**GAMES PONIES PLAY**

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Note: Unless specifically stated otherwise, all mentions of ponies in the Crystal Empire

scenes refer to crystal ponies.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of an idling train at the Ponyville station during the day, seen from the platform side. Tilt up past it to frame the library in the distance; Twilight Sparkle and her friends are on the way out the door. A close-up frames the saddlebags on their backs and Twilight as the last to leave, with the gang’s pets visible in the reading room behind her—the end of “Just for Sidekicks,” Act One. She turns back to address Spike, who walks up to the doorway and uses his tail to hold the cup of jewels he has collected as advance payment for his pet-sitting.*)

**Twilight:** (*turning back toward Spike at the door*) You absolutely sure you can do this?

**Spike:** Of course! Wouldn’t have agreed to it if I couldn’t. Piece of cake. (*reaching behind door*) Speaking of cake… (*He fishes out his cookbook and white chef’s toque.*) …I got a little something I need to attend to.

(*The toque goes on his head and he opens the book to the page with the recipe for the jewel cake he intends to whip up.*)

**Twilight:** (*slightly irked*) Yeah, like keeping an eye on a houseful of critters. (*He licks his chops, then catches himself and turns to her.*)

**Spike:** Uh, yeah! Uh, that was totally what I was talking about. (*gently herding her out the door*) Relax. Go to your welcoming thing in the Crystal Empire. Spike’s got it all under control.

(*They wave to each other, she with a slightly nervous smile; cut to a close-up of her as he shuts the door. Just as the tension starts to drain out of her face, though, the camera quickly zooms out to frame the entire structure, which starts shaking to mark the instant brouhaha that has broken out inside. Before the suddenly panicked librarian can start back toward it, Rainbow Dash grabs her by the tail.*)

**Rainbow:** Hurry up, Twilight! We can’t miss our train!

(*She flies toward it, having let go of Twilight’s tail, and the latter gallops after her. Cut to the platform; the conductor stallion from Act Two of “JFS” stands at the open door of one car as passengers advance toward him, tickets in mouths.*)

**Conductor:** Tickets! (*Pan slightly to frame the group on the start of the next line.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, this is gonna be a real treat. Princess Cadence said she’d never seen the crystal ponies so excited!

**Rainbow:** Duh! (*flying to her, then up to station roof*) Of course they’re excited. They’re up for the Equestria Games! It’s only *the* biggest sporting event in all of Equestria!

**Rarity:** Didn’t Cloudsdale host the Equestria Games one year?

**Rainbow:** (*sourly*) No. Cloudsdale *should’ve* hosted the Games one year. (*crushed, sinking to platform*) I’ll never forget when we got the bad news.

(*Dissolve to a close-up of her as a filly in her hometown, standing on the back of a brown-eyed, rainbow-maned stallion whose coat is a few shades darker than hers. She has not yet earned her cutie mark, and in her teeth is a pennant that shows a pair of clouds with a rainbow arcing between them—a Cloudsdale logo. Cut to behind her and tilt up; many other pegasi have gathered here, their attention fixed on one standing behind a lectern that floats alongside the Cloudosseum. Mare, white coat, blue/white striped mane piled on her head; throaty, cultured voice with a French accent, amplified to carry over the distance.*)

**Announcer:** The Equestria Games go to…

(*Close-up behind her. Now her cutie mark is revealed as a silver laurel wreath; in addition, she wears gold-framed half-moon glasses over her green eyes and a set of dark gray suit jacket lapels with a pink ascot.*)

**Announcer:** …the city of Fillydelphia.

**Filly RD:** (*shooting into air, throwing pennant away, sinking back*) NOOOOOOOOOO!!

(*As she finishes her yell, the camera cuts to a close-up of her touching down among the crowd and slumped down in defeat. Dissolve to her in the present, in the same pose on the station platform; she looks up with wet eyes, then rises defiantly off the planks.*)

**Rainbow:** These crystal ponies lost a thousand years to an evil king’s curse. (*touching down, trotting among them*) They’ve had enough bad news. No way we’re letting them experience the pain of losing out on these Games. (*Twilight crosses to her and touches her shoulder.*)

**Twilight:** Exactly. (*addressing others, one by one*) Princess Cadence is counting on us to do our part to convince the Games inspector to choose the Crystal Empire. (*Close-up.*) And we are not gonna let her down, are we?

(*Zoom out to frame the others on the receiving end of her resolute glare, then cut to a close-up of Pinkie Pie as she slides across on her hocks.*)

**Pinkie:** (*anguished*) NOOOOOOOOOO!!

(*Zoom out to a long overhead shot of the entire station building during her yell, then back in quickly as the others lean in with thoroughly puzzled stares.*)

**Pinkie:** What? I was just answering Twilight’s question.

(*She smiles and gets a round of them in return—from all but Twilight, who rolls her eyes at the histrionics. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the train on its way through the edge of the snowy expanse that borders the Crystal Empire and into its lush green outskirts.*)

**Ponies:** (*from inside*) Four, three, two, one!

(*Cut to them in one car; they have shed their bags.*)

The Crystal Empire, that’s the one!

(*Pinkie whips out a megaphone.*)

**Pinkie:** (*amplified*) Okay, everypony! Great job! Sounds like we’re ready. (*Excited chatter and high-fives among all but Twilight, who thinks it over.*)

**Twilight:** One more time, from the top.

(*Groans and grumbles, with Rarity’s words coming through the most clearly. Pinkie has ditched the megaphone.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, please. I think that was perfect.

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) But we’ve run this, like, twelve times already. I think we got it.

**Twilight:** Cadence said the Games inspector really puts folks through the wringer on her visits. There’s no margin for error here. (*balancing on seat edge*) And this time we need to practice the steps.

**Applejack:** On a train car?

**Rainbow:** (*herding her, Pinkie off seat; Fluttershy follows*) You heard the pony! On your hooves!

(*Cut to an empty patch of the aisle as the two earth ponies jump down to stand alongside each other. As they start their chant, each raises the foreleg closest to the other, the two unicorns teleport in to balance on these, and the two pegasi fly in to balance atop this pair.*)

**Ponies:**  Two, four, six, eight!

(*A hard jolt sends them screaming and tumbling like balls in a lottery machine. Cut to a close-up of the engine’s wheels, decelerating amid a shower of sparks and a plume of steam, then to the entire train as it comes to a stop at the platform of the Empire’s station. Inside, in close-up, an engineer stallion opens a door and looks in.*)

**Engineer:** Crystal Empire, ladies! Watch your step leavin’ the train!

(*Zoom out to frame the car as he finishes. The hapless mares have wound up sprawled all over the furniture, walls, and each other—with Pinkie having hit the wall face first, a hatless Applejack pinned beneath her, and Fluttershy mashed flat against the paneling. All are badly dazed; Rarity is first to struggle up toward vertical with a pained moan.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) Probably should’ve watched our step while we were still on it, too.

