

THE HEARTH'S WARMING CLUB

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

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the School of Friendship and zoom in slowly. The sun has begun to set, and snow is falling steadily to blanket the building and grounds in a fresh layer of white. Dissolve to an extreme close-up of one bough of a tree decorated for the Hearth's Warming holiday as a hoof reaches into view to hang up an ornament, then zoom out. The limb belongs to Sandbar.)

Same melody as prologue song in "A Hearth's Warming Tail," brisk 4 (G flat major)

Sandbar: Ponies' voices fill the night, Hearth's Warming Eve is here once again
(spoken, addressing himself o.s.) Come on, everycreature! Sing!

(Long shot of this area, a common room within the School that has been kitted out from floor to rafters for the big day, including a tree topper of a brightly glowing pink heart with small licks of flame rising from it. Applejack and Rarity are talking at ground level, Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash are working on the overhead decorations, and students and adults fill nearly every bit of the floor not occupied by wrapped gifts. The buzz of conversation dies away at remarkable speed for a fraction of a second at his command, then starts right back up as he trots across the floor singing the melody to himself. He ends it by arriving at a chair in which Ocellus sits and giving her a "take it" gesture. Finding herself ringed by her five friends and classmates, she grimaces with clear unease and manages a few shaky, halfhearted notes.)

Yona: Not everycreature celebrate same way, you know!

Smolder: Yeah. (picking up a pony rag doll) Dragons don't do pony holidays.

Spike: (from o.s.) Sure we do. (He walks up to the six, followed by Twilight Sparkle and Rainbow.) I love Hearth's Warming Eve. It's all about friends and presents and family and...presents! (Close-up of Twilight.)

Twilight: It's also about putting aside differences to come together, like the earth ponies, pegasi, and unicorns did on the first holiday.

(She briefly spreads her wings and gestures to her horn on “pegasi” and “unicorns,” respectively.)

Ocellus: *(from o.s.)* Oh! *(Pan to her and Sandbar.)* Is that why you put their Fire of Friendship on top of the tree— *(Eyes turn toward the heart.)* —to help us remember their unity? *(Rainbow flies up to it.)*

Rainbow: And 'cause it looks cool.

Silverstream: This is my favorite day of the year! *(Giggle.)* Not that I don't like the other ones. *(rearing up/spreading wings, knocking Smolder over)* Tuesdays are great!

(The orange dragon sits up, rubbing one eye that has just been hit with a wall of feathers.)

Yona: Yona like any day that is start of winter break.

Gallus: *(gently jibing tone)* Two whole weeks without classes. How will Ocellus survive? *(Smolder stands up as Ocellus laughs weakly.)*

Twilight: *(crossing to them)* I think you'll all enjoy the time off to be home with your families, to celebrate your own traditions. *(addressing the room)* Attention, everycreature! School is officially out. Happy holidays, and we'll see you after the break.

(The pony portion of the crowd files out amid a rush of happy small talk, Rarity employing her magic to swing the room's doors open.)

Twilight: And for those of you traveling outside Equestria... *(Rainbow hovers next to her.)*

Rainbow: Yeah, shouldn't you guys be getting ready to go? If you miss that train, it's a really long walk.

Twilight: Go pack up, and we'll take you to the station.

(Chattering excitedly, the remaining six students head for the exit, the camera positioned in the hallway to frame Twilight and Rainbow watching them go. A gift is tossed into view from beyond the edge of the doorframe, drawing the two mares' attention; cut to another one near the tree as Spike lifts it, puts an ear to the side, and gives it a hearty shake to try and divine the contents.)

Spike: *(to Twilight)* It's that new bow tie I wanted, isn't it?

Twilight: You'll have to wait and see.

(Unnoticed by the three, an inky figure begins to make its way across the rafters toward the tree.)

Spike: I'm waiting— *(shaking box again)* —but in the meantime, I'm shaking!

(The interloper leans out, showing only a dark gray cloak and hood, and one forelimb reaches out to shake some glittering powder over the Fire of Friendship tree topper. A close-up of the container picks out the vivid violet hue and the spatter of slime that passes for a label. The powder settles onto the Fire, causing it to flare brightly and erratically for a moment before intensifying its glow to near-blinding levels. Twilight, Rainbow, and Spike notice the glare and look up toward the source with a tripartite gasp, just in time to see the Fire decompose into a

torrent of purple sludge that gushes down the tree toward them. Spike has barely enough time for one stunned gasp before it covers him, and the view fades to black as it washes over the entire screen.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of Spike's gasping face just before it disappears under the slimy tsunami. When it drains away, he is left wearing a translucent coating of the muck and stumbling backwards with a grunt of supreme disgust. A longer shot frames the deposits clinging to nearly every surface in the common room, the tree having taken the worst of it by far. Rainbow has gone airborne to avoid the deluge, while Twilight drops the shield she has put up around herself in order to stay dry. Spike manages to lift off with considerable effort and quite a few more grunts, but his boss quickly zaps him with a spell to reel him back in. Her efforts to strip off the goop take a moment to pay off, as its hold is quite tenacious.)

