**THE CUTIE POX**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Apple Bloom’s determined face during the day.*)

**Bloom:** Today’s the day, Cutie Mark Crusaders! I can just feel it!

(*Cut to frame all of her, standing by the front steps of a building and with a red-streaked bowling ball resting nearby. Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle walk up, each carrying a bowling bag on back and in teeth, respectively.*)

**Bloom:** Today’s the day we are all gonna get our cutie marks in…bowlin’!

(*Zoom out on this last word to frame the structure: sod roof; wood frame; stars, balls, and bowling pins above the door; a large ball at each corner; pin/ball doorposts.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*jumping in place*) Woo-hoo!

**Sweetie:** Woooo! (*She spits out her bag.*) I mean, yaaaay!

**Bloom:** Why, after today, we won’t even be the Cutie Mark Crusaders anymore! We’ll be the…

(*A mental picture of three bowling balls appears above her head.*)

**Bloom:** …the Three Strikes!

**Scootaloo:** (*walking to her*) That makes us sound like we’ve struck out. (*The balls fade away.*)

**Bloom:** Mmmm…how about…

(*Now two pins appear amid a string of pink hearts as Sweetie joins the pair.*)

**Bloom:** …the Pin Twins!

**Sweetie:** But there are three of us. (*The picture fades away.*)

**Bloom:** Okay, then…um… (*Big smile.*) …the Bowling Dolls!

(*Three segments of a new picture slide vertically into view, filling the screen: silhouettes of the fillies tossing balls upward against a backdrop of pink hearts. When the view cuts back to them, the other two smile their approval.*)

**Sweetie:** The Bowling Dolls! That’s it!

**Scootaloo:** (*jumping in place*) Perfect!

**Bloom:** All righty, then! Let’s bowl ’em over!

(*Dissolve to the interior of the alley and pan to frame the Crusaders at the lanes near one end, Scootaloo and Sweetie having disposed of their bowling bags. Quite a few ponies have turned out to get in a few frames; all of them wear bowling shirts. Sweetie is first up, carefully positioning her blue-streaked ball behind the foul line and then giving it a shove with her nose. It rolls toward the pins, but veers sharply right and drops into the gutter. She walks back with a smile as Bloom grimaces and Scootaloo forces a pained smile onto her face.*)

(*Up next is Scootaloo, who places her purple-streaked ball at the line, turns her back to it, and bends down to stare at it through her legs. One hard buck sends it airborne; it ricochets off the ceiling, crashes into a ball rack, almost decapitates three bowlers, and bounces most of the way to the other end of the alley. After all this idiocy, though, it too winds up in the gutter to score no points for the overzealous young pegasus. The entire crowd stares incredulously, and she gives them a huge grin and embarrassed little laugh before zipping away.*)

(*This leaves Bloom, who eyes her ball suspiciously for a moment and then stretches her mouth wide open, making as if to take a chomp out of it. After reconsidering this idea, she gets her lips clamped around the sphere and totters forward with it as Scootaloo and Sweetie gape openmouthed. Finally losing her balance well short of the foul line, she spits it ahead o.s. and pitches to the floor. The camera immediately cuts to a close-up of a set of pins as a red-streaked ball crashes into them, knocking them all down for a strike and leaving one spinning on its side. Cheers from the o.s. crowd; cut to some of them.*)

**Mare:** Cool! A bowling cutie mark! (*Close-up of Bloom, from shoulders up.*)

**Bloom:** I did it! (*lifting her haunch*) I did it!

(*A zoom in on the still-unmarked yellow hide reveals that has spoken too soon.*)

**Bloom:** (*crushed*) Blank?

(*Zoom out. The cheers are directed at a colt who excitedly points out the mark he has just earned: a bowling ball striking a pin. He walks off, the camera panning to follow.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) But… (*Back to her; zoom out to frame the other two.*) …but…but what about my ball?

(*Cut to the still-spinning pin and pan to the adjacent lane. A second, identical ball is slowly rolling up to the pins and barely makes contact with the one in the “head” position—that is, the front-most pin in the triangle of ten. The touch is not even enough to wobble it in place. Bloom has confused her ball with the one rolled by the newly minted bowling alley king. Her spirits sink into her hooves and her bow droops as her friends wince at the dismal performance. Snap to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Bloom trudging sourly down the street, with Scootaloo and Sweetie visible to either side. The former is on her scooter and wearing her helmet and none have their bowling balls, as seen when the camera zooms out to frame all three. Bloom’s bow is upright again.*)

**Sweetie:** That bowling sure was fun, even if all I got was gutter balls.

**Scootaloo:** Yeah. At least you were able to keep your ball in your lane. (*zooming ahead; Sweetie follows*) I don’t think Mr. Kingpin is ever gonna let me play again!