(*Dissolve to the train as it pulls away, exposing the crew walking along the platform. An open door discloses a bakery counter inside, which Pinkie has already found and patronized; she stuffs an entire cinnamon roll into her mouth as the others pass. Once she gets it down, the camera zooms in quickly to a close-up.*)

**Pinkie:** (*awestruck*) Wow!

(*Long shot of the Empire, every square inch of the castle gleaming blindingly in the sun; the mares start on the road toward it.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) The Crystal Empire looks crystal-ier than ever!

(*Cut to one street and pan down the block, proving her words true. The locals—every one of them sporting the cut-crystal appearance they took on at the end of Part Two of “The Crystal Empire”—are hard at work scrubbing, polishing, vacuuming every spot that might need it. All six mares are duly impressed, and this shot reveals that Applejack’s hat is back on her head.*)

**Applejack:** They must have everypony in the Empire out sprucin’ it up!

(*On the end of this, cut to the castle balcony; one pony burnishes the diamond-shaped gold fixture above its arched entrance, while another slides down a wall with a squeegee. Zoom out to frame the six approaching.*)

**Twilight:** This must be why we were asked to handle the welcome committee routine!

(*Cut to the snowflake-decorated square beneath the castle. The Crystal Heart, the artifact that defeated King Sombra during their first visit, floats between its stalactite and stalagmite anchor points as a mare puts a sponge to them. The group moves eagerly past.*)

**Rainbow:** And it’s probably also because we’ll be awesome at it! (*Two excited fillies gallop by, each carrying a pennant in her teeth.*)

**Applejack:** Princess Cadence was right.

(*Close-up of the pair; one has the snowflake on her pennant, the other a group of stars.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) These ponies do look pretty darn excited. (*Rainbow swoops down and hauls one up o.s., her pennant drops.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) Yep. (*Cut to the pair.*) I remember that feeling.

(*Zoom in as her expression hardens, then cut to a close-up of the filly as she is set down.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) But not as much as I remember the crushing wave of disappointment that came when things *didn’t* work out.

(*On the second half of this line, cut to frame her standing in front of the filly, and zoom out slightly to frame Fluttershy, Pinkie, and Rarity watching worriedly. Another close-up shows the dejected pout that has stolen across the youngster’s face.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., pointing at her*) That right there! (*Long shot, framing all but Twilight.*) That is the face I do not want to see!

(*Cut to the unicorn, somewhere down the block, on the end of this; she glares back and unceremoniously levitates the other five toward herself as they voice assent. The filly then gets her pennant floated up off the ground and back into her mouth, instantly buoying her mood. Dissolve to a long shot of a domed building with a large heart mounted above its entrance as the group walks toward it, then cut to just inside the front doors. These swing open so the mares can cast an apprehensive eye over the place.*)

**Twilight:** (*softly*) We’re here.

(*Across the room, Princess Cadence bounces up into view, so quickly that one of the two attendants massaging her back goes flying backward.*)

**Cadence:** (*laughing*) Oh, there are my girls!

(*She dives over to Twilight, and the two go into their routine from her foal-sitting days as the others cross behind the pair. The lounge chairs set out around the perimeter of this large circular room indicate that it is a spa similar to the one in Ponyville.*)

**Twilight, Cadence:** Sunshine, sunshine, ladybugs awake!

Clap your hooves and do a little shake!

(*Rarity allows herself a happy gasp under this bit and their giggles as she walks point, spotting customers in the midst of getting the full treatment.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, my. This *is* spectacular. (*hoof to forehead, staggering, knocking attendant over*) Please, everypony, stand back! I need air!

**Cadence:** (*putting foreleg around Rarity’s shoulders*) Go ahead and try whatever you like. It’s all complimentary for the welcome committee. (*Rarity giggles; Cadence points.*) That over there is a crystal mud bath—

(*On the end of this, cut to the bath in question; the contents are light green and bubbling sluggishly. A mare climbs out and gets a towel draped over her back.*)

**Cadence:** (*from o.s.*) —which relaxes your body and rejuvenates your coat. (*Back to the pair; all others but Pinkie gather around.*) Now I realize it can be kind of strange to climb into mud, but if you’ll just give it a chance, I’m sure— (*Pinkie swings past on a rope.*)

**Pinkie:** Woo-hoo!

**Twilight:** Pinkie, no!

(*Laughing and whooping, the party pony pays no mind and lets go at the top of her swing, directly over the mud bath. She does a cannonball dive into its exact center, but instead of splattering everywhere, the mud vibrates in place as if it were a giant Jell-O mold. She ends up halfway embedded for the moment, with her head and forelegs protruding.*)

**Pinkie:** Ahh, so relaxing! (*Sink in; Twilight rushes up; head emerges partway.*)

**Twilight:** Pinkie Pie! Honestly!

(*The exasperated unicorn’s sister-in-law steps up and cuts her off with a knowing smile and a gold-shod hoof, which she then puts to her own chest with a quiet inhalation. Twilight copies both this move and Cadence’s next one, extending the foreleg as she breathes out, and is surprised at the calming effect this exercise has on both of them.*)

**Cadence:** (*crossing spa to a chair*) Go ahead. Have a good time while I get my ceremonial headdress done. (*Rarity looks up from having her hooves filed.*)

**Rarity:** (*breathlessly*) Ceremonial…headdress? (*Cadence is now lying back; an attendant brings a cart. Zoom out slowly.*)

**Cadence:** When meeting with important guests, it was tradition for rulers of the Crystal Empire to weave crystals into their manes in a very specific way. The Games inspector is known for doing her homework. She’ll certainly be expecting my look to reflect the importance of her visit.

(*On the latter part of this, cut to Twilight and Rainbow as they trade worried/skeptical looks respectively, then back. After she finishes, the sound of the doors’ opening is heard; cut to a mare who has just entered the spa. She wears the jacket and small, round, brimless cap associated with hotel bellhops, and she is equipped with a saddlebag and winged shoes—a messenger.*)

**Messenger:** Princess. (*She races in to Cadence and bows.*) If I may have a word, I-I have two pieces of news for you. First, your mane stylist has the flu and won’t be able to make it, for fear of you catching it too.

