**STRANGER THAN FAN FICTION**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a screenful of piled-up boulders, one of which rumbles and falls away to expose Daring Do pushing it from behind. The light from a partially exposed doorway shines over her and the rubble as the camera zooms in slightly and she aims a satisfied smile ahead of herself. A moment later, she is trotting through a cavern studded with clusters of glowing crystals on walls and floor and onto a narrow stone bridge that spans a broad abyss to reach a small outcropping. One patch crumbles away under her hoof, bringing her up short and sending her into a brief fit of hyperventilation. After a worried look at the collapse, she glares ahead and spots a jeweled gold bauble stuck into a rough pedestal-shaped formation. Zoom in quickly to an extreme close-up of this, showing it as a stylized reptilian head with pale green gems set in eyes and mouth, then cut back to Daring. Her eyes widening at the sight of this treasure, she regains her resolve and continues her walk across the bridge.*)

(*Now, though, the stone blocks fall away one after another, almost as soon as she steps off them. She makes the mistake of hesitating for a moment; the one on which she is standing drops out, and she nearly plunges into the depths with a yelp before her front hooves find a purchase on the remaining surface. A great heave of legs and wings carries her up and ahead to solid ground, so that she belly-flops onto the stone in front of the pedestal. Lifting her head, she pushes her pith helmet back from her eyes just in time to see a hissing cobra rear up and spread its hood. In no time flat, far too many of its buddies have gathered around Daring and begun to close in from all sides, the camera zooming in slowly on the suddenly unnerved explorer.*)

(*From here, cut to a close-up of a wide-eyed, equally shaken Rainbow Dash. She comes out of it with a slightly peeved glance off to one side, and a longer shot establishes this new location as the bedroom of her cloud house. She is standing on her hind legs next to her dresser, one of whose drawers is ajar, and an open suitcase lies half-buried under a couple of bush shirts and a pith helmet on the floor. The object of her annoyance is Twilight Sparkle, who sits on her haunches with a book held in her magic and rolls her eyes wearily.*)

**Rainbow:** Well, don’t stop there! (*dropping to all fours*) You read, I pack. That’s the deal.

**Twilight:** I’m sorry, Rainbow Dash. (*smiling briefly, taking book in hoof*) I just keep thinking about how much fun you’re gonna have at the Daring Do convention. I wish Princess Celestia didn’t need my help with the friendship summit in Griffonstone.

**Rainbow:** Don’t worry. (*The book shuts itself and floats into the case.*) I’ll make sure A.K. Yearling signs your book.

(*She closes the lid on the end of this, exposing a larger version of Daring’s compass-rose cutie mark on the outside.*)

**Rainbow:** (*giddily*) I can’t believe she’s gonna be there! (*Close-up.*) She never goes to conventions!

(*Big grin, counterpointed by a heavy sigh from the o.s. Twilight; cut to her, now really deflated, then to both. The pegasus prudently decides to dial her enthusiasm back a notch.*)

**Rainbow:** Which, I guess, will be cool for all those other fan-ponies. But since you and I know A.K. Yearling personally… (*knowingly, throwing foreleg around Twilight’s shoulders*) …*and* we know that she’s secretly Daring Do herself… (*letting go; Twilight stands up*) …it’s no big deal. This convention’ll be fun— (*Close-up.*) —but it’s nothing to get *too* excited about.

(*Cut to a close-up of her in a different place, helmet firmly plunked over the multicolored mane and with the edge of her shirt’s collar peeking into view at screen bottom. An ear-to-ear grin is plastered across the sky-blue face.*)

**Rainbow:** (*breathlessly, putting hooves to cheeks*) So excited!

(*The movement exposes a bracelet around one foreleg—the equivalent of an admission badge on a lanyard—and the camera zooms out to frame the whole place as she looks expectantly around. She is now in a convention hall set up with tables offering all manner of Daring-related merchandise. Dozens of attendees, all wearing bracelets like Rainbow’s and many sporting their own renditions of the intrepid adventurer’s trademark outfit, mill about at the tables and in the aisles that have been left clear between them. Rainbow trots excitedly in place as the view fades to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the hall. Rainbow has left her spot, but the camera cuts to her and pans slowly to follow her along one aisle, gazing in wild wonder at the joy she has found. A light grayish-blue earth pony stallion, with a sunburst cutie mark and a wireless microphone headset, zips in to intercept. He wears a green golf shirt, the same shade as Daring’s iconic garment and marked with an emblem of her face, and his tone is that of a fast-talking sales rep.*)

**Sales stallion:** You look like a pony who’d be up for an all-inclusive, one-of-a-kind adventu-cation—

(*He throws a foreleg across her shoulders and hefts a saddlebag full of brochures on the end of this. Close-up of an open one, showing pictures of ruins similar to the ones Daring has explored in previous episodes.*)

**Sales stallion:** (*from o.s.*) —where you get to live the Daring Do experience! (*Rainbow casually pushes him back.*)

**Rainbow:** No, thanks. Did that already.

(*Which she and her friends did, in “Daring Don’t.” She heads off across the floor; cut to the upper portion of a booth and tilt down as she steps into view. It is a mockup of the floor-tile trap Daring had to pass in “Read it and Weep,” with each tile showing an animal—including the rats that were the safe spots.*)

**Rainbow:** Ahhhh…

(*She deliberately chooses a trapped tile and steps on it, setting off blasts of vapor and red/orange/yellow streamers from the wall. These retract into their holders as Rainbow grins at the spectacle. Cut to a close-up of her.*)

**Rainbow:** This is the— (*Zoom out quickly, a stallion, Quibble Pants, now stands alongside.*)

**Rainbow, Quibble:** —awesomest thing ever!

(*He is an earth pony, dressed identically to her except for a couple of pins added to his shirt, and he has strapped a pair of cardboard wings to his flanks. His coat is orange-brown, perhaps a shade darker than Daring’s, and his mane/tail are a bit shorter than hers but showing the same variegated gray/black stripes. The eyes are bright blue, and his cutie mark is hidden for the moment by his fake wings. All four eyes pop wide open as their owners each realize they are not alone, but the initial surprise melts away as Quibble gestures to the tiles.*)

**Quibble:** Now *this* is something that only a true fan can appreciate. (*Close-up of the first row.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., gesturing toward them*) They even put the tiles in the right order! (*Cut to Quibble.*)

