

READ IT AND WEEP

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Note: All lines marked with one asterisk (*) are delivered as a voice over.

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to Pinkie Pie and Rarity, standing somewhere outside Ponyville proper during the day. Something is heard whizzing around above them o.s., and the two turn their heads to track its movements as Twilight Sparkle walks up.)

Twilight: Hey, Rarity. Hey, Pinkie Pie. *(gazing upward)* What are you looking at?

Pinkie: Rainbow Dash!

(A cut to another patch of sky frames the stunt-flying pegasus, rainbow contrail and all, for a moment before the camera shifts back to the earthbound trio.)

Pinkie: Isn't she the most daring devil—I mean, the most devilish darer—I mean—

Rarity: She's dazzling!

Pinkie: Ooh, yeah, that's a good word. She's dazzling!

(The next couple of unseen maneuvers almost give them whiplash. In close-up, Pinkie follows up by describing a large vertical circle with her head while turning it 360 degrees on her neck. An equally impossible 180-degree turn allows her to see the next trick, and all three voice sounds of awe with Twilight and Rarity o.s. at this point. Zoom out to frame them; Pinkie's contortions finally catch up with her and untwist the bright pink body to leave her disoriented for a moment. Admiration quickly gives way to terror on the part of the trio.)

Twilight: Oh, no...oh, no...oh, no...

Pinkie: Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay!

(Their gazes drop back to ground level in time with the sounds of a hurtling descent and a very hard landing that nearly shakes the camera to pieces.)

Twilight, Pinkie, Rarity: Ohhhhhh!

Pinkie: So much for dazzling.

(Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: the black screen splits as if it were an opening eye, accompanied by the beeping of a heart monitor. The view is extremely fuzzy at this point, but enough detail can be picked out on the five colored blobs to identify them as Twilight, Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie, and Rarity.)

Applejack: *(very muffled)* Is she gonna be okay? *(Blink.)*

Fluttershy: *(a bit clearer)* Oh, I'm so worried!

(Another blink focuses the image and clarifies the quality of the voices greatly, but the next line still echoes a bit.)

Pinkie: Is her face gonna stay that way?

(A close-up of the pony whose brain is connected to this eye reveals a woozy Rainbow, who clearly came down too hard from that aerial show she did in the prologue. A bandage is stuck over one eye, and wrappings are visible around the base of one wing so that it is forced to remain splayed out. She is in a hospital bed, as seen when the camera zooms out to frame the entire group, and she has been dressed in a green johnny. Finally realizing the extent of her injuries, she tries to work the injured wing around a bit, but quickly gives up with a loud moan.)

(A longer shot of the room frames a curtain dividing her bed from whatever is on the other side, as well as a doctor levitating an X-ray of the wing to examine the broken bone it displays. Unicorn stallion, light yellow-orange coat, brown mane/tail, medium blue eyes behind spectacles, white shirt with necktie, white lab coat with stethoscope around neck.)

Twilight: How is she, Doctor?

Doctor: She's going to be fine. Luckily, she has friends like you who got her over here in a jiffy.

Rainbow: *(groaning impatiently)* How long do I need to lie here? I've got things I need to do!

(The next shot reveals the doctor's cutie mark—an EKG screen—and shows his tie as dark gray.)

Doctor: Well, that all depends on your recovery, but I'd say a few days minimum.

Rainbow: You guys have gotta get me outta here! I'm gonna climb the walls!

Pinkie: Ooh, just like a spider! *(turning to doctor)* Did the crash somehow give her super-duper spider powers?

Doctor: *(dryly, turning away/walking out; she falls over)* Nn-no, nor did it give her amazing healing powers. *(Back to Rainbow; he continues o.s.)* She needs to stay in bed for a few days.

Rainbow: Few days? *(She falls back onto her pillow.)* Might as well be a few months, or a few

years. (*Applejack and Fluttershy approach.*)

Fluttershy: It's not so bad, Rainbow Dash.

Applejack: I bet the chow in here is hoof-lickin' good. (*Cut to Rarity at the window.*)

Rarity: (*levitating a johnny*) And the hospital gowns...

(*Zoom out to frame the curtains, which are the exact same drab shade of green.*)

Rarity: ...they match the curtains! (*Big grin.*)

Pinkie: And look!

(*She whisks away the dividing curtain to expose the occupant of the next bed: an earth pony stallion who has more broken bones than sound ones, if the casts and bandages are any indication.*)

Pinkie: You have a roommate!

(*With his face almost totally covered, he can only acknowledge Rainbow with a few eye rolls. The less-than-excellent news prompts the downed pegasus to turn over in bed and pull the blanket over herself. Applejack directs a puzzled shrug at the other four visitors, who glance uneasily at each other before all eyes shift toward Twilight, now deep in thought. A squeaking noise draws attention to the open door, through which a library cart loaded with books is pushed into view. The noise came from its wheels, and the one nosing it along is a pink earth pony mare with birdcatcher spots and a violet/white-striped mane tied in a bun. She wears a white nurse's cap whose design—white cross, four pink hearts tucked in the outer corners, red circle background—matches that of the sign in front of the Ponyville hospital seen in "Baby Cakes."*)

(*Twilight gallops toward the door and returns a moment later, levitating a book over to the bed. This is used to poke Rainbow gently a couple of times, then set down by her pillow. She regards it with the clearest loathing.*)

Rainbow: What's this?