Spike: Wh-what happened? *(Zoom out slightly; now evening sky and stars can be seen through the windows.)*

Twilight: Everything's ruined! That's what's happened!

(After a moment's scan of the area, Rainbow zooms upward. Cut to an extreme close-up of the powder can, lying overturned on the tree's uppermost limbs, and zoom out as Rainbow zeroes in on it.)

Rainbow: *(picking it up)* And I don't think it was an accident. *(She sets it down and backs off.)* Somepony was up here!

(The cloaked/hooded perpetrator breaks from cover and races for an exit.)

Spike: *(pointing after it)* Over there!

(Twilight spots the figure pushing a window open and diving clear. Cut to just outside as the three approach to peer through the wind-driven snow.)

Twilight: Outside!

(They get moving across the courtyard; after a quick stop at its center to survey the vicinity, Spike notices a set of doors slamming shut on the opposite side.)

Spike: That's the students' quarters!

(Both ponies pump their wings to close in. Cut to a broad hallway lined with doors on each side; there is the sound of a closing door, followed by the trio's emergence from o.s.—they are now inside this area of the School, with no other signs of life.)

Rainbow: *(voice raised)* Might as well give up, whoever you are! We gotcha cornered! *(No response.)*

Twilight: Hello? Is anypony there?

Rainbow: I'll check the back door!

(She zips away. Now two doors open, facing each other across the hall, and Silverstream and Smolder step out.)

Silverstream: What's happening? *(Happy gasp.)* Another decorating party?

Twilight: Has anycreature come in here?

Smolder: Well, yeah. All of us did—to pack, like you told us to?

Spike: After that! Did you hear anything? *(Next two lines overlap.)*

Silverstream: Uh...uh-uh.

Smolder: Uh-uh.

(Comes the sound of another door opening from o.s.; cut to it as Gallus emerges.)

Gallus: What's up? *(The next one opens; out comes a very happy Yona.)*

Yona: Yona done packing!

(More hinges creak; pan across the hall to frame Ocellus and Sandbar leaving their rooms.)

Ocellus: Is something wrong? *(Rainbow returns.)*

Rainbow: The back door's locked! No way out!

Twilight: But whoever did it had to have come in here! We saw them!

Ocellus: Whoever did what?

(Dissolve to a head-on close-up of an extremely confused Ocellus, Sandbar, and Yona in the common room, eyes tilted upward.)

Sandbar: Whoa! That is *so* not cool.

(Cut to the top of the slimed tree and tilt down to its base, bringing Twilight, Rainbow, and Spike into view facing them accusingly on the start of the next line.)

Spike: *(pacing)* And whoever did it ran into *your* rooms.

(Overhead shot: they and all six students are gathered here as purple gobbets drip past the camera in the fore. The window used for the perpetrator's escape has been closed.)

Spike: No one came out, and all of *you* are still here. *(Ground level.)*

Rainbow: *(pointing at them)* One of you must have done this! *(Pause.)* But why would any of you want to sabotage Hearth's Warming Eve?

(Six young scholars voice a cacophony of puzzled responses.)

Yona: Ugh! Yak not do this! Yona offended by accusation!

Twilight: We don't know what happened. Maybe this wasn't even on purpose. But I want to give whoever caused this mess a chance to tell the truth and explain themselves. I'll make it easy for you. Close your eyes.

(Five students do so promptly, but Yona keeps hers open until an irritated nudge from Ocellus prompts her to follow suit.)

Twilight: Now, if you did this, raise your hoof—or claw—or whatever.

(Rainbow and Spike have joined in by this point; there is no sound or motion but that of the viscous purple residue dripping from the ceiling, and Twilight sighs in mild frustration.)

Twilight: Come on, Spike. Looks like we have to—

(She cuts herself off, surprised; cut to him with hands over eyes, then zoom out to frame her on the start of the next line.)

Twilight: *(mildly annoyed)* Spike, you can open your eyes. *(He does so, removing his hands.)*

Spike: What? Oh! *(Zoom out to frame Rainbow on the next line.)*

Rainbow: Uh, what about me?

Twilight: You all can. *(All do so, Rainbow with a laugh.)* But, since nocreature took responsibility for this mess, you're all gonna have to help clean it up before we can go home.

(Groans and noises of protest from the students.)

Smolder: Why do I have to stay?