**Quibble:** (*chuckling*) Good catch. Oh, I’m Quibble Pants. Nice to meet you.

**Rainbow:** Rainbow Dash. (*They each extend a foreleg and tap hooves.*) Nice costume.

**Quibble:** You too.

**Rainbow:** Thanks. (*removing helmet; he eyes it*) The hard part was figuring out the right—

**Rainbow, Quibble:** —number of arrow holes.

**Quibble:** (*with growing zeal, removing own helmet*) Be-be-because on page eighty-four of *Sapphire Stone*, i-it describes her dodging a, quote, “score of arrows shooting forth from holes in the very walls,” unquote. But then, on page one hundred and seven, Daring Do says she, quote, “barely made it past the trap’s *barrage* of arrows,” unquote. (*Rainbow grins broadly as he continues.*) But clearly Daring Do is embellishing a-and the correct number of arrows is…

(*Close-up of both helmets being held out, side by side to give a good clear view of the tiny pockmarks that perforate both surfaces.*)

**Rainbow, Quibble:** (*from o.s.*) …*twenty!*

(*They do indeed have this many holes, arranged in almost the exact same pattern. Zoom out as both aficionados regard the headwear proudly, then shift into grins and laughter. From here, wipe to a slow pan that follows them down one aisle, helmets back on; they break into a trot and pull ahead, ending up at a large standee display of Daring being menaced by her nemesis Ahuizotl. The heads have been cut away to allow attendees to put their own through for picture-taking purposes, and Rainbow takes the hero’s role, scowling up at Quibble as he adopts a fierce expression. Both have removed their helmets. There is the flash of a camera going off, and they quickly trade places, with Rainbow crossing her eyes and letting her tongue loll out for a bit of fun that surprises Quibble. After a second flash, she devolves into snickering and he gets a good laugh out of it.*)

(*Wipe to the pair making their way through an obstacle course: climbing up platform steps, then crawling up through an inclined tube. Rainbow is first to reach the top, swinging away on a rope and letting go to drop o.s; a shower of rocks is kicked up by her plunge, and Quibble grins to himself as he gets hold of the rope. He has shed his cardboard wings at this point. Down below, the daredevil pokes her head up from the rocks just as he falls into them, and he grabs one to pitch at her head. It connects and bounces away harmlessly—only rubber—and she gleefully tackles him into the pile. The initial ascent gives the first clear view of Quibble’s cutie mark: an empty speech bubble.*)

(*Another wipe frames them walking the floor. He stops short and points at one booth; she turns her head to follow the gesture, and the camera cuts to a close-up of the indicated item. It is a pillow whose case bears an image of a rather put-out Daring, bound with rope to leave only her head and the tips of her rear hooves exposed. Zoom out as they regard it, he with a smile, she with considerable trepidation; his smile shifts a bit and he half-shrugs and shakes his head as if to say,” What are you gonna do?”*)

(*Wipe to Rainbow, who buys a Daring figurine from a vendor and turns around to face Quibble as he strides up holding one of his own. Close-up of the two items being raised aloft—identical in every detail—and zoom out quickly to frame the new owners, who beam at each other and laugh.*)

(*One last wipe shifts the action to a concession stand, where a sour-faced unicorn mare attendant levitates a drink onto the counter for Minuette and a filly accompanying her. As soon as two straws are plunked into the liquid, the blue mare grips it in her aura and the two walk away with it. Pan to Rainbow and Quibble, seated side by side and enjoying refreshment of their own.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sighing*) I am *so* glad I ran into you. And even though I knew the convention would be totally awesome, it’s more fun when you’re with someone who *really* knows Daring Do. (*He nods on the end of this.*)

**Quibble:** I know what you mean. It’s so hard to find a pony who really gets it.

(*As the attendant backs up out of view with another drink in tow, Rainbow pulls out a brochure and runs an eye over it.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh, that’s weird. We’ve only done stuff from the first trilogy. After lunch, we should probably start working our way back through the other books.

(*Quibble stops pulling at his drink and waves a disdainful hoof toward her.*)

**Quibble:** Whoa, whoa, whoa. There are no “other books.” (*Close-up of a puzzled Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** Of course there are. *Daring Do and the Trek of the Terrifying Towers*, *Daring Do and the Many Faces of—* (*An orange-brown hoof plugs her mouth.*)

**Quibble:** (*from o.s.*) Um, p-please…please don’t. (*Pan to him, pinching the bridge of his nose disgustedly.*) Just don’t even mention the titles. (*withdrawing hoof*) I-I-I’m not saying those books don’t exist, I’m saying… (*with great contempt*) …that I refuse to acknowledge them.

**Rainbow:** (*cuttingly*) Why?

**Quibble:** (*pounding counter*) ’Cause they’re horrible! I-I mean, there isn’t a single thing after *Ring of Destiny* that is even remotely in the realm of the possible!

**Rainbow:** (*ditto, upsetting her drink*) *What?!?* I know for a fact that everything in every one of those books is one hundred percent possible!

**Quibble:** Uh, and how could you possibly know that?

**Rainbow:** (*stammering a bit*) Uh…I just do.

\*\*\* *Until further notice, Quibble punctuates his words with an occasional sarcastic chuckle. \*\*\**

**Quibble:** Well, that’s a compelling argument!

**Rainbow:** Why would you even come to this convention if you hate Daring Do so much?

**Quibble:** I don’t hate Daring Do. The first series was smart a-and cool and an amazing nod to old-time serialized adventure books— (*Cut to Rainbow, throwing him a nasty look; he continues o.s.*) —that somehow manages to be self-reflexive and ironic— (*Back to him.*) —while at the same time celebrating the art form without a hint of cynicism. (*vehemently, sliding his cup aside*) Which is why I came here to ask A.K. Yearling, muzzle to muzzle, why she sold out and dumbed down the rest of her books in-into just a series of impossible action sequences!

**Rainbow:** (*pinning his hoof to the counter*) Okay, now I *know* you’re crazy. A.K. Yearling is awesome, and every Daring Do book that comes out is better than the last!

**Quibble:** (*standing up, stammering a bit*) Wow. O-Okay, yeah, I-I’m, I’m sorry, but I could never be friends with somepony who’s willing to believe impossible stuff is possible as long as Daring Do does it!

(*Zoom out slightly on the end of this as several onlookers gather around the contenders. Cut briefly to a few of them and back during the next line.*)

**Rainbow:** That’s okay, because I could never be friends with somepony who’s so focused on things being possible that he’s willing to turn his back on the coolest hero of all time!