(*Her perspective of Twilight, Fluttershy, and Pinkie; she lifts the volume up to partially block them out. The cover depicts a pegasus mare dressed in a pith helmet and a greenbush shirt trimmed in a darker shade at collar and foreleg cuffs. Her coat is a faded orange-brown, her eyes are very nearly the same red-violet shade as Rainbow's, and her mane/tail display a monochrome gray/black version of the patient's vivid stripes. She is swinging on a vine over a river full of very hungry alligators, and carrying a blue jeweled figurine.*)

Rainbow: *Daring Do and the Quest for the Sapphire Stone.* (*She lowers it partway; Twilight leans close.*)

Twilight: This is the first story in the series. (*Lower away.*) I own all of them.

(*Big squeaky grin; cut to frame Rainbow as she throws the proffered story away. The curtain has been closed again to block off the next bed.*)

Rainbow: No thanks! I so don't read. I'm a world-class athlete. Reading's for eggheads like you, Twilight. (*Chuckle.*) No offense, but I am *not* reading. It's undeniably, unquestionably uncool!

(Zoom in by steps on each of these last three words, ending with a close-up of her dismissive expression and the forelegs crossed behind her head. The sulky reverie is swiftly broken by the laughter of five o.s. ponies; cut to frame them again, then to Applejack.)

Applejack: Is she serious? Who doesn't like to read a bang-up tale from time to time? (*Pan to Rarity.*)

Rarity: Why, a good book is almost as magnificent as silk pajamas on a Sunday morning. (*Chuckle; cut to Twilight and Fluttershy at the bed.*)

Twilight: (*floating book back to Rainbow*) Reading is for everypony, Rainbow Dash.

Pinkie: (*from o.s.*) Yeah! I love reading! (*Cut to her; jumping in place.*) And my head isn't even close to the shape of an egg. (*She touches it briefly, then starts goofing again.*) It's more the shape of an apple, or maybe an orange, but a *big* orange, more like a grapefruit really?

(The descriptive digression ends when she realizes that five very puzzled sets of eyes have trained themselves on her. Pan to the door on the start of the next line, to the sound of approaching hooves; the pink nurse stands here. Her cutie mark can now be seen as a white cross with four pink hearts, the eyes are deep blue, and the tail hangs loose behind her.)

Pink nurse: All right, my little ponies. Rainbow Dash needs her rest. (*Rarity files out past her, then Pinkie.*) You'll have to come back tomorrow.

Twilight: (*to Rainbow*) I think you'd like Daring. (*walking out*) She's a lot like you—adventurous...fierce... (*Cut to her at the door.*) ...and undeniably, unquestionably unstoppable.

(The same series of three zoom steps brings the camera to a close-up of her shrewd expression before she takes her leave and the door swings shut. Rainbow is in room 12. Dissolve to a close-up of a wall clock that shows the time as 1:00, then cut to the bedridden flyer bouncing a ball off the far wall and the floor so that it returns to her. After a few cycles, though, it hits the bed's footboard and rolls to a stop on the floor; she hangs her head in resignation.)

(Clock wipe to a close-up of a food tray resting on the blanket. Cube of gelatin, glass of juice, and a green wad of God knows what comprise this repast; zoom out to show Rainbow eyeing it with obvious disdain—Applejack's guess at the food quality was nowhere close to the mark. She nips the edge of the glass in her teeth and drinks, but gets the whole thing stuck over her snout; it resists her attempt to pull it off, but falls loose on its own. The thing leaves her face temporarily stretched to resemble that of a typical horse.)

(Another clock wipe shows the disaffected convalescent impatiently switching her bedside lamp on and off; her face is back to normal. She steps up the pace after the first few jabs at the button, but soon slows down again. The next clock wipe presents a close-up of her roommate.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* To get to the other side! *(Cut to frame her addressing him; the curtain is open.)* Get it?

(His lack of enthusiasm—or any verbal response, for that matter—sits badly enough with her to make her close the curtain again. She hunkers down in bed.)

Rainbow: Never mind.

(Dissolve to a close-up of her weary face, the circles under her eyes attesting to the physical/mental fatigue that has set in. The wall clock's ticking makes itself heard loud and clear; she glares up toward it, and a close-up reveals that it is still 1:00. This sequence of events has literally occurred in less than one minute, and the big hand clicks ahead one notch. Rainbow's jaw drops almost to the blanket in sheer disbelief; she then reels it in for a frustrated growl and sigh. Her next idea for passing time is to bang the back of her head against the bed's headboard a few times. Boredom, or the realization that such activity might worsen a head injury, prompts her to stop, and she unwillingly swivels her eyes to the book on her nightstand. She turns her back to it and crosses her forelegs resolutely...and then she glances back toward the nightstand while the book just sits there...and then she starts to think very, very hard. As the book continues to be a book, she sighs heavily and picks it up. Holding it at foreleg's length as if it were an old stick of dynamite sweating out nitroglycerin, she eases the cover open; when it fails to explode, she settles down to start reading.)

Rainbow: “As Daring Do trekked through the tropical jungle, the wet heat sapped her energy and slowed her every step.” *(Extreme close-up of her eyes, roving back and forth over each line.)* “If only she could escape this oppressive atmosphere and fly up into the cool blue sky. But her crash landing in the jungle had injured her wing, and she was grounded for a few days.” *(Longer shot; her ears droop a bit.)* “Few days. It might as well be a few months, or a few years.”

(Her level of enthusiasm begins to build from zero during the previous, and this last bit catches her by surprise, being an almost verbatim repetition of her own earlier remarks. She sighs, eyeing her own busted wing.)

Rainbow: I'm right there with you, sister.

(Slow dissolve to a letterbox view of several giant mosquitoes hovering over an extensive body of water at sunrise. The image is slightly fuzzy and faded, with thin fringes of glare spilling off the top and bottom edges of the screen as if this were an old film.)