**Cadence:** Oh… (*Cut to the now-worried five; she continues o.s.*) …well… (*Back to her.*) …I hope she’s better soon.

(*Zoom out slightly to frame Rarity and Rainbow looking on.*)

**Cadence:** Do any of the other stylists here know how to do the traditional royal ceremonial headdress?

(*Cut to a row of them on the end of this, then pan along it as they murmur in the negative.*)

**Cadence:** Oh… (*She does the breathing exercise to calm down.*) …just a…small detail. (*Long pause.*)

**Rainbow:** Whoa, whoa, whoa! You’re trying to land the Equestria Games here! (*She circles to look Cadence straight on.*) There is no such thing as a small detail!

**Twilight:** (*reprovingly*) Rainbow Dash!

**Rarity:** (*from o.s.*) I suppose… (*Zoom out to frame her.*) …I could give it a shot.

**Cadence:** Oh, Rarity! You would do that for me?

**Rainbow:** Way to step it up, Rare!

**Cadence:** Fortunately, I have all the precise instructions right here.

(*She warms up her horn while speaking; on the end of this, cut to a small lockbox being held by two attendants. The lid flips open and a scroll floats up and out under her control, stopping when it is several yards in the air. When it unrolls, the end reaches almost to the floor.*)

**Rarity:** (*taken aback*) Oh, my! (*Cadence, off the chair, crosses to her; Rainbow hovers nearby.*)

**Cadence:** You sure you’re up to this?

**Rarity:** Working on the hair of royalty on such an auspicious occasion is the opportunity of a lifetime. (*resolutely; Twilight joins them*) I will give it everything I’ve got.

**Twilight:** (*to Cadence*) See? No worries.

**Rarity:** (*crossing to scroll*) Besides, the Games inspector isn’t expected for several hours. (*magically pulling end to herself*) I’ll have plenty of time to figure out exactly how to… (*losing steam*) …do…this.

**Cadence:** Oh, Rarity, that’s wonderful! (*to messenger; her cap pops up briefly in surprise*) You said you had a second bit of news?

**Messenger:** Yes, quite. The Games inspector, Ms. Harshwhinny, will be arriving on the… (*very hesitantly*) …next…train.

(*Zoom out quickly to frame the entire room as the Ponyville delegation gasps in shock—including Pinkie, who bounces up out of the mud bath just long enough to join in. In close-up, Cadence’s jaw hangs open while Rainbow zooms into the messenger’s face.*)

**Rainbow:** *What?!?* You couldn’t have told her that news first?

(*Cut to a long shot of Twilight among the group; zoom in slowly. Around her, Fluttershy and Rarity are eyeing the instruction list, Applejack gallops to the door, Pinkie is back on the floor and trotting frantically in place, and Cadence stands in a frozen panic.*)

**Rainbow:** That’s fifteen minutes from now!

**Fluttershy:** Oh my goodness!

(*Applejack throws one of the double doors open and looks out, heaving for breath, but Twilight stands her ground and does the breathing exercise she just learned. Now fully in control of herself, she crosses to Rarity.*)

**Twilight:** How long before Cadence is ready?

**Rarity:** Hmmm… (*She stretches the scroll out and reads.*) …I’m sure to find some shortcuts. (*Pan slowly away from them.*)

**Twilight:** Can you have her back at the castle when we’re done? (*Cadence has recovered now.*)

**Rarity:** Done.

**Twilight:** (*reading messenger’s note*) Okay, we’ll be fine.

(*Cut to outside the doors as she opens the still-closed one, note floating alongside. Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie, and Rainbow exit past her.*)

**Twilight:** Everypony just be on the lookout for the pony with the flower-print luggage.

(*Floating the note back inside the building, she trots after the other four and lets the doors swing shut. They head out along a street.*)

**Pinkie:** Easy-peasy, puddin’-in-the-freezy!

**Twilight:** We bring the Games inspector back to the castle, put on our big welcome committee how-do-you-do, and then…

**Pinkie:** Put the puddin’ out to thaw before you eat it or you’ll crack a tooth? (*Close-up of Rainbow, slightly miffed by this inane response.*)

**Rainbow:** I’ll just ignore that. (*Zoom out to frame Twilight.*) We need to remember that the Games inspector arriving early— (*She shifts to Twilight’s other side.*) —is probably part of a plan to psych us out.

**Twilight:** What do you mean?

**Rainbow:** You said it yourself. (*She rises a bit higher.*) She’s got a rep for trying to catch hosts off guard, just to see if we can handle the kind of massive pressure that comes with hosting the Equestria Games.

**Fluttershy:** (*hyperventilating a bit*) Oh, no! We’re gonna blow it!

**Rainbow:** Not if we always stay one step ahead and don’t fall for any of her mind games. (*Camera shift: they are headed toward the border.*) Anything she throws at us, we just need to remember she’s testing us— (*Midair somersault.*) —and roll with it.

(*By this point, they have moved into the outlying grassland and are close to the station. A train pulls in, throwing up dense clouds of steam; cut to a close-up of one opening door as the view gradually clears. A suitcase sporting a flowered print—and a rather large tear along its side—is carried out in the teeth of an earth pony passenger. Seen from the chin down, this individual has a pale yellow coat, a curly mane/tail in two shades of yellow-green, and a pink shirt with rolled-up sleeves and a white lace collar. The clothing indicates that the pony is a mare, and a cutie mark of a brown chicken can be seen beyond the shirt’s hem. Zoom in on the suitcase as it is carried off in another direction, the head dipping just far enough to confirm the mare’s gender and expose a pair of sunglasses. She walks o.s. just as Twilight and company step up onto the platform, after which the camera cuts to frame all of her. The two-tone mane is tied back into a large, fluffy ponytail. Rainbow is first to speak up to the mare, Ms. Peachbottom, or Ms. P for short.*)

**Rainbow:** Excuse me, ma’am?

(*The mare sets her suitcase down, opening her eyes to expose them as bright green, and addresses the pegasus crossly with the accent of an older Southern woman. A light blue scarf can now be seen knotted under her shirt collar.*)

**Ms. P:** Yes? What is it? (*Confused stares.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*softly*) Oh, no!

**Twilight:** Be cool. (*trotting forward*) Well, I know you’re not expecting us, but we’re here to personally welcome you to the Crystal Empire.

(*Cut to the suspicious new arrival on the end of this, then back; amid a round of slightly forced grins, Twilight gestures invitingly past the train.*)

**Ms. P:** (*propping sunglasses on forehead*) The whole lot of you came to do that.

(*The shades’ movement exposes birdcatcher spots under her eyes.*)

**Twilight:** Uh, well, um…yes!

**Ms. P:** Well… (*grinning; shades fly off*) …darn tootin’, ain’t that the cat’s meow! (*shaking Twilight’s hoof*) Y’all didn’t need to do that. (*shaking with Pinkie, then Applejack*) Why, I hardly expected anything like this.