**Quibble:** Fine! (*She leans into his face.*)

**Rainbow:** Fine!

(*They turn and stalk away in opposite directions, leaving a crowd that has been stunned into silence—and a concession stand attendant aiming a schadenfreude-saturated smile their way. Dissolve to a hotel lobby, where a unicorn sits reading a newspaper in one of the armchairs and a bellhop crosses in the background. The front desk is positioned on the landing of a grand staircase that leads up to the second floor, and Rainbow stands before it to address the well-dressed stallion manager on duty. She has removed her shirt and admission bracelet. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Rainbow:** Look. Just tell A.K. Yearling that Rainbow Dash is here— (*Close-up.*) —and I need her help to convince a know-it-all pony that everything Daring Do’s ever done actually happened.

(*The end of this is punctuated by a series of hoof taps against the countertop, and she follows it all up with her most winning grin. All she gets, though, is a blink from the truly unimpressed manager; she backs off with a glower until a very familiar voice catches her off guard.*)

**A.K. Yearling:** (*from o.s., hushed*) Rainbow Dash?

(*The blue pegasus turns toward the sound and brightens upon seeing the renowned author’s approach.*)

**Rainbow:** A.K.! I’ve gotta talk to you. It’s an emergency. (*Yearling glances furtively around herself.*)

**Yearling:** (*whispering*) Not here!

(*She hustles Rainbow away in a blur of vivid and muted colors, the manager showing no reaction beyond another mildly vexed blink. Even when Rainbow returns to deliver her best “I told you so” grin, he limits himself to an eye roll. After she clears out again, the view cuts to within a hotel room, whose door bursts open so Yearling can shove her inside. Close it, peek through the peephole, and finally turn to the new arrival.*)

**Yearling:** (*hushed*) Now tell me what’s going on! Is it Caballeron? Did you see him?

(*Referring to the rival archaeologist who targeted her in “Daring Don’t.” She proceeds to close the window curtains.*)

**Rainbow:** (*perplexed*) What? No. But there *is* a pony downstairs who thinks everything you’ve written after the first trilogy is totally unrealistic and terrible.

(*Cut to under a bed; Yearling leans down, pulls the spread up, and peers into this space.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) And I need you to help me prove to him that it’s all totally possible.

(*On the end of this, tilt up as she straightens to full height; next, the camera cuts to frame her crossing to Rainbow. The bed is one of two in the room.*)

**Yearling:** I’ve got bigger problems on my hooves than dissatisfied fan-ponies.

(*Reaching into the neckline of her cape, she brings out the gold bauble that Daring was after in the passage Twilight read to Rainbow during the prologue. She is wearing it on a cord as a pendant, and the section embedded in the rock is a short cylinder with zigzag grooves standing up from the surface. The very sight of it causes Rainbow’s pupils to grow until they nearly fill her eyesockets—another mass-market exploit proven to be real.*)

**Rainbow:** (*awed*) Whoa. (*Close-up of it, zooming in slowly.*)

**Yearling:** (*from o.s., hushed*) The Amulet of Culhuacan—and Caballeron wants it. (*Cut to frame both; she continues smugly.*) But the Amulet’s only a key. (*Soft giggle; she pulls a scroll from the nightstand.*) The real treasure is hidden in a lost temple.

(*She spreads it out on the floor to show a map.*)

**Yearling:** (*hushed*) The Seven-Sided Chest of Chicomoztoc.

(*Close-up of the drawing, panning slowly from one end to the other. A path leads from a city, across a bridge over a bay—this must be Manehattan—and through varied unforgiving terrain to stop at an imposing, blocky structure.*)

**Yearling:** (*from o.s., normal volume*) Caballeron wants to sell it to the highest bidder, of course— (*Cut to her.*) —which is why I need to find it first.

**Rainbow:** *Yes!* (*doing a loop-the-loop*) Sounds like another awesome Daring Do adventure! (*She touches down.*) But what are you doing here?

**Yearling:** Since I haven’t found the temple yet, it’s the safest place for me and the Amulet. (*tucking it under her cape*) It’s crawling with security, and if I get into trouble…

(*Ground level, the camera framing Yearling from the neck down and all of Rainbow. The cape slithers to the floor, exposing Daring’s bush shirt and cutie mark, and the fan-pony puts on a shiny-eyed grin and very nearly starts bouncing off the walls from sheer nervous glee. Cut to just in front of the globetrotter, the hat and glasses lying abandoned as well, and tilt up slowly as she nudges her helmet into place. The Amulet is hidden under her shirt.*)

**Daring:** …I can just blend in with all the Daring Do cosplayers.

**Rainbow:** How can I help?

**Daring:** Just keep your eyes out for anything suspicious.

**Rainbow:** (*saluting*) Got it!

(*She peels out and o.s., leaving the sound of the slamming door to mark her exit. Daring rolls up the map, only to be interrupted by a knock and then Rainbow opening the door to poke her head in.*)

**Rainbow:** Does a pony who only likes your first trilogy qualify as suspicious?

(*To which Daring responds with a high-powered scowl that is all Rainbow needs to shift into a sheepish little laugh.*)

**Rainbow:** Just checking.

(*Back out; close the door. Dissolve to the convention hall, where Rainbow walks cautiously down one aisle with red-violet eyes on high alert, then cut to Dr. Caballeron himself standing next to one booth. He puts a hoof to his face with an exasperated sigh and turns to address himself o.s.*)

**Caballeron:** I find all this fanfare around my archenemy… (*A costumed filly passes him.*) …disturbing.

(*Elsewhere, the sales stallion has just passed a brochure into a unicorn’s telekinetic grip. He turns to offer one to Caballeron and his hench-pony Biff, one of the three who worked for him in “Daring Don’t,” as the two walk up. Caballeron snatches it and throws it aside after a cursory glance.*)

**Caballeron:** I mean, where is the booth for Caballeron?

(*Without a word, the sales stallion points back the way they came. Cut to a booth topped by a large skull headdress and decorated with small glowing skulls; available here are costume items to match the ones he wears—including heavy false eyebrows and stubble makeup, if the three ponies standing out front is an accurate indication. The genuine article is quite put out at the display.*)

**Caballeron:** I do not see the likeness.

(*The soft clop of approaching hooves draws his attention; cut to a longer shot. He and Biff are joined by Withers and Vest, the other two hired goons from “Daring Don’t.” Vest has a Daring pillow draped across his back, which Caballeron knocks to the floor with a fed-up sweep of his hoof.*)

**Caballeron:** Come. (*leading them away*) Let us find Daring Do and the Amulet of Culhuacan. (*They pass Rainbow at a booth, but neither spots the other.*) I don’t want to spend any more time in this place than I have to!

