**DARING DONE?**

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Notes: This episode makes reference to a character who has appeared in the IDW comic

series *My Little Pony: Legends of Magic*. Reading those stories is not essential to

being able to follow this one, but the episode and the comics do dovetail with

each other slightly.

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

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a Ponyville street during the day. A bespectacled pegasus colt stands in the middle of the road, next to a stack of newspapers and holding a rolled-up copy, and a few ponies are hanging around to read the ones they have purchased. The sound of Pinkie Pie’s hopping fades up.*)

**Paper vendor:** (*addressing himself o.s.*) Morning, Pinkie Pie! Get your *Ponyville Chronicle* right here!

(*She bounces merrily into view and stops before him.*)

**Pinkie:** Fan-tizzy-astic!

(*She flips him a coin, snatches the paper away, and whips over to sit on a nearby bench where a rather bored-looking Rainbow Dash has just arrived. The pegasus flutters up to take a seat on the next line.*)

**Pinkie:** (*opening paper*) I just love to read about happy happenings, and it’s always good to be a pony in the know, you know? And there’s so much to know!

**Rainbow:** Eh, seems like a bunch of boring hooey to me.

**Pinkie:** (*skimming a page*) Does “New Shrubbery in Castle Gardens” sound like boring hooey to you?

**Rainbow:** Snoo-ooze!

**Pinkie:** What about… (*smiling at one item*) …“Parasprite Infestation in Fillydelphia Eradicated”? Ah! That’s great news!

**Rainbow:** Nah. Another day, another parasprite hype story.

**Pinkie:** (*reading*) “Noodles Named Official Food of Whinnyapolis”…“Author A.K. Yearling Announces Retirement”…“Cloudsdale Election Heating Up for Candidate in Favor of Cooling It Down.”

(*Only after this last headline does Rainbow’s dispassionate demeanor crack.*)

**Rainbow:** *What?!?* (*grabbing paper*) Oh, let me see that!

**Pinkie:** I never knew you were so into politics, Rainbow!

**Rainbow:** No…*this!*

(*On that second word, she holds the newsprint up to the camera, clearly exposing two pictures on facing pages: a profile close-up of a most unhappy A.K. Yearling on the left, a steaming bowl of noodles on the right. Next to Yearling’s picture, and partly covered by Rainbow’s hoof, is a photo of an open book with a question mark superimposed over one page. She lowers it out of view.*)

**Rainbow:** It *can’t* be true! (*She reads some more.*)

**Pinkie:** Well, I’d have never picked noodles as the official food of Whinnyapolis either, but… (*Shrug.*) …here we are.

**Rainbow:** (*exasperatedly*) No, Pinkie! I can’t believe that the greatest author and secret pony adventurer of all time, A.K. Yearling, *is retiring!*

(*She points emphatically at the author’s image upon mentioning the name and finishes with a frightened little shiver. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to Pinkie and Rainbow galloping flat-out through a forest. Pinkie’s copy of the paper is rolled up and protruding from her mane.*)

**Pinkie:** A.K. Yearling just retired, like, today. Are you sure she wants visitors?

**Rainbow:** Pinkie, the A.K. Yearling I know would never quit and retire out of the blue. Something could be really wrong, and we need to make sure she’s okay.

**Pinkie:** Okay. (*suddenly suspicious*) Heeeeey, you’re not just trying to make sure she writes more Daring Do books, are you?   
**Rainbow:** Of course not! (*smiling*) But that wouldn’t hurt either. Now come on!

(*She speeds ahead, followed by Pinkie. Cut to an extreme close-up of one sky-blue hoof pounding frantically on a wooden door, then to a longer shot of Yearling’s cottage as seen in “Daring Don’t.” Both mares have arrived at the front step, but there is no immediate response to the knock except for the hushed noises of the woodland wildlife.*)

**Rainbow:** Uh…maybe she’s not home. (*Close-up; she smiles hopefully.*) Maybe she went to the editor-in-chief of the *Ponyville Chronicle* to correct the misprint they’ve made.

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s., brightly*) Nope. She’s home.

**Rainbow:** (*irked*) How do you know?

(*Cut to frame both; Pinkie has moved to the front window and is looking in.*)

**Pinkie:** Because she’s right there, looking all sad and alone. (*Rainbow gasps.*)

**Rainbow:** I knew it! Something *is* wrong! (*knocking on door*) A.K.!

(*Close-up of Pinkie, seen from just inside the window.*)

**Pinkie:** (*slightly muffled by glass*) Now she’s sighing with the weight of the world… (*Mash face against glass; shade eyes with hooves.*) …now she’s hanging her head in utter despair…oh, now she’s shaking her hoof and cursing the heavens like nothing could ever possibly be the same again… (*Outside again; she backs off a bit.*) …*why, oh, why did this happen to her?!?*

**Rainbow:** *What?!?*

(*Just inside again; Pinkie peers intently a moment longer, then smiles.*)

**Pinkie:** (*muffled*) Whoops! Never mind. That time, she was just stretching. (*Chuckle, back to Rainbow at the door.*)

**Rainbow:** (*knocking madly*) A.K., it’s us! Rainbow Dash and Pinkie Pie! Your friends!

(*It swings open at last, and the two pegasi look each other straight on across the threshold. Yearling wears her cape and glasses, but not her cloche hat, and her mane is neat if slightly ruffled. The eyes behind the red-framed glasses broadcast just how far off her game she is, but narrow into a suspicious squint as she glances from side to side and Pinkie steps up. The coast being clear, she beckons them on and turns to re-enter the living space.*)

