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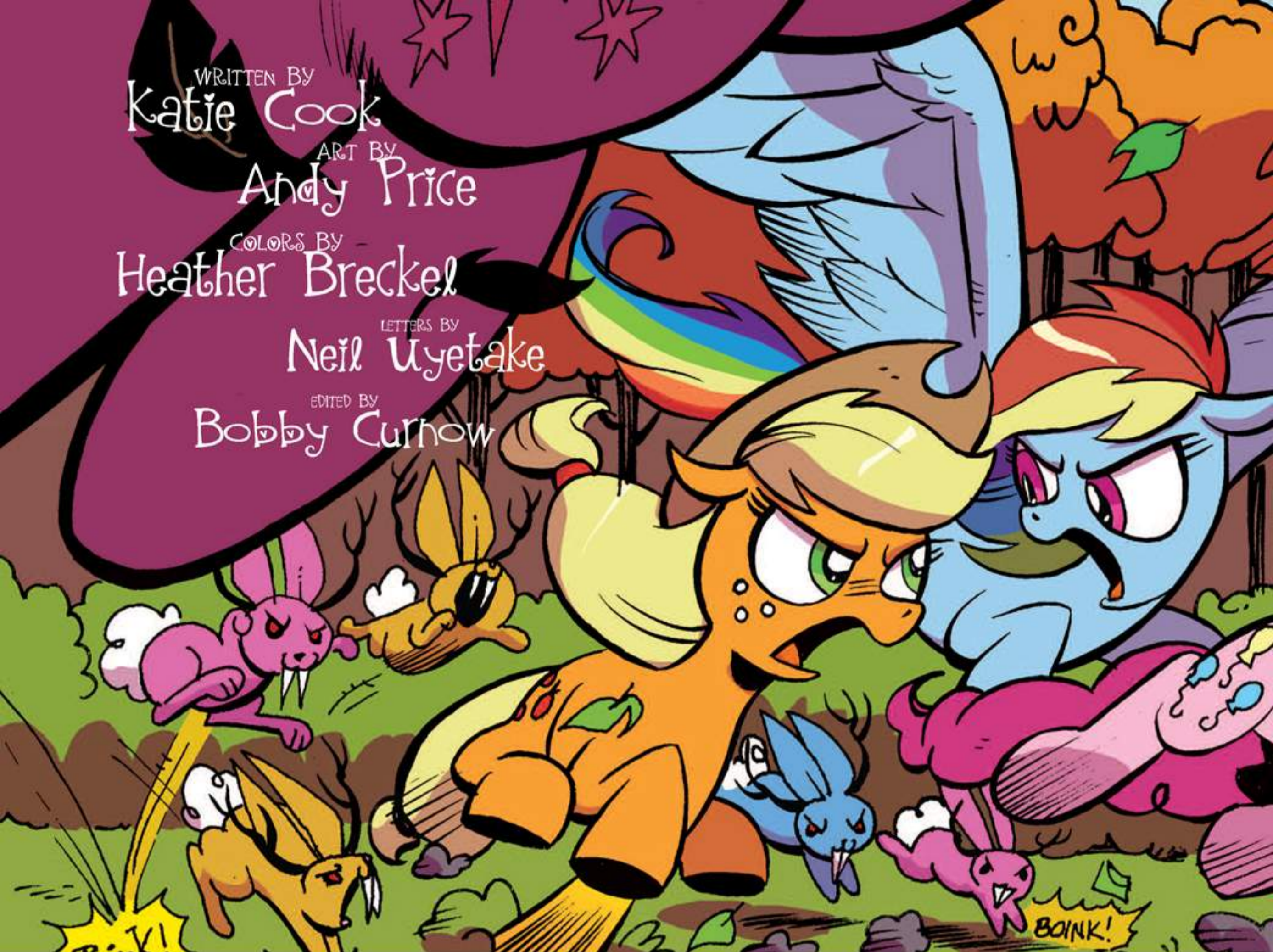
WRITTEN BY
Katie Cook

ART BY
Andy Price

COLORS BY
Heather Breckel

LETTERS BY
Neil Uyetake

EDITED BY
Bobby Currow



Our story so far...

The Cutie Mark Crusaders have been fillynapped by the nefarious Queen Chrysalis! Our heroes travelled through a perilous cave to reach the Queen's kingdom. Unfortunately, the Queen has tricked the Ponies into becoming angry with each other and the group has split up... right as they enter into the most dangerous part of their journey!

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THE RETURN OF QUEEN CHRYSALIS

Love is a Many Splintered Thing

Part III

WE LAST LEFT OUR HEROES AFTER THEIR DRAMATIC TRIUMPH OVER THE CHANGELING ARMY IN PONYVILLE!



THEY HAVE BATTLED MONSTERS AND TRAVELED FARTHER THAN THEY EVER HAVE BEFORE... PONIES OF ADVENTURES!



SADLY, THEY ARE NOW CURRENTLY APART...



...THESE PONY FRIENDS FOREVER ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER, AND HAVE SPLIT INTO THREE GROUPS.

WILL THESE FILLIES EVER BE FRIENDS AGAIN? WILL THEY FAIL IN THEIR MISSION TO RETURN THE CUTIE MARK CRUSADERS SAFELY TO PONYVILLE? OH, THE DRAMA!

WELL, WE'LL TALK ABOUT ALL THAT LATER...





... THIS STORY
BEGINS WITH THE
DEFEAT... OF A
QUEEN...



WHA... WHAT?

HISS!



MY QUEEN, WE'RE MUCH TOO WEAK TO LAUNCH ANOTHER ATTACK ON CANTERLOT RIGHT AWAY. WHAT DO WE DO? WE NEED TO REGAIN OUR STRENGTH! REGROUP! FORM ANOTHER PLAN...



HMM. THESE CREATURES ARE VERY LOVING...



...AND WE DO FEED ON LOVE...



...I GUESS WE COULD EAT.



WE'LL HAVE THE REST OF THIS PLACE CONVERTED OVER TO OUR NEEDS WITHIN THE MONTH.

GOOD... GOOD.



IT MAY STILL BE A WHILE BEFORE WE CAN ATTACK CELESTIA AGAIN. SHE'LL BE EXPECTING US.

FEH TO CELESTIA. SHE ISN'T MY TARGET ANYMORE.

WHA... WHAT? MY QUEEN, BUT...






I WANT CELESTIA'S LITTLE PET... TWILIGHT SPARKLE.