(*She turns away from the goods and heads in the other direction, a fraction of a second too late to catch sight of Daring’s past rival. As she eases through the crowd, giving the camera a good view of the admission bracelet she has now donned, she stops short. Cut to her perspective of a poor copy of Caballeron’s gold-skull cutie mark pasted onto a pony’s haunch and zoom in quickly to a close-up. The view then cuts back to her as she zips over to confront its wearer, who faces away from the camera for the moment. A push rotates this pony 90 degrees toward her—a mare in Caballeron cosplay, stubble and all, who gives her a really dirty look. She offers up a placating grin and backs up, only for her rump to collide with that of Quibble.*)

**Quibble:** (*very snarky*) Well, if it isn’t the pony who knows impossible things can happen because she just does.

**Rainbow:** Ugh! (*She gets in his face, becoming very snippy.*) Sorry, Quibble. I’ve got more important things to do than argue with a pony who thinks “awesome” means “unrealistic.”

(*She turns away, lashing him in the face with her tail.*)

**Quibble:** (*hurrying to catch up*) No! Wait! I want to hear more about how you’re one hundred percent sure that in *Curse of the Jungle Queen*, Daring Do could survive a sixty-story drop— (*She winces; both stop.*) —from the top of a waterfall after sustaining a broken wing in a Category Six rapid!

**Rainbow:** (*rolling eyes*) Ugh! (*She wheels back to him.*) Obviously her wing wasn’t brok—

(*The rest of the word is cut off sharply as her eyes pop and she shifts position to look past him.*)

**Rainbow:** Caballeron!

(*She gallops off; he holds his place, not realizing that the bad guy and his crew are coming up the aisle behind him.*)

**Quibble:** See, now that’s a *great* character. Solid backstory, good motivations— (*Rainbow peeks up from behind a table.*)

**Rainbow:** No, no, no, no. (*turning his head to see*) Caballeron is right there!

**Quibble:** (*rolling eyes, not buying it*) Of course he is.

(*Zoom out; he points across the way at a stallion wearing the outfit.*)

**Quibble:** He’s also over there…over there… (*faking fear*) oh, ooh, over there…

(*The second “over there” is accompanied by a cut to a filly taking a picture of a Daring cosplayer next to Derpy Hooves in a sloppily assembled Caballeron rig. The third: cut to a vendor selling a shirt to a Caballeron stallion. Finally, the real villain leads Biff and Vest past in front of Rainbow and Quibble, along with a hench-pony not previously seen. Gray coat, dark blue eyes, short brown tail and mustache, head shaved bald, dark gray bush shirt trimmed in an even darker shade, hairy chest, prominent scars, cutie mark that matches one of the shirt’s pockets.*)

**Quibble:** …and over there. (*Rainbow trots out to follow them.*) Where are you going?

(*Cut to a loading dock at the rear exterior of the convention hall. Rainbow opens the door from inside for a look and trots onto the platform, followed by Quibble.*)

**Quibble:** And we’re out here because…?

**Rainbow:** Daring Do told me that Caballeron came to this convention to steal the Amulet of Culhuacan, and I just saw him and his hench-ponies come this way! (*Close-up of Quibble.*)

**Quibble:** Okay, I’m gonna head back inside. (*sourly*) There’s just a little too much crazy out here for the both of us.

(*Zoom out slightly to frame Withers and Vest standing to either side and pulling a large sack down over his entire form. Rainbow gasps sharply, turning her head in his direction; cut to her perspective, now filled by the images of these two captors, Caballeron standing with them, and Baldy and Biff whisking a sack toward her and the camera. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a screenful of sacking, which is yanked away to expose a close-up of Rainbow and a covered lump next to her. She loses her admission bracelet in the process. Baldy leans into view just long enough to nip a fold of the remaining material in his teeth and pull it free, revealing the hindquarters of an upside-down Quibble. Visible behind them are trees and open-fronted tents with cots inside, suggesting a wilderness campsite, and a longer shot of the area confirms it as the overly critical stallion flops onto his belly. All four of Caballeron’s thugs are standing watch over the two prisoners. The campsite is set up in a small clearing, with a central fire ring and logs lying half-buried in the dirt to use as seats.*)

**Caballeron:** (*from o.s*) I do not know what Daring Do is playing at— (*emerging from trees*) —but if she told you two fan-ponies of my plan to steal the Amulet, *you* must work for *her*. (*Rainbow and Quibble stand up, the latter a trifle annoyed.*)

**Rainbow:** Caballeron! Hah! What do you have to say now, Quibble?

**Quibble:** This was your plan to prove the Daring Do books are realistic? You bought a Daring Do Experience adventu-cation. Really?

**Rainbow:** (*taken aback*) What? No! Oh, look around us! (*gesturing to each in turn*) Hench-ponies? Caballeron? The jungle it took forever to get to? This is the real deal!

**Quibble:** Right. We’re actually being held captive by Caballeron. (*sourly*) Please! (*pointing at him*) This guy’s accent is all over the place! (*to him*) Eh, no offense.

**Caballeron:** (*to himself, rubbing forehead*) Ay…

**Quibble:** So what’s the setup here? You’ve kidnapped us and taken us to the middle of nowhere because…?

**Caballeron:** The temple of Chicomoztoc is somewhere in this jungle. When I find it, the Seven-Sided Chest is as good as mine! (*Biff and Withers flank Quibble.*) I just need the Amulet of Culhuacan to unlock it.

**Quibble:** Uh-huh, and Daring Do has the Amulet, so you came up with this over-complicated plot to lure her into the jungle and exchange it for us.

**Caballeron:** I wouldn’t call it over-complicated, but…yes.

**Quibble:** Okay, we’re done here. (*walking away*) Great work, seriously. *Very* believable.

(*A gesture from Caballeron sends Biff bounding off after Quibble, who has now passed o.s. There follows the sound of a quick, short, scuffle, after which the would-be escapee is plunked back in front of Caballeron on his haunches. His snark has not diminished one iota through all of this.*)

**Quibble:** Listen, pal. You can keep her money, but I’m not— (*Caballeron slaps his pointing hoof down.*)

**Caballeron:** —going anywhere! (*Rainbow is herded over.*) You may not approve of my plan, but *I’m* the mastermind here!

**Quibble:** (*aside to Rainbow, singsong*) Debatable.

**Caballeron:** And I say you will remain here until Daring Do comes to rescue you! And if she wants you back in one piece, she will give me the Amulet! (*to the others*) Tie them up!