(*A quick jump carries her over a rock, after which she skids to a stop and Sweetie catches up.*)

**Scootaloo:** Hey! Maybe I could get my cutie mark in demolition!

(*Their devious laugh turns to a double look of concern as their partner in mayhem plods by.*)

**Scootaloo:** Aw, come on, Apple Bloom.

**Sweetie:** I know just what you need to put the bloom back on your apple.

(*Cut to the discomfited yellow filly, sitting on her haunches in the street and with her bow drooping once more. Around her, the view dissolves to the counter on the Sugarcube Counter shop floor; Sweetie’s hoof slides a cupcake over, and she and Scootaloo pop up on either side. Scootaloo’s helmet is gone.*)

**Sweetie:** A treat from Sugarcube Corner will cheer you up! (*Bloom pushes it away, surprising them.*)

**Bloom:** No, it won’t.

(*They drop out of sight. Now the backdrop dissolves to put her at a table in one of the building’s upper-story rooms, fully decorated for a shindig. A party hat has been put on her head, and streamers and confetti pour down from above.*)

**Pinkie Pie:** (*jumping behind her*) A party will cheer you up!

(*Scootaloo and Sweetie come up on either side, blowing noisemakers, and Pinkie comes to rest by the trio.*)

**Bloom:** (*a bit louder than before*) No, it won’t.

(*She punctuates these words with a flick of her rump that sends the suddenly dumbfounded pink pony thudding to the floor, as the party favors drop out of the other two fillies’ mouths. Around Bloom, the scene now dissolves to the three-mirror platform in the Carousel Boutique’s ground-floor showroom. One unhappy yellow pony sits here on her haunches as Rarity plops a broad-brimmed purple hat on her head. It is trimmed with a white rose and peacock feathers in purple, blue, green, and orange, with a green ribbon.*)

**Rarity:** A lovely new *chapeau* will cheer you up!

(*Scootaloo and Sweetie jump in to check the effect, the former beating her small wings to keep herself aloft at the top of her leap, but Bloom’s mood does not lift even a whit. In fact, they both drop to the floor in time with the suddenly drooping feathers. Close-up of Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** (*louder again, walking away*) No, it won’t!

(*Around her, the hat disappears and the scenery dissolves to a stretch of Ponyville park land.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Come on, Apple Bloom!

(*Cut to frame all three; she is helmeted again and on her scooter alongside Sweetie, both keeping their distance.*)

**Scootaloo:** It’s just a cutie mark!

**Sweetie:** Or lack of a cutie mark!

**Scootaloo:** Shhh! That’s not helping!

(*Long shot of the three. These two have stopped at a turn in the foot path, but Bloom has continued on through the grass and is on her way into the Everfree Forest. The pink bow has perked up again for the first time since the beginning of the other ponies’ attempts to mollify her.*)

**Scootaloo:** Apple Bloom! Where are you going? (*Cut to Bloom, now entering; she continues o.s.*) Apple Bloom, come back!

(*No dice; the filly’s downcast face hardens as she advances in, and Scootaloo and Sweetie trade a worried look before heading for home. Dissolve back to Bloom, whose sullen self-absorption keeps her from noticing a protruding root in her way. She snags a hoof on this and tumbles forward over a ridge just beyond it.*)

**Bloom:** Whooaa!

(*A series of o.s. grunts and thumps marks her progress toward the bottom, ending with a belly-flop onto the grass down here. She rubs her cheeks with a pained groan as a black-and-white striped chest and pair of forelegs—one encircled by several gold hoops—advance into view.*)

**Zecora:** Well, who is it that we have here?

(*Head-on view.*) Why, it’s Apple Bloom, my dear.

(*Bloom gets partway up and groans again.*)

**Zecora:** What has happened to you, youth?

(*The filly opens her mouth, exposing a front tooth that has been badly chipped in the fall. Zoom in to a close-up of this; she runs her tongue over it during the next line.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) Ah! You’ve gone and chipped your tooth!

(*Cut to frame both; she starts away.*)

Come with me. I have just the trick

(*now o.s.; Bloom follows*) That will fix you up quite quick.

(*Dissolve to the exterior of Zecora’s hut and zoom in slowly. Bloom’s next two lines are delivered with a pronounced lisp.*)

**Bloom:** (*from inside*) I’ve tried everything, Zecora, and still no cutie mark! (*Cut to her, just inside the door.*) Why, I’m gonna be as old as Granny Smith and still have a blank flank!

(*Elsewhere, the zebra herbalist is looking over her shelves of potions.*)

**Zecora:** Your frustration is well understood,

But one must be patient for all things good.

**Bloom:** (*groaning*) I’ve heard that from everypony I know, and now from every *zebra* I know. I’m just too impatient to be patient. (*Cut to Zecora, adding an ingredient to the caldron; she continues o.s.*) I just want my cutie mark and I want it now!

(*On the end of this, she pops up across from Zecora, startling her so that she drops the entire bottle into the mix. The mistake triggers a small explosion and burst of smoke, followed by a slightly hairy eyeball from Zecora. Bloom gives her a big silly grin and zips away; now the zebra turns to some bottles hanging from the ceiling.*)

**Zecora:** For your cutie mark, you will have to wait.

(*She gets a long-handled spoon in her teeth; close-up of the caldron as this is used to scoop out some of the brew.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) We must fix that tooth before it’s too late.

(*A bowl set before Bloom receives the potion. It is a toss-up as to whether her skeptical look is due to Zecora’s opinion on cutie marks or her doubt about this mixture being able to fix her tooth.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) Now drink down every little drop

(*Bloom does so.*) And this mixture will mend that chip on top.

(*Once it is all gone, the filly surveys her reflection in a metal urn and opens her mouth wide. The chipped portions of her tooth flex a bit and instantly knit back together, stretching out for a moment as if made of rubber. Bloom is left with her dental work and voice perfectly intact, confirming the first with her tongue and an ear-to-ear grin, and the second with her next words.*)

**Bloom:** Oh, my star apples! You did it, Zecora! (*She looks over the arrayed bottles.*) Golly! You have tonics that heal all sorts of ailments! Bad bones…bad back…bad breath…

**Zecora:** Yes, little one, it is true.

I have many a healing brew.

**Bloom:** And not only stuff that fixes the bad, but stuff that brings the good! Good health…good hair… (*Soft gasp.*) …good heavens!

