**A TRIVIAL PURSUIT**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to Spike pacing fretfully before a set of closed doors within the Castle of Friendship. He is clad in a nightshirt and nightcap.*)

**Spike:** Okay, Spike. You know you might get distracted by the stacks of books and copious charts, so remember what to say.

(*He hovers up to a wall mirror and addresses his reflection.*)

**Spike:** (*firmly*) Twilight, I know you’re in full prep mode for Trivia Trot tomorrow, but you need to get some sleep. (*relaxing, chuckling*) Huh. Nice work! You got this.

(*Dragon and image trade a fist bump. Cut to the other side of the doors as he pushes one open and enters, stopping short with a gasp after only a couple of steps. Zoom out to put him within the library, which is conspicuously devoid of all other life.*)

**Spike:** This is weird.

(*Close-up, ground level; he scratches his head and turns to leave, but runs flat into a fixedly grinning Twilight Sparkle. The Princess is wearing a grungy, oversized T-shirt decorated with the face of DJ P0N-3 and cut to accommodate her wings.*)

**Spike:** Uh, Twilight! What are you doing?

**Twilight:** Great question, Spike. (*She levitates a desk bell.*) And the answer is… (*Ring.*) …going to bed. Brains need eight hours of sleep to perform at optimum levels.

**Spike:** (*scratching head*) Oh. Uh, cool. I thought I’d have to force you to go to bed, since tomorrow is your chance to be the first pony to win Ponyville Trivia three times in a row. That *is* tomorrow, right?

**Twilight:** The answer is… (*Ring.*) …yes!

(*The little guy tries to sidestep, but she cuts him off.*)

**Twilight:** (*nudging him*) Ask me another one.

**Spike:** (*cautiously, backing off*) Another what?

**Twilight:** Another question! I want to stay in the zone. That way I can sleep in the zone, wake up in the zone— (*bucking at the air*) —and be totally in the zone tomorrow.

(*Spike thinks very, very hard as she leans expectantly toward him, that crazed grin now even wider and a hoof poised to hit the bell.*)

**Spike:** Uh…this is a whole new level of Twilighting, isn’t it? Heh.

**Twilight:** The answer is… (*Ring.*) …yes!

**Spike:** Are you okay?

**Twilight:** The answer is… (*Ring.*) …yes!

(*Cut to the corridor outside the library; he backs warily out through the still-open door to keep ahead of her, bell and all.*)

**Spike:** Well…good night, Twilight. Good luck with your brain sleep and getting that third win. Heh.

**Twilight:** The answer is… (*Ring; rise up to hind legs.*) …good night! And…yes!

(*She hops off in a giddy, half-whacked-out haze and takes the bell with her, leaving a thunderstruck Spike standing at the library doors.*)

**Spike:** That wasn’t a question.

(*He sets off in the opposite direction. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade into a stretch of a busy Ponyville thoroughfare during the day. Twilight and Spike emerge from a side street, both properly rested and no longer wearing their sleeping clothes; Twilight carries her saddlebags, but not the bell.*)

**Twilight:** I’m glad you decided to come watch your first Trivia Trot, Spike. I hope the rules aren’t too confusing.

**Spike:** Rules? Isn’t trivia just asking questions and answering them?

**Twilight:** (*giggling; close-up*) The Trot is a little more involved than that.

(*Her magic extracts a book from one bag, its cover presents a question mark fashioned from a horseshoe and overlaid on a circle divided into eight wedges, each a different color.*)

**Twilight:** Let’s start with the first category of rules. (*Open it and start reading.*) “Categories, Rule One. Each category must be categorically designated and thoroughly researched in all categorical…”

(*As she reels off the verbiage, the camera pans ahead of her to Spike and the enthusiasm that is slowly draining from his face. Her last words fade out in time with a dissolve that shows just how much of a slog this journey has become for him, and her next words fade up to take over.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) “…participating in Trivia Trot.” (*Pan back to her as she continues.*) And that wraps up Rule Forty-One-point-Six.

(*They are now traveling a path that runs through the grasslands outside the town proper.*)

**Twilight:** Of course, the exception to that, Forty-One-point-Six-A, is interesting itself because— (*Spike stops abruptly and jumps up to a hover.*)

**Spike:** Oh, uh, look, we’re here!

(*Zoom out. They have wound up at a building whose rooftop sign depicts the same graphic as on the rulebook cover, with a few extra question marks scattered around; a similarly decorated lectern stands by the doors. Spike lands, and Twilight returns the book to her saddlebags.*)

**Twilight:** (*trotting excitedly in place, jumping ahead*) Ooh, I can’t wait to see who my partner’s gonna be!

**Spike:** You don’t get to pick your own team?

**Twilight:** (*floating/opening book*) Rule Twenty-point-One-Six-B, Spike. To keep things fair, the teams are randomly selected. (*Close it.*)

**Spike:** (*dryly*) Twenty-point-One-Six-B. (*Put it away.*) How could I forget?

(*Now the egghead’s field extracts a scroll.*)

**Twilight:** And based on the regular attendees… (*Unroll; it is covered with sketches of ponies’ faces and accompanying bar graphs.*) …I’ve charted every potential teammate’s strengths and weaknesses, plus my percentage of winning with each one.

(*Top to bottom: Fluttershy, Applejack, Doctor Whooves, Rainbow Dash, Bulk Biceps, Cranky Doodle Donkey’s wife Matilda, and Pinkie Pie’s sister Maud. Spike flies up into her face.*)

**Spike:** Hah! I knew there’d be a chart! (*Touch down.*) Glad I’m just watching. I don’t think I could handle being your teammate. What if I let you down? (*Twilight rolls/stows the document.*)

**Twilight:** (*laughing*) You could never let me down, Spike. But I’m glad you’re watching too. I’m gonna need all the support I can get for win number three!