(*Cut to Rainbow and Quibble, now seated back to back on their haunches. Baldy and Biff get the ends of a long chain in their teeth and wrap it around them, cinching it tight in such a way as to trap the blue flyer’s wings. In the fore, a device is held into view on Caballeron’s hoof: cylindrical, gold end caps, body consisting of four parallel rings marked with various symbols. The shackle is gold with a steel hinge in the middle, designed to evoke the idea of a bird with spread wings; and is attached to one end cap; the free wingtip is sprung away from the other. It is a combination lock, intended to open if the rings are turned to display the correct sequence of symbols, and its introduction throws a bit of a scare into Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** The Griffon’s Lock!

**Caballeron:** You know of it. Further proof that you are an agent of Daring Do!

**Quibble:** (*to Rainbow*) Or an avid reader.

(*Caballeron snaps it into place, passing the shackle through the chain links and securing it to the free end cap.*)

**Caballeron:** And now I will continue my search for the temple. (*smug, menacing tone*) Don’t go anywhere.

(*A chuckle blooms into a full-throated laugh as he strides away into the jungle, and Rainbow begins to struggle against the chains as Quibble addresses her.*)

**Quibble:** Listen. If I pretend to believe this nonsense is real, will you call off the Hench-Pony Repertory Theater over there?

**Rainbow:** (*sighing*) They’re not gonna listen to me. They abducted us both!

**Quibble:** Oh, wow. So you’re gonna stick with that script. Oh, okay, fine. We’re…we’re in a Daring Do adventure.

(*A nip at his shirt allows him to get one of its pins in his teeth, and a quick turn of the head sends it across the open area to clink against a stone. The sound brings Baldy on the double.*)

**Baldy:** What was that?

**Quibble:** (*loudly, woodenly*) Daring Do, thank goodness! We’re over here!

**Baldy:** Fan out! We can’t let Daring Do rescue these two!

(*Exeunt the quartet, in different directions; Rainbow goes back to the job of trying to free herself.*)

**Quibble:** (*laughing heartily*) All four? I mean, shouldn’t at least one of them stay behind to guard us? Oh, oh, wait. Uh, no, because then it wouldn’t be a *terrible Daring Do adventure!* (*Close-up of Rainbow; the lock’s rattling is heard.*)

**Rainbow:** It doesn’t matter. We’ll never solve the Griffon’s Lock before they get back.

(*The snap of a releasing mechanism. The rattle of chain links hitting the ground. A longer shot shows both of them now free, Quibble standing upright and holding that very device. He bounces it contemptuously on his front hoof.*)

**Rainbow:** Okay, that *was* pretty good. (*He tosses it away; she stands up and pulls at his foreleg.*) Quick! We’ve gotta get out of here and warn Daring Do! (*He throws off her grip.*)

**Quibble:** (*pacing, stammering a bit*) No way. Just point me to the hotel and…you can play fan-pony and hunt treasure out here all day long.

**Rainbow:** (*sighing*) Fine! Let’s just say this *is* a Daring Do adventu-cation. The only way to get back to the convention is to go through it. So just follow me and I’ll lead you out. Deal?

(*Glaring around the campsite, he searches for a really crushing remark but manages to get out no more than a fragment of a word before letting it collapse into a supremely frustrated groan.*)

**Quibble:** Fine! (*They start walking.*)

**Rainbow:** (*under her breath*) Maybe if I just leave you in the jungle, it’ll convince you.

(*Dissolve to a screenful of thick undergrowth. During the next line, it is parted from behind by a Rainbow, followed by Quibble. Vexation and triumph are respectively writ large across the two faces.*)

**Quibble:** …which would make Daring Do left-hoofed, which we know is false, and that is *everything* that’s wrong with *Daring Do and the Trek to the Terrifying Tower*. (*Rainbow growls softly to herself.*) Now, the problems with the next book are ev—

(*She cuts him off with a wing clapped across his mouth and the camera zooms out to put them at one end of a rope/plank bridge strung across a ravine. Only after she lowers the feathers does the camera shift to present the entire creaking span under a green-tinted daytime sky.*)

**Quibble:** Oh, right. What Daring Do adventure would be complete without the precarious rope bridge?

(*Back to them. Rainbow takes a few tentative stomps on the first board, stirring up a bit of dust, and starts across once she is satisfied that the wood is sound. The disdainful stallion follows a few paces behind.*)

**Quibble:** Look, I’m all for making things feel as real as possible— (*Both stop.*) —but are these adventu-cation ponies sure this thing is safe?

**Rainbow:** (*pointedly*) Is it too realistic for you? Wouldn’t want *that* on a Daring Do adventure, would we?

**Quibble:** If this were really a Daring Do adventure, I’m sure I’d step on the wrong plank at exactly the wrong mo—

(*He trails off into a yell of terror as the one he has just rested his front hooves on gives way, dumping him halfway through the bridge. Rainbow whirls toward him with a gasp, grabs his tail in her teeth, and pulls with all her strength. A raging river can now be seen far below.*)

**Quibble:** (*sighing, forcing a smile*) Good thing this is all just a pretend adventure. At least we know all of this struggling won’t make the bridge fall apart.

(*As if the Fates were waiting for this very cue, one of the main support ropes frays and breaks. The entire structure flips to leave him dangling headfirst over the river.*)

**Quibble:** You need to get your money back.

(*And here goes the other rope; the two halves of the bridge fall away, each swinging toward its cliff end, and he drops loose and out of sight with a panicked scream. Rainbow rockets down after him, biting down on the free end of a rope still looped around the orange-brown body. Instead of hauling him back up, though, she continues her headlong flight toward the surging currents even as he redoubles his yells. A few plank fragments hit the water just before she pulls up, leveling off so that Quibble finds himself doing a bit of unorthodox water skiing thanks to her motive power and the wood still under his rear hooves. An approaching waterfall causes the blue eyes to pop wide in apprehension, but Rainbow nimbly loops her end of the rope around a branch that projects over the brink. Inertia carries him into empty space, the rope going taut and snapping to send him on a hollering flight over the jungle that exhibits not a whit of grace or poise. Quibble bounces down the tops of several palm trees, then lands on another one that bends double under his weight before dumping him onto the ground and rebounding. By this point, the rope around his midsection has fallen away. The supine stallion is quickly joined by a very smug Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** Hah! How’s *that* for “not possible”? (*He stands up, sweating buckets and on a full adrenaline rush.*)

**Quibble:** That was…*awesome!* I…I-I-I thought we…and then *you*…and the flying! Wow, and I was like, “Where are you going?” A-And then, then you swerved, and I was, I was, I was on the water and then…and the, and the rocks… (*Brief incoherent babble.*) …*wow!*

**Rainbow:** Yeah. If you read that in a book, you might even think it was unrealistic.

(*He drops right back into overly critical mode.*)

**Quibble:** Okay, I’ll give you that one. I-I mean, we could have been done for.

(*It takes a second for the full meaning of those last six words to take hold in his mind; when they do, his eyes go wide and he clutches frantically at Rainbow.*)

**Quibble:** We could have been done for! What…what kind of adventu-cation is this? I-I mean, that’s…that’s just bad business! What…what are these ponies thinking?!?