**Applejack:** (*sighing with relief*) The Princess wouldn’t have had it any other way.

**Ms. P:** The Princess? Princess Cadence?

**Twilight:** None other.

**Ms. P:** (*jumping onto suitcase, spinning happily, then off again*) Well, tie me up and throw me down, this just keeps gettin’ better and better!

**Fluttershy:** Can we help you with your bags?

**Ms. P:** Don’t mind if you do! (*Fluttershy descends and grips the suitcase.*)

**Fluttershy:** Ooh, I love flower print!

(*Her attempt to hoist it away ends with a very abrupt tumble onto the platform—evidently the bag is quite a lot heavier than expected. However, she manages to get it aloft.*)

**Fluttershy:** Sorry.

(*She flies ahead, followed by Ms. P and the other four from Ponyville. It is clear that they believe this mare to be Ms. Harshwhinny, based on the description of her suitcase. Everything about her, though, is a far cry from the cultured Games rep who addressed the Cloudsdale crowd in Rainbow’s flashback during the prologue. Cut to a long shot of the castle’s uppermost spire and tilt down toward ground level.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Our first stop is the castle, where we got a big razamatazzy welcome planned for you!

(*The camera reaches the group on the end of this, between the two crystal pillars marking the road that leads into the realm. Fluttershy is no longer carrying the suitcase. Head-on view.*)

**Ms. P:** The castle? Are you kiddin’? (*hopping ahead with Pinkie*) Hot diggity dog! (*The others follow.*)

**Twilight:** See that? We just gotta roll with it until the Princess gets there and we’ll be just fine.

(*On the end of this, pan away from them to frame the station in the background. The train chugs away, and in close-up, the steam dissipates around a newly arrived mare on the platform. She too has a suitcase with a floral pattern, but not showing any damage, and she is also an earth pony—but there the similarities end. Dark tan coat, blue eyes, well-coiffed blond mane/tail, purple blazer with pink scarf and white shirt, small gold necklace, round pink earrings with gold trim. Her facial expression and glance at a wristwatch on one foreleg broadcast her impatience; when she lowers the limb, her cutie mark is visible as a gold trophy cup. This can only be the real Ms. Harshwhinny—Ms. H for short—who glares out over the platform at nothing.*)

(*Cut to the exterior of the spa, zooming in slowly to the sound of power tools, then to a close-up of Cadence’s legs stretched out toward a counter littered with hair-grooming items. Pan slowly across as a few gems and a comb float in midair under Rarity’s control; the sound dies down and her magic sets a power drill on the counter. The sound of something stretching causes the pink legs to extend full length; cut to behind the head end of Cadence’s chair as the dressmaker-turned-hairdresser keeps at it. Locks of the yellow/pink/purple-striped mane are stretched out here and there, each wrapped around a curler, and Rarity maneuvers another into place, not at all sure of what she is doing.*)

**Cadence:** So, uh, how’s it going so far? (*Rarity magically combs out a few strands.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, I’m…so sorry. It’s just…oh so complicated.

(*Her attempt at an airy chuckle just throws a good scare into the attendants; close-up of her.*)

**Rarity:** I can fix it!

**Cadence:** (*from o.s.*) Fix what? (*Gems hit the floor; cut to frame her and the chair. One attendant stares past it in mute horror.*)

**Rarity:** (*darting to instruction scroll and back*) Well, I-I was looking for shortcuts and I thought Step Twelve was optional…

(*Cut to a hand mirror on the end of this; she floats it up, and the view quickly shifts to Cadence’s perspective of the pair.*)

**Rarity:** (*high, nervous squeak*) …but it’s not!

(*The glass turns to present the ruler’s face, framed by a few unruly mane strands; her eyes pop wide, and the camera cuts to a close-up of her and zooms out. Said mane has been reduced to a hopelessly disordered bird’s nest embedded with gems stuck at crazy angles. Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the castle, its spire framed by the brilliant midday sun. Cut to a broad corridor inside as Twilight and company lead Ms. P in.*)

**Ms. P:** (*breathlessly*) My golly, the Crystal Castle! (*Her perspective during the previous; she gasps, then back to her.*) Why, I’ve seen pictures, but I never expected to see it with my very own eyes!

(*Cut to her perspective again on the end of this, looking up at the ceiling high overhead. The view blurs and seems to descend toward her, after which the camera cuts back to one suddenly unnerved visitor. She swallows hard and continues in a very small, scared voice.*)

**Ms. P:** From the…inside…

**Fluttershy:** (*smiling*) Oh, my gosh! She’s so nice!

**Rainbow:** You’re letting her lull you into a false sense of confidence. (*pointing at her emphatically*) Watch that. (*getting in her face*) It’s all part of the game.

(*Blue hoof flicks yellow nose, eliciting a wince; cut to a long shot of the bunch, now in an atrium.*)

**Ms. P:** Oh, my. I’m so excited. (*Twilight teleports over next to her.*)

**Twilight:** (*gesturing to a couch*) Please have a seat, won’t you?

**Ms. P:** (*trotting in place, stretching legs*) Mind if I take a quick run outside first? It was an awfully long train ride, and my legs could use a stretch.

(*It should be clear by now that she suffers from an acute case of claustrophobia.*)

**Twilight:** Oh! Well, we were just about to start. (*Ms. P plunks her haunches on the couch.*)

**Ms. P:** Oh! Never you mind. You go on ahead. (*Cut to Fluttershy and Rainbow above; she continues o.s.*) I’m listenin’.

**Rainbow:** (*softly, to Fluttershy*) She was probably testing us to see if we could remain in control of a complex situation. Looks like we passed. (*They slap hooves.*) Bump…

**Fluttershy:** …cha! (*Down they go.*)

**Twilight:** We’d like to thank you for this opportunity to introduce you to this wonderful kingdom.

**Ms. P:** (*gasping softly*) Oh, why, the pleasure is all mine.

**Twilight:** And since we’re not even from here ourselves, who better than us to let you know just how welcoming this place can be?

(*Just as in the rehearsal on the train, Applejack and Pinkie leap onto a clear section of floor, landing side by side and raising their inner forelegs. Twilight teleports onto them, and Fluttershy and Rainbow balance on her head.*)

**All five:** Two, four, six, eight!

Name a place that’s really great!

(*Ground level; Twilight walks point, the others falling in behind her for a V formation and peeling off to both sides.*)

One, two, three, four!