PERFECT LITTLE TWILIGHT. CLEVER LITTLE TWILIGHT. BRILLIANT LITTLE TWILIGHT. SHE SAW THROUGH IT ALL... IT'S ALL HER FAULT THAT WE AREN'T REBUILDING CANTERLOT INTO OUR NEWEST CONQUEST.



WELL, I'LL GET HER... AND HER LITTLE PONY FRIENDS TOO.




I'M GOING TO BRING THAT PURPLE MENACE HERE... PUT HER AND HER FRIENDS THROUGH TRIALS THAT WILL BAND THEM TOGETHER. THEN, WHEN THEIR EMOTIONS ARE PEAKED, I'M GOING TO DRAIN TWILIGHT SPARKLE.



WHY DRAIN HER? WE HAVE PLENTY OF THESE GUYS LEFT.



I'M NOT GOING TO DRAIN HER LOVE... I'M GOING TO DRAIN HER MAGIC.



AND I KNOW EXACTLY WHEN I'M GOING TO DO IT.

THE PRESENT...



AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

NOTHING... WE'RE AT NOW NOW. SHE WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT WHAT BROUGHT US UP TO THIS EXACT TIME, THIS EXACT PLACE!

WAIT... WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ADORABLE CITIZENS OF "WUVY-DOVEY SMOOCHY LAND?"

IF YOU THREE DON'T SHUT UP, I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM.



YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO RUDE ALL THE TIME.

YOU CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY... OR... BEES WITH HONEY... OR SOMETHING.

HAVE WE TRIED GETTING OUR CUTIE MARKS IN BEE KEEPING?



AWW! BUMBLEBEES ARE SO CUTE! I'D LOVE A BEE CUTIE MARK!

ME TOO!!!!

DEEP BREATHS... DEEP BREATHS...



AH... LITTLE TWILIGHT SPARKLE. YOU'RE ALMOST ALL ALONE... THE FILLY-SHIP IS BROKEN. THE SUSPENSE IS TERRIBLE... I HOPE IT LASTS.

...A PITY I CAN'T SEE THE PINK ONE ANYMORE, SHE WAS AMUSING.



THAT'S PINKIE PIE! SHE'S FUN!

AWW... WE'LL MISS IF SHE BURSTS INTO SONG!

GUARDS! YOU THERE! GO OUT AND LOOK FOR THE OTHER FOUR. REPORT BACK TO ME WHAT YOU SEE... TAKE SHIFTS, I WANT TO HEAR EVERYTHING.



BUT, FOR NOW, I CAN SEE YOU... LITTLE TWILIGHT.

...WHO NEEDS 'EM?



WELL, I THINK THAT WE MAY HAVE BEEN TOO HARSH. THINK ABOUT IT. RAINBOW DASH, PINKIE PIE, RARITY, AND APPLEJACK ARE OUT THERE ALL ALONE... WITH NO MAP! THEY COULD BE LOST!

WELL... MAYBE...



THE NEEDS OF THE MANY OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE FEW... EVEN IF THE FEW WERE BEING BIG MEANIE HEADS. WE NEED TO LOOK PAST THIS AND WORK TOGETHER TO SAVE THOSE FILLIES!

SIGH. I GUESS... YES... YOU'RE RIGHT. IT WAS A MISTAKE TO SPLIT UP. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE ALL GOT SO ANGRY.



WE'LL FIX THIS. IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S ONLY A FEW PATHS THROUGH THE FOREST. THEY ALL SEEM TO LEAD DOWN INTO THIS VALLEY. AS LONG AS NO PONY TURNED AROUND TO GO HOME, WE SHOULD ALL MEET UP HERE OUTSIDE THE GATES OF THE CHANGELING KINGDOM.



I BET EVERYONE IS JUST SO UPSET ABOUT BEING SEPARATED. I BET RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE ALL WONDERING HOW WE'LL GET BACK TOGETHER AND BE FRIENDS AGAIN. YOU'LL SEE.



MY QUEEN, WE HAVE A REPORT.



APPLEJACK, BE A DEAR AND WIPE YOUR HOOVES BEFORE YOU ENTER THE TENT. WE WOULDN'T WANT DIRT ALL OVER OUR NICE, CLEAN FLOOR!

UH... RARITY? THE FLOOR IS DIRT. WE'RE IN THE FOREST. WE'RE OUTSIDE.



HMPF! JUST BECAUSE WE'RE "ROUGHING IT" DOESN'T MEAN WE NEED TO LIVE LIKE A BUNCH OF RUFFIANS!



NOW WIPE YOUR HOOVES AND COME! WE DRESS FOR DINNER AROUND HERE.

GRUMBLE.



AH, THE FUSSY ONE AND THE COUNTRY ARE A MOST ODD PAIRING. HA!

HEY! DON'T CALL MY SISTER FUSSY!

YOUR SISTER IS FUSSY.

YEAH, BUT SHE ISN'T ALLOWED TO SAY IT!



HISSESSSSS! I AM LOSING MY PATIENCE WITH YOU THREE.

SIGH. LOSING PATIENTS IS HOW WE DIDN'T GET OUR CUTIE MARKS IN DENTISTRY.

I TOLD YOU PULLING TEETH WASN'T THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING.

I THOUGHT TEETH GREW BACK.

NO... NO... JUST... NO, SWEETIE BELLE.



HOW ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO EVEN HOLD ON TO THE STICKS TO MAKE THE FIRE WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE... UM... THOSE THINGS... THAT SOME ANIMALS HAVE THAT HELP THEM HOLD THINGS?

NO... THAT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT.

THUMBS?