(*A shrewd little smile steals over her face.*)

**Bloom:** Hmmm… (*She crosses to Zecora, all innocence.*) I’ll bet you can mix up a brew to fix… (*leaning very close*) …anything.

(*The “anything” she has in mind is emphasized by a twitch of her rump, but Zecora does not think much of the idea and backs her off.*)

**Zecora:** There are many mixtures in this room,

But none for what you want, dear Apple Bloom.

(*crossing room*) A magic potion does not hold the key.

(*now o.s.*) For a cutie mark, time is the only remedy.

**Bloom:** (*sullenly*) Fine.

(*Zecora, meanwhile, retrieves a bottle from a holder on the wall with her teeth. After shaking some of its contents into a bowl on a table, she expertly flicks her tail three times at an overhead vine. Each flick brings down one of its three berries, dropping them neatly into the bowl as Bloom watches.*)

**Bloom:** What you got goin’ on there? (*Zecora walks over to a large jar.*)

**Zecora:** I am brewing up another mix

For a rooster and his chicks.

(*She puts her head in, causing her voice to reverberate.*)

Seems the rooster has lost its crow,

(*Up she comes, a large magenta flower clutched in her teeth.*)

Making mornings very slow.

**Bloom:** Hey! I’ve seen that flower bloomin’ in Ponyville! What is it? (*Zecora brings it over.*)

**Zecora:** It is one we call Heart’s Desire.

(*Shaking it releases a shower of tiny, heart-shaped petals.*)

A dash will ignite the rooster’s fire.

(*Tilt down to follow them into the bowl; Bloom is all attention now as Zecora backs out of view.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) With Heart’s Desire, his talent comes into view,

And he’ll give a mighty “cock-a-doodle-doo.”

(*She leans back over the bowl on the end of this, then backs off.*)

**Bloom:** Zow-wee! (*shrewdly*) Heart’s Desire, huh? (*Zecora noses through the shelves.*)

**Zecora:** Ay, me! But what is this?

I’ve run out of amethyst.

(*walking to door*) I must go get this purple flower

For my brew to have full power.

(*Pan to Bloom, still at the table.*)

**Bloom:** (*waving her off*) Yeah. You go, you go.

(*She hunches over the bowl and the Heart’s Desire flower with a calculating grin as the camera zooms in slowly.*)

(*Dissolve to the schoolhouse playground during recess. As other ponies play and run on the grass, Scootaloo and Sweetie are talking.*)

**Sweetie:** I got so hungry. (*Bloom passes them near the camera.*)

**Scootaloo:** Yeah, I can’t wait—

(*She cuts herself off and both stare wide-eyed after their friend, who stops with a smug little smile and turns to present her haunch. On it is a cutie mark consisting of a metal ring that gleams in the sunlight, forcing the other two to cry out and shield their eyes briefly.*)

**Scootaloo, Sweetie:** (*smiling*) Apple Bloom! (*Other students gather around.*) You got your cutie mark!

(*Zoom in to a close-up of it on the end of this, then pan to her hugely grinning face and fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to Bloom and the knot of admiring students that have gathered around her. After a few seconds of eyeing her mark, Scootaloo and Sweetie become more than a little confused.*)

**Sweetie:** Um…Apple Bloom…what is it?

**Scootaloo:** Yeah. Is it an O? Is your talent spelling?

**Sweetie:** Or is it a ring? Are you a jewelry maker? (*Twist pushes between them.*)

**Twist:** Or is it a powdered donut? ’Cause that sounds delicious! (*Close-up of Bloom’s face.*)

**Bloom:** No… (*Zoom out; a metal hoop now hangs around her midsection.*) …it’s a loop-de-hoop!

(*She gets the thing spinning by gyrating that part of her body, similar to the way a person would play with a hula hoop. Scootaloo voices a happy gasp, then gets just as puzzled as before.*)

**Scootaloo:** A what, now?

**Bloom:** A loop-de-hoop! ’Least that’s what I always called it. Applejack made it for me from an old rain barrel when I was littler. Who’d have thought that loop-de-hoopin’ would end up bein’ my special talent?

**Sweetie:** Wow, Apple Bloom! That’s amazing!

**Diamond Tiara:** (*from o.s.*) That’s it?

(*Cut to her and Silver Spoon, both keeping well clear of the exhibition and clearly not impressed.*)

**Diamond:** That’s your talent?

**Silver:** Spinning a hoop around your waist? (*Disdainful laugh from Diamond.*) Puh-lease.

**Bloom:** (*very cocky*) Oh, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet.

(*Standing up on her hind legs, she works the loop-de-hoop up to her neck, but neither of the egotistical fillies seems to approve. Her next move is to drop back to all fours and buck; the plaything is launched upward and falls on the flagpole as a clean ringer. It clatters toward the base, but before it can touch the ground, Bloom zips in and flicks it back up with her nose. Once it has left the pole, she leaps after it, does a midair somersault, and comes down with it hanging around her neck.*)

(*There follows a brief silence, after which the jaws of Diamond and Silver drop open and all the other students cheer wildly.*)

**Scootaloo:** Apple Bloom! You’re a super-duper loop-de-hooper!

**Bloom:** (*twirling it*) Thanks, everypony.

(*The school bell rings—an electrically operated one like those found in many public schools, not the one in the tower atop the schoolhouse—and Cheerilee steps out in a close-up.*)