Rainbow: “The mosquitoes buzzed loudly.”

(Zoom out to frame thick jungle; bird cries are heard now.)

* **Rainbow:** “The macaws cried from the high trees.”

(Tilt down to the forest floor; the pegasus from the front cover climbs over a fallen tree and eyes

the area as growls float up behind her. A close-up frames her cutie mark as an eight-point compass rose.)

*** Rainbow:** “Yet all of these distracting noises were not enough to cover the sound of the predators following her every step.”

(Daring Do turns around and finds herself nose to nose with one very angry tiger that tries to bite her head off. She jumps clear, revealing an injured and tightly wrapped right wing, but turns to find a panther moving in to cut off her retreat. A glance in a third direction discloses a lynx, while a leopard moves in from a fourth. The explorer stands on the tree trunk as the four big cats close in—and then here comes a fifth contender, a very small and fluffy white kitten. This last sight gives Daring an idea, and she leaps nimbly over the little furball as it yowls angrily and the other four charge past it to give chase.)

(She gallops through the jungle, pursued by all five felines—the kitten hanging onto the panther’s back—and stops short upon reaching the edge of a broad chasm. The snarls from behind her tell just how little time she has to make up her mind. She goes up for a jump, prompting all five pursuers to slide to an incredulous halt and run into each other, and the next shot reveals that she is swinging to the other side on a hanging vine. Daring flips a mocking salute to the predators before coming down beyond their reach.)

*** Rainbow:** “Safely landing on the other side...” *(Daring flips her helmet back from her eyes.)*
“...Daring finally allowed herself a moment to breathe.”

(The rest ends abruptly when she looks off ahead of herself; cut to a close-up of two ruby jewel eyes set in a large stone animal face and zoom out. It is constructed as a dog’s head, with a flight of steps leading up into the mouth as the entrance to this structure. Daring eyes it wonderingly.)

*** Rainbow:** “She turned around to find herself face to face with the long-lost temple that she had sought tirelessly for over sixty days and nights!”

(Cut to a fullscreen shot of her in the hospital bed.)

Rainbow: I hate to admit it to myself, and would *really* hate to admit it to my friends, but...
(smiling broadly) ...I love this story! *(holding book at length)* I...I... *(hugging it to herself)* ...I love reading!

(She falls back onto her pillow, dislodging a few feathers that waft down around her visage. Rapture gives way to panic in less time than it takes to say “pulp fiction.”)

Rainbow: *(horrified)* I’m an egghead.

(Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to a letterbox, or “film,” view of a dim hallway within the temple. The only light comes from braziers carved to resemble the canine figure that framed the entrance. Pan/tilt down to frame a square of sky at the opening on the far end; Daring gingerly climbs the steps and sniffs the air, eyeing the dark passage beyond the braziers.)

*** Rainbow:** “The smell of decay and danger hit Daring Do as she peered into the dimly lit entrance of the ancient temple.”

(Her composure and confidence restored, she moves ahead; zoom in on a skull carving on the wall behind her. Three pairs of glowing red eyes appear within the gaping mouth and shift to follow her progress. Dissolve to a close-up of Daring’s hooves on the move through a bug-infested stretch of rubble and bleached bones, then cut to a head-on view of the orange-brown face. One small patch of floor sinks slightly under the weight of her foreleg, followed by the sound of a mechanism kicking into gear. Daring ducks, barely avoiding the three axes that whistle across the hallway and through the space where her head used to be. They wind up embedded in the wall, but she has little time to appreciate the booby trap before another one is sprung. A hidden joint in the floor slides apart beneath her hooves, throwing her into a very uncomfortable spreadeagle position, and she vaults ahead just in time to avoid a blast of fire from below. Next, several alligators drop into view to snap at her; they are suspended from the ceiling, forcing her to crawl ahead. A swinging pendulum blade and a volley of darts give Daring no quarter, followed by a series of spikes that pop up from the floor, one by one. As she leaps ahead to avoid being skewered, a stone slab at the far end of the hallway begins to descend toward the floor. She gallops ahead through the spikes and slides to a stop on her back—with her head directly beneath the dropping monolith. One final burst of motion gets her in the clear before it slams down to cut off her retreat.)

(Daring stands up and wipes the sweat from her forehead. Her voice sounds as Rainbow’s might in a few years—same brash confidence, but a bit lower in pitch and without the raspy edge.)

Daring: Phew!

(No time to rest here, though; another mechanism kicks up as stones and dust fall from above. She lets off a frustrated groan; cut to another open doorway. A lively, camera-shaking ruckus is heard from within it, and Daring rolls through just before it too slams shut. Her helmet, now in her teeth, has been repeatedly pierced by darts; she brushes these away and puts it on again. A look around this chamber reveals a round hole in the ceiling, through which a dusty shaft of light filters in. This begins to move across the chamber and eventually picks out a figurine on a pedestal at the far end—the one seen on the book’s cover. Its blue jewels cast blinding shafts of radiance that fill the screen; when the view clears, it is seen in close-up. Two dog figures sit back to back, holding a large gem at their feet.)

(An extreme close-up of Daring’s eyes shows the reflections of this treasure in her widened pupils. Her mouth curves into a wondering smile—and then the view dissolves to a close-up of

Rainbow's face, set in the same expression, as the fullscreen aspect ratio re-establishes itself. A knock at the door throws a scare into her; zoom out to show her partway underneath her bed's blankets, eagerly hunched over the book.)

