**THE LAST ROUNDUP**

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Note: In the time since this episode’s premiere, it has been edited to remove the mention

of Derpy Hooves’ name and change her voice. The transcript presented here is based on the original broadcast.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Applejack’s furiously galloping legs, seen in a head-on view. It is daytime. The camera tilts up to the farm pony’s determined face, showing her to be hatless, and cuts briefly to her perspective. She is racing along a broad path in the Sweet Apple Acres orchards, toward a hurdle similar to those used in steeplechases; in profile, she takes it in one easy bound. Rounding a turn, she clears a second hurdle, and the camera pans quickly to a third one built from two curved poles. The green eyes narrow above a fierce smile as Applejack barrels toward this, and she licks her lips and hurls herself into a jump with all four legs extended.*)

(*In slow motion, the orange-tan form glides smoothly over the top pole—except for one rear hoof, which taps against it to give a click that echoes in the sudden silence. Normal speed resumes as Applejack hits the ground and keeps galloping, not even losing a step from the contact. Cut to the sidelines and zoom out to frame Apple Bloom watching from a fence as Applejack jumps a fourth obstacle; the brown cowboy hat is parked on the filly’s head. She waves enthusiastically.*)

**Bloom:** Woo— (*losing balance*) —whoa!

(*Her grab at the top rail causes the hat to flip forward, blocking her vision; she pushes it back and gets an acknowledging wink. A hay bale lies on the path ahead, with an attached length of rope that Applejack grabs in her teeth. One good swing builds up enough momentum to let her fling the mass as if doing the Olympic hammer throw. It sails away, Applejack shading her eyes with a foreleg to watch, and it lands some distance past a line where two others have fallen in previous attempts. She crosses her left legs over her right, aiming a self-deprecating glance off to the side. Cut to Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** (*knocking hat loose*) Woo-hoo! Applejack, you’re sure to knock everypony’s hat off at the Equestria Rodeo Competition!

(*On the end of this, zoom out to frame Applejack now at the fence; she picks the hat up in her teeth and flips it back onto her own head.*)

**Applejack:** Aw, shucks, Apple Bloom. I sure hope so.

**Bloom:** *Hope* so? I *know* so! After all… (*Cut to Applejack; she continues o.s.*) …you’re the ten-time rodeo champeen of Ponyville! (*Back to her.*) Why, you’ve got more blue ribbons than anypony in Ponyville ever!

(*On the end of this, the camera follows her gesture to show a trophy case filled with blue ribbons and gold medals, mounted on the side of a shed. “Ever” marks a cut to a close-up and slow pan down the length of this display.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) And I can’t wait for my big sis to win every blue ribbon in Equestria… (*Back to her.*) …and bring home the title of… (*To a grateful Applejack; she continues o.s.*) …Equestria Rodeo Champeen!

(*Big sis does something that is truly rare for her: she blushes. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a banner being hung, depicting a rearing Applejack. A zoom out reveals the full apple design and Rainbow Dash hoisting one end above the town square pavilion’s main entrance. The other end has already been tacked to the second-story balcony; after Rainbow attaches hers, she looks smugly at her handiwork. Cockiness turns to surprise in a blink, and she ducks just in time to avoid a sudden bolt of lightning that singes the end of her tail.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh? (*calling overhead*) Now, careful, Derpy!

(*At a slightly greater height, Derpy Hooves is cheerfully jumping on a gray cloud, producing a fresh strike with every bounce. She stops at the approach of the irate blue pegasus, whose tail has healed up now.*)

**Rainbow:** Don’t want to do any more damage than you’ve already done.

(*Zoom out to frame the entire upper portion of the structure. The third-story balcony is sagging everywhere, and the roof has had a couple of ragged holes punched through it—doubtless by the constant lightning strikes from Derpy’s goofing off. To add insult to injury, the uppermost piece—already hanging by a thread—breaks loose and crashes through the largest hole.*)

**Derpy:** (*jumping again*) I just don’t know what went wrong.

(*She manages to shock herself a good one, charring the gray coat and blond mane nicely. In close-up, Rainbow throws her a look while tapping one of the banner’s tacks in with a hoof.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sarcastically*) Yeah. It’s a mystery. (*Zoom out; Derpy, now cleaned up, is at the balcony.*)

**Derpy:** Nice work, Rainbow Dash!

(*On the end of this, she backs into a support post, which promptly topples over the balcony rail. With a panicked grimace, Rainbow dives after the timber, gets under the low end, heaves upward—and then drops o.s. with a crash and yell. Once the dust clears, the view has shifted to the pavilion’s porch, with a brand-new hole from which the pole’s snapped end protrudes. Derpy lands next to this and sticks her head inside; her next two lines echo in the space.*)

**Derpy:** You okay, Rainbow Dash?

(*Cut to the basement/foundation area underneath the porch; Rainbow glares up at her assistant.*)

**Derpy:** Anything I can do to help? (*A plank falls in. Back to the porch; Rainbow flies up.*)

**Rainbow:** No! Nothing! In the name of Celestia, just sit there and do nothing!

(*The cross-eyed flyer plunks her rump onto the porch, whereupon a circle of cracks starts to spread in the wood around her. As soon as the spot gives way, she makes a desperate grab at Rainbow that only leads to both pegasi plummeting into this second hole.*)

**Derpy:** (*from beneath, echoing*) Oops. My bad.

(*Cut to a large crowd, gathered outside the pavilion and chanting Applejack’s name. A small stage has been set up here; Mayor Mare stands at a lectern atop it. Close-up of her.*)

**Mayor Mare:** (*over chanting*) Everypony, can I get your attention? Attention, please! (*Silence.*) Yes, we are all here to send Applejack to compete in this year’s Equestria Rodeo Competition in Canterlot.

(*On the end of this, she gestures to one side and the camera pans slightly in this direction to frame Applejack now standing alongside her. Cheers and stomping applause from the multitude; Mayor Mare waits to continue until the noise has stopped.*)

**Mayor Mare:** And I want to thank Applejack in advance, for generously offering up her prize money… (*Cut to the wrecked pavilion roof; she continues o.s.*) …to fix Town Hall.