(*Cut to the interior, the two visitors descending the steps that lead down from the door. Cardboard boxes of various sizes are set around the place, some closed, others open and brimming with notes and possessions. Yearling listlessly packs a few items into one as Pinkie takes interest in a small, open chest holding a glowing gold object.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh, no. Did somepony ransack your cottage again and steal some ancient mysterious relic that’s the key to saving all of Equestria? (*Pinkie lifts the item from the chest—an animal totem that begins to crackle with energy.*)

**Pinkie:** Ooooh! (*Sit on haunches.*) Sparky!

(*Yearling turns from the boxes with a sudden gasp and gallops across to Pinkie. Snatching the totem away, she hastily shoves it back into the chest and slams the lid down.*)

**Yearling:** (*sighing quietly*) Nothing’s been stolen.

**Rainbow:** (*tensing for action*) Then is somepony blackmailing you and forcing you to retire? ’Cause if they are… (*She finishes with a defiant neigh.*)

**Yearling:** No, nothing like that.

**Rainbow:** (*supremely panicked, sputtering*) So you’re just quitting and moving away? (*yanking Yearling back and forth by her collar*) Why—would—you—do—that?!?

(*An unamused glare from behind the lenses prompts her to release her grip on the fabric.*)

**Yearling:** I already explained everything to the *Ponyville Chronicle*.

**Rainbow:** (*hovering*) Oh, really? (*She drags the paper out of Pinkie’s mane, opens it, and reads.*) “Author A.K. Yearling announced yesterday that the next adventure novel in her popular series, *Daring Do and the Curse of the Pharaoh’s Tomb*, will be her last. Yearling looks forward to her retirement.” (*Roll it up.*) That doesn’t explain anything!

(*Yearling turns away with an almost inaudible mutter; Rainbow lands to stare her down point-blank, no longer carrying the paper.*)

**Rainbow:** It just says you’re giving up writing stories! But most ponies don’t know that you actually *are* Daring Do, and that the stories are real! So what you’re really saying is that you’re giving up being Daring Do— (*poking her in the chest*) —but you’re not saying why! (*Pinkie inserts herself between them and pushes Rainbow back a step.*)

**Pinkie:** Of course, if you don’t feel like talking about it, that’s A-okay, A.K. As your friends, we completely understand. (*pointedly*) Right, Rainbow Dash?

(*Zoom in on the blue flying ace as her name is mentioned; she snaps out of her sulk.*)

**Rainbow:** (*smiling hastily*) Oh, yeah! (*Yearling paces.*) We just came to make sure you’re all right. That’s really why we wanted to find out what’s going on.

**Yearling:** (*fishing in a box*) If you really want to know, my last quest took me to a village in southern Equestria, where I started seeing these.

(*She holds up a file folder on “these.” Pinkie and Rainbow lean in, the pink mare sitting on her haunches and taking/opening it so she and her friend can put eyes on the contents.*)

**Pinkie:** (*reading*) “Wake of Destruction, colon.”

(*Her perspective: the folder is filled with news clippings and a couple of loose photos.*)

**Pinkie:** (*reading*) “Daring Do Ruins Entire Village Marketplace!”

(*She lowers it on the end of this, giving a clear view of Yearling’s downcast expression; from here, cut to Pinkie and Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** (*reading*) “Dare or Scare? Local Rogue Daring Do Involved in Frightful Fiasco”? (*Pinkie’s perspective again, the author becoming increasingly hacked off.*)

**Pinkie:** (*reading*) “Daring Do Leads Bull into China Shop During High Speed Chase!”

**Yearling:** That’s enough! (*Sigh.*) Everypony I tried to help is mad at me. (*All three again.*)

**Pinkie:** That’s not true. They’re not mad at A.K. Yearling. (*Sly smile.*) They’re mad at Daring Do. (*Flip the folder closed.*)

**Yearling:** They don’t sell my books in southern Equestria. The ponies there don’t know who A.K. Yearling is. They only know Daring Do, and apparently *she* does more harm than good.

(*On the next line, Pinkie holds up a monochrome close-up shot of Daring Do’s face, obscuring that of the author, and lowers it again.*)

**Pinkie:** Then I guess it’s a good thing you look so different as A.K. Yearling. (*Close-up of Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** (*smiling, holding up folder*) So all we have to do is go down there and explain to these ponies that none of this stuff is true! (*She tucks it behind a wing; zoom out. She and Pinkie are both sitting now.*)

**Pinkie:** Easy-peasy-cheesy!

**Yearling:** But that’s just the thing! It *is* true.

**Pinkie, Rainbow:** (*shooting upright*) *What?!?*

**Yearling:** I guess I’ve always been so focused on saving priceless relics and stopping the bad guys that…I never really thought about the mess I leave behind.

**Pinkie:** Then you *are* in a tricky pickle! But…why is all this happening now?

**Yearling:** (*sighing*) I guess ponies are finally fed up. Either way— (*pivoting angrily to her*) —I’m done with adventures—having, or writing. (*The folder lies on the floor.*)

**Rainbow:** Come on! For every one pony who’s upset— (*Pinkie grins and nods.*) —there must be at least a hundred that know you’re a hero!

**Yearling:** (*sadly*) I don’t think so, Dash.

(*Those words cause the party planner’s perkiness to plummet as her pink posterior plunks onto the planks. Yearling paces gloomily across the floor as Pinkie shrugs resignedly to Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** Well, why don’t we go visit this village… (*checking folder, sounding name out*) …Som-nam-bu-la… (*dropping it*) …and see for ourselves?