(Pan quickly to the closed door as the knob begins to turn, then cut back to Rainbow. She frantically stuffs the book under the blanket and strikes the best nonchalant pose she can; an instant later, Twilight and Fluttershy burst in.)

Twilight, Fluttershy: Hi, Rainbow Dash!

Rainbow: Uh...hey, guys.

Fluttershy: We thought we'd come and cheer you up.

(Cut to the patient and zoom out slightly. The sight of a boxed board game being levitated nearby throws her off balance.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* We brought your favorite board game.

(It is plunked down; cut to a close-up of it, now set up on the end of the bed. Two folding displays are placed back to back, with various figures being placed on the lower portion of the one facing the camera. It is a pony version of the classic game Battleship.)

Fluttershy: *(from o.s.)* We know how much you like to win.

(Rainbow casts a sidewise glance down at her bed and nudges one edge of the blanket down to hide the book from view.)

Twilight: You go first, Rainbow Dash.

Rainbow: *(forcing a chuckle)* No, no. You first.

(Cut to the two visitors, who take their positions at the display she cannot see, all the while trading a very skeptical look.)

Twilight: All right. Uh...Cloud-Three.

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Aw, shucks. *(Back to her.)* You rained on my cumulus. Heh. Go again.

(Pan to the pair.)

Fluttershy: Um...Sky-Five?

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Whoa! *(Cut to her; she holds up one game piece.)* You found my seagull. *(Toss aside.)*

Twilight: Uh...Cloud-Two? *(Cut to Rainbow.)*

Rainbow: You zapped my weather pony!... *(chuckling)* You stung my bumblebee!... *(groaning)* My thunderbolt!

(The second and third parts of this line are accompanied by cuts to frame her face in closer detail. After the last, cut to frame all three again.)

Rainbow: Aw, and that's my last cloud. (*smiling, hastily*) You found it. Guess you guys win. I lose.

(*She shifts her emotions without a clutch again, giving a pout and huff, and snatches the game away; pieces scatter everywhere.*)

Fluttershy: But, Rainbow Dash, you...you didn't even get a turn.

(*Rainbow is feverishly cramming the lid back on the box, but catches herself and smiles.*)

Rainbow: You win some, you lose some. (*An even bigger grin fails to placate Twilight.*)

Twilight: But you *don't* lose some. I don't think you've ever lost a game of— (*Rainbow drops the game, stretches, and yawns.*)

Rainbow: Thanks for coming.

Twilight: But yesterday you were desperate for things to do! (*Rainbow picks it up and shoves it to Twilight.*)

Rainbow: Do? Who said anything about Daring Do? (*Pan to Twilight and Fluttershy, puzzled; she continues o.s.*) I told you, I'm not interested in reading.

(*The lights go out; cut to Rainbow, who has switched off the lamp.*)

Rainbow: (*yawning*) It's naptime for me!

(*The Technicolor-maned head hits the pillow as its owner lets go with some very loud and very inauthentic snoring.*)

Fluttershy: (*walking out*) Glad we could...cheer you up?

(*Twilight aims a critical eye at Rainbow, who opens one of her own and yawns even louder; now the unicorn heads for the door.*)

Twilight: All right, then.

(*Only after the door has closed, and the two mares' shadows can no longer be seen in the slit of light shining in beneath it, does Rainbow fish out her book and carry on reading.*)

Rainbow: "Daring Do stood at the entrance to the central temple chamber."

(*Cut to a "film" view of Daring, who straightens up with a shining-eyed smile, and zoom out to put the jeweled figurine in the fore.*)

* **Rainbow:** "At last, she was face to face with the legendary Sapphire Statue!"

(*Directly in front of her is a grid of floor tiles, each marked with a picture of a jungle animal. She lifts one foreleg to step ahead, but quickly yanks it back as if remembering the gauntlet of booby*

traps she set off earlier. A glance off to one side discloses a battery of holes in the wall, indicating a set of hidden darts ready to fire; she looks around, spots a rock on the floor, and kicks it onto the grid. Once it comes to rest, its weight causes the tile to sink slightly; the darts fly across the chamber, embedding themselves in the wall to form a pony-shaped pattern. Daring hunches down to study the tiles.)

Daring: Hmm...there must be a pattern here. (*Pan across the grid, putting her o.s.*) What do all these animals have in common?

(Cut back to her; inspiration lays her a good one over the pith helmet.)

Daring: Aha! (*Cut to a pan across them; she continues o.s.*) These animals are all predators, except...

(Stop on a tile depicting a rat and zoom in.)

Daring: (*from o.s.*) ...rats!

(One hoof is lifted and placed ever so gently on this spot—and absolutely nothing happens in response. Daring has squeezed her eyes tight shut, but opens one of them to peek through the rivulets of sweat oozing down her face.)

Daring: Phew!

(Getting all four hooves onto this tile, she jumps across the grid to zigzag her way from one rat to the next and is soon at the base of the steps leading up to the Sapphire Statue's pedestal. She throws a savage grin back at the obstacle she has just conquered and climbs up to the prize. The helmet comes off and the sparkles play in her eyes as she regards it with genuine awe; putting the headwear back on, she gets down to business. Inspect the pedestal from another angle, wave a foreleg above it to check for wires, wipe the sweat out of her mane, rub her front hooves together—and then Daring just gets bored with the whole thing and snatches the Statue in her teeth. She drops out of sight and gallops away, not noticing that her action has caused a peg to extend itself upward from the pedestal.)

