reviews the plan. Rainbow Dash and Rarity will try to find a secret entrance to the caverns. Spike and Fluttershy will attempt to enter the ventilation system from above, and Applejack will be a distraction. Meanwhile, Pinkie Pie will be the team’s look out, and Twilight will do her best to act suspicious without actually being integral to the plan at all.

Dash goes over her intel on the wind turbines with Fluttershy and Spike (the Wonderbolts did a few flybys as a favor to test the air system). The turbines blow outward, creating a vortex with a very narrow passage through them (think Luke’s run on the Death Star). Fluttershy and Spike will have to stick to the precise air route, while Pinkie, flying high in her hot air balloon (“*You can’t get higher than space!*”), will block their approach and keep watch over the whole plan. Pinkie can’t wait and starts her ascent—donning her space suit to match GUMMIE’S. Meanwhile...

SC. 7 - EXT. CELESTIA’S CASTLE – SAME

AJ arrives outside the Castle and starts to set up her concert, in full view of Shining Armor and the Palace Guards who are at a loss as to how this “country western super star,” who is clearly Applejack trying to distract them, could possibly distract them. All the while Shining Armor keeps a close watch on Twilight who innocently strolls the grounds, just “*looking at the flowers.*” Shining Armor: “*I know you’re up to something, Twily.*”

Meanwhile, high above, Fluttershy and Spike start their covert mission through the dangerous vortexes from the turbines, when Pinkie’s balloon suddenly gets caught in the cross streams. It jerks right and collides with her friends, knocking them off course and into the intersecting jet streams. Pinkie screams (“*Ponyville, we have a problem!*”) as they all go tumbling and everypony in the courtyard below looks up in shock!

Twilight can’t help herself and soars to Pinkie’s aid, flying high to save her friend. Below, the guards watch the peril, completely distracted in a way that AJ’s “performance” couldn’t achieve. “*Looks like Apple Chord shoulda started her comeback tour in Las Pegasus,*” she grumbles. Still, an opportunity is an opportunity, and AJ manages to grab one of the guards’ special medallions while he cranes his neck to the sky.

Twilight rescues Pinkie, but has no idea if Fluttershy and Spike made it into the castle or not. Pinkie isn’t confident – they all got pretty jumbled up in the air – “*Which never would’ve*

happened if I'd been in space,” she reflects. Twilight sighs – she hopes things are going better for Rarity and Rainbow Dash...

SC. 8 - EXT. CANTERLOT – ENTRANCE TO THE CATACOMBS – SAME TIME

Rarity and Rainbow Dash arrive at the “dive-bar” location from the fantasy sequence, but there’s no building there, and thus nopony to shake down for answers. *“This worked much better in my imagination,”* Rarity explains to Rainbow Dash, who grimaces. They spot a familiar-looking guard (ZEPHYR BREEZE) standing by a sealed archway. If only there was some way to distract him long enough to unseal the door and see if it leads to the catacombs... Dash realizes what Rarity is thinking. *“Oh no. No way. Uh uh!”* She protests. Rarity says it’s something nopony would expect... With a sigh, Dash agrees...

...and soon approaches Zephyr in a femme fatale type dress. *“Fancy meeting you here,”* she says, awkwardly attempting to channel her inner Rarity. Zephyr grins, *“Rainbows! I knew you wouldn’t be able to stay away when you heard I got this job. I know how much the mares love a pony in uniform,”* he says in his usual clueless, offensive way. Dash grits her teeth and keeps him talking while Rarity uses her magic to unseal the archway. Just when Dash is about to scream in frustration, Rarity successfully opens it and slips in, waving for Dash to follow. Dash manages to dart away while Zephyr goes on about how he may have just started his new job with the Royal Guard, but it really feels like a calling, you know? Actually he’s, like, 98% sure it something he’ll be doing for the rest of his life... He continues, oblivious, as the two ponies sneak past him and into the catacombs, sealing the way behind them.

SC. 9 - INT. CANTERLOT CATACOMBS – CONT.

The catacombs are smelly, slippery, and tight. Rarity and Rainbow Dash are basically sneaking through the Canterlot sewers (though we won’t call that out blatantly), much to their disgust. Rarity says she hopes Twilight’s tinfoil crown is worth this! Rainbow Dash reminds her that they’re also helping to protect the castle, so... Rarity holds her nose and ventures on. As they do, they discover Shining Armor did his job well. Most of the side passages have been sealed. There’s only one way to go... Up. Rarity, *“I hope the others are having an easier time of it.”*

SC. 10 - EXT. CANTERLOT CASTLE WALL – SAME TIME

Fluttershy and Spike cling to the side of the castle, slowly scaling its wall. Having been knocked off course, they can’t fly back up into the wind storm from the turbines, so making progress is taking awhile. On the bright side, they weren’t able to get into the ventilation system, so Fluttershy doesn’t have to worry about the small space. Finally, they reach the throne room window – Spike can see the crown!

SC. 11 - INT. CELESTIA’S THRONE ROOM – CONT.

But as he and Fluttershy quietly climb in and glide silently to it, the door opens – and Luna walks in! Panicking, the duo land behind the thrones to hide, accidentally activating the pit trap! Fortunately for them, the sound wakes the alarm geese whose frantic HONKING draws Celestia

and several guards. To busy trying to calm the panicking fowl, nopony notices Spike and Fluttershy fall into the pit and tumble into an oubliette. It looks like they escaped undetected, unfortunately the throne room floor closes above them—trapping them in a small space and Fluttershy starts to freak out!