**Cheerilee:** All right, my little ponies! Time for class!

(*Zoom out to frame some of said ponies, then cut to Bloom as she continues to strut her stuff. She now stands up on her hind legs, rolling the hoop across her shoulder and spinning it on one raised hoof as if it were a basketball. Appreciative murmurs from the crowd; Cheerilee steps up.*)

**Cheerilee:** (*sternly*) Apple Bloom?

(*Cut to her, now hunkered down on the ground and twirling the ring around one foreleg.*)

**Bloom:** Yes, Miss Cheerilee?

**Cheerilee:** I want you to take your loop-de-hoop into the yard…

(*Back to Bloom on the end of this; her eyes pop in anticipation of a punishment, but Cheerilee breaks into a smile instead.*)

**Cheerilee:** …and give us all a lesson in your amazing loop-de-hooping!

(*Cheers from the others as the instant expert whirls it on her tail and rears up. Dissolve to a double line of ponies facing each other; most of them now have their own loop-de-hoops. Cheerilee watches from the side as Bloom walks between the lines, bouncing her own on her tail. A loose one bounces past her; cut to Snips, whose embarrassed look gives him away as the one who lost it. However, Bloom quickly recovers the stray and throws it back to land around Snips’ neck, bringing a blush to his cheeks.*)

(*Now Bloom resumes her tail twirling as a few yelps are heard from o.s.; quick pan to Diamond and Silver, both of whom are badly off balance and quickly fall flat. Silver’s glasses end up askew on her nose. Bloom winces a bit, then smiles.*)

**Bloom:** Don’t worry, gals. Keep at it and you might get to be half as good as me!

(*On the end of this, cut back to the pair, who snarl and look daggers in her direction; Silver’s specs are straight on her schnozz again. The rest of the class is faring little better; Bloom moves over to Scootaloo and Sweetie.*)

**Bloom:** Great job, girls! (*Dejection; Scootaloo lets her tongue hang out.*)

**Sweetie:** You’re too kind, Apple Bloom.

**Scootaloo:** Yeah, we stink.

**Bloom:** Naw. You just need a little practice. Soon you’ll be able to…hoop and bop!

(*She sets the hoop on the ground, steps into it on two legs, and gets it going around one of them while jumping. Tilt quickly up to follow it being flung into the air.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Hoop and hop!

(*Up she goes, arcing neatly through before it can drop out of sight. Back at ground level, she gets it in her teeth and swings it like a jump rope, hopping neatly over it on every revolution.*)

**Bloom:** Hoop and skip!

(*Quick pan to another spot on the playground; now she has stood the thing on edge and is balancing atop it.*)

**Bloom:** And hoop and flip!

(*A couple of backflips, and she leaps away to one side. The loop-de-hoop bounces after her and drops back around her midsection while she stands triumphantly with both forelegs raised. Her two previous tormentors glare at her as she settles back down to all fours and appreciative mutterings drift in from all sides. Even Cheerilee cannot hold back an excited little giggle.*)

**Cheerilee:** Show us some more, Apple Bloom. (*Bloom balances it on her tail.*)

**Bloom:** Well, all right. (*bouncing it*) Just a few more tricks—but be warned. (*Cut to Scootaloo, Sweetie, and Twist; she continues o.s.*) These are advanced moves, not for beginners. (*leaning over to Diamond*) Got that, Diamond Tiara?

(*She backs away, eliciting a furious growl, and goes back to twirling the hoop on her tail.*)

**Bloom:** I call this one the Hoopla!

(*A boost to the RPM’s generates enough of a wake to blow her classmates’ manes back, as seen in a pan across them, and eventually the yellow filly begins to lift clear of the ground like a helicopter. Higher and higher she goes, the loop-de-hoop visible as a whirling blur—and then, with no warning, a second cutie mark winks into view on her haunch. Seen in close-up, this one depicts two spinning plates, each balanced on the end of an upright pole. Zoom out as Bloom regards it with sudden bewilderment.*)

**Bloom:** Huh?

(*The break in her concentration causes her and the hoop to drop out of sight. Loud thud from below.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Oof!

(*At ground level, she has wound up flat on the grass.*)

**Diamond:** Another cutie mark? Ha! (*to Silver*) I guess that last trick *was* a lot of hoopla. (*Cut to Bloom and zoom in; she continues o.s.*) Those cutie marks are fake!

(*Scootaloo, Sweetie, and Twist straighten up with a collective gasp, and Bloom gets up.*)

**Bloom:** What? No, they’re not!

**Diamond:** Miss Cheerilee, have you ever heard of a pony with two cutie marks? (*Back to Bloom, confusedly starting to spin the hoop on her tail.*)

**Cheerilee:** (*from o.s.*) I must say that I never have. (*To Diamond; zoom out to frame Cheerilee.*) But maybe Apple Bloom has two special talents.

**Silver:** (*to Bloom*) Oh, yeah? Then let’s see you do *that!*

(*She points at the new cutie mark and the camera zooms in to a close-up of it.*)

**Snips:** (*from o.s.*) Spin plates!

(*Cut to him and Snails. The former has two short sticks in his mouth, the latter a pair of plates, and they throw these items across the yard.*)

**Snails:** Yeah!

(*The sticks land upright on Bloom’s nose, and one plate balances perfectly on each to spin in place. The loop-de-hoop is whirling on her tail at the same time, bringing surprised gasps from the entire class.*)