(*Hooves and webbed wings propel the pair toward the doors; cut to just inside as they enter and zoom out. The place is packed with ponies in the throes of lively conversation and strategy discussions, and Granny Smith sits at one table near the doors, a glass bowl filled with paper slips set before her. She has traded her apple-patterned shawl for an oversized bow tie cut from the same material. Starry curtains and hanging banners are present in abundance, as are a banner and lectern at the far wall that carry the rulebook’s logo.*)

**Applejack:** (*tauntingly, crossing to Twilight*) Well, well, well. If it ain’t our reignin’ champ. Think you can win again this week, Twilight?

**Twilight:** Everypony here has a different area of expertise. (*Her magic picks up a quill and blank slip from Granny’s table.*) So it really is anypony’s game. (*Draw her cutie mark; set the quill down.*) But, yes!

(*The paper is folded and dropped into the bowl as Rainbow flies over to the pair.*)

**Rainbow:** Then you better hope you get paired with me, because I’m gonna rule this game! (*Sound of the doors opening.*)

**Sunburst:** (*from o.s.*) We’ll just see about that.

(*Purple, green, and red-violet eyes turn confusedly toward that voice; cut to the bespectacled stallion walking in.*)

**Sunburst:** (*drawing/adding his mark to the bowl as Twilight did*) I didn’t come all the way from the Crystal Empire to lose. (*magically removing/cleaning glasses on his cloak*) I hope you realize I have the highest percentage of correct answers— (*They go back on.*) —and I aim to keep it that way.

(*Rainbow expresses her opinion of this boast with an impatient huff.*)

**Rainbow:** I hope *you* realize, not every category is gonna be “Spells So Old Not Even Starswirl the Bearded Remembers Them.”

(*On the next line, cut to Fluttershy entering the joint, cradling her rabbit Angel with a wing and using a foreleg to run a brush through his fur.*)

**Fluttershy:** *I* hope there’s one on fur maintenance for adorable creatures, because I’ve been *brushing up*.

(*She giggles at her own pun, but a close-up of the white face tells just how little he thinks of both is and the grooming.*)

**Mudbriar:** (*from o.s.*) Technically— (*Cut to him and Maud approaching and holding hooves.*) —that was a category last week.

**Maud:** It won’t be in the game tonight.

**Twilight:** Rule Thirty-Seven-point Two-C. No back-to-back categories. But I think Fluttershy was joking. (*Sound of the doors opening.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Sure sounded like a joke to me!

(*Every single one of Twilight’s mental processes screeches to a halt as she turns two constricted eyes toward the entrance and spots the pink goofball now inside the threshold. A couple of giggly hops bring Pinkie over to Granny’s table so she can draw out her own mark, using a pencil concealed in her mane and held by her forelock.*)

**Twilight:** Pinkie Pie?!?

**Pinkie:** Present!

(*The writing implement goes flying as she nips the paper in her teeth and blows it into the bowl, and Twilight can only stare in mingled shock and horror at it lying among the other entries. Once the brain starts working, she gallops frantically away from the crowd and fires up her horn to reel an insanely long scroll from her bags, mumbling her way through yard after yard as Spike flies over.*)

**Spike:** What’s wrong, Twilight?

**Twilight:** I hadn’t anticipated Pinkie Pie as a potential player! She’s never played before! My chart is completely off! (*dropping it, shaking him*) I have no way to predict what’ll happen, and “unpredictable “is not good for Trivia Trot three-peat! (*She brings up the scroll again.*)

**Spike:** Do I have to do that thing where I list all your successes as Princess of Friendship to put things into perspective and remind you this is just a game?

(*She drops the massive parchment and rounds on him, eyes popping and hooves getting caught in the folds.*)

**Twilight:** Spike, this has nothing to do with being the Princess of Friendship! (*stomping for emphasis*) And this is *not* just a game… (*Zoom in by steps to an extreme close-up.*) *…this…is…TRIVIA TROT!!*

(*These last two words are delivered with enough force to shake the entire trivia club. Cut to a longer shot; Granny has now shifted to the lectern at the back wall and is tapping a hoof on it for attention. She has brought the bowl of paper slips with her.*)

**Granny:** Okay, settle down, everypony! (*The crowd gravitates toward her.*) I’m fixin’ to pick these here teams! (*Cheers.*)

**Twilight:** (*gasping*) It’s starting! (*Her aura scoops up several folds of her scroll.*) I have to re-evaluate my chart! (*Shove it over to…*) Spike, I need you to find the part on matchups! Can you look outside?

(*A burst of energy teleports him and it out, dumping him gracelessly onto the road and the mass of documentation over his head. He is none too happy over the split-second scenery change, but starts to look through the first bit he can easily clap eyes on. Clock wipe to inside; he re-enters with it neatly rolled up, but finds his boss paralyzed with nerves.*)

**Spike:** What’d I miss? (*She floats it back to herself and reads.*)

**Twilight:** Granny’s about to call out the fifth team! Sunburst gave me the highest chance of winning, but he’s been paired with Cranky Doodle!

(*Cut to these two seated at one of several side tables near them, a desk bell placed at the ready. The old donkey mumbles a bit and falls asleep, drooling slightly with his head on the surface; Sunburst prods him awake, and he sits up with another burst of confused verbal hodgepodge.*)

**Twilight:** At least Rainbow Dash and Applejack aren’t together. (*Zoom in quickly on her and Spike.*) Team Apple-Dash is basically unstoppable!