SC. 12 - INT. CANTERLOT CATACOMBS – SAME

Meanwhile, Rarity and Dash continue to make their way through the catacombs only to come to a dead end. It looks like they’re stuck too.

SC. 13 - EXT. CASTLE – SAME

Outside Twilight frets. She hasn’t heard from anypony yet, so something must have gone wrong. “*Probably several somethings,*” Pinkie unhelpfully points out. Twilight is bummed. With Pinkie, AJ and herself stuck outside, and the others who knows where, it looks like the heist is a failure. In a stylized three-way split screen we see that is pretty much the case. Looks like Twilight can kiss her crown goodbye.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SC. 14 - INT. UNDER CELESTIA’S THRONE ROOM – DAY

As Fluttershy continues to freak out about the small space, Spike tries to distract her with conversation. He tells her how excited he was to be a part of Twilight and Shining Armor’s sibling rivalry, since he’s always thought of himself as their little brother. Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem like Twilight sees it that way. Fluttershy can tell Spike is pretty bummed and tries to console him. She knows what it’s like to be a big sister (Spike: “*Ugh. Right. Zephyr.*”), and to be honest, she’d be happy if her little brother was a little more like Spike. What Spike needs to do, in her opinion, is show Twilight that he’s just as much a sibling as Shining Armor – of course, she’s not exactly sure how.

Just then a stone in the wall slides open to reveal Rarity and Dash! Relieved, they all enjoy a quick reunion, before deciding they need to head back out and come up with a new plan. Unfortunately, for Rarity, that means they’ll have to backtrack through the slimy catacombs.

SC. 15 - EXT. CASTLE – LATER

Outside, Twilight is still bummed, and when the rest of the gang show up (without the crown) it doesn’t do much to improve her mood. Luckily, the others are recharged after their narrow escape. Pinkie tries to sell her on the upside: “*Think of it as a successful reconnaissance mission!*” Twilight is unconvinced, but Spike gives her a pep talk. If doing things the unexpected way didn’t pan out (Rarity, “*Perhaps the plan was a tad too unexpected.*”) it’s time they go back to Twilight’s way. It might not be a surprise, but Twilight has a pretty good success record

planning things. They should lean into that. They others all agree. Twilight thanks them and especially Spike for the confidence boost, “Aw, *shucks. That’s what little brothers are for!*”

MONTAGE

Twilight goes over her new/old plan and as she talks we watch the plan unfold in real time:

- Pinkie distracts the guards with the best party ever. “*Some of the new guards Shining Armor hired are so young, they haven’t even had their cute-ceañera!*”
- Rarity, disguised as a guard, gets the chance to use her formerly hidden skill with accents (and in the process reveals that her normal speaking voice is, in fact, totally put on). Using the medallion AJ acquired, she heads right for the throne room.
- In her element above the castle, Dash flies through the gauntlet of converging air streams from the wind machines with ease.
- With the entrance to the catacombs now covered by Zephyr’s replacement, Twilight leads the others to the backside of the castle. AJ isn’t sure she can buck through the side of a mountain, but Twilight has brought in a specialist. Maud steps from the shadows and gives the rock face a few taps, then nods. At Maud’s direction, AJ bucks a new entrance to the catacombs and they all file in headed to the throne room where...
- Fluttershy is able to win over the geese just as the rest of the team converge on the crown...

SC. 16 - INT. CELESTIA’S THRONE ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Twilight’s plan has gone off without a hitch. There’s nothing between them and the crown, but just as she’s about to fly over and grab it, Shining Armor and the Princesses step out from behind their thrones. It looks like the jig is up. Shining Armor has to admit, it was kind of unexpected for Twilight to exactly follow the expected plan, but she should know by now there’s no way to fool the true Sibling Supreme! Just as Celestia is about to (good-naturedly) award the title of Sibling Supreme to Shinning Armor, Spike clears his throat from off-screen.

The all turn to see the dragon, flapping by the window – outside the castle, and holding the crown! Confused, they all do a double take. Yep, the crown on the throne is gone! Twilight and Shining Armor are flummoxed. How’d he do it? Spike explains: Surely the two of them didn’t think they were the only siblings with a rivalry. He had an inside pony help him out. Celestia turns to Luna in shock. Luna, “*I told you we should have handled the security ourselves.*”

SC. 17 - INT. THRONE ROOM – FLASHBACK

Spike continues in VO over a quick flashback from earlier, where we see Luna spot Spike and Fluttershy just before they fall into the pit. Spike and Luna share a quick exchange before Spike follows his friend, “tumbling” after her.

SC. 18 - INT. THRONE ROOM – RESUME

Spike tells them all that once Luna agreed to help, all he had to do was convince Twilight to go back to her original plan to keep everypony distracted so Luna could slip him the crown. Twilight and Shining armor are stunned. Celestia agrees that it looks like they’ll have to reconfigure their security to account for threats from inside as well as out—and she apologizes to her sister for not taking her concerns more seriously. But Shining Armor and Twilight are at a loss. Who wins the crown? Who is the Sibling Supreme? Luna tells them the answer is pretty clear and with that she floats the crown onto Spike. With a laugh they all agree, if anypony has earned the title it’s him.

END