**Yearling:** (*packing a box*) Those articles seem to make it pretty clear how the villagers feel. (*Pinkie stands and brightens.*)

**Pinkie:** But if we go there, the ponies can tell you in person just how much they appreciate you.

**Rainbow:** (*brandishing folder*) *And* what a heap of rotten apple cores these articles are!

(*The retiring writer’s spirits rise a notch as she turns away from the box.*)

**Yearling:** You really think so?

**Rainbow:** (*hovering briefly, tucking folder away*) I know so! Let’s go!

(*She and Pinkie make tracks for the door; Yearling thinks hard for a moment, then dons her cloche with an uneasy sigh and starts after them. Dissolve to a slow tilt down the length of a map, a red line drawing itself in to mark the trio’s route—from the cottage, to a city, across railroad tracks and into a mountain range, past a bend in the tracks to a forest, following to their end and veering away into a desert, then finally ending at a cluster of buildings around a pyramid. From this last, dissolve to the three mares entering the village of Somnambula, whose architecture strongly resembles that of small Egyptian towns from the early twentieth century. Buildings are squat and square, none more than two stories tall; market stalls line the wide, busy streets; a well in the middle of one; and a great pyramid towers over all in the background. It is daytime, and Rainbow is no longer carrying the folder of clippings.*)

**Rainbow:** (*to Yearling, shuddering excitedly*) This is so cool! (*All stop.*) It looks just like that village in your last book, where Daring Do recovers the Doomed Diadem from the Wild Bunch Gang, who chase after her through the desert!

**Yearling:** It should. I based that entire chapter on my experiences here in Somnambula.

**Pinkie:** What happens? (*pacing, collecting herself*) No, wait, don’t tell me. (*freaking out, to Rainbow*) I changed my mind! TELL ME!!

**Rainbow:** Daring Do thwarts Ahuizotl’s evil plot to separate the Sister Crown Relics! (*Pinkie backs off.*) And if it wasn’t for her, the region would be cursed with eternal night, and the entire town of Somnambula would have sunk into the ground!

(*She and Pinkie have both dropped to their haunches by the time she finishes, Pinkie having hunched down a little farther in sheer anticipation.*)

**Pinkie:** (*contemptuously, to Yearling*) Aw, puh! (*standing up*) There’s no chance that these ponies don’t think you’re a hero. (*Rainbow gets up.*)

**Rainbow:** Watch this!

(*She trots off, leading the others to a wizened tan earth pony vendor stallion sitting at his battered, heavily patched cart of bruised apples. Blue eyes; two-tone red mane/tail, the former held by a brown headband; brown vest over a long-sleeved, pale gray shirt; a single long beard tuft.*)

**Rainbow:** Hiya there, mister! (*coaxing tone*) I was hoping you could tell me about a pony named Daring Do. I hear she’s an awesome adventure pony hero.

**Apple vendor:** Daring Do? Oh, she’s awesome, all right.

(*Rainbow smirks back at Pinkie and Yearling, but the oldster stand and shatters their triumph by shifting into instant bitterness. His cutie mark, previously hidden by the camera angle, consists of a red apple overlaid by a violet, five-pointed blossom from that type of tree.*)

**Apple vendor:** Awesome at destroying ponies’ apple carts…

(*The whole rig promptly goes to pieces, spilling dust and fruit everywhere.*)

**Apple vendor:** …and priceless sacred statues!

(*He points furiously off to one side; cut to a point just ahead of an archway through which the huge pyramid can be seen and zoom in slightly. A stallion in a hooded brown cloak and off-white scarf stands to one side, showing no facial features except a gray-tinged khaki nose and a crop of beard stubble around his mouth. Beyond the archway, in a wide village square, a pile of tumbled and broken stones litters a broad dais—the remains of the statue Daring allegedly wrecked. Back at the scene, Rainbow aims a querying look at Yearling, who averts her eyes ruefully; they are interrupted by a stallion’s hushed, heavily accented voice.*)

**Voice:** Indeed.

(*The speaker proves to be Hood, who steps off from the archway.*)

**Hood:** Daring Do is a menace who destroys everything she touches.

(*He gestures off to one side on the end of his, exposing a shirt with rolled-up sleeves in the same color as the scarf. Pan quickly in this direction to stop on two stallions, a pegasus and an earth pony, working to rebuild a trashed stall and not looking too happy about it. They stop and grumble their agreement with the statement around the tools in their mouths.*)

**Rainbow:** (*taken aback*) What? No! Daring Do is the exact opposite of a menace!

**Yearling:** (*groaning, whispering to Rainbow*) I tried to tell you! Coming back here was a mistake!

(*She gallops off. Cut to a long shot of Pinkie and Rainbow staring after her with clear concern, while Hood resumes his spot by the archway. Zoom out slowly and fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a fleeing Yearling, closely followed by Pinkie on the ground and Rainbow in the air.*)

**Rainbow:** Come on, A.K.! So we picked a bad example. That was just one angry pony.

**Pinkie:** Two angry ponies!

**Yearling:** It doesn’t matter! I-I never should have come with you! You two should just go home!

(*As said two come to a stop, she pelts out through an arch that marks the edge of town and is soon lost amid the desert wastes.*)

**Rainbow:** Come on! We gotta follow her!

**Pinkie:** I don’t know. It *reeeeally* seemed like she doesn’t want us cramping her saddle.

**Rainbow:** (*landing to face her*) But we have to convince her that ponies do appreciate her! As her friend, I have to make sure she believes that.