(Back at ground level, Daring has removed her helmet so she can drop in the Statue. Once she puts it back on, she realizes what is happening; the peg suddenly drops back into its hidden groove and the ceiling begins to cave in. Before Daring can take a step onto the floor grid, the tiles crumble away to expose a lake of steaming lava underneath. Several of the columns lining the walls topple into the molten rock as the liquid surface rises inexorably to swallow the pedestal's lowest steps. Daring scrambles up to the top, looking desperately for a way out of this mess, and lets her glance rove from the tumbled columns to the chamber's ceiling hole. Gritting her teeth, she jumps from the pedestal and gets herself balanced on one broken end; just before this too is swallowed up, she leaps high and snags the edge of the hole. Outside, on the temple roof, Daring is flung skyward by a sudden burst of steam and the lava overflows through the hole.)

(The dazed explorer does a graceless belly flop onto the forest floor, the Statue falling out of her helmet to land a few feet away. A dark-blue-furred forelimb ending in a lighter-toned hand slams down in front of her; cut to a head-on shot of the new arrival and tilt up to frame all of it. This thing rests on all fours, with huge, gorilla-like arms and a dog's hind legs; the underbelly is the same lighter shade of blue as the hands, as are the muzzle and the extra hand at the end of the long slender tail. A few spots in the lighter hue are visible on the back. Gold circlets ring the forearms, tail, and neck, and the eyes are set at the end of a long snout above a mouth filled with cruel teeth. Two dog ears stand straight up from the head, showing gold piercings. This is Ahuizotl.)

Ahuizotl: *(Pinkie's voice)* Hel-loooo, Rainbow Dash!

(Zoom out quickly from this scene to stop in the hospital room as the fullscreen ratio is re-established. A panicked blue pegasus looks up from her book; cut to the poofy pink party pony at the door. She, Applejack, and Rarity enter the room, giving Rainbow barely enough time to hide the novel under the blanket.)

Rarity: How's our patient doing today? *(Applejack crosses the room with a sigh; Rainbow sweats heavily.)*

Applejack: We need to get some fresh air in here. You're lookin' sweatier than a pig wrangler on a summer's day.

Rainbow: *(stammering a bit)* Uh...well, guys...thanks for visiting, but—

(A light yellow nurse mare enters the room, pushing a cart with a dinner tray. Earth pony; same cutie mark and cap as the pink nurse seen earlier; green eyes; two-tone light blue mane/tail, the former bound in a hairnet; markedly less sunny disposition.)

Yellow nurse: Okay now. Dinnertime for Rainbow Dash.

(She deposits the cart by the bed and leaves; the patient grabs the tray off it and feigns enthusiasm over the unappetizing food.)

Rainbow: Oh, just in time. I am sooo hungry. *(Pan slightly to frame Rarity on the next line.)*

Rarity: Oh, well, don't mind us, Rainbow Dash. *(Pan to Applejack, on Rainbow's other side.)*

Applejack: Yeah, just go ahead and eat up.

[Animation goof: Her mouth stops moving before the line is finished.]

(Finding herself hemmed in by these two on either side, and Pinkie at the foot of the bed, she has no choice but to dig in. Which she proceeds to do in the most ill-mannered, uncouth, and just plain messy fashion possible. The horrid display, and the particles of flying food that accompany it, are enough to send these three visitors toward the exit.)

Rarity: *(shuddering)* On second thought...

Pinkie: Uh, we'll see you tomorrow, Rainbow Dash. *(Uneasy laugh.)*

(After the door is closed, she quickly spits out the mouthful over the side. Coming up with a clean face, she retrieves the book and plunges back in. Zoom in slowly on her darting eyes.)

Rainbow: “ ‘You thought you could evade me and capture the relic for yourself, but you were sadly mistaken, Miss Do.’ ”

(Dissolve to a “film” view of Ahuizotl, tilting up from ground to head as before. This time, he speaks in his normal voice, sounding like Dracula’s South American second cousin, as the camera zooms out to frame him against the sun. He now holds the Statue in one main hand and a small gold kitten figure in the one on his tail.)

Ahuizotl: And now, you shall meet your doom!

(As the half-dazed explorer struggles to rise, he brings the kitten figure up to his lips and blows into the tail, generating a shrill whistle with overtones of a cat’s yowl. Right on cue, here come the tiger, panther, lynx, and leopard, each with a weapon in its teeth: spiked flail for the tiger, club for the panther, coils of rope for the other two. The white kitten emerges with a meow from behind one of the tiger’s hind legs and rubs happily against it. Cut to a long overhead shot of the tableau and zoom out slowly as Ahuizotl uncorks a long, crazed laugh to the heavens.)

(Cut back to a fullscreen shot of Rainbow, now sitting up on her haunches in bed with the blanket pulled up over her back.)

Rainbow: Whoa! Who is *this* dude?

(“Film” view: a chamber within a different structure. A large gold medallion is hung on the wall near ceiling level, with the image of a menacing animal face worked into it; tilt down to the sound of Daring’s heaving breath. She is lashed to a stone table on her back; the four jungle cats stand around her.)

Daring: You won’t get away with this, Ahuizotl!

(Cut to him, standing by a lever on a wall and holding the Statue in his tail hand.)

Ahuizotl: But I already have. *(He pulls the lever; machinery starts up.)*

Daring: *(groaning)* Not again!

(The whole crew bails out and the door closes as spikes emerge from two opposite walls, which begin to grind slowly toward each other. Daring struggles against her bonds to no avail; meanwhile, spiders crawl out along the spikes, cobras slither from a hole in the gold medallion, and spouts on the walls begin to dispense...)

Daring: Quicksand!

(She keeps straining as all four perils gradually converge on her, the table starting to sink into the muck.)