(*Ground level; Rainbow has climbed up onto the porch, while Derpy hangs at the edge of her hole.*)

**Derpy:** Yeah, Applejack! (*raising forelegs*) Woo-hoo!

(*Gravity wastes no time in yanking her out of sight as Rainbow rolls her eyes disgustedly. More cheering and stomping from the crowd; cut to Pinkie Pie among them as it dies off again.*)

**Pinkie:** (*jumping in place*) Speech! Speech! (*To Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, shucks. I’m not much for speeches. (*To Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** All right, then, no speech! (*She zips away.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Buuuuut… (*Back again; cut to her onstage.*) …this here is the nicest sendoff anypony could ask for.

(*Cut to a pan across the front row, with first Fluttershy, then Twilight Sparkle, and finally Rarity coming into view.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Y’all have been cheering me on in every rodeo since I was a *little* little pony. (*Back to her; she glances toward Mayor Mare.*) So it seems only fittin’ to use my winnin’s to fix up Town Hall. (*Long shot; her voice reverberates across over the crowd.*) I promise to make Ponyville proud!

(*Receiving a third round of adulation, she smiles gratefully and pulls her hat forward over her eyes. Dissolve to a locomotive’s smokestack and tilt down to the sound of a clanging station bell on the start of the next line. On the platform are Twilight, Applejack, Pinkie, Mayor Mare, Granny Smith, Big Macintosh, and Apple Bloom, with Rainbow hovering above. Applejack is toting a pair of saddlebags.*)

**Granny:** I want you to show all them highfalutin rodeo ponies what a *real* rodeo pony’s like!

**Applejack:** You betcha, Granny Smith. (*Mayor Mare shoves Granny back.*)

**Mayor Mare:** And bring back all that money!

**Applejack:** (*turning/walking toward train*) You betcha, Mayor. (*Pinkie cuts her off.*)

**Pinkie:** And have fun, and don’t be nervous. (*as Applejack approaches train again*) Or if you are, use that nervous energy to do even better than you already would! And eat peanuts and popcorn and taffy. (*Fluttershy, Rarity, and other ponies have gathered now; she holds up a bag of taffy.*) Taffy gives you lots of nervous energy.

(*She proceeds to start chomping away at the sweet stuff, burying her face in the bag. Reactions are mixed, from annoyance to puzzlement to hungry chop-licking by Macintosh. Twilight turns away from the undignified face-stuffing to address Applejack.*)

**Twilight:** Just do your best, Applejack.

**Applejack:** I’ll do better than my best!

**Stallion voice:** The train to Canterlot is about to leave!

(*Quick pan to the locomotive. The speaker is a light blue-gray earth pony stallion, dressed in a conductor’s jacket and cap, with white shirt and red necktie; dark gray mane/tail with long mustache; spectacles on nose; pocket-watch cutie mark. He stands on the platform, while the engineer is visible through the locomotive window: light brown earth pony stallion, brown eyes and mane/tail, striped engineer’s cap, red bandana around neck.*)

**Conductor:** All aboard who’s coming aboard!

**Applejack:** (*to the group*) Guess that means me. (*She steps to the door.*)

**Rainbow:** See you in a week!

**Bloom:** With lots of new blue ribbons! (*Cut to just inside the door; Applejack enters.*)

**Mayor Mare:** And lots of money!

**Applejack:** (*stepping inside o.s.*) Darn tootin’!

(*Steam pours up from below the platform. As the train begins to roll, the camera shifts to the exterior of the locomotive and pans back a few cars to frame Applejack waving and looking out from one window.*)

**Applejack:** See y’all in a week, with a big bag full of blue ribbons!

(*Inside the car again; she watches the well-wishers shout their last goodbyes while galloping as far as the platform’s end. Once they have receded past the trailing edge of her window, cut back to the platform.*)

**Pinkie:** And drink sarsaparilla! (*Funny looks from the others; she addresses them.*) What? It gives you extra sass.

(*Twilight turns away with a slightly exasperated sigh. Dissolve to a close-up of a window as a banner depicting Applejack, identical to the one hung by Rainbow and Derpy, is strung up. Zoom out to show it being hung by Fluttershy and Rainbow inside the Sweet Apple Acres barn; streamers and balloons are present and accounted for as well.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, I hope Applejack is surprised by this surprise party.

(*During this line, cut to a shot of the entire area: cakes, more banners and decorations, and a plethora of ponies helping to set up. Macintosh blows up a balloon; cut to Rainbow, now reeling a streamer from a box as Bloom nips away one of her own.*)

**Rainbow:** (*a bit irritated*) Well, that *is* the point. (*She flies up to Fluttershy.*)

**Fluttershy:** I know. (*She catches the free end thrown to her.*) But I hope she isn’t so surprised she’s startled. (*They tack up the ends.*) Because while being surprised can be nice— (*dropping to ground, walking off*) —being startled can be very startling.

(*Naturally, Pinkie chooses this very moment to jump into the timid pegasus’ face with a shower of confetti.*)

**Pinkie:** SURPRISE!! (*Fluttershy falls backward with a gasp.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, Pinkie, you startled me.

**Pinkie:** (*helping her up, hopping away*) Sorry. I was just practicing my “surprise” for when we surprise Applejack with this super-cool party for becoming Rodeo Champeen of Equestria!

(*Her head drops into view from above, marking her climb from floor to ceiling in the split second that she was out of view.*)

**Pinkie:** SURPRISE!! (*Fluttershy falls backward again.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s., whispering*) Quiet, Pinkie! (*Cut to her, peeking out the doors.*) I think Applejack’s coming!

(*Bloom, meanwhile, has taken up a position in an empty feed trough; Pinkie dives in next to her.*)

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry, Twilight. Got my lips all limbered up.