(*She trots away from the village, Pinkie following. Dissolve to them topping a dune; the sky has deepened into twilight. Rainbow’s eyes widen in surprise.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh, look, Pinkie! (*pointing ahead*) It’s the Get On Inn!

(*Cut to a long shot behind them. The establishment in question sits on the other side of a river from them, in a bend fringed by palm trees and lush vegetation, and a wooden bridge leads from one bank to the other.*)

**Rainbow:** Daring Do stays here all the time in her adventures! (*Close-up; an idea hits.*) Which means there must be ponies here who love Daring Do! Maybe they can help us! (*Pan to Pinkie, who inhales a drifting wisp of aroma.*)

**Pinkie:** Mmmm! My nose is telling me to help myself to muffins!

(*Cut to a close-up of a desk bell on the corner of a countertop inside. Rainbow reaches into view and hits the button to ring it; a longer shot puts her and Pinkie at the front desk. The sound of slowly approaching hooves asserts itself.*)

**Rainbow:** (*impatiently, ringing repeatedly*) Come on…

(*Cut to a curtained doorway behind the counter. Through this comes a slightly irritated earth pony mare on desk clerk duty. Pale blue coat; curly, two-tone grayish-green mane; faded brown eyes behind blue-framed cat-eye glasses; white/lavender/gold earrings; sleeveless lavender dress with white trim that covers her tail and cutie mark; three necklaces—gold, pearls, small twinkling plaques of a light green stone strung on a gold cord; two bracelets on one foreleg—one gold, the other made of that same stone.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Ooooh! (*Cut to her and Rainbow.*) She’s fancy! I got this.

(*The clerk glares at the two new arrivals from her side of the counter; her voice carries a faint, hard-bitten Western twang when she speaks.*)

**Pinkie:** (*over-the-top sophisticated tone*) A good evening to you, madame. We are but weary travelers who humbly wish to inquire on the status of a certain mare of intrigue taking residence here.

**Desk clerk:** What in southern Equestria are you on about?

**Pinkie:** (*normal tone, resting front hooves on counter*) Is it true that Daring Do stays here?

**Desk clerk:** (*contemptuously*) Hah! (*Pinkie backs off; she sets her own hooves up here.*) Not anymore, she doesn’t.

[*Animation goof: She now wears bracelets on both forelegs.*]

**Rainbow:** (*hesitantly*) Why not? (*Hooves down.*)

**Desk clerk:** The last time I rented that rascal a room, she was in such a rush to hightail it outta here, she didn’t even pay her bill. (*Rainbow leans across to her.*)

**Rainbow:** But—

**Desk clerk:** After that, a band of ruffians showed up and destroyed half the rooms lookin’ for her! (*leaning toward Rainbow*) Guess she made them even more mad than she made me!

**Rainbow:** No, no, no. You’ve got it all wrong!

**Desk clerk:** Heh. How do you figger?

**Rainbow:** (*hovering*) Daring Do was trying to save everypony from the curse of the Doomed Diadem of Xilati! And she was only in a rush because she had to get the crown back to the Tiara of Tioclale before the curse took effect!

(*Dropping to the ground, she trades a satisfied smile with Pinkie.*)

**Rainbow:** (*to her*) Chapter seventeen.

**Desk clerk:** Sounds like a tall tale to me, and a hard one to believe now that I know Daring Do is a scoundrel and a thief!

(*She glances down at her neck and lifts the string of green plaques.*)

**Desk clerk:** Every year, ponies come to offer precious glowpaz to the Somnambula statue in the village, in hopes for a good future.

(*She points across the lobby at Hood, who chooses this moment to wander away with a faint smile.*)

**Desk clerk:** Why, that poor fella had his glowpaz necklace stolen by Daring Do just yesterday! (*Pinkie and Rainbow trot after him.*)

**Rainbow:** Hmmm…

(*They stop in close-up, flick their eyes around the area, and gasp loudly in unison. Zoom out quickly as they point in the same direction, putting Yearling in the fore, seated at a table.*)

**Pinkie, Rainbow:** (*pointing to same side*) There’s A.K.!

(*They cross the lobby to her, and all three shift their focus to the stallion, now standing on a table to address the crowd that has gathered in close. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Hood:** Daring Do ruined our town and stole our precious glowpaz! We need to make sure that if she turns up again, there will be consequences! Everypony who’s with me, meet at the statue tomorrow!

(*Yearling leaves her seat to join the other two, amid a swell of grumbling from the listeners.*)

**Yearling:** (*sighing*) Now I’m getting blamed for things I didn’t even do? Why would I steal from them?

**Pinkie:** They are super-bad! (*smiling*) But we’re still staying the night, right?

(*A muffin is swiftly lifted and stuffed into her mouth, leaving a spray of crumbs across her cheeks.*)

**Pinkie:** (*mouth full, sitting on haunches, holding up an empty plate*) Because I already ate all the free mini-muffins. (*Giggle.*)

**Rainbow:** Listen, A.K. (*hoof to shoulder*) After a good night’s sleep, we’re gonna fix all of this. I promise. (*Pinkie nods.*)

(*Dissolve to the Somnambula village square. It is now the following day, and quite a few ponies have gathered before the wrecked statue. Pinkie, Rainbow, and Yearling make their way in, Pinkie hopping and the others walking; the pink mare has cleaned her face and ditched the plate.*)

**Yearling:** (*whispering*) I shouldn’t be here, Rainbow Dash! This is never gonna work!

**Rainbow:** Of course it will! All I have to do is go up there and explain to everypony how *wrong* they all are. (*Cut to Pinkie and Yearling.*)

**Pinkie:** (*foreleg around Yearling’s shoulders; she smiles briefly*) Yeah! And then I’ll be like, “What she said!”

**Yearling:** (*sighing heavily*) Easy-peasy-cheesy.

**Pinkie:** (*hopping in place*) Exactly!

**Hood:** (*from o.s.*) Here it is!

(*Cut to him, up on the dais to address those gathered.*)

**Hood:** The remains of your—I mean, *our* Somnambula statue! Now that Daring Do has destroyed it, tell me! Where will we hang our glowpaz?