(*Cut to another table—Applejack and Whooves, the latter dressed in a white shirt collar and green bow tie. The farmer aims a murderous, growling glare across the room; pan to Rainbow and Matilda seated here, the Wonderbolt responding in kind. Both tables are equipped with bells, and the camera zooms out to frame the face-off before cutting back to Twilight and Spike.*)

**Twilight:** (*giddily*) And apart, they’ll spend all their energy trying to one-up each other! (*showing him a chart*) So that only helps my chances.

**Bulk:** (*from o.s.*) LET’S DO THIS!!

(*He, Fluttershy, and Angel have taken a table on Rainbow/Matilda’s side, leaving one still empty. All three have bells and are now equipped two sets of placards that can be flipped to hang over the table edge as a score display. Each is currently showing a double blank.*)

**Bulk:** YEAH!! (*Back to Twilight/Spike.*)

**Twilight:** Eh, not every team is a threat. But there aren’t many ponies left.

(*On the start of the next line, cut to Granny and zoom in slowly; her bowl is nearly empty.*)

**Granny:** (*reaching in*) All righty, hold on to your horseshoes! (*pulling/checking two slips*) ’Cause the next pair of players is…Maud and Mudbriar!

(*There follows a cacophony of disgruntled mutterings, accompanied by Twilight clapping a hoof to her face.*)

**Spike:** What’s wrong?

**Twilight:** Maud and Mudbriar have been paired together every week! It’s a statistical improbability, which would be fine if they weren’t so good!

(*Horn-power brings out her trusty quill and sets it to scratching madly across the page, fast enough that smoke begins to rise. Spike tries desperately to fan it away with hands and wings until she stops writing and pulls in a long, shaky gasp.*)

**Twilight:** Oh, no! According to my calculations, the only pony who could really threaten my winning streak is—

(*Her brain locks up before she can finish the sentence. On the next line, cut to an extreme close-up of Granny’s wrinkled hoof pulling the last two slips from the bowl and zoom out to frame her holding them up.*)

**Granny:** And our final pair of contestants for this week’s Trivia Trot is…Twilight and Pinkie Pie!

(*The utterly dumbfounded Princess’s quill and scroll hit the ground.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Twilight! (*She trots over, grinning ear to ear.*) It’s you and me! (*gesticulating broadly, knocking a table over*) Isn’t that great?

**Twilight:** (*waving, forcing a huge grin*) Yeah! Great!

(*Spike eyes her almost-mechanical motions and twitching eye with no small degree of concern. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the trivia club and zoom in slowly. On the start of the next line, cut to Twilight and Spike inside.*)

**Spike:** So I’m guessing the one pony who could mess up your winning streak is Pinkie. (*Who pops up between them right about now.*)

**Pinkie:** (*pulling Twilight into a headlock*) Twilight! I can’t believe we’re partners for a game! (*Let go; hop around her.*) I love games! And I’m super-duper-excited for this game because it’ll be my first time ever playing— (*poking Twilight’s nose*) —and I get to play it with you, which makes it even funner!

(*In an instant, she has darted off and returned with balloon sculptures in their likenesses.*)

**Pinkie:** Twilight and Pinkie Pie forever!

(*One string is quickly tied around each violet foreleg; the buoyancy slowly lifting a very confused Twilight off the ground.*)

**Pinkie:** Ooh! We can be Team Twinkie! (*Twilight summons a pair of scissors and cuts herself loose.*) Or… (*Gasp.*) …Team Pink-Light! (*Again.*) Sparkle-Pie! (*Shake head.*) No, no, no, no! (*Deep breath.*) TWI-PIE!!

(*Capped off by a big squeaky grin.*)

**Twilight:** (*gently pushing her back, floating quill/scroll into bags*) Pinkie, I-I’m glad you’re excited. But tonight’s game is special. I could be the first pony ever to win three consecutive Trots in a row! And I’m *really* hoping I do.

**Pinkie:** You don’t have anything to worry about. I’ll do everything I can to be the bestest and most funnest teammate ever.

(*Tossing a pinch of sparkly glitter over the Princess’s head, she moves to the tables and occupies an empty one on the same side as Applejack/Whooves and Sunburst/Cranky. It has a bell, which she eagerly hammers, but none of these three positions has any scoring placards yet. Back to Twilight, who regards this display of enthusiasm with barely contained panic scribbled all over her face.*)

**Spike:** (*hovering toward her*) So, uh, still think you can win? (*She takes a breath and composes herself.*)

**Twilight:** I know I can. Pinkie might not be the partner I expected, but I can coach her along. And besides, I’m pretty good at this game. If she misses a few, I’m sure I can pick up the slack.

(*Her new confidence is shattered by a long, bellowing blast; cut to the tables, where Pinkie has just deployed an airhorn.*)

**Pinkie:** Let’s get this party started!

(*Twilight can only manage a strained chuckle before crossing the floor to take her own seat. Dissolve to a long shot of the competition area; Maud and Mudbriar are at the last table on the same side as Rainbow/Matilda and Fluttershy/Bulk. The score placards have been cleared away, as have Granny’s bowl and Pinkie’s airhorn, and Twilight has shed her saddlebags.*)

**Granny:** Now, the first order of business is… (*Pinkie taps at their bell.*) …we need somepony to keep score. (*Spike flies eagerly to her, the camera shifting to him.*)

**Spike:** I’ll do it!

(*Indulgent chuckle from Applejack’s direction; cut to frame her side.*)