(*This consists of a series of goofy facial contortions in which she works her teeth, her jaw, her lips; Bloom just stares at her, thoroughly confounded. Above, Fluttershy and Rainbow jump up to hide in a full hayloft and peek out over the scene, which is now fully stocked with Apple family members from near and far. All take whatever cover they can find as the lights go out. After a few seconds that feel like a week, a rectangle of light is cast over the floor from the doors creaking open and a hatted shadow advances into view. Lights on; all but Pinkie pop up.*)

**Crowd:** SURPRISE!!

(*The noisemaker in Macintosh’s mouth prevents him from shouting with them, so he gives it a hearty blow instead. Pinkie leaps up well after the room has gone dead silent.*)

**Pinkie:** Surprise! (*Pause.*) Shoot!

(*Cut to the open doors. The new arrival is not Applejack, but a telegram delivery stallion. Khaki coat, curly brown mane/tail, medium blue eyes, blue uniform jacket and cap with silver badges, light blue shirt, dark gray necktie. His cutie mark consists of a white postage stamp displaying a heart, and he has a folded note tucked into his cap’s band.*)

**Delivery stallion:** Wow! This is the best surprise ever! How did you know it was my birthday?

(*All faces fall; cut to just outside the barn. He now holds a telegram in one hoof, and Twilight grumpily looks out, levitates it from his grip, and yanks both it and herself back inside. The door slams shut in his face, sending his own spirits into the basement. As he paws the ground listlessly, the doors burst open and a beaming Pinkie holds out a slice of cake on a plate, drops it, and shuts him outside again. The stallion’s puzzlement gives way to a smile.*)

(*Inside, the rest of the crew has gathered around Twilight, who is studying the message intently.*)

**Bloom:** Who’s it from, Twilight? What’s it say?

**Twilight:** It’s from Applejack. (*reading*) “Family and friends…” (*Cut to Macintosh and Granny; she continues o.s.*) “Not coming back to Ponyville.” (*Shock all around the barn.*) “Don’t worry, will send money soon.”

(*Back to her; she turns the telegram around in midair to expose its printed side.*)

**Twilight:** That’s all there is.

(*Cut to a pan across several Apples, all of whom gasp in disbelief as Rarity stands among them, staring with great concern.*)

**Bloom:** Applejack’s… not comin’ back? (*Cut to Fluttershy and Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** What do you mean, Applejack’s not coming back? She loves Ponyville. (*Zoom out to frame Granny and Bloom.*)

**Granny:** And she loves Sweet Apple Acres. (*Close-up of Bloom, zooming in.*)

**Bloom:** And she loves her family!

(*She aims her saddest big-eyed pout past the camera, which pans away from her in order to avoid ending up with diabetes. It stops on Rarity, just behind her; she gasps melodramatically.*)

**Rarity:** Something just dreadful must have happened to Applejack to make her not return!

**Fluttershy:** Maybe she’s hurt, or sad or scared!

**Rainbow:** So what are we waiting for? Let’s go find her!

(*The blue wings shift straight from idle to fourth gear and propel her toward the door. Zoom out to frame the rest of the guests, with a determined Twilight at the fore.*)

**Twilight:** (*trotting out; Fluttershy/Rarity follow*) Don’t worry. We’ll search all of Equestria if we have to.

(*Cut to a pan across Bloom and several of her kin.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) We’ll bring her back.

**Bloom:** Y’all are the best. (*Stop on Macintosh and Granny on the end of this.*)

**Granny:** Thank you, girls.

(*The MIA workhorse’s five friends are now gathered at the open barn doors, and Twilight snaps a salute before they gallop/fly out across the fields. Macintosh fights to keep his composure as Granny steps up alongside him. The family’s collective mood has just nose-dived again.*)

**Granny:** Our little bushel just lost one Apple.

(*He just wipes and sniffles at the tears that have now gotten the better of him. Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of a stretch of railroad track. The Ponyville-to-Canterlot train chugs along under a tranquil blue sky as Twilight and Rainbow look out the windows toward the distant capital city. Cut to the Canterlot station as the train pulls in, then wipe to the exterior of a large stadium as the five hurry toward its open gate. It is hung with horseshoe-decorated banners and flying assorted flags, some of which depict rearing ponies, and the seats within can be seen to be empty. This can only be the venue at which the Equestria Rodeo Competition took place. All stop for a moment, then scatter at a nod from Twilight.*)

(*Inside, Rarity carries a black-and-white photo of Applejack in her teeth and trots up to a cowboy-hatted stallion talking to a mare in the stands. Both shake their heads at the picture—“nope, haven’t seen her”—after which a rodeo-clown stallion in garish face makeup and clothes rolls by on a beach ball. Right behind him is Pinkie, on a ball of her own and with a copy of the photo in teeth. Once she has pulled even, she leans over to give him a good look; no good here either. The dejected pink pony stops dead, her ball deflating to slowly lower her back to the ground.*)

(*Up in the stands, two mares taking a break from cleanup duty—Carrot Top and Cherry Berry—get a look at the photo when it is floated over to them. Zoom out slightly to frame Twilight in control of it; they trade a puzzled look, then give her a shrug that pegs this try as a bust. Cut to a close-up of Caramel pushing a barrel along with his head. Something stops him in his tracks, revealed to be Rainbow when the camera zooms out slightly. He aims a vexed glare at both her and the photo of Applejack in her teeth, then shakes his head. Next Fluttershy flies up to the stadium roof, where another rodeo-clown stallion is napping with his hat tilted over his face. She has a fifth copy of Applejack’s photo in her teeth, but he waves her off without even lifting his hat to get a clear look. As the cleanup crew gets everything squared away, Twilight and company make one last, fruitless effort to pick up any hints on their friend’s whereabouts.*)

(*A dissolve leaves the area clean and empty; pan to frame the very glum quintet off to one side. Rainbow lies flat in the stands, Pinkie slumps over the rail, Fluttershy sits next to it on her haunches, Twilight is slumped face first at a table on the stadium floor, Rarity stands nearby. Twilight’s copy of the photo lies in front of her; a passing mare takes surprised notice of it and smiles in recognition. All five are up and beaming at her in an instant; zoom out to frame her as she points off in a new direction. A cut to the group’s perspective reveals that her hoof is aimed at a stretch of parched desert land and rock formations, over which a hawk’s lonely cry rings out. Back to them, all genuinely thrown off balance by this new tip.*)