**Sweetie:** Two cutie marks?

**Scootaloo:** Two talents?

**Bloom:** Aw, yeah!

**Sweetie:** Our friend is the most…

**Scootaloo, Sweetie:** (*as Bloom trots past*) …special pony ever!

**Bloom:** All right, everypony. You ready for a *real* show?

(*Wipe to a Ponyville street. With hoop and plates spinning steadily away, the two-trick pony leads Cheerilee and the class down the block. Other residents stop to look on as she throws the items overhead; the sticks and plates sail cleanly through the hoop, and she jumps after them for a bit of midair stunt work. The sticks and plates end up balanced on her nose in one column, stick-plate-stick-plate, and she touches down, comes up on one hind leg, and lets the hoop drop onto the other.*)

(*Next she rides the hoop like a unicycle while balancing the sticks/plates on her front hooves, then rides back upside down with them on her rear ones. The spinning discs and their supports are set down on the ground so she can keep them turning and work the hoop back and forth; cheers from the crowd as she gathers everything up and jumps to silhouette herself against the sun.*)

(*Cut to a close-up of Rainbow Dash napping on a cloud and zoom out slightly. Bloom eyes her carefully from the ground, then whips her tail to launch the hoop. It flashes past the snoozing pegasus and slices away the periphery of the cloud like a cookie cutter, leaving her untouched on a perfectly circular section. When the hoop falls, Bloom lets its roll across her shoulders and spins it expertly on one hoof.*)

(*Here comes Sweetie, with a properly surprised Twilight Sparkle and Rarity right behind. The metal ring goes flying toward the trio and stops just short of Twilight’s face, whirling in place so that it skims her mane’s bangs. When it backs off, the streaked dark blue hair over her face has taken on a loose curl identical to Rarity’s, and the latter beams at the result as Spike pops up to gaze at Twilight with hearts in his eyes. The violet unicorn is clearly not amused at this split-second styling.*)

(*Cut to Pinkie as she trots cheerfully down the street, and zoom out to frame Bloom coming up behind her in hoop-unicycle mode with the plates/sticks on her front hooves. A stumble sends the pink pony down flat, and the rider bounces over her while the rest of her family—Applejack, Big Macintosh, and Granny Smith—look on. Bloom doubles back to Granny and lets the hoop drop around both of them, drawing a round of cheers.*)

(*With a shrill whistle, Applejack bucks a nearby picnic table and launches the items on it—a pie and a stack of eight plates—into the air. Not missing a beat, Bloom rushes in, catches the plates on one foreleg and the pie on her rump, and shifts the hoop so it is back on her tail. Another toss sends the whole load airborne again; this time, the hoop flashes around the pie, slicing it. Four plates apiece land on two picnic tables, with a piece of pie falling onto each, and hungry ponies instantly show up to eat their fill. Cut to a close-up of Bloom, hoop on tail and one plate/stick on her nose, and zoom out to frame the appreciative crowd standing/hovering around her.*)

(*Dissolve to a long shot of Sweet Apple Acres that evening, then zoom in slowly and cut to inside the barn’s living area. Granny and Macintosh are already inside, and Applejack gallops in ahead of a noticeably tired Bloom, who is spinning both plates and the hoop. Apples appear prominently on the wood-frame walls, and the overall feeling is that of a meeting hall in a rural town.*)

**Applejack:** Yee-haa, little sis! (*walking ahead, sighing happily*) Congratulations on gettin’ not just one, but *two* cutie marks! Oh, we’re mighty proud of you—right, Big Macintosh?

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

(*Close-up of the two marks; a little sigh of surprise from the o.s. Applejack, and the camera zooms out to frame both sisters.*)

**Applejack:** I’ve never seen anything like it! Have you, Big Mac?

**Macintosh:** Nn-nope.

**Granny:** (*slowly crossing the room, joints creaking*) Why, the way you were a-hoopin’ and a-hoppin’ and kickin’ and spinnin’ reminded me of when I was a spry young filly.

(*She gets herself balanced on one rear leg, only to have a joint pop audibly and send her into a spasm of pain.*)

**Granny:** Ugh, charley horse, charley horse!

(*The king-sized grandson directs a well-aimed hoof at the offending spot, loosening it so that Granny can drop back to all fours.*)

**Granny:** Ooh, that’s better.

**Applejack:** Why, Apple Bloom, I think you’re ready to hit the rodeo circuit right now!

**Bloom:** Actually, I’m ready to hit the hay right now. (*walking off*) I’m plumb tuckered. I’ll see y’all in the mornin’. (*heading upstairs*) ’Night.

**Applejack:** ’Night! (*to Granny and Macintosh*) Oh, my. Little Apple Bloom has finally blossomed—hasn’t she, Big Mac?

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

(*Dissolve to Applejack’s bedroom, darkened and with the door slightly ajar. She sleeps in a bed near the window, with a nightstand nearby, and her hat and one rope are hung up on wall pegs in one corner. A second rope is coiled on a peg by the door, and a cushion and dresser stand across the room. The walls are painted green, with wood paneling and floors resembling those downstairs, and apples figure heavily in the décor.*)

(*The sound of muffled, rapid tapping causes the workhorse to toss and moan in her sleep for several seconds before finally waking up.*)

**Applejack:** What in tarnation’s that?

(*Cut to the hall as she noses her door open and peeks out. A zoom out frames a second door, also slightly ajar; the lights are on inside, and the tapping seems to be coming from here. Applejack grimaces at the interruption, and the camera cuts to just inside this door.*)

**Applejack:** (*groaning, nudging it open*) Apple Bloom, what is all that awful…

(*Her eyes pop and the scolding dies on her lips. This area is Bloom’s bedroom, its walls painted a lighter shade of green than Applejack’s, and a four-poster bed stands in on corner. However, the intended occupant is instead doing a frenetic tap dance—and still spinning plates on her head and the loop-de-hoop on her tail to boot—and not enjoying this a bit. Zoom in on the scrabbling hooves.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) …tapping?