Sandbar: Aw, but the holidays!

(The headmare impassively floats rags, mops, and buckets over to them.)

Twilight: While you're cleaning, we'll bring you into my office one at a time. Since honesty is one of the Elements of Harmony, we want to give you each a chance to tell us the truth.

Rainbow: *(threateningly)* And once we find out who did it, just you wait! We're gonna... *(losing steam)* ...we'll... *(to Twilight)* ...w-what are we gonna do, exactly?

Twilight: *(sighing heavily)* The guilty party won't be going home over Hearth's Warming break. She or he will stay here for some one-on-one friendship lessons.

Silverstream: *(scared)* But what if none of us confesses?

Twilight: Then... *(Sigh.)* ...I guess there's no holidays for anycreature. You'll all stay over the break.

(A six-way gasp of shock, accompanied by a fresh glob of gunk splattering to the floor, and the view snaps to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of a mop being withdrawn from a bucket and plied against a splotch on the carpet. It is held by Gallus, who sullenly wipes sweat from his brow just before a set of doors swings open, pushed by Twilight's hoof. Long shot of the entire common room: all six students are on cleanup detail, and Twilight/Rainbow/Spike have just entered from a hallway.)

Twilight: All right, let's get to the bottom of this. Who wants to be interviewed first? *(Brief silence.)*

Gallus: Eh, I'll go. Beats mop duty.

(He throws the cleaning implement to Silverstream, who catches it, and follows the trio out. The camera remains on her and Smolder.)

Silverstream: Hey, I know! We can make a game out of this—see who finishes cleaning up first! *(She begins mopping.)*

Yona: *(from o.s.)* Woo-hoo! *(Pan to her, rag in hoof.)* Yak win! Yak best at cleaning!

(She laughingly makes short work of a couple of spots, and Smolder easily sops up another bit.)

Smolder: Let's save time and cut to the chase. *(Wring out her rag over a bucket.)* Which one of you did it?

Ocellus: I would never do something this horrible! I love Hearth's Warming Eve— *(angrily)* —and I do *not* want to miss going home for it.

Sandbar: Huh. I didn't even know changelings celebrated Hearth's Warming.

Ocellus: *(brightly, nodding)* Oh, yes. It's our favorite holiday—well, since Headmare Twilight shared it with us last year. She gave our hive *very* clear instructions.

(A wavering dissolve shifts the scene to a patch of ground against which an extremely long scroll unrolls itself into view. On the start of the next line, zoom out to frame Ocellus holding the other end and addressing her family—parents and two younger siblings—at home in their hive.)

Ocellus: *(clearing throat, reading)* “Welcome to the traditions and fun of Hearth's Warming. Here's a guide to help you enjoy this celebration of pony history. Families start the holidays by putting the tree up.”

(Wipe to the whole group backing slowly into view and hauling on a rope with teeth and hooves. It runs through a pulley attached to an overhead beam, and the other end is tied securely to the trunk of an uprooted tree that is being hoisted clear of the ground. They get it tied off, leaving the

tree to dangle upside down, and smile up at the low-altitude boughs. Wipe to Ocellus reading from the scroll.)

Ocellus: “Thirsty? Dive into some holiday punch.”

(Wipe to the surface of a body of some deep pink liquid, whose tranquility is broken when she dives into it headfirst. She surfaces with a grin, the camera zooming out to frame her and the rest of the family bobbing/jumping in a natural basin of this stuff and laughing. The color gives it away as the punch described in Twilight’s list, and this scenario and their response to the “putting the tree up” suggestion indicate that they have taken her words a bit too literally. Wipe to a close-up of Ocellus picking up a wrapped gift box and passing it to her left; on the next line, cut to the five seated in a circle. This box and two others are passed from hoof to hoof, over and over.)

* **Ocellus:** “Just before bed, everypony exchanges gifts.”

(The passes continue for some seconds before she speaks up.)

Ocellus: *(embarrassed)* It doesn’t say how long we keep doing this.

(Wipe to an extreme close-up of two short pieces of wood being nailed into place to hold two larger, red/orange-painted ones together.)

* **Ocellus:** “ And to finish celebrating, you can build a fire...” *(The hammer is traded for a lantern.)* “...light it up...”

(More such lanterns are produced and held up. This construction proves to be a facsimile of a large campfire built within a ring of stones.)

* **Ocellus:** “...and sing carols.”

Ocellus, Family: *(singing, G major)* Carols, carols, carols, carols, carols

(They break off and laugh warmly over their unwitting literal-mindedness. Wavering dissolve back to Ocellus and Sandbar in the present.)

Sandbar: You might have misunderstood things just a little.