(*Wipe to a pan across this unforgiving new terrain, accompanied by the chuffing of a train engine, and zoom out to frame Rainbow gazing gloomily out from a window.*)

**Rainbow:** I hope this lead doesn’t turn out to be a dead end.

(*Cut to frame all five, seated on benches in the car. Pinkie groans and squirms in her seat.*)

**Rainbow:** I don’t want to go home empty-hooved after promising we’d find her.

**Fluttershy:** I don’t know how we’ll break it to the Apple family. (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** I don’t know how we’ll break it to Ponyville. (*Quick pan to Pinkie, one rear leg tightly crossed over the other.*)

**Pinkie:** (*through gritted teeth*) I don’t know how I’ll make it to the next stop!

(*Before Twilight can fully wrap her mind around the problem of her friend’s overloaded bladder, the train’s whistle sounds off to mark their arrival at a station. She smiles.*)

**Twilight:** This is Dodge Junction, girls.

(*Cut to a slowing pan across a station not too different from the one in Appleloosa. An outhouse stands at one end of the platform.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Applejack is supposed to have come here after the Rodeo ended.

(*The camera stops moving, steam hisses up, and hooves hit the ground as soon as the car’s steps are lowered.*)

**Twilight:** Let’s fan out and try to find her.

(*Or, in Pinkie’s case, “let’s make a beeline for the toilet” would be a better description. A moaning pink blur flashes past the others.*)

**Pinkie:** (*now o.s.*) Pickles! (*She knocks frantically at the outhouse door.*) Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry! (*Knock again; flush.*) Hurry it up in there!

(*The door is flung open, knocking her silly for a moment, and Applejack emerges with her saddlebags.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing, annoyed*) Some ponies. Sheesh.

(*Her pink friend pays no mind whatsoever, ducking inside and slamming the door—and then throwing it open again with a huge smile.*)

**Pinkie:** Applejack! (*hopping out and around*) I found her, I found her, I found her, I found her, I found her!

(*The others hurry around the corner after her and stop at her enthusiastic pointing. Sure enough, on the other side of the tracks is Applejack, walking across the main street in the Wild West-style settlement of Dodge Junction. Zoom in quickly to a close-up of her face, surprise stamping itself across every square inch, before the two unicorns trot up.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, Applejack, thank heavens!

(*She turns away from them only to find both pegasi on her other side.*)

**Fluttershy:** We’re so glad you’re safe!

**Pinkie:** (*bouncing in place*) I found her, I found her, I found her, I found her!

(*Stopping in midair, she clamps one hind leg over the other as she did on the train, having suddenly remembered her urgent need to tap a kidney.*)

**Pinkie:** (*sheepishly*) Be right back.

(*She zips away; an o.s. door slams, and the rest of the group walks to the now-occupied outhouse. Applejack’s lack of enthusiasm at being tracked down instantly becomes apparent.*)

**Applejack:** Uh…hey, everypony. What’s up?

**Rainbow:** Why didn’t you come back to Ponyville?

**Rarity:** Yes. Why are you here? (*Toilet flush.*)

**Fluttershy:** Are you okay? (*Pinkie pokes her head into view.*)

**Pinkie:** Do you have any snacks?

**Twilight:** (*urgently*) Tell us what happened, Applejack!

(*The blonde’s reluctant silence is broken by a cheerful older mare’s voice with a Western twang.*)

**Mare voice:** Applejack?

(*Pan to a nearby building. Standing at the door is the speaker, a cream-colored earth pony whose two-tone deep red mane/tail are carefully curled and piled high about her head and rump. The mane is held by a yellow band decorated with cherries, her cutie mark shows two of this fruit, and a pink scarf is knotted around her neck. Eyes: light green, with pink shadow and a small beauty mark at the outer corner of one. This is Cherry Jubilee.*)

**Jubilee:** Are these some of your Ponyville friends? (*Twilight and Rarity walk over to her.*)

**Twilight:** Yes, ma’am.

**Rarity:** And you are?

**Jubilee:** (*stepping down to street*) Why, I’m Cherry Jubilee, boss of Cherry-O Ranch. (*Cut to the pair; she continues o.s.*) Hasn’t Applejack told you? (*passing them, stopping by Applejack*) I saw her compete at the Equestria Rodeo. Never saw anypony win so many ribbons in all my life.

**Applejack:** Aw, shucks, Miss Jubilee. You don’t have to go into all that.

**Jubilee:** (*lifting Applejack’s chin*) Aw, she’s so modest. Anyway, I can always use a pony with quick hooves and a strong back. (*Overhead view; all gather around her.*) So when I heard Applejack was looking for a change of scenery, I snapped her up quick as I could and brought her to Dodge Junction.

(*On the end of this, the camera cuts to Applejack’s five friends, who trade a round of worried/suspicious glances. It then returns to Jubilee as she walks away.*)

**Jubilee:** Well, I’ll let you catch up with your friends. (*Close-up of Applejack’s face, running with nervous sweat; she continues o.s.*) See you back at the ranch!

(*Zoom out as Rainbow zips in to hover in her face.*)

**Rainbow:** Change of scenery? What’s that supposed to mean?

**Applejack:** (*testily, walking past her*) It’s no big deal, guys. I thought cherries would be a nice change from apples, so I took the job and came here. That’s it. End of story. (*Cut to the others.*)

**Pinkie:** That’s it? Well, that’s a terrible story!

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Sorry, but that’s all there is to tell. (*Back to her.*) Thanks for checkin’ on me, but y’all can go home now. (*walking off*) Tell my family hi and that I’m doin’ A-OK. (*Rainbow flies over.*)

**Rainbow:** (*really sore*) Excuse me, AJ— (*She lands and starts to back Applejack up.*) —but we didn’t travel all over Equestria searching for you to come home without you!