*** Doctor:** *(echoing)* Rainbow Dash?

(Cut to a close-up of the avid reader; a small pool of light is cast over her from an o.s. source.)

Doctor: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow Dash?

(Zoom out slightly. The light is coming from a lantern filled with fireflies, and she has tunneled underneath her bed's blanket. She looks guiltily off to one side; cut to frame the doctor in the foreground. It is daytime, and the lantern picks out her silhouette within the bedclothes.)

Doctor: *(singsong)* Rainbow Dash!

(The blanket tries to flee in at least four different directions, then gets shoved aside to expose her head and the lantern.)

Rainbow: *(stammering a bit)* Oh! Good evening—

Doctor: Morning.

Rainbow: *(stretching)* —morning, Doc.

(The full meaning of his correction sinks in; she looks quickly out the window and finds the sun rising over Ponyville. Cut to the doctor, who is eyeing the lantern with clear suspicion.)

Doctor: Have you been up all night? *(It is whisked away.)*

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Uh, of course not.

(Cut to her; a quick puff of air scatters the fireflies out of the lantern to extinguish it. She grins broadly and hides it behind her back, placating the doctor.)

Doctor: Well, I'll be quick. Congratulations, Rainbow Dash, we're checking you out of the hospital.

Rainbow: *What?!?* Later today? *(She bites a hoof nervously.)*

Doctor: No. *(He backs o.s.)* Right now.

Rainbow: *Right now?!?* "Right now" right now? *(Cut to him at the door; both nurses charge in with a wheelchair.)*

Doctor: "Right now" right now.

(Comes next a melee from the direction of the bed, along with clouds of dust and Rainbow's johnny being flung back.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* But I don't feel better! *(The bandages go next.)*

Doctor: Now take it easy, Rainbow Dash. *(walking out)* Remember to stay off that wing for a

week.

(The pink nurse pushes her out in the chair as she tries desperately to reach back behind herself. Cut to her receding perspective of the bed and the lump in it that marks her hidden book; the yellow nurse steps into view to wave goodbye. Outside the front entrance—a standard set of double doors, rather than the Dutch doors used on most other buildings in Ponyville—the discharged patient gets one final shove to roll her onto the walk. The doors are slammed shut; zoom in on her as she bangs the chair's arms in frustration.)

Rainbow: How will I ever find out what happens to Daring Do?

(Zoom out to a long shot of her and the building, then snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to Rainbow, out of the chair and pacing before the hospital entrance. To say that she is in a tizzy would be something of an understatement.)

Rainbow: Is Ahuizotl gonna get away with the statuette? What's gonna happen to Daring? *(She stops and gets an idea.)* Aha! Twilight has a copy of the book! *(Defeated sigh.)* But I can't ask her after I called her an egghead and all!

(She flops onto her back and groans loudly.)

Rainbow: This is making me sick all over again!

(Another brainstorm hits; zoom in on her calculating smile, then clock wipe to the hospital lobby. The doors slide open to admit Rainbow, who staggers toward the front desk with a front hoof pressed to her forehead; the yellow nurse and the doctor take note of her arrival.)

Rainbow: *(groaning, flopping onto bench)* Oh, the pain, the pain! *(The doctor crosses to her.)*

Doctor: Rainbow Dash? What are you doing here? Uh, anything wrong?

Rainbow: Well, uh...my wing! *(spreading left wing)* It's still hurting, Doc.

(She goes down on her belly; he flexes the appendage a bit with no immediate reaction. After a moment, she provides one in the form of a full-body twitch.)

Rainbow: Oh...ouch! Right there!

Doctor: *(dryly)* I was touching your good wing.

(The fact that this is the truth—her right wing had been bandaged up after the wipeout—leaves her at a loss.)

Rainbow: Uh...right. Well, I think that one's hurting now, too.

(He just gives her a sardonic little chuckle and smiles.)

Doctor: I think I know what the trouble is. *(Cut to her, looking pitiful; he continues o.s.)* A severe case of... *(Back to him.)* ...lazy-itis.

(Outside the front entrance, he bulldozes the malingerer onto the walk as both nurses stay available for backup. The sky is working its way toward sunset now.)

Rainbow: B-but...you got me all wrong, Doc! I'm not being lazy!

Doctor: You're fine, Rainbow Dash. *(The nurses nod.)* Give it some time and you'll be right back in the swing of things. *(He heads back in.)*

Pink nurse: Good day, Rainbow Dash. *(So does she.)*

Yellow nurse: Take care. *(Ditto; Rainbow stands up.)*

Rainbow: What am I gonna do? *(walking off)* I'll never get to sleep without knowing what happens to Daring Do!

(She stops after only a few steps, with a third idea flashing through the little gray cells under her vivid mane. Zoom in to a close-up.)

Rainbow: Which may not be such a bad thing.

(She walks off again. Dissolve to the full moon in the night sky and cut to the exterior of the hospital. After the lights in all the windows have been snuffed, the blue pegasus jumps out from the bushes at one corner of the building. She has put on a dark gray, full-body hooded sweatsuit that leaves only her face, wings, and tail exposed. The amateur housebreaker slinks toward the front entrance, only to find herself standing in a slit of light issuing from between the double doors. Cut to a close-up of the source, a blue-eyed khaki stallion dressed as a security guard. His grizzled gray mane is cut short in a military style, and he has the end of a flashlight in his teeth.)

(Once the glare from the beam dies down, the view shifts to just outside the doors as he steps out through them to make his rounds. His tail is cut short to match his mane, and he is revealed to be an earth pony. Rainbow is nowhere to be seen for the moment, but she peeks up from a new hiding place on the portico above the entrance. A glance upward reveals an open upper-story window.)