**Applejack:** I’m not sure you want to take that job, Spike. The scorekeepin’ could get a mite intense.

**Sunburst:** Yeah. Starlight used to do it, but now… (*Shiver.*) …well, I can’t even say the word “trivia” around her.

**Granny:** (*shifting Spike to her other side*) Pffft! Apple mash! Don’t let them scare you. You’ll be fine!

(*The old green mare produces a half-dozen binders filled with placards and passes them over. Spike busies himself with issuing one to each table, flipping them open to show two blanks as seen in Act One.*)

**Granny:** Now let the games begin!

(*Cheers abound from all angles as two vertical panels slide in from opposite sides to fill the screen—Applejack on the left, Rainbow on the right.*)

**Applejack, Rainbow:** Get ready to get squashed/squished! (*Pause.*) Hey, don’t copy me!

(*Fullscreen; Spike has distributed the placards, and Granny has a box of question cards on her lectern. She draws one.*)

**Granny:** The first category is…Literary Figures. (*Groans from all teams except Twilight/Pinkie.*)

**Twilight:** (*clapping*) Ooh! A category about books! We’re off to a great start!

(*Pinkie raises a hoof for a high five, but finds herself left hanging after Twilight’s attention shifts toward the lectern—so she delivers one to herself with a giggle. Slow pan across the room.*)

**Granny:** (*clearing throat*) Who is the pony that despises the holiday season in the old classic *A Hearth’s Warmin’ Tail*?

(*Twilight gets ready to hit the bell but is interrupted by a pink hoof slamming onto the button. Pinkie vaults up onto the table to balance on her hind legs.*)

**Pinkie:** The answer is nopony! (*twirling*) Because everypony ends up loving the holiday with singing, festive cakes, and thoughtful presents!

(*Spectators and contenders alike stare at her, utterly dumbstruck.*)

**Granny:** Well, as much as that ain’t exactly wrong, it ain’t exactly right neither.

(*A solemn nod to Spike is his cue to fly over to the table, Pinkie sinking back to her seat with a chagrined giggle. He flips a placard on the right stack to show a 1 and pencils in a negative sign on the blank left one to put their score at -1, not dissuaded by a crushed little whimper from his boss.*)

**Spike:** Just doing my job, Twilight. (*He flaps away; she moans softly.*)

**Pinkie:** (*shrugging*) Sorry. I didn’t know we could have negative points.

**Twilight:** (*managing a smile*) It’s fine, Pinkie. (*patting her shoulder*) But maybe it’ll help our chances if I coach you as we go. (*Pinkie nods.*) Tip one—try sitting still.

**Pinkie:** (*saluting*) Can do, Coach Twi—

**Twilight:** *And* don’t get distracted, or be distracting. Oh, and remember to listen carefully. Also, it’s best to keep quiet between questions.

**Pinkie:** (*overwhelmed, moaning faintly*) Got it.

(*She slumps forward, chin on the table and spirits sinking fast, and the camera zooms in to a close-up of their scoreboard. A dissolve turns it into 2, Spike flipping a placard to take it up to 3; he flies off to the tune of a nervous, squeaky moan from the o.s. Pinkie. Zoom out to frame her sitting ramrod-straight and Twilight hunched intently over the bell.*)

**Pinkie:** (*softly*) Sitting still, sitting still, sitting still…

(*She repeats these words time after time under the next line, the camera cutting to Granny—reading a new question—at the start of it.*)

**Granny:** Which topographical locale used to be a cavern, but after thousands of years of erosion is now a gorge? (*Back to Twilight and Pinkie.*)

**Twilight:** (*sharply*) Pinkie!

**Pinkie:** *What?!?*

(*The ring of another team’s bell stops them both cold; pan quickly to Maud and Mudbriar, whose score stands at 6. The bluish-gray mare has signaled.*)

**Maud:** The answer is the Ghastly Gorge. (*Mudbriar nods.*)

**Granny:** That is one hundred percent correct!

(*Spike hustles in to put up the point; zoom in to a close-up of the display, then cut back to Twilight/Pinkie. Now it is Twilight’s turn to slam her chin onto the table in disbelief. Rainbow and Matilda exchange cocky grins over the 11 points they have racked up; Applejack munches into an apple, the tally for her and Whooves at 10; Bulk flexes and sweeps Fluttershy/Angel into a headlock, their score at 9. Back to Twilight/Pinkie, the former clutching at her own face in the throes of an incipient freak-out, then cut to Granny/Spike on the start of the next line.*)

**Granny:** Next category is…Apples! (*She throws a wink to her granddaughter; Rainbow hovers out of her seat.*)

**Rainbow:** Rigged!

**Applejack:** I didn’t hear you complain when the category was Wonderbolt History!

**Rainbow:** (*sputtering, sitting*) But…that’s—that’s totally different!

(*Matilda offers a soothing pat on the shoulder as if to say “shake it off.”*)

**Twilight:** Okay, Pinkie. Remember, the category is Apples. Keep your mind on apples.

**Pinkie:** (*massaging temples*) Apples, apples, apples… (*smiling*) …apples! Ooh, and oranges! And grapes! And strawberries! (*Gasp.*) Strawberry cupcakes! I’m hungry.

(*She falls to licking her chops as Twilight slaps an incredulous hoof to her own face.*)

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) Which variety of apple… (*Cut to her.*) …only blooms for five days?

(*She aims a knowing look toward Applejack, the camera panning to frame the blonde returning it and getting ready to ring in.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., under a cough*) Don’t choke!

(*Applejack fires a vicious glare across the room and leaves her seat to approach the blue pegasus, who has turned in her seat and is whistling innocently. The effect is far from convincing.*)

**Applejack:** Now why would I choke on a question about apples? (*A moment’s shock; she backs off and addresses Granny.*) Uh…w-what was the question again?