Ocellus: Eh. We may not have done everything exactly the way you do, but we made our own tradition. And I can’t wait to do it all again this year.

Smolder: If we ever get out of here.

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Ocellus? *(Cut to her and Gallus, standing at the open hallway doors.)* Your turn.

(She paces away as a silent summons for the very nervous changeling to follow her and pass the returning griffon. Rainbow brings up the rear, flapping slowly behind Ocellus to usher her down the dimly lit hallway and into Twilight’s office; its doors close ominously behind them.)

Silverstream: *(to Gallus)* What happened?

Gallus: What do you think happened? I told her I didn't do it. *(Cut to Silverstream/Smolder/Yona.)*

Yona: Ugh! *(stomping; the room shakes)* Yona tired of waiting! Yaks *always* home for holidays! *(To Sandbar on the start of the next line.)*

Sandbar: How do you celebrate Hearth's Warming in Yakyakistan, Yona?

Yona: Yaks do not. Our holiday *much* better. Is called Snildar Fest. *(Close-up.)* Night before, yaks gather things to smash and put them in big pile. *(brandishing rag)* Then, in morning, we smash them! In afternoon, we smash them again! In evening—

Gallus: *(from o.s.)* So— *(Cut to him, her, and Sandbar.)* —it's just about smashing stuff, like all your other holidays.

Yona: *(offended)* No! How griffon get that idea? This holiday about so much more. *(smiling warmly)* Last year, for example—most perfect Snildar ever.

(Wavering dissolve to an elderly yak couple tromping through the countryside under a steady snowfall. They are followed in turn by two calves, then a couple younger than the first, and finally Yona—her hair long and loose rather than braided. The sun has begun to set.)

* **Yona:** Whole family. Grandpa, grandma yak, Yona's brother, sister, mother, father yak, all go to woods singing yak song.

Ponderous melody, slow 4 (E major)

Yona, Family: Yak song, yak song not very long, sing again
(They approach the edge of a forest.)

Yak song, yak song not very long, sing again
Yak song, yak song not very long, sing again

(Stop near a scatter of fallen logs, which she and her siblings inspect.)

* **Yona:** Calves and family pick out perfect smashing log. *(They decide on one.)* Then yaks smash it!

(With a chorus of savage yells, the whole clan joins in on battering the piece to splinters and throwing out enough powdery snow to fill the screen. Once the view clears, cut to an extreme close-up of a wall of snow getting an extra lump pressed into it by Yona.)

* **Yona:** Then yak family build perfect snow fort... *(Long shot; they have put up a serviceable hut.)* ...and smash it!

(Hooves big and small waste no time in pummeling the structure from all angles, Yona stomping on the roof until the whole thing tumbles down in a gale of blowing snow that whites out the view all over again. After the haze clears, cut to a close-up of what might be an evergreen tree cut

down and laid on its side, already bedecked with bows and tribal-patterned cloth bands. Family members add various items during the next line: a bow, a gold ring, a twig.)

* **Yona:** Then we hang perfect things on perfect moss pile and—

(Cut to the common room.)

Gallus, Sandbar, Silverstream, Smolder: *(wearily)* —you smash it.

Yona: *(needled, brandishing rag)* What you think yaks are, barbarians? *(smiling)* Moss pile is for special family rituals. Last year, ritual for Yona.

(The family at the forest's edge again. Now the "tree" can indeed be fully seen as a sizable, lumpy pile of moss. Grandparents, parents, and siblings pack in tight around Yona.)

* **Yona:** All yak family gather around Yona...

(When they back off, her hair is in the long, straight braids she first sported upon arriving at the School.)

* **Yona:** ...and braid Yona hair for first time.

(In close-up, she regards the style change with a joyful grin; behind her, the background dissolves to the common room.)

Gallus: *(from o.s.)* So, to recap... *(Cut to him her, and Sandbar.)* ...your holiday is about smashing things and family.

Yona: Two most perfect things ever, put together! Happy Snildar Fest!

(She gets into the spirit by leaping onto the nearest bucket with a grunting laugh and crushing it to scrap wood. On the start of the next line, pan to frame Silverstream and Smolder.)

Silverstream: Happy Snildar to you too, Yona! *(dropping her mop)* It's so cool to learn new traditions from new friends!

(Her attempt to emulate the practice only gets as far as knocking her bucket onto its side, her follow-up stomp and smacks leaving it quite intact.)

Smolder: Yeah. Well, one of these new friends has gotten us all in trouble, and they'd better confess soon.

Ocellus: *(from o.s.)* Sandbar? *(Long shot; she has now returned.)* Sorry, but they said they want you to go in next.

(The young earth pony lets his mop clatter to the floor and trots off.)

Silverstream: Why the rush to get home, Smolder? Like you said, dragons don't really have holidays—do they?