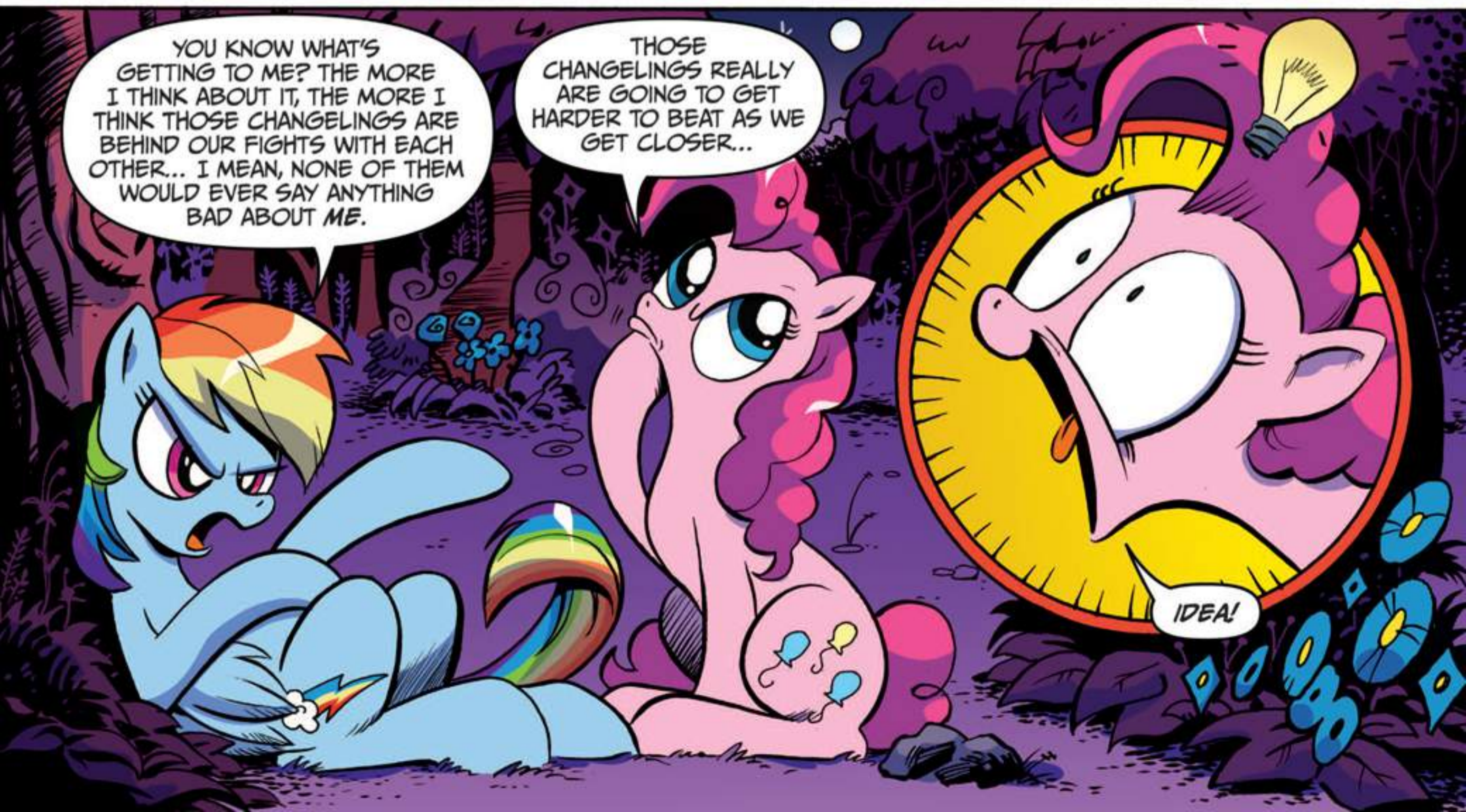
I BET TWILIGHT AND RARITY BOTH STARTED FIRES WITH THEIR FANCY MAGIC. HMPF.

OH, DON'T BE SO GLUM! WANT ME TO SING A SONG ABOUT FIRE? I CAN!



NO! NO MORE SONGS! YOU'VE ALREADY SUNG THREE TODAY!

GLOMP



YOU KNOW WHAT'S GETTING TO ME? THE MORE I THINK ABOUT IT, THE MORE I THINK THOSE CHANGELINGS ARE BEHIND OUR FIGHTS WITH EACH OTHER... I MEAN, NONE OF THEM WOULD EVER SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT ME.

THOSE CHANGELINGS REALLY ARE GOING TO GET HARDER TO BEAT AS WE GET CLOSER...

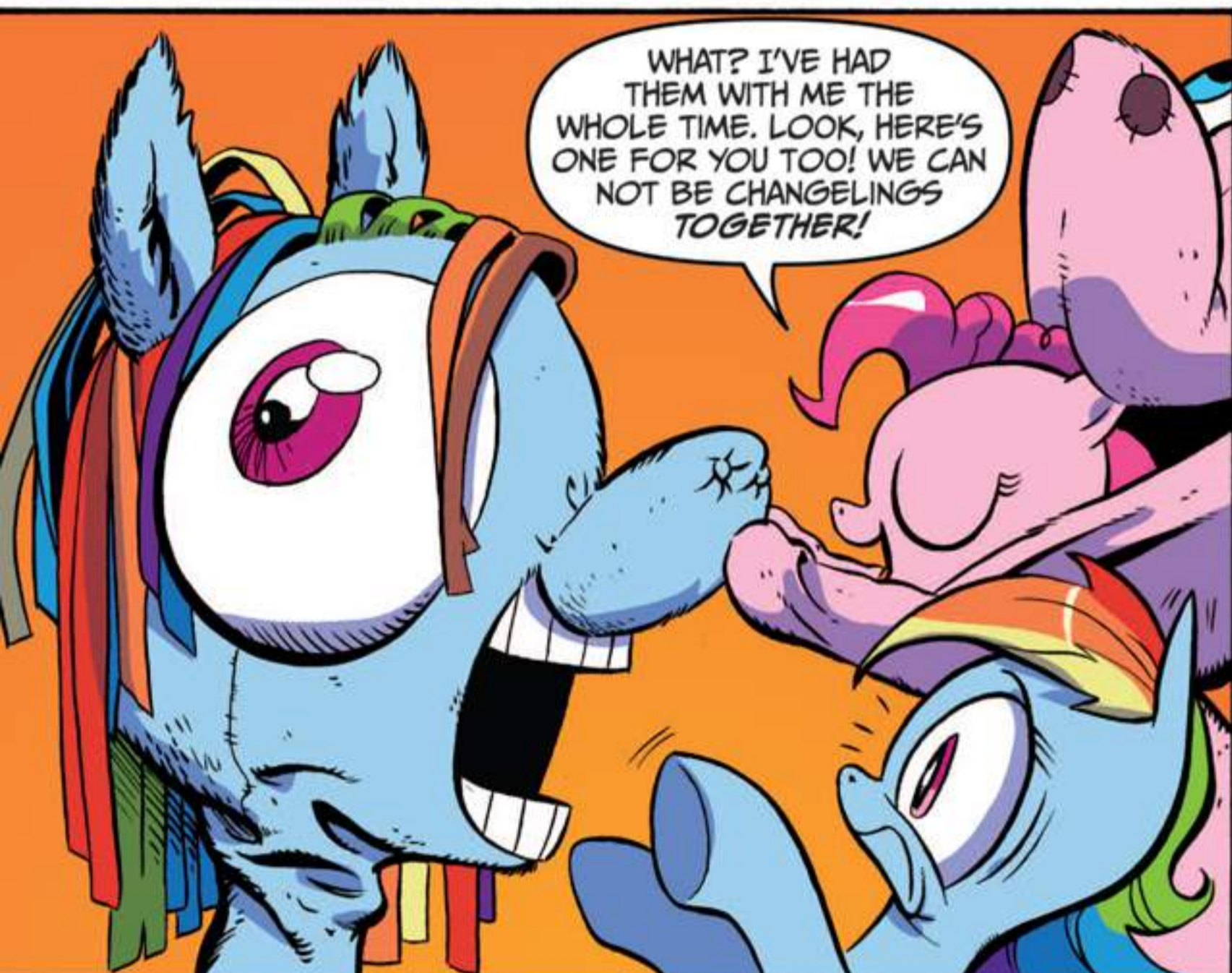


IDEA!