(*Tilt up to frame the yellow haunch, which now displays a bright red, yellow-ribboned tap shoe in addition to the hoop and plates.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s., gasping*) *Three* cutie marks?!

**Bloom:** (*weakly*) Help me…

(*Cut back to the horrified elder sister and zoom in slowly, then snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to just behind Applejack at the door. Now a full, open toy chest can be seen across from Bloom’s bed.*)

**Bloom:** Help me!

**Applejack:** Come here, you!

(*She darts in, aiming her teeth at the fluffy red tail, but gets whacked with the loop-de-hoop.*)

**Applejack:** Ow! (*Again.*) Ow!

(*Backing off for a second to rethink her strategy, she dives toward the dancing hooves and grabs one. Unfortunately for her, the leg attached to it jackhammers her against the floor.*)

**Applejack:** Whoa… (*She is thrown off.*)

**Bloom:** I’m sorry, Applejack! (*Cut to Applejack, tumbling to the doorway; she continues o.s.*) I don’t know how to make it stop! (*Applejack stands up.*)

**Applejack:** Well, I know somepony who might!

(*Around the uncontrollable showoff, the background dissolves to the library’s reading room. Cut to Twilight and Applejack as they eye her worriedly; Applejack has her hat back on, and Twilight’s mane is back to its usual style.*)

**Twilight:** Three cutie marks! Three talents! I’ve never seen anything like it! (*turning to bookshelves*) I was just reading something about unusual equine illnesses. What was it?

(*She levitates and replaces one book, then another—no luck—and is stopped by Spike’s voice.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) *Perplexing Pony Plagues*, perhaps?

(*She looks behind herself; quick pan/tilt up to the baby dragon on the ladder at the other side of the room. He has procured a volume and jumps down with it.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Yes, Spike! (*Back to her.*) You’re amazing! (*He lands on her back; she carries him across.*)

**Spike:** (*smugly*) Yes, well, I do have some talents.

(*Now on her head, he sets the opened book on a stand; she magically flips a few pages as Bloom capers back and forth.*)

**Twilight:** Hay fever…the trots…

(*Sharp gasp; cut to a close-up of one page and zoom in. It shows a diagram of a mare covered with cutie marks, each of which is numbered.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Cutie pox!

**Applejack, Bloom, Spike:** Cutie pox?!? (*Cut to frame all four.*)

**Twilight:** (*reading*) “Cutie pox. This puzzling pony plague afflicted a population of ponies back in the Paleo-Pony Period.”

**Spike:** Heh. Say *that* ten times fast!

(*This crack earns him an annoyed buck that sends him crashing o.s. into the far wall.*)

**Twilight:** “Random cutie marks appeared all over the ponies’ bodies…”

(*During this line, cut to a close-up of another page and tilt up slowly past three figures that depict sufferers juggling on a unicycle, snorkeling, skiing.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) “…causing them to perform all the talents that came with them.” (*Cut to frame all four.*)

**Bloom:** Just like me!

**Applejack:** Yes, but what’s the cure? What’s the cure?

(*Twilight checks the book again as the camera pans slightly to focus on her. What she finds causes her mouth to drop full open.*)

**Twilight:** It says here there’s no known cure!

**Applejack, Bloom, Spike:** No known cure?!?

**Twilight:** “The cause of the breakout was never discovered, and the cutie pox disappeared as mysteriously as they arrived.”

**Bloom:** Oh, no!

(*Right on cue, here comes mark number four—a light gray fleur-de-lis. Those readers/viewers who are familiar with Scouting will instantly recognize it as the symbol of this organization. Now the stricken filly begins to speak French; translations of her words are in brackets.*)

**Bloom:** Sacrebleu! Plus de marques de cutie! [“Good grief! More cutie marks!”]

[*Note: “Sacrebleu” is actually an old French profanity. I have translated it as “good grief” in order to avoid offending any readers.*]

(*The suddenly bilingual pony gasps in pure shock.*)

**Bloom:** Qu’est-ce que c’est? Je parle français? [“What’s this? I’m speaking French?”]

**Applejack:** My sister’s speakin’ in fancy!

**Twilight:** She needs help!

**Applejack:** I know she needs help! We can’t just wait for this to go away! (*Cut to her, Twilight, and Spike.*) We gotta find somepony to mix up a cure, and fast!

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Tout de suite! [“Right away!”]

**Twilight:** (*getting an idea*) Not some*pony*…some *zebra!* (*Applejack catches on.*)

**Applejack:** Zecora!

(*Dissolve to the two mares galloping through Ponyville, with Spike riding on Twilight’s back, and pan quickly to Bloom doing her best to keep up. It is now the following day. The others stop to look back toward her.*)

**Applejack:** Hurry! (*Cut to Bloom; she continues o.s.*) Hurry!

**Bloom:** Dépêchez-vous! [“Hurry up!”]

(*Zoom in on one hind leg as a fifth cutie mark manifests itself—a hammer and chisel. Quite against her will, she zips away and the camera quickly pans to a cloud of dust that has enveloped her high-speed work. It clears to reveal a freshly sculpted statue of a mare standing on her hind legs and emerging from a giant scallop shell, using her long mane and tail to cover herself. Bloom has just created a three-dimensional pony version of Botticelli’s famous painting The Birth of Venus.*)