Smolder: *(shrugging)* Meh.

Ocellus: *(gasping, shocked)* That's so sad! You must do something in the winter for fun.

Smolder: Well, we do have the Feast of Fire. Every dragon gets together and tells stories. The best one wins a pile of gemstones.

Yona: Ooh! What story won last year?

Smolder: It was called "A Dream Come True."

Silverstream: Come on! Now you've gotta tell it!

Smolder: *(rolling eyes)* Ugh, fine. *(Silverstream calms down.)* Once upon a time, there was this sad little dragon.

(Wavering dissolve to a barren, rocky plain under a torrential rainstorm at night. Zoom in on a large outcropping, at the top of which a tiny figure can be seen beneath an overhang as lightning bolts throw their harsh glare over it. A close-up picks out the occupant as a rather glum dragon with pink hide, green eyes, pale yellow underbelly and tail spines, a light orange-pink projection at the tail tip, and horns striped in these last two colors.)

* **Smolder:** Her name was Scales. She lived alone in the wilderness, with nothing to eat.

(Scales' gut chooses this moment to voice its displeasure at being empty.)

* **Smolder:** But one night, as she sat alone in the storm, she heard something.

(Leaving the relative dryness of the overhang, Scales ventures to the edge of the plateau beyond it and finds a much larger, blue male flying up from below to look her straight on. His underbelly is pale blue, the lower surfaces of his wings are light green, the large horns are striped in yellow and light green, and the eyes are bright yellow with a faint green tinge. One hand carries the Bloodstone Scepter, the Dragon Lord's badge of office, and he wears a dark skullcap topped with a cluster of red gems that match the one set in this item.)

* **Smolder:** It was the Dragon Lord! Scales was scared—*(He speaks to her...)*—but the Dragon Lord told her not to be afraid. *(...and extends his free hand.)* That he was taking her to the Dragon Lands for a great feast.

(The forlorn dragon allows herself a hopeful smile, places her hand in his, and is airlifted to a cave whose mouth glows with an inviting yellow light. Inside, she finds a trove of gems waiting for her and stuffs her mouth full; looking up from the mineral smorgasbord, she spots many other dragons eating their fill. All have gathered around a table with the Dragon Lord.)

* **Smolder:** Scales sat with the Dragon Lord's family and friends and had the biggest, best dinner of gemstones she'd ever eaten. *(One stands to tell a dramatic story, shadow standing tall on the cave wall.)* Then, while the dragons were telling stories...

(With all eyes on the speaker, Scales casts a calculating eye toward the Scepter.)

* **Smolder:** ...Scales thought it would be so easy to seize power from this feeble and sensitive Dragon Lord.

(The camera begins to zoom in slowly on the thoroughly distracted ruler during the end of this line.)

* **Smolder:** She saw her chance... *(Back to Scales.)* ...and took it!

(A blast of fire issues from the determined mouth to white out the screen; snap to a long shot of the cave from outside, shafts of light lancing through the storm as the whole area shakes and a mighty belch of flame issues from the opening. Through the clearing smoke rises the tiny pink figure of Scales, carrying a gleaming red spot that can only be the Scepter—her power grab has succeeded. On the next line, its power washes over the form of the new wielder.)

* **Smolder:** She claimed the Bloodstone Scepter and took over the Dragon Lands—

(Scales laughs madly in Smolder's voice; cut to the deposed Dragon Lord, huddled miserably beneath the overhang Scales had used—far too small to shelter more than a fraction of his bulk.)

* **Smolder:** —and forced the Dragon Lord to live out in the cold— *(Scales hovers triumphantly over him.)* —just as she used to.

(The yellow eyes slowly fill with tears, a crushed little moan rumbling up from the draconic throat as the Scepter's great gem reflects in the slitted pupils. Wavering dissolve to Gallus/Ocellus/Silverstream/Yona in the common room, all briefly stunned into total silence by this tale.)

Ocellus: That's a horrible story!

Smolder: Maybe to you, but dragons like hearing about weak, kind creatures getting defeated.

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Silverstream!

(Pan to the hallway doors, where she is hovering and Sandbar is making his way back in.)

Rainbow: You're up!

(Cut to the hippogriff, who trades a most unsettled look with Yona.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Let's go!

(Silverstream plods out, moving as if her hooves and talons are now filled with lead shot, and Rainbow follows her and pulls the doors closed.)

Smolder: *(impatiently, to Sandbar)* So, did you tell them you did it?

Sandbar: What?! No way! Why would I say that?

Smolder: You already live in Ponyville. Staying here over break is no big deal.