SO... HERE'S THE PLAN. NEXT TIME WE FACE THE CHANGELINGS, WE ALL WEAR COSTUMES OF OURSELVES. SEE? IF THEY ALL TOOK MY FORM AGAIN, YOU'D BE ABLE TO TELL IT WAS ME BECAUSE I'M WEARING THIS! CAN YOU TELL I'M NOT A CHANGELING RIGHT NOW? HUH? CAN YOU?

WHERE DID YOU EVEN GET THAT?

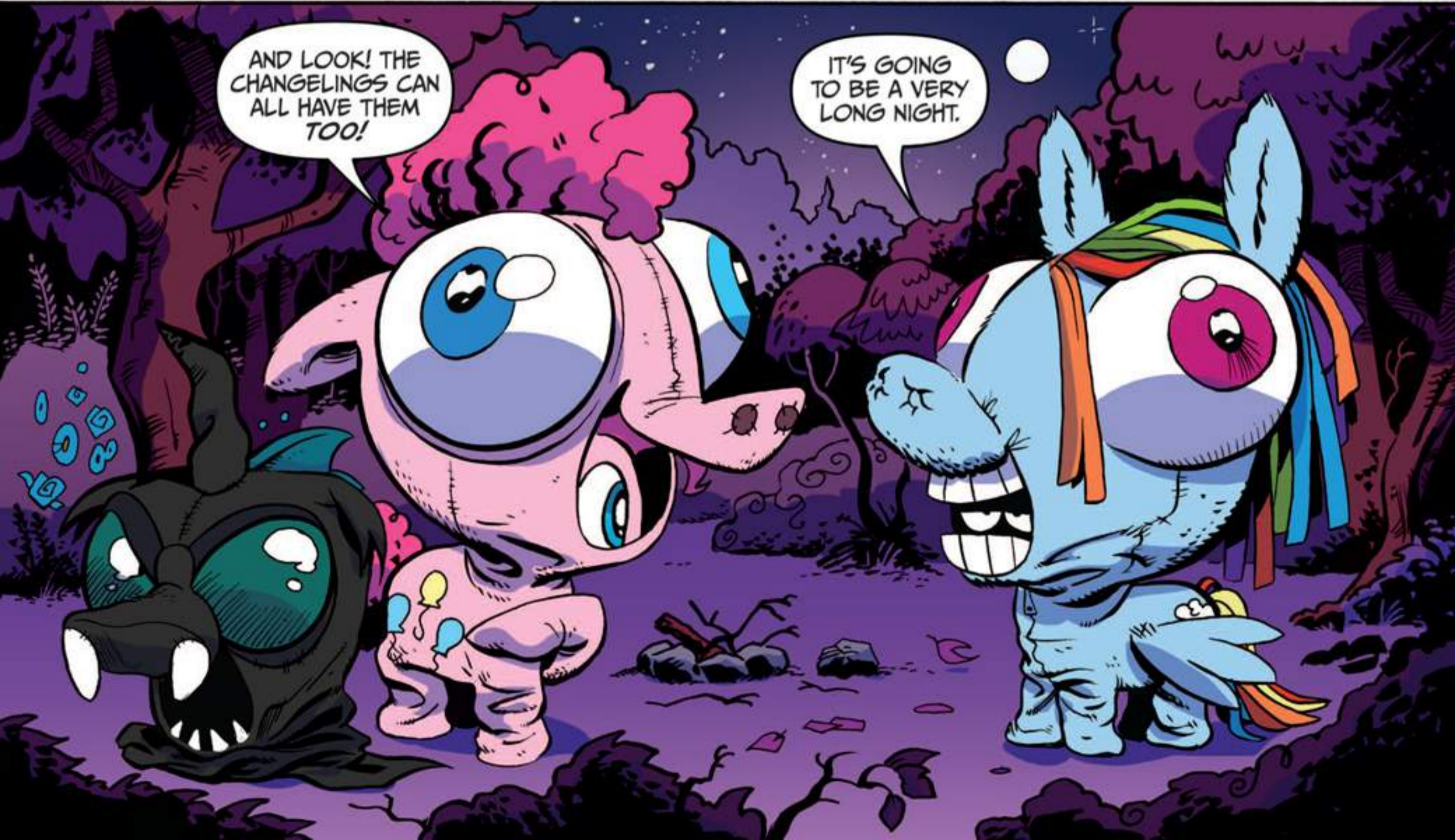


WHAT? I'VE HAD THEM WITH ME THE WHOLE TIME. LOOK, HERE'S ONE FOR YOU TOO! WE CAN NOT BE CHANGELINGS TOGETHER!



GAH! STOP IT!

TWUMP



AND LOOK! THE CHANGELINGS CAN ALL HAVE THEM TOO!

IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY LONG NIGHT.



IF I HADN'T BEEN WATCHING THE PINK ONE FOR HOURS, I WOULD THINK YOU WERE MAKING ALL OF THAT UP.

YEEEEEP. ME TOO.



HA! SEE... RAINBOW DASH SAW RIGHT THROUGH YOU GUYS.

THEY'LL ALL BE FRIENDS AGAIN BY MORNING. YOU CAN'T STOP FRIENDSHIP!

FRIENDSHIP IS MAGIC, AFTER ALL.



YOU... PEONS... I DON'T CARE IF THEY'RE FRIENDS OR NOT! THESE LITTLE SQUABBLES HAVE JUST BEEN AN ENTERTAINING BONUS.

... YOU... DON'T CARE?

ISN'T MAKING THEM ALL HATE EACH OTHER PART OF YOUR EVIL PLOT?

YOU KNOW, BECAUSE YOU'RE SO EVIL?