**Granny:** (*irritated*) You kiddin ‘me?

(*Whooves begins to think very hard, the camera panning from him and past Sunburst/Cranky doing likewise over their score of 3. Stop on a nervous Twilight and a grinning Pinkie.*)

**Twilight:** Come on, Pinkie, you know this one! (*Pinkie puts her mind to it, hooves to temples and tongue out the corner of her mouth.*) Mysterious apples? Only around for five days?

(*The pink party pony gasps as a brainstorm strikes—but a loud, prolonged rumble from her gut sounds off to stop her from going for the bell.*)

**Pinkie:** (*poking it*) Quiet down there! Pretty sure there’s a rule against tummies ringing in.

(*Ring; cut to Fluttershy/Bulk/Angel. The animal expert has signaled.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, I’m just guessing, but…is it Zap Apples?

**Granny:** Finally! (*smiling; Spike flies off that way*) Yes, Fluttershy, it is. (*to Applejack, under her breath*) At least somepony here knows her apples!

(*The orange-tan mare is so ashamed by this upbraiding that she pulls her hat down to cover her face, and the respondents’ score is flipped from 9 to 10.*)

**Bulk:** YEAH!!

(*He and Fluttershy trade a high five that knocks her out of her seat and to the floor behind Rainbow/Matilda’s table. She offers a woozy little giggle as these two help her up. Cut to Twilight/Pinkie, the winged unicorn’s mane now in severe disarray and her lower lip clamped in her teeth over this calamitous turn of events. She slams her face onto the table and gets a consoling pat from her teammate, whose empty stomach asserts its presence again.*)

(*Dissolve to an overhead shot of the room. All involved have left their posts and congregated around a pair of snack tables set up near the entrance to strap on the metaphorical feedbag. The only one not present is Twilight.*)

**Spike:** (*voice raised*) One minute left in the refreshment-slash-bathroom-break!

(*He trails off into a yell as the violet mage’s telekinesis yanks him off his feet; cut to her in a corner as he is plunked down. Her tail is as badly scrambled as her mane.*)

**Twilight:** (*setting him upright*) Spike! I don’t think I can coach Pinkie well enough for us to get my three-peat! I don’t want her to feel bad, she’s trying so hard, but I might have to start answering everything myself!

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Look, Twilight! (*Cut to her, a piled-high plate of snacks balanced on one hoof.*) No more belly-growl interruptions for Team Twi-Pie!

(*She plops her haunches onto the planks as she finishes, then opens wide and dumps all the food—and the plate—down her throat in one swift move. On monster swallow later, she throws Twilight a toothy grin; pan quickly to Princess and dragon, the former doing her best to copy the mood but not even remotely succeeding.*)

**Spike:** Maybe instead of focusing on Pinkie, you should just focus on how you’re playing.

**Twilight:** (*calculatingly*) Or…I should look at how everypony else is playing!

(*She flies back toward the tables, the dragon plodding sullenly after her, and finds the others and Granny back at their spots as she resumes hers.*)

**Granny:** Hope you’re all in your seats, ’cause the break is over— (*dramatically*) —and it is time for more questions!

(*She mumbles and flips her way through the box of question cards, a sotto-voce “let me see” working its way to the surface, before finding a good one.*)

**Granny:** How do you say “reward” in Old Ponish?

(*Twelve minds strain themselves over this tough nut; Pinkie utters an inspired gasp in close-up, but Twilight slaps her hoof back before she can touch the bell. Another team’s signal breaks the quiet; pan to follow the scared purple eyes to Sunburst/Cranky, the donkey having nodded off to mark the unicorn as the answering player.*)

**Sunburst:** “Reward” in Old Ponish is “*hliet.*” (*He adjusts his glasses.*)

**Granny:** Correct!

[*Note: I have chosen to transliterate his answer as an approximation of spoken German, in which “ie” is pronounced as a long E. This pronunciation differs slightly from that offered by Twilight in “Uncommon Bond.”*]

(*As Spike flaps in to change the team’s score, Twilight stands up and points accusingly their way.*)

**Twilight:** SLEEPING!!

(*Cranky opens his eyes drowsily and is met by a round of confused murmurs; catching herself, Twilight clears her throat and sits down.*)

**Twilight:** Sunburst’s partner is sleeping— (*levitating/opening rulebook*) —and according to Rule Fifty-Seven-point-Six, sleeping at the table is subject to… (*over-enunciating*) …disqualification!

(*Granny fishes up her own copy, consults it, and lets her eyes widen at what she finds.*)

**Granny:** Well, looky here. That’s an actual rule. Cranky is disqualified! I’m sorry, Sunburst. Without your teammate, you can’t play neither.

**Sunburst:** (*groaning*) Fine! But I’m counting that as a correct answer!

(*He strides away from the table, enveloping the old jack in his magic and towing him along.*)

**Sunburst:** (*grumbling, under his breath*) Can’t even stay awake for five minutes…

(*Twilight has now put her book away.*)

**Twilight:** (*pulling Pinkie close*) Don’t worry, Pinkie. We’re not out of this game yet.

(*The peppy mare grins just a bit shakily before several interlocked rows of question cards slide past the camera. Behind them, wipe to a close-up of an extremely apprehensive Fluttershy getting a little whispered advice from Angel; what she hears causes her to gasp, grin and ring the bell.*)

**Fluttershy:** Is the answer…carrots?

**Twilight:** (*from o.s., jabbing a hoof toward her*) Ah! Rule Thirteen-point-Two! (*Cut to her, opening/leafing through the book with her field.*) No help from pets!