And keeps you coming back for more!

(*The screen has now blacked out due to her close approach; from here, snap to a head-on view of her. All five are marching single file; Twilight, Applejack, and Pinkie fall out to alternate sides, and Fluttershy and Rainbow fly up behind them, the latter leaving rainbow contrails around the former.*)

Two, seven, nine, three!

The place that we all want to be!

(*Cut to Ms. P, enjoying the show; they continue o.s.*)

Four, three, two, one!

(*Long shot of the atrium; Rainbow’s flight traces out a giant heart around her four friends. They have stacked up with Twilight balanced on Pinkie’s mane and Applejack’s tail and Fluttershy on her head.*)

The Crystal Empire, that’s the one!

(*Pinkie whips out her party cannon and fires off a burst of streamers and confetti, scaring the rest of the tower off its collective hooves. Cut to Ms. P.*)

**Ms. P:** Whoo! (*Thud from o.s.*) Yeah!

(*She jumps onto the couch’s armrest and lets off an enthusiastic whistle; cut to all but Fluttershy, either tumbled on the floor or hovering limply in midair, all well and truly worn out from this show. She jumps down to them.*)

**Ms. P:** Oh! I tell you, I have traveled far and wide— (*Twilight stands up.*) —but I have never, ever been welcomed anyplace in the fashion that y’all have done here today!

**Twilight:** That’s fantastic! Princess Cadence would be so glad to hear that! (*Applejack and Pinkie are up now.*)

**Ms. P:** (*a bit surprised*) Honestly, I’m surprised she knows anything about me at all.

(*These words throw the bunch for a loop, but Twilight quickly finds her tongue and smiles. Rainbow is fully recovered from her exertions.*)

**Twilight:** Of course she does. She’s been looking forward to your visit for weeks. (*Now Fluttershy is with them.*)

**Ms. P:** (*laughing*) Oh, goody! Is she here?

**Twilight:** Uh…

**Applejack:** (*aside, to Twilight*) Where the heck is she, anyway? (*Rainbow drops lower and glances worriedly to one side.*) Wasn’t she supposed to be here by now?

**Ms. P:** Oh, that’s all right.

(*Her eyes flick nervously upward; cut to her perspective of the ceiling, which begins to blur and shift as it did earlier on—another panic attack setting in. Back to her, forcing down a swallow.*)

**Ms. P:** Maybe…

(*Her perspective of the balcony archway, zooming in quickly toward the blue sky beyond the railing. On the start of the next line, cut back to her; she gallops past the group.*)

**Ms. P:** …I-I-I’ll just take my little run outside now.

(*Emerging onto the balcony, she leans on the railing and struggles to catch her breath. She has barely gotten herself under control before Rainbow streaks out and gets nose to nose with her.*)

**Rainbow:** Or…if you like… (*Long shot of both; her words echo in the air.*) …we could give you a tour of the castle!

(*Close-up of the archway as Twilight looks out, her Cadence-inspired composure starting to slip, and pan toward the railing as she and the others emerge.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) That way, you could be learning *and* stretching— (*now in view*) —all at the same time.

**Ms. P:** (*now at ease*) Ohhhh, a tour of the Crystal Castle! I’d love that a whole heap. (*Close-up of Rainbow; Twilight slides over to her.*)

**Twilight:** (*aside, to Rainbow*) Dash, we’ve hardly ever even been here before!

**Rainbow:** (*aside, to Twilight*) It’s just another test. We gotta roll with it, remember?

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Ooh! (*Cut to frame the whole group; she hops excitedly.*) Let me give the tour! (*Back to a truly scared Twilight; she continues o.s.*) I’ll do it, I’ll do it! Let me, let me, let me!

(*The stressed unicorn employs Cadence’s breathing exercise to steady herself.*)

**Twilight:** Fine. (*trotting in*) You all start giving her the tour, and I’ll go see what’s keeping Cadence.

(*Tilt down from the balcony to ground level, where Ms. H has her suitcase’s handle in her teeth and is dragging it along a sidewalk. She falls onto her haunches with a pained groan, then stands up as Twilight emerges from one of the Crystal Castle’s entrances and trots by.*)

**Twilight:** Hello there!

**Ms. H:** (*sourly*) Hello yourself. (*to herself*) First hello of the day.

(*Her voice carries a pronounced British accent and the tone of one deeply affected by age and chronic dissatisfaction. A stallion gallops down the street, towing a cart of pies and splashing her with water from a puddle at the curb directly in front of her. Splutters and snarls issue from a mouth that now lies between a sodden mane and waterlogged clothing.*)

(*Dissolve to the exterior of the spa as Twilight trots toward the doors, humming cheerfully to herself, then cut to inside. One door swings open under her influence, but she is barely inside before Rarity zips up in a full-scale tizzy, causing her to gasp.*)

**Rarity:** Wh-What are you doing here?

**Twilight:** We finished the welcome committee song and we just wanted to introduce Ms. Harshwhinny to—

**Rarity:** No, no! Princess Cadence isn’t ready. (*whispering*) Something’s gone terribly wrong.

(*Cut to just behind Cadence’s head, the camera angled to frame part of her wrecked mane and the two unicorns.*)

**Twilight:** I need to speak to the Princess. (*She tries to look past Rarity, who blocks.*)

**Rarity:** (*flailing forelegs*) You can’t! You mustn’t! (*Close-up of the pair.*) She’s in the middle of a delicate conditioning rinse that must go perfectly if there’s to be any hope for her hair.

**Twilight:** (*trying to look past her; no luck*) Come on. How bad could it be?

**Rarity:** (*magically fluffing Twilight’s mane in all directions*) Imagine her mane turned into a porcupine.

**Twilight:** Ewww. (*It falls back.*)

**Rarity:** (*moaning, turning/pushing Twilight out*) Please! I will bring her back from the brink of tragedy, but you have got to buy me some time!

(*Outside; she leans through the doorway, hoof to forehead.*)

**Rarity:** There’s no other way!

(*Duck in; slam the door; Twilight cringes mightily at the realization that things are going off the rails. Cut to the upper reaches of a rotunda within the Crystal Castle and tilt down.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) So, you see this here?