**Mare 1:** We don’t even have any glowpaz because they were stolen by Daring Do!

(*Outraged responses from the crowd catch the trio off guard. Rainbow is the first to take action, leaping forward and overhead to land on the dais.*)

**Rainbow:** Daring Do would never steal anything! And, okay, she destroyed your statue, but it was because she was trying to save you all from Ahuizotl!

(*The collective ire turns to confusion.*)

**Rainbow:** Ahuizotl? (*Rise to the peak of the debris.*) He’s about yea big? (*indicating features on herself*) Long neck, itty-bitty face, weird claw thingie on his tail?

(*Dead silence from the spectators, without even a flicker of recognition.*)

**Pinkie:** (*hopping to front*) Ooh, ooh! I know him! (*She hooks a foreleg around each nearest neighbor’s neck.*) He’s a baddie!

(*She is gone in a blur, leaving bewildered mumblings that seem to unnerve the mystery agitator. Rainbow lands next to him.*)

**Rainbow:** Trust me. If Ahuizotl had gotten away with the Doomed Diadem, your entire village would have been swallowed up! And that’s a lot worse than losing some crummy old statue.

(*This brings a shocked gasp from the audience, followed by a lone throat-clearing. Pan from them to the old apple vendor seen in Act One, standing off to one side.*)

**Apple vendor:** This was not some crummy old statue! (*moving up to face Rainbow*) It was the namesake of our town! If you want to understand us, you must first understand her!

**Rainbow:** Who?

**Apple vendor:** Somnambula. Long ago, this village fell prey to an evil Sphinx who demanded most of their crops.

(*During the first half of the previous line, the view dissolves to a hieroglyphic-styled rendition of the village and nearby pyramids, appearing as if it has been painted on slabs of weathered sandstone inscribed with pictograms. Once the transition is complete, the remainder of his words are delivered as a voice over. The camera pans to a profile of the Sphinx, an enormous, nastily grinning giant to which ponies bow fearfully. The body is that of a pegasus mare, but with a long lion’s tail and legs that end in feline paws rather than hooves. The coat is a dark grayish-purple, with lighter gray underbelly, wing surfaces, and tail tuft, and blue bands encircle the visible foreleg and the base of the tail. The eyes are medium orange, in black-rimmed sockets and with blue-shadowed lids, and it wears a two-tone blue headdress, a gold tiara that hooks behind the tufted ears, and a broad neck piece inlaid with gold and dark blue pieces. While the hieroglyphic style holds, characters move in sudden jerks, as if a series of still frames were being shown for the camera, and all ponies have black makeup rimming their eyes.*)

(*The Sphinx preens as the ponies prostrate themselves, and the camera pans farther to stop on two earth ponies, a raggedly dressed old stallion who approaches a well-groomed young mare at a stall stocked with bread. She turns away impassively, seeing that he has no money.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** Like her fellow villagers—

(*Pan slightly farther still; watching them is a pink, blue-violet-eyed pegasus mare with straight, two/tone green mane/tail, the latter tied back with gold bands. A crescent-topped gold band and white veil cover her mane, the eyelids are shadowed purple, and she wears a pearl necklace and a gauzy, gold-trimmed white dress that hides her cutie mark. This is Somnambula.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** —Somnambula didn’t have much. (*She pulls off her necklace, trades it for a loaf, and offers it to the elder.*) But she used what she had to keep others from giving up hope.

(*He takes the food and the two bow to one another. Zoom out to frame five newly arrived stallions. One is Prince Hisan, a dark blue-gray pegasus draped in lighter gauze, with a broad gold collar and a matching band, topped by a snake’s head, that holds back his upswept, two-tone faded red mane. The tail is cut short, the eyes brown with light blue-gray shadow to match the headband’s wings positioned behind his ears, and a short, golden false beard is attached to his chin. The four behind him are identical white earth ponies with short, straight-cut, two-tone red manes/tails, gold collars, and green eyes. Servants all, they bear the same cutie mark of a snake wrapped around a staff.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The son of the Pharaoh, Prince Hisan, was so moved by her compassion—

(*Dissolve to a close-up of Hisan making a proclamation and zoom out. He stands before rows of these same white earth ponies.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** —that he decreed nopony would go hungry again.

(*All bow; now he descends from the dais on which he stands and passes rank on rank of helmeted guard stallions. His steps take him past a chariot, pulled by a guard, that holds a stern-faced medium violet-gray pegasus stallion robed in a darker hue, with a broad gold necklace and matching bands on his braided tail. Both it and the mane are striped in two shades of dark grayish-red, the former straight and kept back with a gold, snake-topped headband, gold earrings hang in the ears, and a small mole rests under the gray left eye. Based on the apple vendor’s description, this must be Hisan’s father, the Pharaoh. Hisan stops before one of the Sphinx’s mighty paws.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** But when Hisan stood up to the Sphinx…

(*He stomps and huffs imperiously, only for the giant to rear up, unleash an arc of flame, and snatch him. This move reveals a gold band on the foreleg not seen earlier.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** …the beast captured him… (*She hovers over the Pharaoh and guards, now ringed by a full corona.*) …telling the Pharaoh the only way to get Hisan back… (*Fly off; perch atop a pyramid.*) …was to solve her riddle!