(*Spike reluctantly docks the team a point, dropping them from 14 to 13, and Twilight smiles smugly while snapping the covers shut. More cards tumble past the lens, wiping the view to a close-up of Applejack and Rainbow sticking their tongues out at each other. Zoom out slightly to frame Twilight leaning over her table toward them.*)

**Twilight:** Rule Seventy-Two-point-Eight! (*She shows off a book page.*) No sticking tongues out at opponents!

(*Two vertical panels slide together to fill the screen, each showing a close-up of one team’s score being rolled back by Spike. Applejack/Whooves end up at 15, Rainbow/Matilda at 14. More cards fly past, the view wiping to a close-up of Twilight with book put away and hoof poised over the bell. Pan quickly to Maud/Mudbriar with 18, the impassive stallion ready to ring. After his incredibly slow blink, the camera whips to a sweaty-faced Twilight and back to the couple’s utterly inscrutable expressions. Both of them blink this time, prompting the trivia fanatic to lean toward them. Pinkie just sits there, bored out of her gourd.*)

**Twilight:** Motion to establish new rule—no expressionless contestants!

**Granny:** (*sardonically, drawing a card from her box*) Nice try.

**Twilight:** (*petulantly, sitting down*) Fine.

**Granny:** The next category is…Cupcakes!

(*Pinkie’s apathy gives way to a starry-eyed gasp of delight in perhaps ten microseconds flat.*)

**Pinkie:** (*grabbing/shaking Twilight*) Twilight! I know all about those! You have to let me help!

**Twilight:** (*completely unhinged, laughing*) Suuuure! (*caressing scoreboard*) Just when we’re finally back in the game! Why, that sounds perfect, Pinkie, but— (*calmer, pointing past Pinkie toward front of club*) —ooh! Isn’t that a confetti appreciation parade I see?

**Pinkie:** Where?!? (*She is gone in a blink; Granny consults her card.*)

**Granny:** What flavor cupcakes did Princess Celestia order for Princess Luna’s surprise birthday party last year?

(*Cut to just outside one front window; Pinkie is here, face mashed to the glass so she can peer out.*)

**Pinkie:** (*slightly muffled*) Wait. What? (*Twilight rings in.*)

**Twilight:** (*crazed*) Double midnight chocolate fudge with chili pepper frosting!

**Granny:** Correct!

(*Twilight pumps a hoof in savage triumph as Spike augments the team’s score from 10 to 11.*)

**Pinkie:** (*returning, scoffing*) Hey! I knew that! I made those cupcakes! (*She slumps over the table.*)

**Twilight:** Sorry, Pinkie, but you were looking at the parade and I didn’t want our team to miss out on the point.

**Pinkie:** (*propping head on front hooves*) Guess that makes sense, but…

(*Just outside the window again; she hustles over and puts her face to it.*)

**Pinkie:** (*slightly muffled*) …which way did that confetti parade go, anyway?

(*She pouts as cards rain past the camera, wiping the view to a close-up of Granny picking one from the box with her teeth. Pinkie, back at the table, perks up and gets ready to hit the bell, but Twilight’s magic yanks it out of reach so she can ring it herself; Pinkie is surprised to strike only the tabletop.*)

**Twilight:** Fifteen-forty-seven, Pony B-E!

(*A rapidly flipping scoreboard drifts by the camera; behind it, wipe to Pinkie’s hoof being slapped away so Twilight can reach the bell.*)

**Twilight:** Vanhoover!

(*Another such transition yields a close-up of Pinkie, who lifts a foreleg with gusto and brings it down, only to get a splat of some semi-liquid stuff instead of a bell ring. She raises the limb, finding a cupcake now stuck on it, and glowers as Twilight magically shifts the bell to herself and sounds it.*)

**Twilight:** Cutie pox!

(*A third flip, and she is ringing the bell with one foreleg and holding back a flailing Pinkie with the other.*)

**Twilight:** Bananaaaas!

(*A fourth, and her gung-ho attitude has progressed to the point that she is holding the bell and grinning dementedly, while a surly Pinkie lounges against the wall.*)

**Granny:** The category is…Sticks and Stones.

(*Vertical panels of Twilight and Maud/Mudbriar slide in from opposite sides to fill the screen. Her score is 15, theirs 13. The Princess’s jaw drops almost all the way to the table, a donkey’s bray escaping her lips, while Pinkie leans in beaming fit to burst. From here, cut to a fullscreen close-up of Twilight flopping onto the table and letting her bell roll away.*)

**Twilight:** I don’t know anything about those! That’s not any kind of category!

**Mudbriar:** Mmm—technically, it’s a kind of category where we know the answers and you don’t.

(*Her nerves even more frazzled, Twilight summons a paper bag to herself and begins hyperventilating into it. Zoom out to frame Pinkie, fully at ease; the bell is standing upright between them.*)

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry, fellow Twi-Pie. I grew up on a rock farm. I’m sure I know some of these.

(*Instead of settling Twilight down, this bit of reassurance rattles her even more and causes her to speed up her cycling lungs.*)

**Granny:** What kind of stone can be used to start a fire?

(*Vertical panels framing close-ups of two bells slide in to fill the screen. Pinkie and Maud ring them very nearly simultaneously; fullscreen shot of the face-off.*)

**Pinkie:** (*leaning over table*) The black one! (*Twilight, now without her bag, covers her face in shame.*)

**Maud:** The answer is flint.

**Pinkie:** Yeah, that one! (*Sit.*) We both get points, right?

**Sunburst:** (*from o.s.*) Sorry, Pinkie.

(*Cut to him standing among the audience and holding an open rulebook in his power.*)

**Sunburst:** Rule Four. Answers must be specific and exact. I’d help you if I could. (*Close it; send it away and adjust glasses.*) I know this category pretty well.