(*Stop on her, Applejack, Fluttershy, and Rainbow with Ms. P.*)

**Pinkie:** (*thinking fast, crossing floor*) This, um…this is, um…a big, *round* room! (*Surprise from the other three.*) It’s known for its *roundness*—

(*Close-up of the green-maned mare, who rolls her eyes with growing impatience.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) —and bigness! And did I mention that it’s… (*Back to her and the others.*) …*round?*

(*Every mention of “round” in the preceding is accompanied by a circling foreleg. Her attempt at playing tour guide is going over very badly indeed.*)

**Ms. P:** I think they call it a rotunda. (*Zoom in by steps; she starts to lose it.*) A small, confining rotunda! (*Pinkie blows a quick raspberry.*)

**Pinkie:** Whatever! Round is round, am I right? (*Applejack zips over to her.*)

**Applejack:** (*aside*) Easy, Pinkie! (*Close-up.*) Let’s play this safe. We got her in a good mood, so let’s not do anythin’ to ruin that. (*Sound of hooves on floor.*)

**Ms. P:** (*from o.s., a bit on edge*) You know… (*Cut to her, walking away from the others.*) …I love this sort of architecture. I-I-I detect a neo-Gothic inspiration in the design, yes?

(*Three faces cringe as eyes turn toward Pinkie, who blinks stupidly before shifting into a huge smile.*)

**Pinkie:** Hey! (*pointing to herself*) L-Look at me!

(*She launches into a string of silly faces that earns a round of disapproving looks, topped off by Rainbow clapping a hoof to her own face. A door swings open to admit Twilight into the atrium.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) And not a moment too soon. Where’s Cadence? Please tell me she’s right behind you.

**Twilight:** There’s a bit of a problem with her headdress. How’s it going here?

**Pinkie:** (*hopping from side to side*) Boingy, boingy, boingy! (*More facial contortion and disbelieving stares.*)

**Ms. P:** I, uh… (*The Ponyville four; she continues o.s.*) …hate to be a bother… (*Back to her, stretching legs.*) …but the legs are crampin’ up on me with all this standin’ around.

**Rainbow:** Huh?

**Twilight:** (*aside, to her*) She’s getting bored. And we have to buy Rarity some more time. (*Quick breathing exercise; calmed, she trots for the door.*) I’ll see if Shining Armor can come help. Can’t one of you other ponies take over in the meantime? (*Out she goes.*)

**Rainbow:** I got this. (*She flies over to Ms. P.*) Want to stretch your legs, huh? Well, whatever you need, I’m sure we can provide. Let’s just make our way to the castle’s gymnasium.

(*She flies out, the others following; cut to the adjoining corridor as she emerges.*)

**Rainbow:** Our tour will now be headed…

(*Cut to her perspective, panning along a row of doors set in the opposite wall—all identical and unmarked—then back to her. Glancing uncertainly to each side of herself, the aspiring daredevil focuses on the area to her left. Another cut to her point of view frames a stairway farther down the corridor, leading down and out of sight and enclosed in a transparent walkway through which sunlight is shining in. Back to her; she drops to the floor and points confidently off in that direction.*)

**Rainbow:** …this way. (*She floats up and beckons the others on.*) And we’re walking, and we’re walking…

(*Cut to a pan through one of the courtyards outside the Crystal Castle. The stairs lead down in alternating flights and straightaways, and a traveling pony within the walkway appears only as a moving black speck at this distance. Twilight’s tranquil humming is heard, marking her as the one on the stairs—which are connected to a large, high-walled stadium with a domed roof and a gold starburst mounted above the main entrance. Cut to a close-up of Twilight in the walkway, then to a set of doors inside the stadium as they open to allow her entrance. A quick zoom out frames the interior of this massive facility: a grassy infield at the center of the floor, set up for an obstacle course and ringed by a mirror-smooth running track with hurdles. Tiers of spectator seating surround the whole, backed by crystal formations and stretching under the transparent overhead dome.*)

(*Several ponies stand on the track as another watches from the infield. Close-up: the one on the grass is Shining Armor, wearing a red baseball cap and a whistle on a lanyard around his neck. He sternly eyes the others, dressed out in running gear and stretching, talking, drinking water—coach and team. He looks off to one side and smiles.*)

**Shining:** Twilie! (*Pan to frame her coming down the steps toward him.*)

**Twilight:** Hello there! (*now on infield*) Shining Armor, you’ve gotta help me.

(*A blast from his whistle sets the athletes galloping around the track.*)

**Shining:** Everything okay? (*Close-up of her.*)

**Twilight:** I left the other ponies behind, giving the Games inspector the worst castle tour ever.

**Shining:** (*from o.s., yelling*) Come on, gang!

(*She winces a bit at the sudden volume jump; cut to him, watching the ponies leap the hurdles.*)

**Shining:** Are we gonna gallop, or are we gonna trot?

(*Close-up of one hurdle on the end of this, a few jumping over it, then back to the siblings. He smiles and addresses her again at normal speaking volume.*)

**Shining:** Castle tour, huh? I’m pretty sure I can give you a hoof with that. (*yelling to team*) Let’s move, move, move! (*normal volume, to Twilight*) Everything’s gonna be okay.

**Twilight:** I know. I’m not worried.

(*A beat of silence, during which she displays absolutely none of the mannerisms that crop up when she starts to lose it—twitching eyes/ears, hyperventilation, and so forth. Her mouth falls open once she realizes this, and the camera zooms in slightly on the relieved smile that comes over her face.*)

**Twilight:** I’m not worried! It worked!

(*Referring to the breathing exercise she has been using from time to time. One set of doors flies open as Ms. P gallops into the stadium. What remains of the Ponyville party stays out behind her.*)

**Ms. P:** (*shuddery*) Oh! I’m outside!

(*Tilt up to frame the dome above, to the sound of her half-crazed laughter, then cut back to her—now zooming around the track and knocking the team members aside.*)

**Ms. P:** Feels so good to stretch the old legs!

**Shining:** Uh…what the—? (*The other four come down; her yells and crashes float back.*)

**Rainbow:** (*chuckling nervously*) Uh, turns out the Crystal Castle doesn’t have a gymnasium.

**Shining:** (*looking ahead*) Watch it!

(*The whooping mare’s overexcited jump clears a hurdle, but also takes out two athletes.*)

**Shining:** Make her…stop!

**Rainbow:** Wait! (*She lands next to him.*) That’s the Games inspector! Let her do her thing.

**Ms. P:** Good! Oh, these hooves! I’m outside! (*Back to Shining and Rainbow.*)

**Shining:** Why would she do that?

**Rainbow:** I have no idea. But…that’s why she’s in charge of choosing who gets the Games and we’re not. Heh.

(*A loud crash from o.s.; cut to Ms. P, plowing through one jumping stile after another on the infield obstacle course. A potted plant goes flying off one stile’s end post, its contents falling out so that the empty vessel lands upside down on her head. She skids to a stop with a shriek.*)