TWILIGHT'S FRIENDS ARE JUST AN ADDED PERK. ONCE I DESTROY TWILIGHT, THOSE OTHER PONY'S EMOTIONS WILL SPIKE FOR THEIR PRECIOUS PONY FRIEND. THEY'LL BE A FEAST FOR MY COLONY!

I'LL GAIN TWILIGHT'S MAGIC AND MY PEOPLE WILL GAIN STRENGTH FROM HER FRIENDS... THEN, WE WILL GO BACK TO CANTERLOT AND WATCH EQUESTRIA CRUMBLE.

WHOA.

THAT... THAT REALLY IS EVIL.



WELL... MY SISTER AND HER FRIENDS ARE GOING TO STOP YOU. THEY'RE BRAVE AND STRONG AND AMAZING! THEY HELPED DEFEAT YOU ONCE, THEY CAN DO IT AGAIN!

YEAH.

AS LONG AS THEY HAVE FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE, THEY CAN CONQUER YOU. YOU'RE NOT SCARY!



YOU'RE ALL QUITE INNOCENT TO STILL BELIEVE IN SUCH FAIRY TALES.

AWWWW! HOW CUTE!

... UH... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT?



AAAAHHHH!

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW THE MAP AND WE SHOULD BE IN THE VALLEY IN A FEW HOURS. THAT WILL LEAD US STRAIGHT TO THE GATES OF THE CHANGELING KINGDOM! WITH THIS MAP, WE CAN'T GO WRONG! IT'S AMAZING! IT EVEN HAS IT MARKED THAT THERE'S A GIANT HOLE RIGHT OVER...





WELL, LUCKILY, IT'S NOT TOO FAR. I CAN USE MY MAGIC TO GET US OUT OF HERE. GIVE ME A SECOND...



TA DA! WE'RE OUT OF THE HOLE AND SAFE AND SOUND! HOW MANY PONIES THAT HAVE BEEN IN AN OUBLIETTE CAN SAY THAT?!

UH... TWILIGHT?



HEY! LOOK! A CHUPACABRA!

HE... HE LOOKS HUNGRY.



OH NO, I THINK THEY ONLY EAT GOATS.



RUUUUN!

SNARL!





MORE NEWS? I HOPE IT'S AS GOOD AS THIS.

WE AREN'T GOATS! I SWEAR!

OH, I THINK YOU'LL LIKE THIS...

WELL, IF WE'RE GOING TO BE TRUDGING ALL DAY, AT LEAST WE HAVE SPLENDID SURROUNDINGS.

IF WE JUST KEEP FOLLOWING THIS TRAIL, I'M SURE WE'LL END UP WHERE WE NEED TO BE.



I THINK THESE FLOWERS ARE SIMPLY DIVINE... SIMPLY INSPIRING!

FLOWERS-SHMOWERS. LET'S GET HOOFIN' AND GET OUR SISTERS BACK, WE'RE ON A DEADLINE.



THESE WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT ADDITION TO MY NEW LINE OF GARDEN PARTY DRESSES. SKIRTS, MAYBE A RUFFLED COLLAR... THEY REALLY ARE EXQUISITE! I'LL JUST TAKE A FEW TO MAKE A PATTERN FROM.

BECAUSE IT WILL BE SO EASY TO KEEP AHOLD OF THEM WHILE WE'RE FIGHTIN' CHANGELINGS.



WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY, APPLEJACK. THEY MAY BE USEFUL... WHAT IF WE NEED A JAUNTY HAT? ONE OF THESE WILL DO IN A PINCH.

I'D STILL RATHER YOU LEAVE 'EM BE. I DON'T LIKE THE FEEL OF THIS PLACE.



SSSSHHH...

Rustle

WELL, IT WOULD SEEM THIS ONE DOESN'T WANT TO BECOME JAUNTY.

COME... ON... YOU...

WHA... WHAT IS THAT? A SNAKE? RARITY, STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING. I THINK THERE MAY BE SNAKES IN THERE.

WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SNAKES?! EW!

YANK

Rustle



EEP!



I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE THOSE FLOWERS ALONE!

YES. OF COURSE. BECAUSE WE ALL COULD HAVE PREDICTED THIS?! PONY EATING PETUNIAS?!



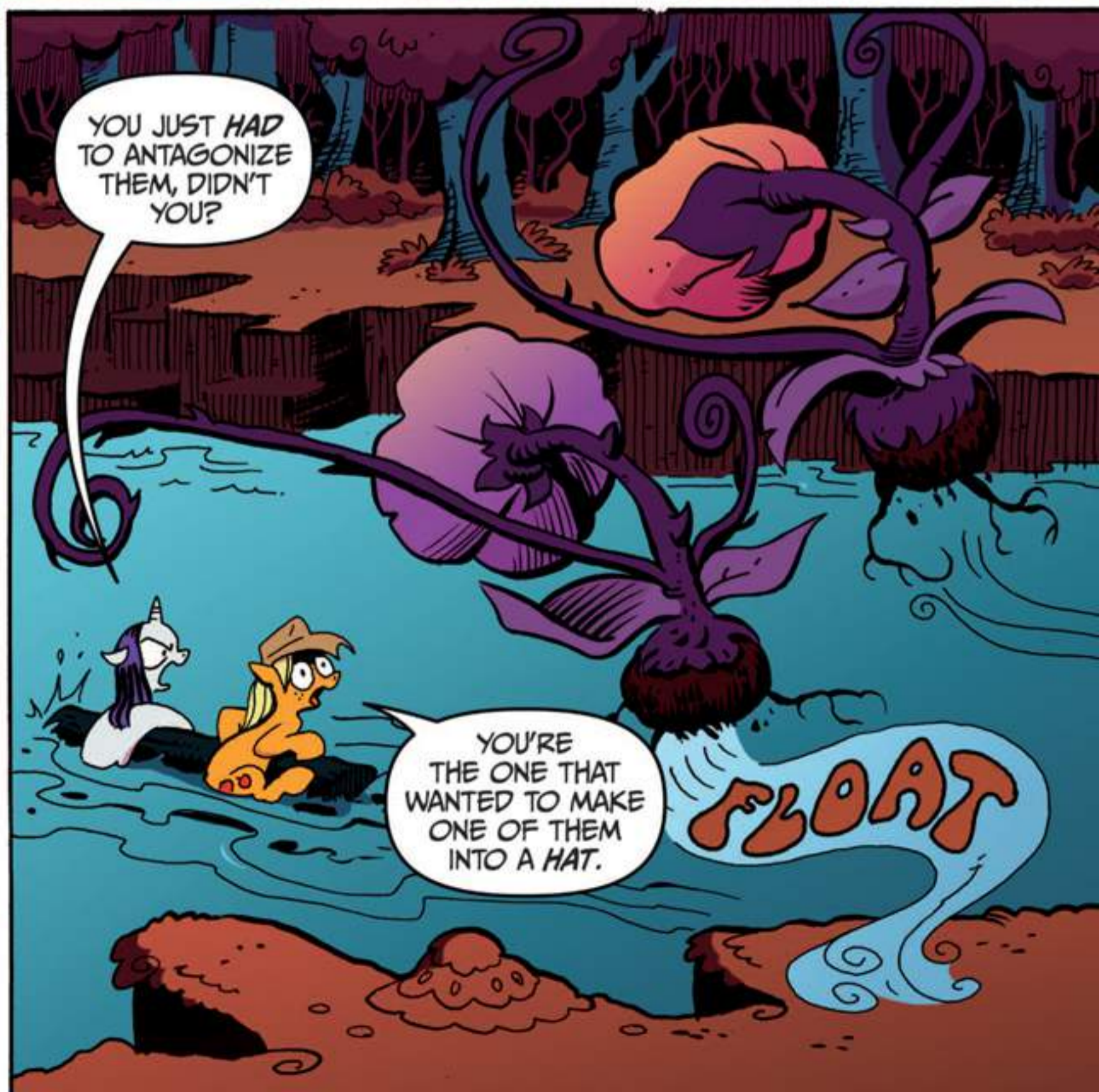
PERFECT! RARITY, JUMP IN THE WATER!