**Twilight:** (*coaxingly*) Gee, Pinkie, I forgot the name of that famous rock in Griffonstone. Could you ask Maud?

**Pinkie:** You got it! HEY, MAUD! WHAT’S THE NAME OF THE FAMOUS ROCK IN GRIFFONSTONE?

**Maud:** Pinkie, you can’t ask me that.

**Pinkie:** Sure I can. I just did.

(*Disapproving mumbles and stares from the other teams and the onlookers throw her for a loop.*)

**Pinkie:** What?  
**Granny:** You can’t go and ask another player about rocks when that’s the category! (*brandishing rulebook*) It’s in the rulebook! (*flipping through*) …somewheres… (*Set it aside.*) Um, uh, sorry, Pinkie, but you’re disqualified.

(*Cut to the gobsmacked pink pony and zoom in quickly to a close-up.*)

**Pinkie:** *What?!?*

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to an overhead shot of the club interior, zooming in slowly on Twilight and Pinkie, and cut to them.*)

**Pinkie:** I-I-I can’t believe I’m disqualified! (*Shiny-eyed frown and whimper.*)

**Twilight:** (*giggling shakily, patting Pinkie’s shoulder*) I’m sorry, Pinkie. (*pushing her away*) Guess I forgot about that rule.

**Pinkie:** Oh, no! If I’m out, you don’t have a partner! You won’t be able to get your third win!

**Twilight:** Actually, since there’s another player who has also had his teammate disqualified…

(*Here comes Sunburst in a blur of starry cloak and unkempt mane, rulebook hovering overhead.*)

**Sunburst:** Rule Nineteen-point-Seven-B. (*Open it to show Pinkie a passage.*) Whereby players whose teammates were disqualified may form a new team.

(*He shuts it and drapes a chummy foreleg over Twilight’s shoulders as he finishes, and the new partners grin widely to punctuate the thought.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh! Okay. Um…I’ll just cheer you on from… (*eyes tearing up, pointing across room*) …over there.

(*She clumps away with another piteous little whimper and sits at a table by the front windows. The balloon sculptures of herself and Twilight that she procured in Act Two are still floating here, but a knot on the Twilight one comes loose and the outrush of air propels the rubber effigy away. Pinkie gasps softly, an instant before hers springs a leak and crumples to the floor, and her chin lowers to the table in time with her mood.*)

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) The next category is…

(*Cut to her and the tables on the end of this, Sunburst taking Pinkie’s vacated spot next to Twilight.*)

**Granny:** …Ancient Legends. (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*laughing*) Oh, we’re gonna crush this round! (*Zoom out to frame a less sure Sunburst.*)

**Sunburst:** I don’t know, Twilight. You seem out of the zone today. (*patting her head*) But don’t worry. I can pick up the slack.

**Twilight:** *What?!?* I am the reigning Trot champ. If there’s any slack that needs picking, I’ll be the “up”!

(*Her eyes pop as she realizes how badly she has mishandled that expression.*)

**Twilight:** I mean…wait.

**Sunburst:** (*adjusting glasses*) I’m just saying, you seem a little frazzled and I do have a correct-answer percentage to maintain. (*Twilight deflates a bit at his smug chuckle; cut to Granny.*)

**Granny:** Who traveled to Equestria from a distant land, seeking to steal the magic from its pony inhabitants? (*Bell; back to Twilight and Sunburst. She has rung, ignoring his grimace.*)

**Twilight:** That would be Lord Tirek.

(*The sound of a second bell catches her like a two-by-four to the head, and Granny looks across the room to Mudbriar, who removes his hoof from it.*)

**Mudbriar:** Technically, that answer is incomplete. The answer is Lord Tirek *and* Scorpan.

(*Recall that the two are brothers, as explained in “Twilight’s Kingdom.”*)

**Twilight:** (*rapid fire*) But Scorpan tried to convince Tirek not to do it, so technically he wasn’t part of it, even if he started out… (*Relent, sighing.*) …never mind.

(*Sunburst’s field shifts the bell to his side of the table, and Spike scores a point for Maud/Mudbriar to bring them up to 14 and put the slightest hint of a smile on the geologist’s face. Question cards surge past the camera, shifting the view to a close-up of Granny picking one from the box with her teeth and reading. Twilight gets ready to sound the bell, but Sunburst throws up a force field to stop her and does it himself.*)

(*More cards rain past the camera, moving the action back to Granny as she reads a new question. This time, the overeager Princess stands up on the table but again gets no joy, thanks to Sunburst levitating the bell out of reach. The passage of another wave of cards brings yet another question from Granny, her eyes flicking from one side to the other. As Twilight hesitantly positions a hoof over the signal, Sunburst uses his field to distract her with a copy of the rulebook and slide the bell closer so he can tap it. The discovery that she has been faked out stuns her greatly.*)

(*Cards surge by, wiping the view to Rainbow/Matilda’s table and their score of 50. Pan to Fluttershy/Bulk/Angel with 48, then Maud/Mudbriar with 59. Twilight turns frustrated eyes from these teams to the 46 showing on her table’s placards.*)

**Twilight:** Uh, look, Sunburst. I realize I may have been a little off earlier, but I’m *really* good at this game. (*Back to Granny on the start of the following.*)

**Granny:** How many holes are there in Daring Do’s hat?

(*Back to the pair, the Crystaller sternly pulling the bell toward himself with his aura. The winged mare, deciding that she has had quite enough of this high-handedness, yanks it back in like manner. However, the sound of another team ringing in stops her short; cut to Rainbow lifting her hoof from the button.*)

[*Error: Twilight/Sunburst’s score appears as 48 in this shot, then switches back to 46 later.*]

**Rainbow:** Twenty! (*She cups a hoof to one ear.*)

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) Correct!