(*Here comes the sixth mark onto her belly, a flat cap and long-handled brush; she races away from the statue and goes to work cleaning out a chimney at top speed. Number seven, on a hind leg, is an accordion, so she drops to street level and plays a merry tune for a few dumbstruck spectators. Eighth, on her flank: a whip and lion’s head—she wields a chair and whip against three growling lions, trying to tame them. Ninth, on her chest: a trio of chess pieces consisting of a castle and two pawns—she gets into a chess game against an elderly stallion in the park. Cut to a street, where she engages an opponent in a fencing match watched by plenty of perplexed ponies; mark number ten, a pair of crossed swords, has appeared on her foreleg. Twilight and Applejack trade a panicked look, while Spike chows down on popcorn and Daisy, Lily, and Rose stare aghast.*)

**Lily:** She’s cursed!

(*Now Bloom begins to walk a tightrope consisting of a string of banners between two roofs, holding a long pole for balance. The mark that led to this exhibition is not immediately visible.*)

**Rose:** Hexed!

(*The helpless Apple filly does a bit of hang-gliding; the mark for it cannot be clearly made out at this distance. Through this entire sequence, she has kept the loop-de-hoop going on her tail and the plates balanced on her head.*)

**Daisy:** Enchanted!

**Spike:** No, she’s not. (*All three mares sigh with relief.*) She just has some weird mysterious disease with no known cure, called cutie pox. (*They recoil in horror.*)

**Crowd:** CUTIE POX?!?

(*Mass hysteria ensues; ponies scatter everywhere, diving into buildings and slamming doors and windows shut. A boiling dust cloud of wings and hooves marks the exodus of other residents, leaving the street silent and empty save for Twilight and Applejack. A tumbleweed drifts past them as a hawk’s lonely cry pierces the stillness, and Zecora breaks it with her voice as she walks up to join the pair. Wicker baskets are slung on her back in the fashion of other ponies’ saddlebags.*)

**Zecora:** I thought I had removed their fear

The last time that I visited here.

(*Cut to a slow pan across the street, framing her as she continues.*)

But doors are barred and shutters shut.

Guess I should have stayed inside my hut.

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Zecora!

(*Cut to her; she points back toward Bloom, who stands at a blackboard.*)

**Twilight:** Apple Bloom has cutie pox!

(*Zoom in on the filly on the end of this. She has now begun chalking up equations as her hooves remain stuck in fifth gear. Now one of the additional cutie marks can be seen: a hang glider on one foreleg. Furthermore, a barbell has appeared near one eye.*)

**Twilight:** We were just on our way to see if you had a cure!

**Applejack:** But magically you’re here! Was your zebra sense a-tinglin’?

**Zecora:** (*walking ahead*) My zebra sense did not bring me ’round.

It was a special flower that I needed found.

(*Overhead view, panning ahead; Bloom is now lifting a thousand-pound barbell with her tail and doing four-legged push-ups.*)

I thought I’d picked enough to fix

All the potions I had to mix.

But after my visit from Apple Bloom,

(*Close-up of Bloom; she continues o.s.*)

Some had mysteriously left my room.

(*This shot reveals another of her extra marks, a long pole for the tightrope-walking. For the benefit of those keeping count, the tally now stands at fourteen manifested talents, thirteen of whose cutie marks have been spotted. Pan to frame a stern zebra standing alongside.*)

**Zecora:** Apple Bloom! What do you say?

Did this flower just walk away?

(*The straining face picks up number fifteen on the forehead—a pair of sponges—and Bloom’s legs kick into gear.*)

**Bloom:** I…um…

(*She races over to the nearest house and begins to scrub its front room window, using a conveniently placed bucket of water and sponges. The two mares inside worriedly start to don radiation suits, complete with built-in respirators to protect them from any contagion, as sponges, tapping hooves, and tail keep doing their thing.*)

**Zecora:** A cutie pox cure I have, forsooth.

(*She turns to present her basket; close-up of it as she dips her tail in and extracts three seeds.*)

For healing power is in the Seeds of Truth.

**Applejack:** W-Well, then, give ’em to her, quick!

**Zecora:** These seeds must be planted in the ground.

With the truth, they’ll grow and the cure is found.

**Applejack:** Come again?

(*Bloom staggers past, the barbell and plates both on her head and her tail working the loop-de-hoop again.*)

**Zecora:** The Seeds of Truth do hold the cure,

But one must speak words— (*sternly, in close-up*) —true and pure.

(*The afflicted filly swallows hard and smiles thinly under the zebra’s unflinching gaze.*)

**Applejack:** (*running up, nudging Zecora’s tail*) Huh. Well, then, let’s get to it!

(*Up go the seeds; she scrapes a hole in the earth, and they fall in and are swiftly covered. Tilt up from this spot to frame Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** All right. They’re planted. (*Long shot of her, Twilight, and Zecora in the deserted street.*) Now somepony tell the truth!

(*Bloom is now veering past Sugarcube Corner, on whose front step Pinkie is sitting on her haunches with a bad case of the jitters—eyes, mouth, whole body. Yet another cutie mark appears on the yellow haunch, this one a tornado; Bloom drops everything and turns into a hollering, yellow/pink/red whirling dervish.*)

**Applejack:** (*calling overhead*) Somepony!

(*Cut to a roof-level pan; the two mares from the window cleaning—now fully suited up—peek over the eaves as a third watches from her own window.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) *Anypony!*

(*All three take cover; now Scootaloo and Sweetie risk a glance from around a corner at ground level and Pinkie’s sweat glands go full throttle. Finally she breaks.*)

**Pinkie:** (*rapid fire*) Yesterday I told Mrs. Cake that I ate two corn cakes, but I really ate three!

(*She cringes, and Twilight and Applejack—the latter’s hat gone, perhaps blown off by the little-sister twister—eye the buried Seeds of Truth. Nothing yet, so they look anxiously toward the twitching Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** Okay, six! I ate six corn cakes!