**Applejack:** (*walking past*) Well, I didn’t ask you to come lookin’ for me! There is nothin’ to tell, and I am not goin’ back to Ponyville! (*She gallops off.*)

**Twilight:** (*to the other four*) I don’t care what she says. Applejack’s not telling us something.

**Rainbow:** Twilight’s right. We gotta get her to spill the beans.

**Pinkie:** *What?!?* She had beans?!? (*sighing angrily*) I told her I was snacky!

(*Wipe to a white mouse nibbling on a cherry. It rests in the angle formed by a post and a bracing member for the ceiling of the room it is in; cherries decorate the background wall. On the start of the next line, tilt down to frame Applejack and Jubilee in a large room that contains the following: a conveyor belt with one end butted up against a hatch in the far wall; two large bins alongside this, one marked with red cherries and the other yellow; a pony-sized version of a hamster exercise wheel. The two mares cross to this last item; Applejack is wearing an apron, a pair of baskets on her back, and a white hairnet over her mane in place of her hat.*)

**Jubilee:** You ready to put your back into it, Applejack?

**Applejack:** Sure am, Miss Jubilee. (*She jumps into the wheel.*)

**Jubilee:** Terrific! Come on in, girls!

(*Here come the other five, all suited up as well; Applejack’s surprise soon gives way to annoyance.*)

**Applejack:** What are you all doin’ here?

**Twilight:** We’re your cherry sorters.

(*They line up parallel to the conveyor, on the opposite side from the two bins.*)

**Twilight:** Shall we get started?

**Applejack:** Fine. (*Close-up of the red bin.*)

**Jubilee:** (*from o.s., pointing to it, chuckling*) Red cherries go in one bin— (*Pan to the yellow; she indicates it.*) —and yellow cherries go in the other.

(*Cut to frame her at the free end of the conveyor.*)

**Jubilee:** Simple as cherry pie. Uh, just one teensy thing to remember…have fun! (*She trots out of the room.*)

**Applejack:** What are you five up to?

**Rarity:** Well, uh…you made working on a cherry orchard sound so delightful.

**Applejack:** (*not buying it*) Uh-huh. Well, just remember—no talkin’ about Ponyville!

**Rainbow:** Fine! (*thumping conveyor*) Why don’t you quit talking and get walking?

(*Needled by this jab, Applejack turns her head bitterly forward and begins to walk inside the wheel. As it turns and gains speed, the pulleys attached to both it and the conveyor start rotating and the belt itself comes to life. From the hatch comes a steady stream of cherries, which the five new workers push off into the appropriate bins as they pass. The work goes on for perhaps ten wordless seconds before Rainbow sneaks a peek in the stoic ranch hand’s direction. Next she glances the other way and gives a furtive nod; quick pan to Twilight, who smiles sneakily and tips her a wink.*)

**Twilight:** (*trying to sound casual*) So, AJ, how was Canterlot?

(*Applejack’s eyes pop as she glares back toward the unicorn.*)

**Twilight:** (*hastily*) Not talking about Ponyville, talking about Canterlot. Totally different town.

**Applejack:** Canterlot was fine.

**Twilight:** Was the Rodeo fun? (*Close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Yes.

(*Her eyes bug out a bit again; cut to a longer shot. Twilight has left her post and is now standing by the wheel.*)

**Twilight:** Did you meet some nice ponies there?

**Applejack:** Some. (*Rainbow flies over.*)

**Rainbow:** (*excitedly*) Really? Did you see Wild Bull Hickok? Oh! What about Calamity Mane?

**Applejack:** Yes, I saw ’em both.

(*Rainbow grins and nods, hoping for an inside scoop, but gets only a dirty look in return. She throws it right back at Applejack as Rarity steps over to the three.*)

**Rarity:** And how did you meet Miss Jubilee?

**Applejack:** Um…well…Miss Jubilee had a cherry stand at the Rodeo. (*speeding up to a trot*) Real good treats.

(*The conveyor accelerates as well, bringing the cherries out at a considerably faster pace. Fluttershy and Pinkie, the only two sorters still on duty, have to work to keep up.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, excuse me?

**Applejack:** (*paying no mind*) Cherry winks, cherry cheesecake, cherry tarts. We struck up a conversation, being orchard folk and all.

**Twilight:** So you told her about Sweet Apple Acres?

**Applejack:** Yes.

**Rainbow:** (*irked*) Did you tell *her* why you weren’t going back?

**Applejack:** No, ’cause it was none of *her* business!

(*She speeds up again, leaving Fluttershy and Pinkie to scramble even faster at the belt.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh…can you *please* slow down?

**Rainbow:** Is it because I made it rain on you that one time? (*Applejack is now galloping.*)

**Applejack:** No!

(*And now the cherries are coming so fast that Fluttershy gives up using her hooves and puts them to the sides of her head.*)

**Fluttershy:** Help!

(*Pan to Pinkie, who frantically gathers up as many as she can hold in her forelegs and dumps them into an indentation in Fluttershy’s hairnet. The latter aims a pair of extremely worried blue-green eyes up at the impromptu fruit basket, and as Applejack keeps racing along, Pinkie makes another desperate grab at the unsorted fruit. Within moments she has filled her baskets and set a pile on her own head, but these moves buy her precious little time.*)

**Twilight:** Is it because you were insulted when I gave you that book on organized orchards?

**Applejack:** No!

(*The gallop speeds up, with the result of bringing fresh cherries out by the bushel. They are now piled high in the bins and on the floor, and Pinkie races to the end of the belt and puts her limbered-up lips to work catching them. In a lot less than ten seconds flat, her mouth is stuffed so full that she faces a real danger of asphyxiation.*)

**Rarity:** Is it because you were insulted when I insulted your hair?

**Applejack:** No, no, *no!*

(*The camera cuts closer on each “no,” ending with an extreme close-up of her narrowed eyes, then backs off.*)