(*This structure is different from any of those seen up to now, built of darker stone with upward-projecting spires on the slopes and a statue of a lesser sphinx to either side of the entrance. The Pharaoh turns to his troops, but they all bow and back away as Somnambula steps up instead, to his noticeable surprise.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** Nopony would volunteer to save the prince—nopony except Somnambula.

(*As she hits the road, the animation returns to normal and the ponies’ colors brighten visibly from their depiction on the sandstone. Somnambula’s coat has a tinge of red to the pink, and the Pharaoh’s is medium blue-violet under a darker-hued robe. She gallops away to take flight over the desert, making for the pyramid to which the Sphinx fled, and zeroes in on the doorway. As she zooms through it in close-up, the outside light fading, her dress shifts enough to expose a cutie mark of an unclasped gold necklace with two pearls at either end. The camera then cuts to an interior chamber, framing one of the Sphinx’s front paws at ground level, and Somnambula lands to face her. The clawed digits show a more vibrant shade of purple than that from her image on the sandstone, and the eyes’ pupils are narrowed to catlike slits.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The Sphinx gave her the riddle.

(*As he provides the dialogue, the relevant characters’ mouths move in time.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** “I shine brightest in the dark.” (*covering face with a wing, peeking through feathers*) “I am there, but cannot be seen.” (*Wing down.*) “To have me costs you nothing.” (*leaning down over Somnambula*) “To be without me costs you everything.”

(*Cut to an overhead shot of Somnambula and zoom in slowly as she begins to think very hard.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** As Somnambula thought of the hardships she and her fellow villagers had experienced— (*Big smile.*) —she instantly knew the answer. “Hope!” she shouted.

(*The Sphinx unleashes a furious, frustrated roar toward the upper reaches of the chamber. Now a deep rectangular pit can be seen behind her, filled with glowing green liquid; a rope/plank bridge leads from the edge to a pillar, on which Hisan stands lashed to a large stone carved to resemble a gem. When seen next in close-up, he proves to have a dark blue coat, deeper red shades to his mane/tail, blue-shadowed eyelids, and a gold bracelet on one foreleg.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The Sphinx was so enraged— (*Cut to Hisan and zoom out; she drops to all fours and glares down at Somnambula.*) —it seemed she might still refuse to release the Prince. (*Somnambula gathers herself, bows, and addresses the enemy.*) So Somnambula asked her for one more challenge. But if she accomplished it, the Sphinx would leave from the kingdom forever.

(*The Sphinx grins and begins to pace.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The Sphinx quickly agreed, asking only that Somnambula “walk to the Prince,” across a deep chasm… (*A band of cloth covers Somnambula’s eyes.*) …blindfolded!

(*The pegasus tries to dislodge it, but to no avail.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** Further, the Sphinx had cast a powerful spell— (*A flare of light, and she is unable to spread her wings.*) —that prevented Somnambula from flying!

(*The Sphinx utters a low, reverberating laugh and pushes Somnambula to the end of the bridge. After one tentative move of a hoof, she steels herself and stands up to her full height.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** But Somnambula never lost hope. (*A great bound…*) She knew she’d need to make a leap of faith to save the Prince.

(*…and she lands neatly on the planks, cupping an ear to get a bead on Hisan’s shouting.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** Guided by the sound of the Prince’s voice— (*Walk toward him; the Sphinx glowers silently.*) —she easily made it across.

(*His abductor lets go with one enraged scream and flies up to exit the pyramid through a long vertical shaft. Somnambula gets one end of Hisan’s ropes in her teeth and releases him with one deft tug, and he in turn strips off her blindfold. Both turn to look proudly up toward the exit, the camera zooming to a profile close-up of Somnambula, and a dissolve shifts the view back to the hieroglyphic-style animation and muted colors. She bows.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The Pharaoh asked how Somnambula prevailed. (*Zoom out; father and son stand before her, surrounded by ranks of servants.*) And she explained that she had always hoped she could make things better for her people, and that hope had carried her through.

(*Hisan steps forward, a necklace of light green glowpaz stones hung over a hoof, and drapes it around Somnambula’s neck.*)

**\* Apple vendor:** The Prince replaced the pearls Somnambula gave up with a string of glowpaz. (*Zoom out as it flares with light.*) And around her neck, they glowed bright enough to light the entire kingdom.

(*The radiance whites out the screen as he finishes the tale, then subsides to give a close-up of him in the here and now.*)

**Apple vendor:** Forever after, glowpaz became our symbol of hope. (*Appreciative murmurs from the crowd.*)

**Rainbow:** Wow. I had no idea how special the statue was to you. Somnambula sounds like a pretty cool pony. But I bet if she were here— (*Cut to Pinkie and Yearling; she continues o.s.*) —she’d tell you how cool Daring Do is too, because they both fought to protect this town.