**Caballeron:** (*from o.s.*) Right now? (*He emerges from a bush.*) We are thinking that we should thank you for escaping.

(*A gesture brings Biff on the jump to tackle Rainbow, while a lasso settles around the neck of the thoroughly ill-spirited Quibble. Vest crosses to him, with the rope’s free end in his teeth, and within moments Biff has Rainbow properly tied and clamped his jaws on her rope.*)

**Caballeron:** For you have led us directly to the lost temple of Chicomoztoc!

(*As he finishes, the camera shifts to frame the entire group—now joined by Baldy and Withers—and zooms out. They are alongside the base of the waterfall, and an imposing stone structure styled after those of ancient Central American civilizations stands across the river from them. Built into the cliff face, it corresponds to the end of the trail on the map Daring showed to Rainbow in Act One. Caballeron laughs exultantly, the camera cutting back to a close-up of the two captives. Rainbow’s face goes slack with undiluted shock, but Quibble looks as if he has been presented with a cheap, badly prepared meal. Zoom in slowly and snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a stretch of interior wall marked by a piece of gold/stone artwork. Baldy steps up for a better look, lantern in teeth, and Caballeron moves in as well as the camera zooms out slightly.*)

**Caballeron:** (*calling behind himself*) Make sure they are secure this time!

(*Longer shot: the wall bears a mural of ponies circling a gold yin/yang design and hovering near a large starburst in one corner. A staircase leads down into this corridor, and the entire raiding party is advancing along here. The rope around Quibble’s neck has been cinched up, and those around Rainbow have been rearranged into a loop at her throat and a set of wing bindings; the free ends are held in the mouths of Vest, Biff, and Withers, respectively.*)

**Caballeron:** We can’t have them escaping again! (*Rainbow pulls against her leash and lunches toward him.*)

**Rainbow:** You’ll never get away with this!

**Caballeron:** Won’t I? You’ve led me to the temple, and Daring Do is too noble to let harm befall her companions— (*to Quibble*) —so the Amulet is as good as mine.

(*The bottomless pit of snide cracks comes up dry for once.*)

**Caballeron:** What? No witty remarks this time about how silly my plan is? (*All stop.*)

**Quibble:** This isn’t the official Daring Do Experience adventu-cation, is it?

**Rainbow:** Finally!

**Quibble:** (*poking at Caballeron’s chest*) It’s some cheap knockoff run by a bunch of incompetent ponies that have no idea how to execute this adventure with any level of safety!

(*The big boss can manage no response except for a helplessly bewildered glance in Rainbow’s general direction that might translate as “this guy can’t be for real, can he?” She, in turn, just groans and slaps a hoof to her face; next Quibble leans indignantly toward Vest.*)

**Quibble:** What was that with the bridge?!? We were in serious danger! I-I’m reporting you all to…well, I don’t know who I’m reporting you to, but it’s gonna be somepony important!

(*A moment later, he has removed the rope from his neck and is carrying it along as he paces past the others.*)

**Quibble:** (*tossing it aside, wheeling to face Rainbow*) Oh, and this cut-rate excuse for an experience hasn’t proved anything except that I’m right! It has all the hallmarks of a lame Daring Do adventure!

(*On the end of this, cut to a close-up of his hooves as he stomps the right front one down for emphasis. The patch of stone beneath it sinks slightly into the floor, the trigger for chunks to pop out of the wall so that torrents of mud can start pouring in. Cut to a close-up of Rainbow, her face all consternation.*)

**Rainbow:** Uh…Quibble? (*His hoof reaches into view to cover her mouth.*)

**Quibble:** (*from o.s.*) No! I’m talking! (*Cut to him; he backs off as more mud gushes forth.*) Generic jungle locations? Check. Overly complicated villain plot. (*A falling rock barely misses him.*) Check! Random coincidences that conveniently get us to the next big set piece? Check!

(*On the last “check,” cut to a close-up of his hooves as he stomps the left front one down—and it too presses a hidden release stone. This time, the effect is to cause the section of floor immediately behind him to slide away; he does not notice, but Caballeron does.*)

**Caballeron:** Watch where you are stepping, you fool! (*Quibble gets in his face.*)

**Quibble:** Listen, buddy. (*poking at his chest*) I don’t take orders from some second-rate performer who learned acting from the Supervillain School of Bad Accents.

(*Caballeron actually starts to back down, showing genuine fear—whether of Quibble’s growing venom, or the mud still pouring unchecked into the corridor, is anyone’s guess. During the next line, a shape slowly rises behind the stickler from the area where the floor dropped out. It is covered in brown slop, vaguely reptilian, and easily two or three times his height, with most of its bulk ultimately cut off by the top edge of the screen.*)

**Quibble:** (*really worked up*) The only thing this mess is missing is some giant Ahuizotl-wannabe monster, and I have a feeling that would be a bit too much for you bargain-basement adventurers to pull off!

(*He is so caught up in his own brilliance that he utterly fails to notice that Caballeron and the hench-ponies are busy clearing out of the place, leaving the still-tied Rainbow behind. She is scared out of her wits, but he only turns to take notice after a few globs of mud spatter down around him. What he finds is a massive, gray-spotted, green crocodilian beast with gold spines running down its back and gold bracelets on both forelegs. The underbelly is a lighter greenish-brown, and green/brown fringes frame two very angry blue-gray eyes as mud drains off its hide. This is Cipactli.*)

**Quibble:** Huh?

(*The toothy maw opens wide, unleashing a deafening roar and a shower of spittle and blowing his mane back. A note of true fear begins to set in over his entire personage.*)

*\*\*\* From here on in, the snarky laugh is gone from his voice. \*\*\**

**Quibble:** Um…you’re real. (*It growls and starts to advance on him.*) This is real.

(*Now Rainbow darts in to pull him to safety, an instant before the powerful jaws can slam shut on his head. She has shaken off the rope around her neck, but her wings are still bound, and the two gallop like sixty down the corridor.*)