BUT... MY MANE!

JUST DO IT!



HA! CATCH US IF YOU CAN, YA' COWERIN' CARNATIONS!



YOU JUST HAD TO ANTAGONIZE THEM, DIDN'T YOU?

YOU'RE THE ONE THAT WANTED TO MAKE ONE OF THEM INTO A HAT.

FLOAT



I GOT THIS. MY GREAT UNCLE HONEYCRISP WAS A LUMBERJACK.

?



HA! COME ON, YOU PANSIES, JUST TRY AND KEEP UP WITH ME!

I'M TRYING, I'M TRYING!

NOT YOU!



UH, APPLEJACK, DEAR. WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS SITUATION EVEN MORE DIRE?

CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS LATER? I'M KINDA' BUSY.



OH, I THINK WE CAN PUT OFF THE CONVERSATION FOR ANOTHER FIFTEEN SECONDS OR SO.

...OH.



GET READY TO ACCESSORIZE, APPLEJACK!

?



SEE? I KNEW THESE FLOWERS WOULD BE USEFUL.

WE'RE FLOATIN' OFF INTO THE GREAT UNKNOWN ON PARACHUTES THAT WANT TO EAT US. WHAT PART OF THIS IS OKAY?

WELL, THE VIEW IS NICE. THE GLASS IS HALF FULL, APPLEJACK.



HEH!

ALWAYS WITH THE MONSTERS. YEESH! CAN'T ANY OF THEM RUN INTO FLUFFY BUNNIES OR SOMETHING?

ACTUALLY... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...



EEEEK! CHUPACABRA!

WHAT'S THAT NOISE? A BIRD?

A WHINEY BIRD.



HELLO MY SQUISHY-WISHY!

COME ON, GUYS, I APPRECIATE THE AMBIENCE, BUT I NEED SOME BREATHING ROOM. PINKIE, I REMEMBER SOMETHING ABOUT A VALLEY ON THAT MAP. LET'S HEAD TOWARDS THOSE ROCKS AND MAYBE WE'LL FIND SOME PONY.



WE CAN'T SPEND OUR DAY TRAIPSING AROUND WITH BUNNIES. LET'S GO.

OW! BAD BUNNY!

K-CHOMP!



OF COURSE THEY'RE MONSTERS. ALWAYS WITH THE MONSTERS. COME ON!

AT LEAST THEY'RE CUTE MONSTERS! I'LL CALL THIS ONE "BITEY"!



YOU CAN CALL IT WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE, AS LONG AS YOU RUN AWAY FROM IT!

BYE, BITEY!



EVERYPONY!
THERE YOU
ARE!

CRASH!

ODDF

OW!

MY
HAT!

POW!

BANG

BAM

GET
OFFA
ME!

CRUNCH

HEY!
A CLIFF!

AHHHH!



UGH. IT'S SPINNING SO MUCH I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK.

WOW! WHAT A CLIMACTIC TURN OF EVENTS!

IT'S QUITE THE ~~URP~~ TURNING TALE.

THAT ORB KNOWS HOW TO SPIN QUITE THE STORY!



HEY. THAT WAS A GOOD ONE.

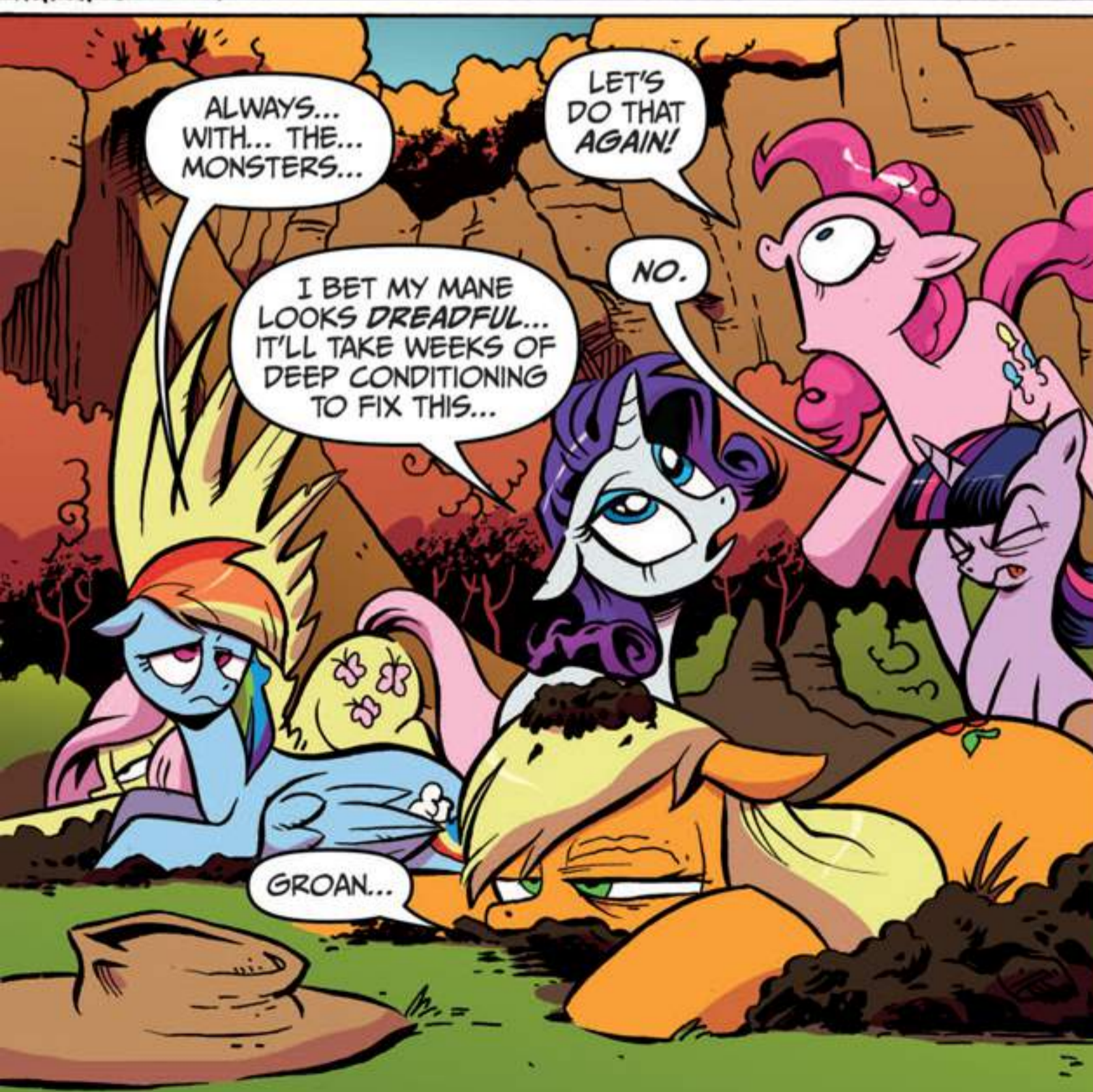
NO. NO, IT WASN'T.