Yona: *(suspiciously)* School of Friendship good place for pony to have pony holiday. *(Gallus and Ocellus close in.)*

Sandbar: I'd still rather spend it with my family at home. *(A thought hits him.)* Oh! That reminds me! I have the best holiday story ever! It's called...

(Wavering dissolve to him standing before a blazing fireplace and lifting a rag doll in his own image. Zoom out slowly.)

* **Sandbar:** ... "The Day My Hearth's Warming Doll Almost Fell Into the Fire."

* **Gallus, Ocellus, Smolder, Yona:** *(awed)* Ohhhhhh!

(The camera shifts to within the fireplace, pointing out at him, an older stallion and mare reaching up toward the mantel, and a toddler filly. All are earth ponies, as seen when the two elders back away during the next line.)

* **Sandbar:** Just before we went to bed, my mom, my dad, and my sister all put our Hearth's Warming dolls up on the mantel.

(Cut to the room on the end of this; the mantel is set with three dolls, and Sandbar prepares to add his. Holiday decorations and lights lace across the ceiling of the family home.)

* **Sandbar:** Just like we do every year. *(It is set in place and starts to topple forward.)* But this year, I put my doll too close to the edge... *(He turns back toward it.)* ...and it fell!

(The action shifts to slow motion.)

Sandbar: *(half speed)* NOOOOOO!!

(Normal speed resumes with a cut to below the mantel, the screen blacking out as gravity drags the doll over the precipice and toward the camera. Snap immediately to the common room.)

Ocellus: *(gasping softly)* And? *(Long paus.)*

Sandbar: *(casually)* My doll hit the floor. *(dramatically)* But it could have gone in the fire!

(The four listeners' enthusiasm drains away at the sheer banality of this ending.)

Smolder: *(dryly)* That's a great story, and you told it really well.

Sandbar: *(completely missing her meaning)* Yeah. It was a Hearth's Warming miracle.

(One door opens partway behind him so Rainbow can put her head in.)

Rainbow: Next!

(It swings the rest of the way to allow a slightly shaken Silverstream to return; cut to her passing Smolder and Yona.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Smolder, come with me.

(The dragon's snarky attitude vanishes in a trice, replaced by genuine apprehension as she slumps her way out of the room.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Yona, Twilight's waiting for you.

(Now the hirsute youngster looks as if wishing she could wrap herself up in her own blanket and vanish, but clomps out after Smolder. Rainbow ushers them out, pulling the door to behind herself.)

Ocellus: Last two. So if neither one of them confesses, that means... *(Silverstream's eyes pop.)*

Silverstream: ...we're never going home!

(Fade to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to the remaining quartet.)

Ocellus: We'll be here forever!

Sandbar: Beyond forever!

Silverstream: But I can't miss the "Three Days of Freedom" celebration!

Gallus: *(deadpan)* How long does *that* last?

Silverstream: *(smiling)* It used to be only one day, but now to commemorate our escape from the Storm King, we're adding two more days of awesome! *(holding up a book)* See?

Gallus: *(puzzled)* There's a book? *(Close-up of Silverstream.)*

Silverstream: *(nodding)* Mmm-hmm.

(When she raises it again, a hippogriff and sea pony can now be seen on the cover, bodies curved to form a circle.)

Silverstream: Queen Novo had these made for the Mount Aerie Board of Tourism, to explain it all to guests.

(The blue eyes roll wearily in the griffon's face before the view undergoes a wavering dissolve to a close-up of the book, which opens and flips pages as the camera zooms in. Stop when an illustration of sea ponies frolicking in the underwater realm of Sequestria fills the screen. Throughout the following account, all movements have the feel of construction-paper figures being moved against a static background.)

* **Silverstream:** We'll spend the first night in Sequestria— (*Tilt up to Mount Aeris, dark clouds and the Storm King moving in to threaten it.*) —thanking the ocean for protecting us from the Storm King.

(A page is turned; now the sea ponies celebrate in the depths.)

* **Silverstream:** Sea dancing... (*Two whales swim up.*) ...whale singing... (*They vocalize a melody; another turn, and a mare and stallion exchange seashell necklaces.*) ...shell-stringing... (*Laughter.*) ...lots of "ing"s.

(Another turn, to an image of the water's surface; several sea ponies leap clear of it, instantly becoming hippogriffs and flying up to the shores at the base of Mount Aeris.)

* **Silverstream:** The second day will be on Mount Aeris.

(They gather around an immense bonfire; another turn shows them gamboling among the clouds as musical notes float up.)

* **Silverstream:** With sky dancing, and a wind song in the Harmonizing Heights to celebrate the Storm King's defeat.

(Tilt up into the heavens as the sun rises, then flip another page to return the action to the shores—sea ponies in the water, hippogriffs hovering above it. Zoom out.)