**Ms. P:** (*slightly muffled*) Oh! Get me outside for a run! (*She races off; cut to Twilight, Rainbow, and Shining.*)

**Shining:** Look out!

(*Cut to one set of exit doors as she barrels straight through, reducing them to splinters.*)

**Rainbow:** Yeah, okay. We need to stop her.

(*She flies off; meanwhile, the potted pony continues her crazed, gibbering race through the streets around the stadium. She charges straight past Ms. H, who has dried herself out from the earlier puddle run-in and is again hauling her suitcase in her teeth. The pounding hooves send up another gout of standing water that drenches the staid mare all over again; now Fluttershy and Rainbow begin to pull even from the air.*)

**Fluttershy:** Where’s she going in such a hurry? (*Rainbow dives, closing the gap, as they enter the outskirts.*)

**Ms. P:** Oh! Oh, yes!

**Rainbow:** Closer…closer…I think we’ve got her!

(*She gets both forelegs clamped onto the pot and gives it a solid yank, pulling it free as the fugitive stops dead. Momentum is not on Rainbow’s side, though, and she describes a long, graceless arc as her yell fades into the distance. Cut to inside the spa, the camera pointing up at the domed ceiling and past Rarity, who is back on the job. The part of Cadence’s mane that is in view has been carefully coiffed and set with a light blue heart jewel to match her cutie mark, and Rarity sets an ornate gold tiara in place. Up above, the equine projectile smacks spreadeagle into the translucent ceiling and slides slowly down toward the edge. The squeaking of hide against crystal distracts the unicorn momentarily; she looks around herself but does not notice Rainbow, then resumes her work.*)

(*Cut to a close-up of one very happy tourist.*)

**Ms. P:** Hoo-wee! Oh, that felt good! (*trotting in place a bit; Fluttershy lands next to her*) Nothin’ like a great run to shake the cobwebs off these old bones! (*Rainbow crawls over, panting and badly scuffed up.*) Hey there, Speedy. (*Gasp; Rainbow stands up.*) Oh, these wide open spaces y’all got here remind me of home. This is great!

**Rainbow:** (*out of breath*) Oh…so you’re…enjoying your visit!…Oh, I’m so…glad!

**Ms. P:** Oh, good golly, yes. (*Shining gallops over, followed by Twilight/Applejack/Pinkie.*) I just love to travel and see new places. Such a beautiful spot you got here, too!

**Shining:** Why, thank you so much. I’m Shining Armor.

**Ms. P:** Oh…the Prince! (*Rainbow hovers next to Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*to Rainbow*) What’s going on?

**Rainbow:** From the looks of it, just locking up the Games for the Crystal Empire, is all. (*Chuckle; she touches down.*) Ain’t no thing.

**Ms. P:** (*shuddery*) My, oh, my. I never met a prince before. (*Shining chuckles.*)

**Shining:** I’m surprised. I’d think in your line of work, you’d meet princes all the time.

**Ms. P:** (*toying with her mane*) Hardly. Just an ordinary wild mustang from Mustangia— (*Cut to the suddenly unnerved Ponyville five; she continues o.s.*) —here to enjoy a little vay-cay. (*Back to her and Shining; she continues coquettishly.*) Never thought I’d also be meetin’ royalty to boot.

(*She flicks his whistle with a giggle, but he cringes mightily while perhaps offering up a silent prayer that his wife never, ever, ever find out about this.*)

**Twilight:** (*hesitantly, with growing fear*) You…*are* Ms. Harshwhinny, the Equestria Games inspector, aren’t you?

(*The recipient of this question cocks her head ever so slightly to one side before answering.*)

**Ms. P:** Inspector what, now?

(*Cut to a close-up of Twilight and Rainbow and zoom in as their irises/pupils contract sharply; behind them, the background recedes and goes out of focus. They have finally caught on to the case of mistaken identity.*)

**Rainbow:** *We got the wrong pony?!?!?*

(*Pan to the other three; Pinkie slides forward on her hocks with forelegs outstretched as the camera zooms out to a long overhead shot of the group.*)

**Pinkie:** (*anguished*) NOOOOOOOOOO!! (*Zoom in quickly to a close-up.*) I mean… (*Out again.*) YEEEEESSSSS!!

(*Try as she might, Twilight finds Cadence’s breathing exercise to be of no help in taming the raging case of nerves that has just seized her. Snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the train station, its platform unoccupied. All but Rarity gallop/fly toward it; Rainbow is cleaned up from her belly flop onto the spa’s roof.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, please still be here! (*Inside, they burst in through the door.*) Oh, please, oh, please, oh, please… (*Spread out.*)

**Twilight:** There’s got to be another pony with flower-print luggage around here somewhere.

(*Across the way, Fluttershy and Rainbow are looking over a pile of bags from a train that has just come in.*)

**Rainbow:** Except that there isn’t!

**Twilight:** We’ve gotta find her before Cadence finds out what a mess we’ve made of things.

(*All five have gathered in one spot, but Pinkie is more interested in the bakery counter she scoped out in Act One.*)

**Rainbow:** Okay. Here’s what we do. We split the Empire up into five sectors.

**Fluttershy:** Each of us search a sector.

**Pinkie:** Well… (*holding up a cinnamon roll she has been eating*) …except for the spa. What’s the point of checking there? That’s where Cadence is. If Ms. Harshwhinny is there, well, then, game over, right?

(*The other four have no immediate response to this line of reasoning—but a sudden group gasp marks their horrified understanding that she just may be right. Cut to the exterior of the spa and zoom in slowly.*)

**Ms. H:** (*from inside*) Every city and empire wants to host the Equestria Games!

(*Close-up of both her suitcase and Ms. P’s, side by side on the floor; zoom out to frame the two mares on the start of the next line. They are stretched out on lounge chairs, next to their respective bags, and being well looked after: cucumber-slice eye treatment and hoof touch-up for Ms. H, massage for Ms. P.*)

**Ms. H:** So I have to go through all the big phony-baloney song and dance, though of course I’m never getting the real inside scoop. (*Ms. P gasps happily.*)

**Ms. P:** Oh, gol-lee! (*Close-up of her face, through the padded hole in her chair headrest.*) I’ve been havin’ a swell time since I got here. I’m actually thinkin’ of extendin’ my stay. (*Cut to frame both again.*)

**Ms. H:** And what exactly has made your visit so “special”? (*Air quotes on this last word.*)

**Ms. P:** (*laughing*) Oh, gosh, where to start?

(*Out in the street, the five desperate mares gather at one of the spa’s windows; Pinkie has disposed of her snack. Cut to just inside the window as Twilight and Rainbow peek in, the latter mashing her face on the glass with a smile and gasp.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh! (*Her perspective, zooming in slightly on Ms. H.*) There she is! (*Pan to Rarity by a folding screen; Cadence’s silhouette behind.*) We’re in luck! I don’t think either of them knows yet that the other one’s here!