**Applejack:** I’m not tellin’ you why, so just— (*Cut to Fluttershy on the end of this.*)

**Fluttershy:** *STOP!!*

(*Which Applejack does, dropping her haunches to act as the brake. A squeal of wood on hide, a few sparks and some smoke, and inertia does that voodoo that it do so well. The cherries’ forward momentum carries them straight off the belt and across the room—with Applejack finding herself directly in the line of fire. As they smash against her and the wheel, the screen fills with the deep red of their juice and pulp.*)

(*The mess drains away after a moment to show both her and the wheel thoroughly splattered with the ruined fruit. A loud gasp from the others, save Pinkie, whose mouth is still way too full for her own good; Applejack gets her eyes open, glares at them, and walks off.*)

(*Clock wipe to a patch of cherry mush on the sorting room floor. A mop is levitated over to clean this up.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s., dejectedly*) Well, girls…

(*Longer shot. Now out of uniform, she is plying the mop and a bucket.*)

**Twilight:** …we seem to be striking out.

(*Zoom out overhead. The others have also removed their gear and are cleaning up various bits of the place: Rainbow working up high with a mop, Fluttershy using one on the wheel, Pinkie and Rarity scrubbing the conveyor. Pinkie has disposed of her mouthful.*)

**Rainbow:** That’s ’cause we’re playing too nice! (*Close-up of Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** Yes. Desperate times do call for desperate measures. (*Rainbow descends to her.*)

**Rainbow:** It’s time to call in the big guns!

(*Pan quickly to Pinkie, who happily uses her tongue instead of a rag to pick up a bit of cherry slop. The camera cuts closer to her in three steps, ending with a close-up of her unaware yet blissful expression, and the view snaps to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a path leading through the Cherry-O Ranch’s orchards and stopping at a barn and silo. A series of thumps shakes the camera and brings down a shower of leaves and cherries; pan to Applejack, hard at work bucking one tree. She has done away with her sorting-room gear, cleaned herself up, and put her hat back on. After a few hits, she brings down enough fruit to fill a pair of baskets, just in time for an o.s impact to surprise her and Pinkie to zip up from that direction.*)

**Pinkie:** Hey, Applejack. Need some help?

**Applejack:** (*suspiciously*) You promise not to ask me any questions?

**Pinkie:** I promise.

(*The orange-tan earth pony turns away, the pink one follows, and both turn their efforts to harvesting. Applejack bucks as before, while Pinkie shakes a tree to fill her own basket; after a few tense seconds, Pinkie speaks up, cheerful as always.*)

**Pinkie:** Have you ever had a cherry-changa? (*Pause.*) Ooh! Sorry. That was a question.

**Applejack:** That kind of question is fine, Pinkie. No, I-I never had a cherry-changa. (*Pinkie gets in her face.*)

**Pinkie:** Well, no wonder, because I made it up myself. (*slowly backing Applejack up*) A cherry-changa is mashed-up cherries in a tortilla that’s deep-fried. Cherry-changa! Great name, huh?

(*Cut to Applejack as she reaches another tree and tries to block out the chatter.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, but maybe I should call it a chimi-cherry. Ooh, that’s good too. (*She pops up behind Applejack, who walks off.*) Which do you think sounds better? Cherry-changa or chimi-cherry? Or what if I combine them? Chimi-cherry-changa! (*Gasp; she follows Applejack.*) What sounds the funniest?

(*The fed-up cherry picker snags a full basket in her teeth and heads off as Pinkie hops after her.*)

**Pinkie:** I like funny words. One of my favorite funny words is “kumquat.”

(*Cut to a head-on view of Applejack during this line; Pinkie then bounces into view behind her.*)

**Pinkie:** I didn’t make that one up. I would work in a kumquat orchard just so I could say “kumquat” all day! (*singsong, as Applejack walks off*) Kumquat, kumquat, kumquat! (*Pause.*) And “pickle barrel”! (*She catches up again.*) Isn’t that just the funnest thing to say? (*from various angles*) Pickle barrel, pickle barrel, pickle barrel!

(*She ducks out of sight and thrusts a hoof toward the strained orange-tan face.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) Say it with me! (*Cut to frame both; rapid fire.*) Pickle barrel, kumquat, pickle barrel, kumquat, pickle barrel, kumquat, chimi-cherry-changa…

(*Cut to an extreme close-up of Applejack’s constricted, darting eyes on the end of this, then zoom out quickly to frame both as she blows her cool. She has dropped her basket, and the stream of funny words continues under the following.*)

**Applejack:** NOOOOOO!! (*huddling down*) Make it stop! Make it stop!

(*Rainbow darts in and claps a hoof over Pinkie’s mouth, but this only muffles the babbling instead of shutting her up. The pegasus has stuffed corks into her own ears for self-protection.*)

**Rainbow:** The only way to make it stop is for you to spill the beans!

**Applejack:** Never! (*Rainbow uncovers Pinkie’s mouth.*)

**Pinkie:** Speaking of beans, did you ever realize how many words rhyme with “beans”?

(*Cut to a frightened Applejack, backing up toward a nearby tree; Rainbow holds Pinkie out toward her.*)

**Pinkie:** Lean, mean, spleen, unclean, keen, tureen, sardine, preen, green, tambourine…

**Applejack:** (*over end of previous*) All right! All right! I’ll tell everypony what’s goin’ on! (*as all five friends close in*) Just *please* stop talkin’!

(*Only now does the motor-mouthed pony can it; Applejack squats on her haunches by the tree.*)

**Applejack:** But can it wait ’til tomorrow at breakfast? I’m plumb tuckered out. (*Rainbow has removed the corks from her ears.*)

**Rainbow:** Tomorrow, huh? I don’t know.

**Pinkie:** Do you Pinkie-promise?

(*This demand is accompanied by the mime she used in “Green Isn’t Your Color”—“cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye.” Applejack mulls it over, then sighs heavily.*)

**Applejack:** I will tell you the whole truth at breakfast. (*miming*) Pinkie-promise.

(*The hoof to her own eye puts the others at ease. Dissolve to the exterior of the Cherry-O barn and silo at sunrise of the following morning. A rooster’s crowing marks the start of the day as the sky goes from orange to blue; inside, Twilight leads her four fellow travelers down a hall.*)

**Twilight:** I’m glad we’re finally gonna get some answers from Applejack. (*Rainbow brings up the rear.*)

**Rainbow:** (*not convinced*) Yeah…maybe.

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry, Rainbow. She’s gotta fess up after making a Pinkie promise.