(*The brown cowboy hat is back where it belongs, and both Twilight and its wearer smile at the admission as Bloom zooms past behind them. Another look at the still-barren ground ends their happiness, though, and Pinkie breaks into hysterical sobbing.*)

**Pinkie:** Make it stop! Oh, make it stop! (*Inarticulate yells from Bloom; then she gets words out.*)

**Bloom:** I can’t stand it anymore! It’s me! I admit it! I didn’t earn my cutie mark! They’re all fakes!

(*The equine tornado ends as quickly as it began, leaving her tap-dancing and loop-de-hooping with her tail. Zecora aims a satisfied gaze in her direction, the camera zooming out to frame Twilight and Applejack as they watch the Seeds’ spot carefully. The earth begins to shift a bit.*)

**Bloom:** I figured the Heart’s Desire would help me get what I wanted most!

(*Cut to a closed door on the end of this; three ponies open it and cautiously put their heads out. The camera then shifts to another block on the next line; others peek up from a roof and behind hay bales, and one pulls off her radiation suit’s headpiece.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) So when Zecora left her hut, I mixed up a special potion and put the rest of the Heart’s Desire in it!

(*A shoot pops up through the clods and quickly blooms to produce a glowing flower similar to a lily, white with deep pink petals around its base. A crowd has gathered near Twilight, Applejack, and Zecora to see it grow.*)

**Crowd:** (*awed*) Whoooaaa…

(*Bloom, though, cares more about function than form at this point and simply gobbles the whole thing down. She collapses spreadeagle to the ground with a relieved sigh—and then a series of swift flashes wipes all the cutie marks off her hide. She stands up with exactly as many as she started with: zero.*)

**Sweetie:** (*from o.s.*) Apple Bloom! (*Cut to her and Scootaloo, galloping out from their vantage point.*)

**Scootaloo:** Are you okay?

**Bloom:** I’m great, and I’ve never been happier to be a blank flank. But I’m awful sorry I lied, especially to you gals. (*Cut to them; she continues o.s.*) I was so desperate for my cutie mark, I just got carried away.

(*Cut to Zecora, who smiles, and zoom out as Bloom walks up to her.*)

**Bloom:** And I’m really sorry I snuck those flowers from you, Zecora. (*hanging her head*) Why, I wouldn’t blame you if you never wanted me to come by again.

(*Close-up of the downcast yellow face; Zecora reaches into view to lift it gently.*)

**Zecora:** (*from o.s.*) Now, Apple Bloom— (*Zoom out to frame her.*) —do not be silly.

You are always welcome, my little filly.

(*Bloom smiles; cut to her perspective of the older trio, panning from Zecora to Applejack.*)

With each mistake, you learn something new,

(*now o.s.; Applejack winks*)

Growing up into a better you.

(*The two mares look toward her and register sudden surprise, and a pan back toward the zebra’s spot reveals why—she has disappeared without trace. Cut to a close-up of Twilight, glancing back behind herself toward Scootaloo and Sweetie, and pan to frame Bloom beside them on the next line.*)

**Twilight:** Apple Bloom, would you mind writing to Princess Celestia and telling her what you learned?

**Bloom:** I’d be happy to, Twilight. (*addressing herself o.s.*) Spike? (*He zips up, quill and scroll in hand.*)

**Spike:** Ready!

(*Dissolve to a peaceful stretch of Ponyville and tilt up slowly toward Canterlot on its elevated mountainside.*)

**Bloom:** (*voice over, dictating*) “Dear Princess Celestia: Waiting for what your heart desires can be really hard, so you may try to take a shortcut. But this dishonesty never works—”

(*Dissolve to another patch of sky and tilt down to frame the Crusaders on the next line.*)

**Bloom:** “—because you didn’t earn what your heart desired. The only cure is being honest with yourself and others, and that’s somethin’ every heart desires.”

(*Spike rolls up the page and fires it off, and all three fillies stare after the magic smoke as Applejack approaches them.*)

**Applejack:** I sure am proud of you, sis. Seems like you’ve finally learned the importance of patience.

**Bloom:** Yep. All good things come to those who wait.

(*The Crusaders smile placidly over this moral, but it takes no more than two seconds for those smiles to go bye-bye—first Scootaloo, then Sweetie, and finally Bloom. The earth pony filly’s enthusiasm returns one second later.*)

**Bloom:** Well, I’ve waited long enough.

(*Surprise from Twilight and Applejack; the Crusaders gallop past them.*)

**Scootaloo:** Actually, that was way too long.

**Applejack:** What?! (*They slow to a walk.*)

**Bloom:** (*to Scootaloo, Sweetie*) So what are we gonna do today to earn our cutie marks?

**Scootaloo:** Well, I was thinking. For a pony who’s never mixed up a potion before, you sure stirred up something fierce.

**Sweetie:** Yeah! So what if your talent is potion-making?

(*Long overhead shot of the three.*)

**Bloom:** Oh, my gosh! Totally! Let’s go talk to Zecora! Now! (*They gallop off.*)

**Scootaloo:** Yeah!

**Sweetie:** Woo-hoo!

(*Zoom out slightly to show that they are headed for the Everfree Forest, then fade to black.*)