**Rainbow:** (*pointing across room*) Hah!

(*Applejack rolls her eyes disgustedly at this jibe, her and Whooves’ score now up to 49.*)

**Sunburst:** (*irked*) Twilight, I knew that one! (*adjusting glasses*) You just cost us a point *and* the correct answer I needed to boost my percentage! (*He turns away with a crossed-foreleg pout; she sets the bell on the table.*)

**Twilight:** Well, I knew it too! You’re not the only pony to ever read a book, you know! (*Sunburst relents.*)

**Sunburst:** You’re right, Twilight. I’m sorry. Uh, but now that I think about it, I’m not so sure about Dash’s answer. Could you do a quick fact check?

**Twilight:** Oh, I know it’s twenty. But if you want proof…

(*She conjures up a book and lets her magic do the walking through several dozen pages before stopping short.*)

**Twilight:** Wait. (*closing it—a Daring Do novel*) According to Rule Eighteen-point-Three, I can’t check outside reference materials. (*Vanish it with a stunned gasp, then round on him suspiciously.*) Are you trying to get me disqualified? What kind of pony would do that to their own teammate?

(*By the time she finishes, she has left her seat and is leaning over him with such rancor that he is hunching down and shivering in abject fear. He slides to one side, giving her an exceptionally clear line of sight to one very unhappy pink pony, and her fury melts with remarkable speed.*)

**Sunburst:** You’re right, Twilight. I don’t know what got into me. I was so focused on my correct answers, I-I wasn’t thinking straight. (*touching her shoulder*) Can you forgive me?

**Twilight:** It’s okay, Sunburst. I understand. And I have a teammate of my own to apologize to. (*smiling*) Lucky for you, Cranky’s awake. And according to Rule Fifty-Seven-point-Six-B— (*Sunburst looks across the room and grins.*)

**Sunburst:** —players previously disqualified for sleeping may rejoin the game, provided they’re well-rested.

(*Cranky, sitting at a table in the audience, shakes himself out of his nap and mumbles his way up to full consciousness.*)

**Cranky:** Where am I? What time is it? (*angrily*) Where are my morning hay cakes?

(*Twilight cautiously approaches the teammate she ditched, her mane/tail now back in order except for a couple of stray hairs.*)

**Twilight:** (*touching Pinkie’s shoulder*) Pinkie, you were the best teammate I could ask for. But I let wanting to win keep me from seeing that.

**Pinkie:** Pffft! I knew you wanted to win, but I probably could’ve helped a little. (*propping head on hooves*) And even if I couldn’t…

**Twilight:** …we still could’ve had fun. I’m so sorry for not realizing it. I got so obsessed with one thing, I forgot what really mattered.

**Pinkie:** (*very snarky*) No! That doesn’t sound like you at all.

**Twilight:** (*smiling sheepishly*) Well, win or lose, nothing is more important than my friend—or my team. (*extending a hoof*) Twi-Pie forever?

**Pinkie:** (*hesitantly*) Uh, I don’t know.

**Twilight:** (*sadly, turning away*) I understand. I guess even the Princess of Friendship can mess things up with her friends. (*Pinkie stands up.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, it’s not that.

(*Smiling, she brings up a sheet cake decorated with the faces of Twilight and Sunburst from somewhere beneath the table. The former image is fully colored, but the latter is little more than an outline over smudges of pink icing.*)

**Pinkie:** It’s just that I already changed it to Team Twi-Burst and…now I guess I should change it to Sun-Doodle?

(*She swipes a hoof through the sugary violet face, reducing to a smear and taking out some of the edging in the process, and proceeds to lick the residue away.*)

**Twilight:** (*smiling*) Actually, I have a better idea.

(*A copy of the rulebook floats past the camera, held by her telekinesis; behind it, wipe to the team’s table. She flies to a seat, reading from another copy that rides at eye level, and Pinkie is not far behind and no longer carrying the cake.*)

**Twilight:** According to Rule Thirteen-point-Two, players can join the game at any time— (*Put the book down; flip the score placards back to double blank.*) —provided they start from zero.

**Pinkie:** (*hefting book*) Wow. These rules are *really* convoluted. (*Toss it aside.*) But doesn’t starting from zero mean we’ll lose?

**Twilight:** Well, our chances aren’t good, but the odds of having fun on Team Twi-Pie are one hundred percent.

(*An enthusiastic, forgiving hug is all the confirmation she needs that the matter is closed and in the past, and Twilight fires up her horn to shift the bell so that either of them can reach it. Cut to Granny, reading a question.*)

**Granny:** What is the name of the Ponyville Day Spa’s most popular candle?

(*Bell; cut to the reconciled pair. Both have gone for it, but Pinkie has gotten in just barely ahead of Twilight. The next two lines overlap.*)

**Twilight:** Competitive Library Musk!

**Pinkie:** (*standing up*) Candle-licious Wax!

**Granny:** Uhhh…no.

(*Even though the ruling has gone against them, they share a good laugh as the camera zooms out slowly. Cut to the exterior of the trivia club, Derpy Hooves pulling at the doors in a fruitless attempt to gain entry. The zoom out continues as the view faces to black.*)