(*As she speaks, the Princess spreads her wings and Rarity says something inaudible with a smile. Cut to a close-up of a bell mounted above the doors; they swing open, jingling it, and the camera tilts down as the other five enter.*)

**Rarity:** Wonderful news! (*The others again; she continues o.s.*) Look!

(*Now Cadence steps out from behind the screen, her mane done up in an elaborate construction of curls and braids and hung with several gems in addition to the heart-shaped one seen earlier. The fancy tiara rides high atop it all, and she is clad in a short-sleeved white/light-blue gown trimmed in darker blue fabric at the sleeve cuffs and neckline. Matching gems are attached to the cuffs, the hem is done in blue/violet accents, and a gold-framed jewel brooch completes the outfit.*)

**Rarity:** Princess Cadence, better than new!

(*Zoom in quickly to a close-up of the resplendent winged unicorn, then cut to Ms. H as she sits up quickly enough to launch the cucumber slices off her eyes.*)

**Ms. H:** (*looking around*) Princess Cadence? (*crossing to her, suddenly furious*) So, this is where you’ve been! I will have you know, this is by far the worst welcome I’ve had in all my years!

(*During the previous, cut to Twilight and Rainbow as they trade a very scared glance, then back.*)

**Cadence:** I-I can’t believe it! What was wrong with your welcome?

**Ms. H:** *There wasn’t one!*

**Cadence:** (*to Twilight*) What is going on?

(*Sister-in-law steps forward, ready to take all the heat, but Rainbow puts up a foreleg to head her off.*)

**Rainbow:** Princess, we gave our welcome to the wrong pony… (*Cut to Cadence, mouth falling open; she continues o.s.*) …left the right one waiting at the station… (*Back to her.*) …and completely ruined everything.

(*The Princess mulls this over as Twilight, Applejack, and Fluttershy drop their eyes and heads contritely. Pinkie, on the other hand, holds up a steaming piece of pastry.*)

**Pinkie:** (*whispering*) Cinnamon bun? (*Big squeaky grin; Rainbow addresses Cadence again. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Rainbow:** When I was a little filly, I wanted so badly for Cloudsdale to win the Equestria Games—but it didn’t happen. So I thought I could make up for that disappointment by helping the Crystal Empire win the chance to host the Games. (*Longer shot.*) But it looks like I ruined your chances instead.

(*Ms. P joins the tableau now.*)

**Ms. P:** Not so fast, Speedy! (*Puzzled eyes are raised; Ms. H smiles.*)

**Ms. H:** I just finished hearing about how this pony was just treated to the warmest, funnest [*sic*], most fabulous reception she ever had…

(*During this line, the camera cuts briefly to a close-up of a dumbfounded Twilight, zooming out to frame all but Rainbow and Rarity as she smiles, then back to the two visitors. Pinkie has either ditched or eaten the cinnamon bun she offered previously.*)

**Ms. P:** Darn tootin’!

**Ms. H:** …courtesy of these fine ponies right here—which, in my expert opinion, amounts to the first ever unvarnished, unrehearsed, and unbiased appraisal of a potential host of the Equestria Games!

(*The camera shifts as follows during this line. To the five mares, who glance uncomprehendingly toward Cadence; to the very well-groomed Princess, who smiles warmly back at them; to Ms. H and Ms. P. After the end of it, cut to a smiling Twilight, a still-puzzled Pinkie, and a wide-eyed blue pegasus whose face slowly rearranges itself into a look of pure bliss.*)

**Ms. H:** (*from o.s.*) Which can only mean one thing.

(*The balcony of the Crystal Castle. She, Cadence, and Shining are up here, Cadence with a microphone floating before her and Shining without his coach’s cap and whistle. Cadence’s next three lines are amplified.*)

**Cadence:** The next host of the Equestria Games is…

(*Long shot of the square, jammed side to side with her subjects.*)

**Cadence:** …the Crystal Empire! (*Wild cheering; Rainbow rises from the crowd, holding a filly.*)

**Rainbow:** We did it!

(*A pulse of light emanates from the crowd and is quickly absorbed into the Heart.*)

**Cadence:** Congratulations, crystal ponies!

(*Spinning rapidly in place, the relic emits a burst of radiance that illuminates the structure from bottom to top. It shoots into the sky, forming a multicolored ribbon that explodes outward into a midday aurora borealis to mark the Empire’s victory. From here, dissolve to a pan across the train station platform, framing the Ponyville six ready to board the train for home. In close-up, Rainbow sighs contentedly.*)

**Rainbow:** (*to Twilight*) You know, it feels good to help others get something you always wanted but never had. Almost as good as getting it yourself. (*a bit sourly*) Almost.

**Twilight:** (*walking toward train; whistle blows*) We’ll still be able to come back here and watch the Games when they’re played. (*Rainbow cheers up.*)

**Rainbow:** You’re right. (*rearing briefly*) That’ll rock!

(*Collective move toward the train; Fluttershy brings up the rear, eyeing a piled-high luggage cart that stands next to her. The strap around the lot marks this as the one whose contents cut off her rabbit Angel’s attempt to flag her down in Act Three of “JFS.” Right on cue, the big green gem she gave to Spike flies into view, dislodging the buckle and causing the parcels to tumble down; the bauble winds up in the station’s roof gutter.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, my goodness!

**Conductor:** (*from o.s.*) All aboard!

(*She gallops after the others. Cut to inside one train car; Applejack sits on one seat, having raised one of her hind legs to show the others after her “my dogs are barkin’” line.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh. Bummer Spike had to miss out on all this. He woulda had fun here.

**Twilight:** I’m sure he’s having a great time watching all the critters back at home. (*She turns to a window.*)

**Applejack:** Think he’s still got a handle on things?

(*The unicorn does her breathing exercise, which proves much more effective now than the last time she tried it.*)

**Twilight:** If he’s staying calm and collected, I bet he’s doing a terrific job as a leader.

(*All contemplate this for a moment until a loud stomach grumble from Spike—hidden under Applejack’s seat, recall—breaks the mood.*)

**Applejack:** You all hear that?

(*Tilt down to floor level, framing Spike and the group’s six pets under her seat and the Cutie Mark Crusaders under the one across from it. All ten stowaways stay dead quiet, the dragon fearfully chewing his lower lip, and the view fades to black.*)