OOMF!

POW!



OOMF



ALWAYS... WITH... THE... MONSTERS...

LET'S DO THAT AGAIN!

NO.

I BET MY MANE LOOKS DREADFUL... IT'LL TAKE WEEKS OF DEEP CONDITIONING TO FIX THIS...

GROAN...



WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE A DEATH-DEFYING FALL MIGHT KEEP THOSE GUYS AT BAY. I HOPE THAT THEY DON'T START TO MAKE THEIR WAY DOWN HERE.



OH NO, THE VAMPIRIC JACKALOPE AND THE CHUPACABRA ARE NATURAL ENEMIES. THEY'LL FIGHT FOR DOMINANCE OVER THE RIGHTS TO EAT US.

NATURE IS SO FASCINATING...



EVERYPONY... I OWE YOU ALL AN APOLOGY. I... I SHOULD NEVER HAVE GOTTEN SO ANGRY AT YOU. AND I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT YOU ALL WITHOUT A MAP TO FIND YOUR WAY. THAT WAS AWFUL OF ME.



I THINK WE ALL SAID SOME THINGS THAT WE DIDN'T MEAN. I'M SORRY TOO.

ME TOO. WE SHOULD HAVE TALKED THINGS OUT... LIKE CIVILIZED PONIES. WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER, AFTER ALL! I'M SORRY.

I'M SORRY EVERYONE. I CAN BE SUCH A HOTHEAD...



RIIIIGHT... WELL, I'M SORRY... I GUESS.

RAINBOW.

OKAY. OKAY... I'M SORRY TOO.

ME TOO! SORRY EVERYONE!



LUCKILY, I ALWAYS TRAVEL WITH AN "I'M SORRY" CAKE! I ALSO HAVE "I'M SORRY" GOODY BAGS!



UH... PINKIE, I DON'T THINK WE HAVE TIME FOR CAKE... WE'RE ONLY AN HOUR AWAY FROM THE CHANGELING KINGDOM...



EAT... THE... CAKE.

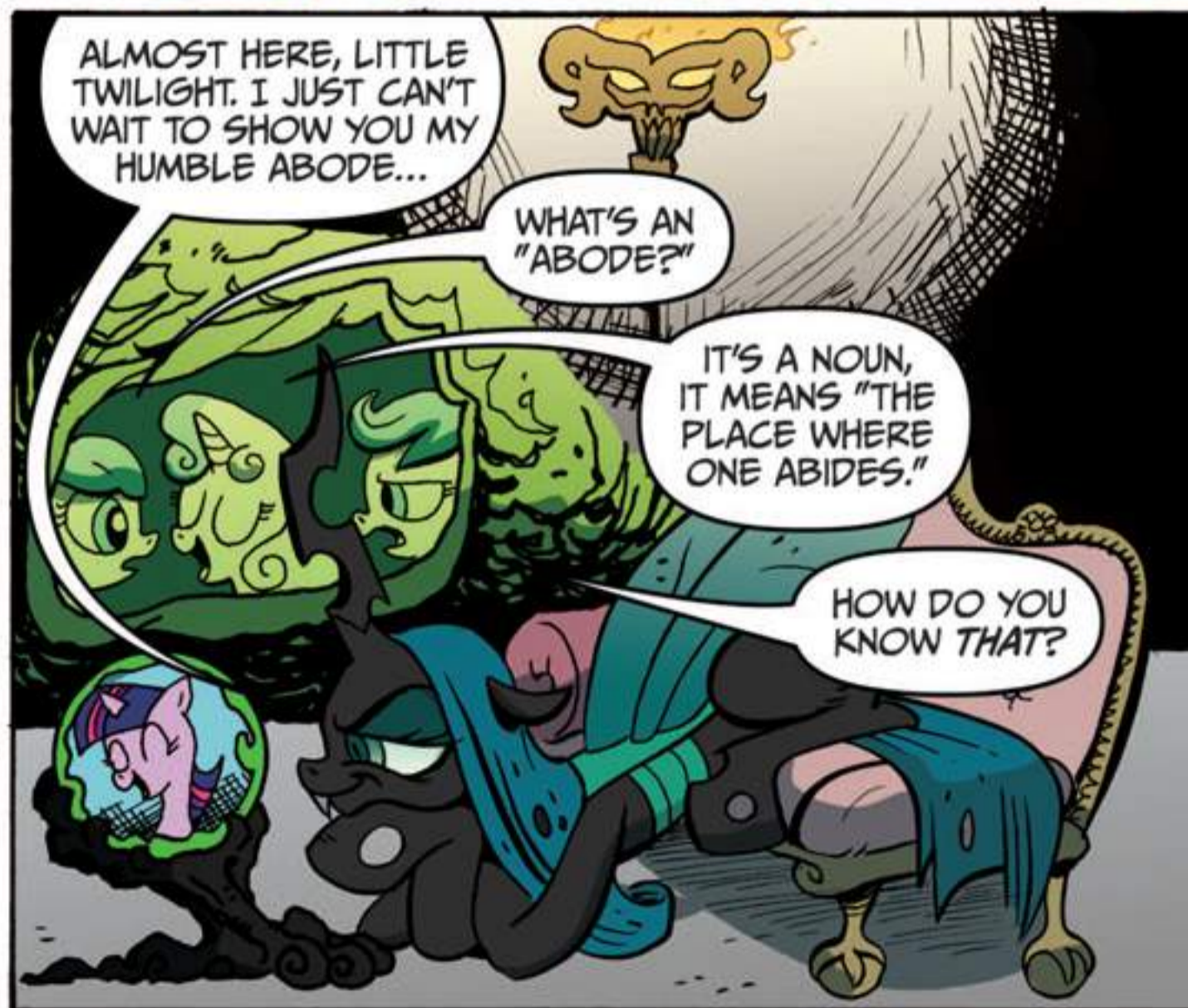
ER, ARE WE JUST GOING TO IGNORE THAT COSTUME?