(*The murmurs gain a few decibels, and the deflated writer lifts her head ever so slightly to take them in as the camera zooms out to frame the group.*)

**Hood:** If Somnambula were here today, she would condemn Daring Do for destroying your—*our* symbol of hope!

(*The instant souring of the mood sends Yearling into a fresh funk. She plods away from the simmering hostility, missing the looks of worry and desperation that Pinkie and Rainbow respectively send her way. Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the village square. The last of the crowd is dispersing, but Rainbow and Hood are still on the dais. The red-violet eyes are filled with tears, but quickly dry on their own as she turns an enraged glare his way.*)

**Rainbow:** Hey, buddy! What did Daring Do ever do to you to deserve all this?

**Hood:** Only…

(*In one swift move, he rips off the cloak and scarf and throws them down to reveal himself as Daring’s archrival Dr. Caballeron.*)

**Caballeron:** *…everything!*

**Rainbow:** Dr. Caballeron?!?

**Caballeron:** (*leaning toward her; she backs down*) Yes, Rainbow Dash. (*Laugh; she drops to her haunches.*) When I saw you, her closest friend, I knew that Daring Do would not be far behind. I really do owe you for leading her right to me.

**Rainbow:** But I—I didn’t mean to—

**Caballeron:** Thank you for helping me break Daring Do’s spirit by destroying her reputation. (*menacingly*) But I can’t have you running off and telling her my plan.

(*His whistle brings four stallions on the double—Baldy, Biff, Withers, and Vest, the thugs who assisted him in “Stranger Than Fan Fiction.” Rainbow can only look from one to the next, utterly paralyzed by fear, as they close in and the view fades to black. Snap immediately to her standing upright, blindfolded and with Withers cinching a rope to bind her wings. The five villains move out, Rainbow being led by the free end of the rope.*)

**Rainbow:** HEEELLLLP!!

(*Pan quickly to a dejected Pinkie and Yearling; they stop short and whirl to face the group.*)

**Yearling:** Caballeron?! No!

**Pinkie:** He’s got Rainbow Dash! Come on!

(*She is gone in a pink blur and a cloud of dust, but Yearling cringes silently in place. Wipe to a long shot of the pyramid to which the Sphinx took Hisan in the apple vendor’s tale. A swirl of dust is moving rapidly toward the entrance. Pan back in the direction from which it came, showing a second swirl charging after it, then cut to Pinkie racing across the desert. Just as quickly as she started moving, she skids to a stop and crumples to the ground, heaving for breath as the grit boils and swirls around her.*)

**Pinkie:** (*between gasps*) I’m…coming…Rainbow…Daaaash!

(*A dim shape appears within the dust and resolves into a galloping Daring, who has shed the trappings of her alter ego. Pinkie stands to face her, instantly revitalized.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, I knew you’d come!

**Daring:** You did? I sure didn’t. What if I cause more trouble?

**Pinkie:** You won’t.

**Daring:** How do you know?

**Pinkie:** I just do. You wouldn’t let anything happen to Rainbow Dash. You care too much.

**Daring:** You’re right! (*She pulls out a pair of binoculars and begins scanning the area.*) Which way did they go?

(*Cut to her perspective through the instrument, panning here and there and stopping on the pyramid’s entrance. The two lesser sphinx statues still flank it, but are somewhat the worse for wear after the passage of uncounted centuries. A cluster of tiny dots recedes into the blackness—Caballeron and crew with their hostage—and the camera cuts back to Pinkie and Daring, the latter putting the binocs away.*)

**Daring:** To the pyramid!

(*They race off; wipe to them charging through its dim corridors.*)

**Voice of Rainbow:** (*distant*) SOMEPONY HEEELLLLP!!

(*They emerge into light on the end of this and slam on the brakes, hooves coming to rest a fraction of an inch away from a sudden drop-off. On the next line, a glance down and zoom out below ground level reveal that they have come to the pit of green gunk over which the Sphinx held Hisan. However, the bridge is gone.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., closer*) SOMEPONY!! ANYPONY!!

(*The two would-be rescuers trade a panicked glance, then look ahead of themselves and see Rainbow tied to that self-same carved stone and still blindfolded.*)

**Rainbow:** Pinkie Pie? Daring Do? Is that you?

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry, Rainbow! We’ll save you!

(*As the pillar begins to sink into the pit, Caballeron’s crazed laughter drifts down from above. Pinkie and Daring look toward it; tilt up quickly to frame him peeking into the opening of the shaft through which the Sphinx fled.*)

**Caballeron:** If my previous plan didn’t cause you to give up, Daring Do, then the shame of losing your dear friend Rainbow Dash to the slime will! (*Ground level, then back to him as he continues.*) Oh! And that ancient magic from the legend…is real. There’ll be no flying in the pyramid! Good luck, Daring Do!

(*He ducks out of sight with one last wild laugh, and a stone slab slides into place to cut off this means of egress. Daring tries to spread her wings, but has exactly as much success as Somnambula did during her face-off.*)

**Daring:** He’s right! We’ll never get to her in time!

**Pinkie:** If this really is like Somnambula’s story, then we just have to have hope that we can.

**Daring:** I think we need more than hope, Pinkie. (*pointing ahead*) There was a bridge in the story, and there’s no bridge here! What are we gonna do? (*Rainbow strains against her bonds.*)

**Pinkie:** I don’t know. But Rainbow Dash is our friend. Just like Somnambula, we need to make a leap of faith and hope that we can save her! (*She dives into the pit.*)

**Daring:** *PINKIE!!*

(*Taking a deep breath—with the full understanding that it might well be her last—she hurls herself toward the sluggishly bubbling ooze. Instead of belly-flopping into it, though, she finds herself borne upward and ahead by a series of sudden bursts of vapor.*)

**Daring:** Aha!

(*Up ahead, Pinkie is getting the same ride. The spurts are coming from a row of nozzles that protrude above the surface of the slime.*)

**Pinkie:** Whee! (*Giggle; both land safely on the platform in close-up.*) I knew we’d do it!

**Daring:** (*touching Pinkie gently*) Thanks for reminding me to never give up hope, Pinkie. (*Zoom out to frame Rainbow on the start of the next line.*)

**Rainbow:** (*very snarky*) And *I’m* kinda *hoping* you ponies will untie me before we all take a bath in bubbling green slime!