**Quibble:** *THIS IS REAL!!*

(*The hench-ponies race through a chamber and up a staircase. Caballeron follows, but stops a few steps up so he can pull a lever on the wall, bringing down a stone slab to seal the exit behind his savagely grinning visage. Rainbow and Quibble throw themselves against it, to no avail, and glance fearfully back toward the approaching, screeching Cipactli. Just as it is about to overrun them in the muddy expanse, Daring swings across on a vine and pulls them both away. When Quibble musters up the courage to uncover his eyes, he finds the adventurer smiling smugly down at him through her fringe of six-toned gray/black forelock. The arcing trajectory carries them up to an elevated doorway, where she lets go of the vine and they of her, and she wastes no time in releasing Rainbow’s bindings in close-up.*)

**Daring:** I told you to warn me of anything suspicious— (*Zoom out slowly; Quibble goggles wordlessly at the pair.*) —not run off on an adventure without me! (*Rainbow rubs the back of her neck nervously.*)

**Quibble:** Wh…whoa, whoa! Y-You’re real! (*to Rainbow*) You’re, you’re…you’re friends with her?

(*Cut to Rainbow and Daring. The blue pegasus answers him by draping a wing across the orange-brown one’s back and stitching on the king daddy of all smug expressions. Daring just throws her a very funny look and shrugs the wing away.*)

**Daring:** Uh, we’ll have to do introductions later. Right now we have to—

**Quibble:** (*from o.s., panicky*) Uh, g-get outta here, yes.

(*Cut to him, staring at the doorway and the rapidly rising mud in which Cipactli is now swimming about.*)

**Quibble:** Thank you!

**Daring:** Actually, no.

**Quibble:** *What?!?* (*She stuffs a hoof in his mouth to shut him up.*)

**Daring:** We can’t leave without the treasure.

(*Floor level in the chamber, the camera pointing up at the trio as they move to the edge of their vantage point.*)

**Daring:** And we should probably get to it before our friend gets any higher.

(*Said “friend” chooses this moment to let off a hungry-sounding roar and splash in the murky torrents, which rise to fill the screen. Dissolve to a wall panel that shows three ponies with a sunrise as their backdrop. To the sound of turning gears, this pivots 180 degrees around a vertical axis down its middle to deposit the three in this new place—a trick door built onto a turntable. As they turn away from the wall, Rainbow is first to find her tongue.*)

**Rainbow:** (*awestruck*) Whoa…

(*Her perspective of the chamber, panning from one side to the other. They are facing a semicircular line of seven doors, each with its own particular artwork; overgrowths of roots and vines hang down from ceiling to floor, snaking into a small central pool of lily pads and blooms.*)

**Daring:** (*from o.s.*) Seven doors, seven locks. (*She leans into view.*) One of them leads to the treasure. (*All three again.*) I’d rather not think about what the others lead to.

**Quibble:** (*sourly, stepping forward*) Yeah, yeah, the classic “pony and the tiger” bit. All you have to do is—

**Rainbow:** Um, maybe you should let Daring Do figure it out?

**Quibble:** (*backing away from the mares*) Oh, excuse *me.*

(*These two advance a bit—Rainbow hovering, Daring on hooves and leaning down to scrutinize the conundrum. As she strokes her chin thoughtfully, Quibble breaks the silence.*)

**Quibble:** (*under a cough*) Not that one.

(*One double hairy eyeball later, Rainbow and Daring move off across the chamber and stop at a particular door. Daring pulls the Amulet out of her shirt collar, still strung around her neck, and gets the head in her teeth. As she begins to crane her neck toward the door, she is again interrupted by the know-it-all, who voices a drawn-out half-whine that is the universal equivalent of “You sure about that?” Letting the Amulet drop free, Daring turns to Rainbow.*)

**Daring:** Is he always like this?

**Rainbow:** Yeah. Buuuut he’s usually right. (*Quibble idly buffs a hoof on his shirt.*)

**Daring:** (*sighing, to him*) Which lock do *you* think it is?

**Quibble:** (*groaning wearily*) Finally. (*pacing*) Look. Each door has another door that matches.

(*His perspective, pointing at one of the seven and panning to another, identical one as he speaks.*)

**Quibble:** These two both have earth ponies fighting serpents. (*To a third, then a fourth.*) These two have pegasi fighting griffons. (*To a fifth, then a sixth.*) These two have unicorns fighting bears…

(*Cut to the odd one out; he crosses to it and points.*)

**Quibble:** …but this one… (*Grimace; Daring catches on and smiles.*)

**Daring:** …has an alicorn on it! (*She and Rainbow cross to it; now he allows himself a smug smile.*) It’s the only one without a match.

(*Cut to within its keyhole, the camera pointing out at an extreme close-up of her peering eye. The next two lines are slightly muffled by the stone.*)

**Daring:** How did I miss that? (*She backs away and Quibble moves into view on the next line.*)

**Quibble:** I’ve been asking myself that ever since Book Four.

(*That jibe does nothing to win him any points with either mare. Outside the keyhole again: Daring flies over to the door, Amulet in teeth and off the cord, and slots the cylindrical end into the winged unicorn’s eye. There is the snap of a catch being released, and the entire eye recedes into the door surface. Cut to its other side as the passage grinds open to frame her; the other two fall in wonderingly behind as she steps confidently through.*)

**Quibble:** The Seven-Sided Chest of Chicomoztoc!

(*On the end of this, cut to a close-up of this item within and zoom in slowly. It is a small, flattish container whose lid forms a shallow pyramid, and it rests on a stone pedestal under a shaft of sunlight. A sweep of Daring’s wing carries it away for a closer look, the camera cutting to her and then zooming out to frame Rainbow on the next line.*)

**Quibble:** (*from o.s., uneasily*) Uh, guys…

(*Cut to him, having retreated out to the chamber and aiming a very scared eye at the mud that has pushed the turntable door open and begun to pour in. He grimaces mightily toward the others, the filth still brimming up toward the doorway through which they exited Cipactli’s chamber. All three gather at the edge, Daring having stowed the Chest away, as the beast cruises back and forth.*)

**Rainbow:** (*hyperventilating*) The way out is totally covered! How are we gonna get out of here?

(*Daring looks this way and that, then upward, and points toward the ceiling.*)

**Daring:** There!

(*Cut to just behind her and Rainbow and tilt up, framing a skylight opening far above.*)

**Quibble:** Uh, seriously, do you ever *not* escape out of the top of a temple?

(*Suddenly finding himself on the business end of a double-barreled “shut it” glare, he wisely takes the hint and backs away fearfully.*)

**Daring:** We’ll have to carry Mr. Adventure Critic out with us!

**Rainbow:** We won’t be fast enough! We’ll never make it!

**Quibble:** (*now o.s.*) Guys!

(*Cut to him, now standing alongside one of the vines that have spread throughout this entire edifice. He grabs a length in his teeth and pulls, snapping it so that several coils tumble down to drape loosely around his neck, and offers the faintest hint of a smile to a mildly ticked-off Daring.*)