(*They stop at a closed door and Twilight knocks; cut to the other side as she opens it. Pinkie is first to put her head in past the frame.*)

**Pinkie:** Good morning, Applejack! You ready for break—

(*Her face goes slack with surprise, as have the four behind her; cut to their perspective and zoom in slightly. They are looking into a bedroom with a neatly made bed, nightstand, closet, drawn windowshade, pictures on walls—and no Applejack in sight. Back to Pinkie, who voices a huge gasp as her pupils shrink to points. Shock gives way to lip-chewing, eyebrow-lowering rancor, then a paroxysm that sends sweat pouring down her reddening face and bulging cheeks. Her mental steam whistle works its way toward supersonic frequencies for several unbearable seconds; finally she straightens up with eyes burning and steam gushing from both ears.*)

**Pinkie:** *Nopony breaks a Pinkie promise!*

(*A vivid pink blur marks her top-speed departure, leaving the other four to scramble after her as best they can. Cut to the Dodge Junction train station, where an uneasy Applejack waits on the platform along with a few other travelers. She trots in place, saddlebags slung up, as if ready to break into a sprint at any moment—and the next voice instantly makes her wish she had.*)

**Pinkie:** (*from o.s.*) *AAAPPLLLEJAAACK!!*

(*Cut to the approaching quintet and zoom in quickly to a close-up of Pinkie’s face. Her eyes burn yellow as in the hall, but no steam comes from her ears this time.*)

**Pinkie:** (*voice reverberating weirdly*) *YOU PINKIE-PROMISED!!*

(*The fugitive has enough time for one strangled yelp before galloping off the platform.*)

**Pinkie:** Applejack, come back here!

(*Cut to an idle stagecoach and four-stallion team standing in front of a building.*)

**Applejack:** (*galloping up*) Giddyup, fellas! (*She jumps in and stands up behind the driver’s seat.*) I gotta get the heck outta Dodge!

(*They start off with a rear and neigh, just ahead of the pursuing five.*)

**Pinkie:** She’s gonna get away! (*They stop.*)

**Twilight:** Oh, no, she won’t! (*pointing ahead*) Look, girls!

(*Quick pan to a cart, with harnesses for two ponies, sitting empty in the street. A moment later, both unicorns and the earth pony are riding in it while the two pegasi pull.*)

**Pinkie:** Follow that stagecoach!

(*Applejack risks a quick glance behind herself. She has a decent lead on her pursuers, but they begin to close the gap.*)

**Pinkie:** Oh, we have you now!

(*A rabbit hops into the middle of the street, prompting Fluttershy’s eyes to shrink in horror at the thought of turning it into roadkill. She digs her hooves into the dirt, and the whole cart pivots 180 degrees around her to throw up a screenful of dust. When the view clears, the wheels have stopped inches from the rabbit, which sniffs curiously at them and hops away. Rainbow rolls her eyes wearily at Fluttershy’s sudden attack of compassion, then surprises her by hauling the cart ahead without warning.*)

(*Applejack smiles at the mishap as the chase moves out of town and into the desert. Close-up; a bump nearly shakes her down to the floor.*)

**Applejack:** Whoa! What the hay?

(*She looks off to her left. A longer shot frames Twilight and company, who have pulled even.*)

**Rainbow:** Pull over!

(*The cart bangs into the coach—the source of the first bump—and Applejack leans over the side toward it.*)

**Applejack:** Hey! Cut that out! (*Another hit; she falls between the passenger seats.*) Whooaa!

(*She climbs back up and addresses her team.*)

**Applejack:** I’ll pay you double to outrun them! (*They speed up.*)

**Twilight:** We’ll pay you triple to slow down! (*They do so; the cart moves ahead.*)

**Applejack:** I’ll pay you quadruple to leave them in the dust!

(*Which they waste no time in literally doing, so that the five chasers are left choking and coughing in the murk. The view clears after a few seconds.*)

**Rarity:** That was rude!

**Pinkie:** Get them! GET THEM!!

**Rainbow:** Come on, Fluttershy!

(*Both of them shift up a couple of gears and quickly cut into the coach’s lead. Applejack gets a nasty surprise when she looks back to find them closing in.*)

**Applejack:** (*snapping reins*) Hyah! (*Cut to the two lead stallions; she continues o.s.*) Come on, y’all! Go! (*Back to her.*) Go!

(*Even this is not enough to keep her ahead of the cart, and once it has pulled up, Pinkie hurls herself across the gap. Applejack soon finds a pair of furious blue eyes boring into her own at point-blank range.*)

**Pinkie:** Applejack, you broke your Pinkie promise! Apologize!

**Applejack:** Pinkie, I did not break my promise!

**Pinkie:** Wha…?

**Applejack:** If y’all reckon back, I told you that I would tell you everything *at breakfast!* But I didn’t come to breakfast! I *couldn’t* come to that breakfast! Not if it meant tellin’ y’all what happened!

**Pinkie:** Well, I…I…

**Applejack:** I’m sorry, Pinkie, but I can’t tell y’all the truth. (*Cut to Twilight and Rarity, crestfallen; she continues o.s.*) I just can’t! (*Back to her and Pinkie.*)

**Pinkie:** Well, I heard a “sorry” in there, so that’ll have to do for now. I’ll get a real apology later. (*jumping backward off coach*) Rarity, catch me!