(Wipe to a hallway inside. She zigzags her way down its length, peeking out from one bit of cover before instantly appearing behind the next, then ducks away to avoid being spotted by the passing doctor. After he has gone, she slips into the open, looks around, and finds a beam of moonlight shining through an overhead grate to pick out the closed door of room 12. A big, squeaky, calculating grin steals across the intruder's face.)

(Inside the room, whose door has now been opened, Rainbow peeks in and stays low while easing past the patient in full-body traction. Cut to a close-up as she peeks over the edge of a bed and registers sudden surprise, then zoom out. Her former bed is now occupied by a sleeping,

light yellow stallion whose mane has been shaved down to stubble. A few furtive glances here and there inform her that the object of her search is lying underneath the bed; she hunkers down here to get back into the story.)

(Cut to a “film” view of Daring in the four-way death trap set off by Ahuizotl.)

Daring: *(with effort)* Feels like the harder I struggle...the tighter the ropes get! *(A spider by her head speaks up.)*

Spider: *(male voice)* Help! *(Zoom in on it.)* Burglar! Burglar!

(Cut to Rainbow under the new patient’s bed. She hears the voice again, causing her to start so violently that she bangs her head against the bed frame and knocks herself silly for a moment.)

Spider voice: Someone’s trying to steal my slippers!

(Out she comes, book in hoof, finding the bald stallion sitting up in bed to mark him as the speaker. He is an earth pony with dark blue eyes.)

Rainbow: I’m not trying to steal your slippers! *(easing away from bed)* I’m trying to steal this book!

(And she nearly catches a lamp upside the head for her trouble, flung at her by the annoyed patient. She makes it back into the hall, only to be confronted by the pink nurse.)

Pink nurse: Stop thief!

(Here come the yellow nurse and the doctor from two other directions, ready to throw some hooves. The next contender is a white, pink-eyed earth pony filly with a curly black mane/tail; she has the same cutie mark and cap as the two nurses, marking her as a junior staff member. Rainbow takes to the air and flies over this last, but a sudden cramp or re-fracture in her right wing sends her crashing into the library cart. She looks wildly about the scatter of books in search of the right one, but a buzzer forces her to clear out ahead of the squad, now well provisioned with flashlights.)

(Outside, she bursts from the front doors and gallops down a hill littered with stumps, rocks, and other nasty obstacles. Her four pursuers are hot after her, and a dog’s barking does very little to calm her spirits. As they spread out, it can be seen that only three of the four—doctor, guard, pink nurse—have lights; the fourth can only be discerned as a silhouette with a badly disheveled mane/tail.)

(As Rainbow gallops through Ponyville, the three beams of light slash past a building’s shuttered upper-story window. Pinkie pops her head out from this, wearing a pink nightcap.)

Pinkie: *(angrily)* Hey! No pony invited me!

(Rainbow pays no mind and races on, her face registering mind-blowing shock before she skids to a full stop. Zoom out quickly to show that she has reached one bank of the stream that borders Ponyville; a vine hangs down above it. As the four hunters close in, she takes the big leap and catches the vine to swing safely across the water, throwing a mocking salute back in the process. However, her heroics are for naught, as the group simply charges over the nearest bridge to stay after her.)

(The chase takes a hairpin turn around the Carousel Boutique, all of whose lights quickly come on before Rarity opens the front door to glare out with a disgusted cry. She is in a flowered bathrobe.)

Rarity: Hasn't anypony heard of beauty sleep?

(As Rainbow leads her pursuers back and forth past the library, all of its windows blaze up and Twilight opens the front door to take in the scene. Her untidy mane and the circles under her eyes point to the very sound sleep she is no longer getting. Rainbow jumps to a crouching stop before her.)

Doctor: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow Dash, what in the world is going on?

(On the end of this, zoom out to frame him, the guard, and the pink nurse right behind him.)

Doctor: Why are you stealing slippers?

(The fourth member of the crew is now seen in close-up as the pink nurse casts a light over her. Light blue earth pony mare, ruffled gray mane/tail, dark red-violet eyes that point in opposite directions, screw cutie mark, dressed in a white johnny. She, rather than an actual dog, has been generating the barks heard during the entire chase sequence.)

Doctor: *(from o.s.)* Hey, get back to the hospital!

(She gallops off, followed by the guard—whose cutie mark is now revealed as a silver badge. Fluttershy and Rarity arrive on the scene, the former clad in a white bathrobe with lavender trim, and are quickly joined by Applejack.)

Applejack: What's all the ruckus? *(Pinkie pops up, without her nightcap.)*

Pinkie: Mmm—I'd say it's more of a fracas than a ruckus.

(Cut to the cornered pegasus, with Twilight and the doctor glaring at her, and zoom in slowly; she has lowered the hood of her outfit.)

Twilight: What's going on, Rainbow Dash?

(Sweat trickles down for a long moment before Rainbow sighs heavily and hangs her head.)

Rainbow: I'm an egghead.

Rarity: Pardon? (*Fluttershy smiles.*)

Rainbow: See, I was trying to get back into the hospital to finish the last chapter of—

Twilight: (*smiling*) —*Daring Do and the Quest for the Sapphire Statue* [*sic*]!

Rainbow: You got me.

Twilight: Wow. I knew the book was good, but I didn't know it could drive a pony to petty theft!

Rainbow: Good? Try awesomely amazing! (*smiling fiercely*) That book is undeniably, unquestionably un-put-down-able!

(As in Act One, the camera zooms in by steps on each of these last words to frame her appreciative expression. It then zooms back out as her enthusiasm fades into regret and the doctor's face goes slack with surprise.)