**Quibble:** I think Rainbow Dash and I have this covered.

(*The blue daredevil surprises her literary hero by flashing a savage grin and spreading her wings. Wipe to the uppermost reaches of the chamber, now almost totally filled. Rainbow and Daring zoom across, barely clearing the surface and each with one end of a vine tied around her midsection. They are towing a gleefully grinning Quibble, up on his hind legs for a second round of water skiing and being pulled by the vine around his shoulders. Cipactli is not far behind them, however, and they cut a sharp corner to head toward the skylight only to find the monster bursting upward with a roar dead ahead. The next three lines are shouted so as to be heard over the rushing liquid.*)

**Quibble:** Go around! You can’t go over him! (*Pan to Rainbow and Daring.*)

**Daring:** Go over him? Are you crazy?

**Rainbow:** If Quibble says “go over him,” we go over him!

(*Here comes a final roar from Cipactli, answered by Quibble’s scream of abject terror, and then the monster’s lunge. It gets nothing for its trouble but a mouthful of mud, as the two pegasi go into a sharp climb and pull him clear with almost no room to spare. He rakes his way up the golden spines and is flipped off the tail as it sinks into the depths.*)

(*Cut to the jungle surrounding the temple as the three burst forth from the roof and arc toward the trees with all the grace and artistry of a brick flung into a lake. They plummet out of sight, a rustle of leaves and a scatter of birds marking their touchdown; cut to them in a half-dazed pile on the ground, Quibble at the bottom.*)

**Quibble:** (*starting to stand, lifting the others*) You two are insane!

(*By the time each gets upright in turn, they have disposed of the vines they used to make good their escape.*)

**Rainbow:** You *said* “go over him”!

**Quibble:** I *said* “go around him”!

**Daring:** (*hushed, covering each mouth with a wing*) And *I* said “be quiet”!

(*Caballeron leads Withers and Vest through the undergrowth.*)

**Caballeron:** This way! I heard them! (*Quibble peeks up from behind a nearby bush.*)

**Quibble:** (*to Rainbow, Daring*) Okay, I got it. Let’s create a fake treasure out of mud and rocks, give *that* to Caballeron, and then when—

**Daring:** (*smiling, lifting a stone*) Not every Daring Do plan has to be super-complicated.

(*The missile is thrown to smack against an outer wall, bringing Caballeron at a gallop. Followed by his two goons, he utters a loud, frustrated groan.*)

**Caballeron:** I swear I heard them!

(*And a sizable portion of the wall comes crumbling down to reveal Cipactli inside—plenty steamed over either the disturbance, having lost out on a free lunch, or both. It uncorks a roar that shakes the whole area and spooks all three stallions into a shrilly screaming bug-out, and it decides to go after them for good measure.*)

**Caballeron:** *I’LL GET YOU, DARING DOOOO!!*

(*As the echo of his words fades away, the camera pans/tilts down slightly to frame the edge of a nearby pond. Three cut reeds project upward from the surface, and three heads quickly bob up with the lower ends in their mouths—having used them as breathing tubes. Quibble is first up to dry land so he can give his an appraising glance. He is already dry, as will the other two be when they come up without their reeds.*)

**Quibble:** Eh, not particularly original or inspired, but it worked. (*He lets it drop.*)

**Daring:** Who are you again?

**Rainbow:** He’s a fan.

**Daring:** (*not fully convinced*) Uh-huh. There’s some stairs on the other side of the temple that lead out of the ravine. (*smiling*) I suggest you two take them and head west.

**Rainbow:** What about you?

**Daring:** (*pulling the Chest out of her shirt*) I’ve gotta get this to a museum. Thanks for your help. (*tucking it away*) I couldn’t have done it without you—both of you.

(*She takes off in a smear of faded colors, leaving Quibble to deal with the turnabout of having an insufferably smug smile aimed at him by Rainbow. He offers a conciliatory grin, and the two begin to walk.*)

**Rainbow:** So…?

**Quibble:** (*grudgingly*) So…maybe the later books *are* slightly more realistic than I gave them credit for. Still don’t like them. (*Both stop.*)

**Rainbow:** (*affronted*) What?!? How can you—

**Quibble:** Wait! Hold on. Before we get in another fight, I…I think I’ve finally figured it out! *I* love the Daring Do that solves puzzles and uses her brain to get out of tough situations, and she did way more of that in the original trilogy.

(*Cut to Rainbow, not quite buying it.*)

**Quibble:** (*from o.s., pointing to her*) *You* love the Daring Do that is brave and awesome and comes out on top, no matter what the odds.

**Rainbow:** O…kay? (*He withdraws the hoof; cut to frame both.*)

**Quibble:** And that’s okay. We might never agree on what makes Daring Do cool, but…*you* are…definitely cool. (*suddenly nervous; she smiles*) I-I mean, the way you saved me on the bridge…heh, wow! And escaping from the temple…you, Rainbow Dash, are *awesome*.

**Rainbow:** (*scratching back of neck*) Well…I-I-I’m not the one who can locate a treasure in half the time Daring Do can. You may have terrible taste in books, but you’re pretty awesome yourself.

(*The words have barely left her mouth before their full meaning hits her like a two-by-four to the head.*)

**Rainbow:** In a brainy, egghead, puzzle-solving kinda way. Heh.

**Quibble:** I guess we don’t have to agree on everything to get along. (*offering a front hoof*) Friends?

**Rainbow:** Definitely friends.

(*Just as when they first met at the convention, they tap hooves. With the matter closed, they start walking again toward the riot of jungle vegetation spread before them. Zoom out slowly, framing a sky that has gone gold in the sunshine of late afternoon.*)

**Quibble:** Uhhh…do you think A.K. Yearling would consider letting me write the next book? I…yeah, I think I can make things *way* clearer. I mean, for instance—

(*Fade to black on the end of this line.*)

(*Instead of music, the credits are accompanied by the following dialogue, delivered in voice over.*)

**Quibble:** —in the second adventure, there’s this side character. I don’t want to kinda name it right now, because it’s sort of this thing that I’ve already written a lot of fan fiction on. I don’t want you to—not that I’m saying that you would steal it, but I am saying that this would totally go along my whole thing about puzzle-solving, except what if each puzzle that was solved, uh, unlocked a new karate move? Think of it that way, right? And I mean I’m kind of a “Yearlite” myself, so I’m sure she’d be open to—

**Rainbow:** (*very slightly annoyed*) Uh, Quibble?

**Quibble:** Sorry.