* **Silverstream:** Then the third day, everycreature will party together, on land *and* sea. (*More gather in.*) Grandparents and parents and sisters, uncles, brothers, acquaintances, neighbors, and cousins.

(Flip to a long shot of the peak and the jubilant crowd at its base. Two simultaneous clock wipes turn day to starry night, one sweeping through the sky and the other across the water.)

* **Silverstream:** And at the end of the night...

(Flip to a gathering of hippogriffs, with Queen Novo presenting a wrapped gift to Silverstream front and center. It glows brightly as the student takes it on the next line.)

* **Silverstream:** ...Queen Novo is gonna give out presents!

(The book closes itself and is pulled away from the camera, the background showing the common room to mark the end of her narrative. It is lowered out of view to frame a still-skeptical Gallus.)

Gallus: (*shaking head clear*) Wait, hold on. C-Cousins? What are those?

Ocellus: Your aunts' and uncles' children—you know, part of your family.

(Long, uncomfortable silence from Gallus, broken by Ocellus's hesitant laugh.)

Ocellus: Ohhh! You're teasing us again, right?

(The sound of the door opening precedes the return of a rather grumpy Smolder and Yona; cut to Sandbar.)

Sandbar: I'm guessing neither one of you confessed. *(Door closes under his words.)*

Yona: *(sighing, stomping)* Headmare Twilight say "wait here."

Silverstream: *(smiling hopefully)* Maybe they're changing their minds about sending us home!

Smolder: Why would they? Face it. We're stuck here.

Ocellus: *(crying)* But-but...but I have to go home!

Silverstream: *(tearing up)* My mom makes the best kelp fritters!

Sandbar: *(to Smolder)* How can you be so cool about this? *(Gallus mulls this over.)*

Smolder: We're mad. We just show it differently.

Sandbar: *(peering closely at her)* More like you don't show it at all.

(These words get under the scaly orange hide, but before Ocellus can deliver a crusher of a comeback, Yona zips over and into Sandbar's face.)

Yona: What pony getting at?

Silverstream: Maybe it wasn't just one prankster! Maybe there were three of you—and you're trying to hide your guilt by not being upset!

Ocellus: It *does* make sense. *(Pan to Gallus.)*

Gallus: Guys, stop it.

Smolder: *(pacing)* Or, maybe whoever did it is only pretending to be upset— *(pointing at Ocellus)* —to throw us off.

Ocellus: Me? But I didn't!

Gallus: Come on, let it go.

(The other five do nothing of the sort, instead launching into volley on volley of recriminations. Sandbar speaks up over the tumult.)

Sandbar: Come on! Ocellus, you know you did it! *(crossing to face her down)* Just fess up!

(The accusations fly for several more seconds until Gallus has had quite enough and too much, clapping talons to temples before shooting into the air.)

Gallus: *I said, stop fighting! (Instant dead silence.)* That's not what the holidays are about, no matter what you call them or how you celebrate!

(Chastened looks pass among the five as he touches down on the befouled carpet.)

Gallus: *(slowly losing composure)* D-Do you know how lucky you all are? With your stories about sharing and-and kindness and getting together with everycreature that you care about?

(He turns away and covers his eyes.)

Ocellus: But...griffons do that too, don't they?

Smolder: Some holiday about a moon? *(Gallus uncovers his face.)*

Gallus: *(sighing wearily, turning to them)* Blue Moon Festival. The one time of year when griffons are nice to each other—well, as nice as we can be.

(Wavering dissolve to a table fashioned from a broad tree stump, within a house in Griffonstone. Sunset is visible beyond the windows, and Gilda brings over a platter of scones. Three of the four stools are occupied by Gruff, Gabby—the excitable female who visited the Cutie Mark Crusaders in “The Fault in Our Cutie Marks”—and a young griffon, and a large serving bowl filled with gruel sits in the center of the table.)

* **Gallus:** Families get together to eat and then complain about the food— *(The other three grumble and/or glare at the culinary offerings.)* —and give each other presents they don't like— *(Gilda sets the scones on the table, any good cheer gone.)* —and mostly just try not to yell at each other.

* **Silverstream:** Well—

(Cut to her in the present time.)

Silverstream: —at least you get to be with your family.

Gallus: *(from o.s.)* No. *(Her face falls; cut to him.)* Because I don't have a family.

(Wavering dissolve back to the dysfunctional dinner. The general mood has brightened a few notches, and Gilda and the youngster are chomping into the scones.)

* **Sandbar:** What about Grandpa Gruff?

(Gabby leans eagerly across the table, but backs off slightly at Gruff's reproof glare as the camera zooms out beyond a window. Gallus is out here, staring forlornly in at the quartet.)