(*Sure enough, they have sunk so far that it is beginning to lap over the edge. Daring jumps across to the knot in the ropes.*)

**Daring:** We’re on it!

(*A quick bite and pull undoes them, and Pinkie follows suit to remove the blindfold. All three bug out, riding the vapor spurts from the nozzles to make it out of the pit and then galloping for the door. Cut to a swath of desert under its unforgiving sun, the camera at ground level; Daring steps partly into view, then Rainbow, and both stare after the fleeing quintet. The next shot frames a close-up of all three mares’ grim-set faces. A look of silent agreement passes between them before they move out.*)

(*Dissolve to Caballeron and company on their way out of town, Biff and Withers dragging a bulky sack by the ends of its cinching rope in their teeth as Vest pushes it from behind. Daring plants herself in their path, bringing them up short.*)

**Daring:** Not so fast, Caballeron!

(*The three with the sack try to make a break for it, but find Pinkie and Rainbow in place to head them off. The rope comes undone, allowing the contents—glowpaz jewelry of all sizes and types—to spill across the ground. Incredulous gasps from the perpetrators; one loose stone bounces away and off a set of hooves, and the mare attached to them quickly puts two and two and two together.*)

**Mare 2:** *You* stole our glowpaz!

(*The suddenly riled-up crowd begins to close in on the thieves.*)

**Daring:** (*to Caballeron*) I should’ve known you were just trying to sully my name so that you’d be free to steal whatever you wanted.

**Caballeron:** Of course that was the plan, Daring Do! At first, I just wanted the glowpaz. But then I saw an opportunity to write you out of the story for good! (*Deranged laugh; gasps from the crowd; he gets in her face.*) And with the destruction you leave in your wake, it didn’t take too much to convince ponies *you* were a villain! (*He backs off.*)

**Daring:** You’re wrong, Caballeron! (*stomping*) And I won’t let you break my spirit again, because I’m never gonna give up hope that I can protect ponies and ancient treasures from miscreants like you!

(*One pony after another falls in behind her as she speaks, including the apple vendor and the desk clerk from the Get On Inn, and every eye trains itself on Caballeron with pure righteous fury. His own two, on the other hand, widen in fear as some most unfriendly shouts start coming his way.*)

**Caballeron:** (*stammering*) Remember! She ruined your statue! You’re fools to believe in her!

(*But they start to close in on the gang, ready to take a piece out of their hides. Before a hoof can land, Caballeron snarls through gritted teeth and leads his hench-ponies in a frenzied gallop to the open desert.*)

**Caballeron:** YOU’LL PAY FOR THIS, DARING DOOOO!!

(*With the threat gone, the locals cheer and gather around Daring, lifting her overhead in celebration for some seconds.*)

**Daring:** (*laughing*) Okay, okay, that’s enough. (*She is set down to face Pinkie and Rainbow.*) Thanks for helping me come to my senses. You two are true friends.

**Rainbow:** Are you kidding? (*doing aerial loop-the-loops*) That was *awesome!*

**Pinkie:** (*putting foreleg around Daring’s neck*) We’re just glad you’re back to your old self again.

**Daring:** (*laughing*) Me too. But I’m glad I realized that even if you’re fighting for something good, you’re still responsible for your actions.

**Rainbow:** And if something bad happens that you didn’t intend, you shouldn’t give up hope or lose faith in yourself.   
**Pinkie:** Yeah! All you gotta do is make it right. (*Wink; lean in close.*) Feel free to use that in your next book. (*Back off.*)

**Daring:** You know, I think I will.

(*Pinkie claps and hugs Rainbow as both let go with a gale of joyful squeals and laughter. Daring spares them a warm glance before turning her head to gaze skyward, much as Somnambula did after saving Hisan.*)

(*Clock wipe to a uniformed unicorn delivery stallion levitating a brand new cart into place for the apple vendor. The oldster gapes openmouthed at it—and the inventory of fresh, shiny apples it carries—as the stallion passes him a note. He smiles at the sight of Daring’s cutie mark at the bottom, seeing that she has made good for the damages she caused him.*)

(*Wipe to the desk bell in the lobby of the Get On Inn; a very full, very heavy sack is dropped into view to ring it. A picture of gold coins is attached to one side to indicate the contents, which jingle on impact, and a tag with Daring’s mark is tied on to indicate the source. Zoom out slightly to frame the desk clerk, who examines the tag confusedly at first and then smiles—the explorer has settled up her bill and paid for the trashed rooms. On the wall is a picture of a downcast Daring, marked with a red circle-and-slash to denote her as a banned customer. This is pulled down, and a similarly arranged picture of a fuming Caballeron is put up in its place.*)

(*Wipe to a close-up of the upper portion of a very large object, sitting outside, as the tarp covering it is pulled away. Revealed is a stone head in Somnambula’s likeness, eyes blindfolded and mouth smiling, and a zoom out shows it to be part of a new statue in her honor, replacing the one smashed by Daring in the village square. It is draped in red ribbons, and others have been strung around it as a perimeter. As the villagers cheer the unveiling, Yearling turns and leaves with a quiet smile, knowing that she has put everything right here at last. The view rolls up from right to left as if it were a scroll, leaving the screen black.*)