PLEASE DON'T ASK ABOUT IT.



WELL, A *SHORT* BREAK WON'T HURT OUR SCHEDULE... AND WE DO NEED TO KEEP OUR STRENGTH UP! THANK YOU, PINKIE!

YOU ASKED... WHY DID YOU ASK?



ALMOST HERE, LITTLE TWILIGHT. I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO SHOW YOU MY HUMBLE ABODE...

WHAT'S AN "ABODE?"

IT'S A NOUN, IT MEANS "THE PLACE WHERE ONE ABIDES."

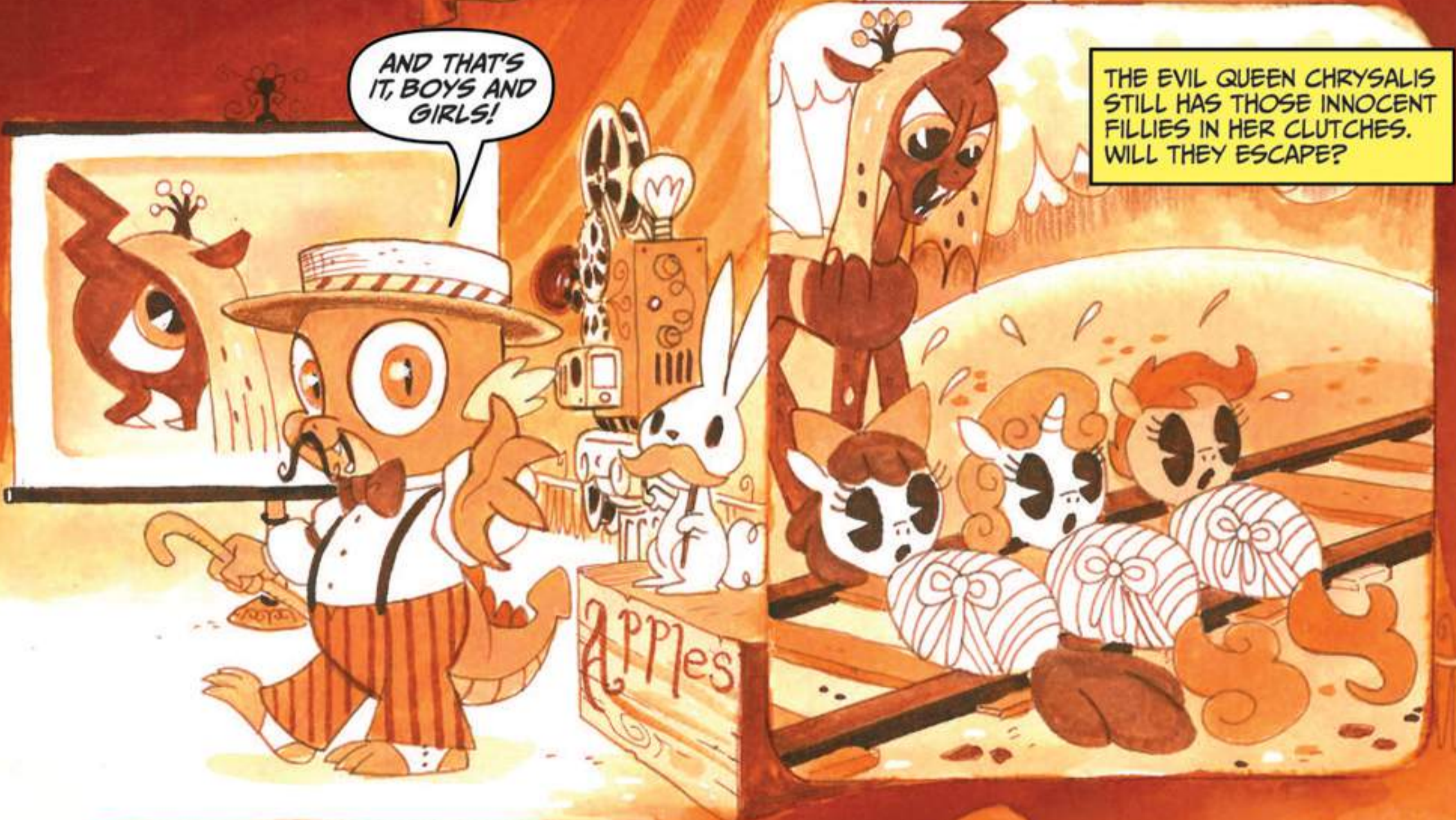
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?



THIS IS ALMOST OVER... ALMOST OVER... *GUARD!* BRING ME AN ANTACID!



Get well!!



AND THAT'S IT, BOYS AND GIRLS!

THE EVIL QUEEN CHRYSALIS STILL HAS THOSE INNOCENT FILLIES IN HER CLUTCHES. WILL THEY ESCAPE?

WE LEAVE OUR HEROES, REJUVENATED AND TOGETHER AGAIN, AT THE GATES OF THEIR FINAL DESTINATION! WILL IT BE... UM... ER... THEIR FINAL DESTINATION?

TUNE IN NEXT ISSUE FOR OUR EXCITING CONCLUSION.

LIGHTS ON OFF



YOU'RE MY SHNOOKUMS, WHATEVER YOU ARE!

TO BE CONTINUED...