* **Gallus:** That's just his name. He's not anygriff's actual grandpa.

(Longer shot: he turns away from the scene and trudges away past the snow-blanketed houses as the camera zooms in on him.)

* **Gallus:** I felt like I never had a place in Griffonstone.

(Around his moving figure, the background dissolves to the common room to leave him approaching the window. He sits to gaze out through the panes as the others watch from a respectful distance.)

Gallus: Then I came here and, well— (*Cut to them; he continues o.s.*) —met all of you. (*All six again.*) So I don't want to go home for the break. And that's why... (*with sudden resolve*) ...I did it!

Yona: (*gasping in shock*) Griffon mess up decorations?

Gallus: (*reluctantly*) Yeah, it was me. I put goo powder in the Fire of Friendship.

(*Deep, incredulous gasps from the others.*)

Sandbar: So it wasn't Ocellus? (*She gives him a brief, funny look.*)

Ocellus: (*to Gallus*) Why would you ruin things for us?

Gallus: I didn't plan to. I just figured if I made a mess, our teachers would make us stay to clean up—be together a little longer.

Smolder: (*sourly*) Well, it worked, didn't it?

Gallus: Better than I thought. (*pacing*) And when Headmare Twilight threatened to cancel winter break, that meant I would get to be with all of you the entire holiday. That's why I didn't confess.

Sandbar: So why are you admitting this now?

Gallus: I hated seeing all of you fighting and—and blaming each other. That's the opposite of what all your holidays mean—except maybe yours, Smolder.

(*Pan to Smolder, who opens her mouth for a retort but shifts into a "point taken" smile and shrug instead, then back to Gallus.*)

Gallus: I can't keep all of you from the happiness of your homes and families just because I feel bad. (*Downcast looks pass among the other five.*) I'm sorry. Don't worry. You won't have to tell our teachers. I will.

Twilight: (*from o.s., gently*) You don't have to.

(*The blue eyes go very, very wide at the sound of these four words; he glances back toward the now-open hallway doors, the camera panning to frame Twilight, Rainbow, and Spike looking on with warm smiles.*)

Twilight: We already know. (*Gallus grimaces and sheepishly scratches an itch under his chin.*)

Rainbow: We kinda guessed it was you. But we wanted to give you the chance to tell the truth.

Twilight: I'm proud that you did, and I'm glad to see you've been paying attention in Professor Applejack's honesty classes. (*Cut to him on the end of this sentence, then back to the three as he crosses to them.*) But you're still gonna have to make amends and stay over break for extra friendship lessons—by yourself.

(*He has barely let his head drop in resigned acceptance before Silverstream is at his side with a smile.*)

Silverstream: I'll stay with him. (*His spirits rise; the next three speakers step up one by one.*)

Ocellus: Me too!

Yona: Yona stay also.

Sandbar: I'm staying.

(By this point, the beaked blue face is displaying a full-tilt grin. All five pairs of eyes shift inquisitively toward the missing sixth; cut to Smolder, who regards them impassively with arms folded.)

Smolder: *(shrugging)* What? *(Pause; she drops the act)* All right. I guess pony holidays can't be that bad. *(She crosses to them.)*

Sandbar: *(to Gallus)* Now you can finally know what it's like to spend Hearth's Warming with friends who care about you.

(They gather in for a six-way hug; cut to Twilight and Rainbow.)

Rainbow: *(aside, to Twilight)* Looks like they don't really need any extra lessons.

Twilight: *(addressing group)* Since you obviously know that Hearth's Warming is about coming together, I'd be honored if all of you would join my friends as guests at our holiday table.

(Amazed gasps are followed by a round of joyous cheers.)

Twilight: *After we finish cleaning up.*

(The feeling of bonhomie is not reduced one whit by this fiat; in fact, they continue to voice their enthusiasm as they hop to it. Dissolve to a close-up of a patch of purple slop on the floor as Sandbar drops a sponge into it from his mouth and begins to scrub. Tilt up to frame his face.)

Sandbar: Hey! This reminds me of another story! *(dramatically)* The time I almost spilled grape juice on the white couch! *(Elsewhere, Ocellus and Smolder are back at work cleaning as well.)*

Smolder: *(eagerly)* Does it have a depressing ending?

Ocellus: I'm not sure pony stories work that way.

(Gallus attacks a spot as Yona crosses to him.)

Yona: *(hesitantly)* Um, Gallus want Yona braid feathers?

Gallus: Uh...pass. *(Silverstream makes her way to them, working a mop.)*

Silverstream: *(singing, E major)* Hearth's Warming Eve is here once again

(Cut to the exterior of the School, room and holiday lights glowing invitingly under a deep purple night sky. Zoom out slowly and fade to black.)