Rainbow: But then I had to put it down. I was sent home before I could finish it. (*She smiles sheepishly.*)

Twilight: Well, I'm glad that's all this is about. (*The other four gather around.*)

Applejack: There's no reason to go around causin' a ruckus— (*The smile widens.*)

Pinkie: Fracas!

Applejack: (*rolling her eyes*) —causin' a fracas just because you like to read.

(Dissolve to the right end of a particularly full bookshelf and pan to the left one.)

Twilight: (*from o.s, levitating one out*) Like I said, I have every book in the series, and you can borrow them all anytime you like.

(Cut to Rainbow inside; it is floated down to her. She has stripped off the stealth gear. Zoom out to frame Twilight and Spike here as she voices a happy sigh. The three are in Twilight's upper-story room, and the baby dragon is taking a break from sweeping up.)

Rainbow: Thanks, Twilight. I'm sorry I made such a big deal about all this. (*Cut to Twilight; she continues o.s.*) I thought reading was just for smart ponies like you.

Twilight: (*gently reproofing*) Rainbow Dash, just because you're athletic doesn't mean you aren't smart. (*She taps her head with a hoof; pan to Spike.*)

Spike: (*flexing one arm*) Yeah! Just look at me!

(He kisses his bicep but gets no love from the two mares, so he grumpily snatches up his broom to get back to work.)

Twilight: Reading is something everypony can enjoy, if they just give it a try.

Rainbow: Yeah, I get it. I shouldn't knock something until I've tried it.

Twilight: That's a great lesson, and it would make a great letter to the Princess. (*Rainbow leans over to Spike.*)

Rainbow: Did you get all that?

Spike: (*uncertainly*) Yeah?

Rainbow: Great! (*She zips away and continues o.s.*) You write the letter... (*Cut to frame all*

three.) ...I gotta finish this book!

(A lightning-fast nip puts it in her teeth and nearly takes off a hank of Twilight's mane; unicorn and dragon share a knowing smile after her departure. The scene contracts to letterbox aspect ratio and dissolves to a "film" view of Daring still in her unenviable jam on the stone table. After a few groans and a bit of thrashing, she flips her head forward so that her helmet ends up lying on her belly, brim up. Casting her frantic eyes about the room and noting the position of every detail, she hooks one rear leg into the helmet, snags the brim in her teeth, and pulls back as if trying to launch a slingshot. When she lets go, the helmet is flung across the room to bounce off one spike; it whirls around the edge of the gold medallion on the wall, then ricochets crazily between several other spikes. Daring sucks in a huge breath and holds it as the quicksand envelops her face—and on its last bounce, the helmet bangs into the lever Ahuizotl pulled to start this engine. It flips up, causing the spiked walls to retract and the table to rise above the surface of the draining sand. Now free of her bonds, Daring heaves for breath and knocks a few grains out of her ears.)

(The exit slides open, and she stands up with helmet in hoof.)

Daring: Another day... *(putting it on)* ...another dungeon.

(A flick of one hoof gets it adjusted at the proper rakish angle. Cut to a close-up of the white kitten that tried to join in on the big cats' earlier pursuits of Daring. It is now sitting on Ahuizotl's lap and purring like a little outboard motor as he strokes it and laughs.)

Ahuizotl: With Daring Do out of the way...

(Zoom out to frame all of him; he sits on a stone throne, holding the Statue in his tail hand. The tiger and panther nap on either side, while the lynx dozes on top of the headrest.)

Ahuizotl: ...the world will suffer mightily at my hands! *(exultantly)* I am victorious!

(He laughs wildly for a few seconds, but a blur of green, orange-brown, and monochrome rainbow stops him in his tracks. It also leaves his tail hand holding a whole lot of nothing.)

Daring: *(from o.s.)* I'll take that!

(Cut to her, holding the Statue in one foreleg and gripping a vine in the other to swing away.)

Ahuizotl: *(stammering)* What?!

(Cut to a high ledge; Daring lands here and releases the vine.)

Ahuizotl: *(from o.s. below)* NOOOOOOOO!! *(She tucks the Statue away.)*

Daring: Better luck next time, Ahuizotl!

(She gives her helmet a nudge and gallops away, the camera zooming out to frame the entire area. Ahuizotl's throne has been set up in a stone courtyard, and the ledge hangs above the wall opposite it. He has now put the kitten down and jumped to ground level.)

Ahuizotl: CURSE YOU, DARING DO!!

(Wailing; cut to a long shot of the jungle at sunset. The silhouette of Daring gallops toward and past the camera.)

* **Rainbow:** “And so, with Ahuizotl defeated and the Sapphire Statue secured...”

(Dissolve to a close-up of Rainbow, now at the end of the book, as the view widens out to fullscreen.)

Rainbow: “...the world was safe and sound once again—thanks to Daring Do!”

(She slams it shut and falls backward o.s. with a blissful sigh. Cut to a tall stack of books; she pokes her head into view and retrieves the topmost one in her teeth. The camera then zooms out to frame this area as a bedroom in her house. Although the structure has been seen to be constructed from clouds, everything in here is solid enough: bed, floor, rug, columns, window, nightstands on either side. The books are stacked up on one of these, and the bed's blanket is blue with a red/yellow lightning bolt. The entire room is done in shades of blue and violet.)

(Rainbow lounges back onto the pillows with this new tome.)

Rainbow: *Daring Do and the Griffon's Goblet.*

(She clasps it to her belly...)

Rainbow: *(giddily)* Awesome!

(...and settles in to bust some pages. Fade to black.)