**Rarity:** What?! Pinkie!

(*Cut briefly to her perspective of the pony plummeting toward her as she screams, then to a head-on view of the cart. The impact dumps both Pinkie and Rarity over the side and leaves Twilight as the only passenger.*)

**Twilight:** Rainbow! Go back! (*Zoom out to frame her.*)

**Rainbow:** No time! They knew what they were getting into!

(*As the vehicle zooms away toward the horizon, the two jettisoned ponies sit up—badly scuffed, manes askew and full of cactus burrs. Pinkie grins at Rarity, who coughs up another burr and shoots her an icy glare that would freeze her solid if it were at all possible to do so. Meanwhile, Applejack’s coach races over the parched earth, turning it into a drab khaki blur. Not far ahead of her is a railroad crossing whose barriers swing down to block the way as the warning lights and bells start up. The sight throws Applejack for a loop; here comes a speeding train, right on schedule.*)

**Applejack:** (*smiling wickedly*) Yes! (*She pulls her hat down a bit lower.*) Hyah!

(*A snap of the reins sends her straining team toward the crossing at a truly ludicrous speed. As the train thunders ahead, the two lead stallions toss a puzzled glance back at her focused, almost crazed countenance. Fluttershy and Rainbow gallop flat out, but cannot catch Applejack before her coach smashes through the barriers. The train rolls by a fraction of a second later, the camera positioned so that the locomotive comes straight toward it to black out the screen.*)

(*Snap to the coach, which finally slows to a stop as Applejack jumps down. The four stallions have reached their physical limits, but her attention is focused entirely on the passing train.*)

**Applejack:** Yee-haa!

**Stallions:** Lady, you’re trouble!

(*And with that, they gallop off, taking the coach with them.*)

**Applejack:** Hah! (*Her perspective of the cart, seen through gaps between the cars.*) Try and catch me now!

(*The camera shifts to roof level, just in time for the winged steeds to take the cart airborne.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, nuts.

(*She can only stare openmouthed as it soars over her head and lands neatly close by. Fluttershy heaves for breath as Twilight and Rainbow look daggers at their absent friend, who glares right back and gallops away. Rainbow, having had quite enough of this high-speed chase, pulls out of the harness.*)

**Rainbow:** (*flying after Applejack*) Not so fast!

(*She lays a flying tackle on the escapee that plows her out of sight. The sound of their impact on the earth is accompanied by a ribbon and medal tumbling backwards into view. In close-up, a red second-place ribbon drops among them; pan ahead slightly to frame a disconcerted Applejack flat on her belly, with Rainbow standing over her. The awards are among several that have spilled from her dropped saddlebags. Long silence.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice trembling*) Fine! (*covering eyes*) Now you know.

(*Twilight and Fluttershy approach the pair, the latter now out of the harness as well.*)

**Twilight:** Know what? (*Applejack looks up and stands.*)

**Applejack:** Well, just look! (*Cut to Twilight, eyeing the spread.*)

**Twilight:** (*smiling*) I am! You won an amazing number of ribbons, just like Miss Jubilee said! (*A red-ribboned medal is hung into view.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Don’t you get it? (*Cut to her.*) There’s every color of ribbon down there. Every color…but… (*slumping onto haunches, dropping medal*) …blue.

(*Cut to Twilight and Fluttershy, who are starting to understand the reason for Applejack’s distraught tone.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) I came in fourth, third… (*Zoom out slightly; Rainbow steps over.*) …even second. (*Cut to her and zoom in.*) But I didn’t win one first prize—and I certainly didn’t win any prize money. (*Rainbow approaches.*)

**Rainbow:** But the telegram said you were gonna send money. (*Applejack stands up.*)

**Applejack:** That’s why I came here. (*walking off*) I wanted to *earn* some money. After that big old sendoff Ponyville gave me, I just didn’t have the nerve to come home empty-hooved. (*hanging her head*) I couldn’t come home a failure.

**Twilight:** (*smiling; Fluttershy does the same*) Applejack, you’re not a failure. (*Rainbow pops up.*)

**Rainbow:** And we’re your friends. (*winking*) We don’t care if you came in fiftieth place. You’re still number one in our books.

**Applejack:** So…you’re not upset or disappointed?

**Twilight, Fluttershy, Rainbow:** (*shaking heads*) Mmm-mmm! (*Applejack zips to Twilight.*)

**Applejack:** But what about the Mayor? I don’t think I can face her and tell her I didn’t get that money to fix the broken roof.

**Fluttershy:** (*reproving, but gentle*) Applejack! We can always find a way to fix that hole in the roof, but if you don’t come back, we’ll never be able to fix the hole in our hearts.

(*Applejack finally smiles and shares a nuzzle with Twilight and Fluttershy on the end of this. Although Rainbow is out of sight at this point, the camera tilts up to frame her hovering a few feet overhead—and crying softly to boot. She shakes herself out of it angrily.*)

**Rainbow:** Darn it! Now you got me acting all sappy!

(*In close-up, the blonde aims a warm smile toward her o.s. friends. Dissolve to another close-up, this one framed in a train window during the journey home.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over, dictating*) “Dear Princess Celestia…”

(*Zoom out slightly; she waves cheerfully.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) “It’s a tad easier to be proud when you come in first than it is when you finish further back.”

(*The train pulls in at the Ponyville station, whose platform is crammed with Apple family members, well-wishers, and her dog Winona.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) “But there’s no reason to hide when you don’t do as well as you’d hoped.”

(*As soon as she steps onto the platform, Winona happily knocks her flat, to the amusement of Twilight and Fluttershy on the train.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) “You can’t run away from your problems.”

(*Pan along the platform; Macintosh tries and fails to hold back his tears of joy as the other ponies smile in welcome.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) “Better to run *to* your friends and family.”

(*Macintosh, Granny, and Bloom dog-pile on Applejack as the rest of the group watches happily, including a now-hovering Rainbow. Dissolve to a stretch of the desert railroad well outside Dodge Junction. A handcar rolls squeakily into view on the tracks, with Pinkie and Rarity working opposite ends of the handle to keep it moving. Since none of the other four apparently thought to come back for them, they are making their way home the only way they can, short of walking.*)

**Pinkie:** I mean, which do you think, Rarity? (*in rhythm with handle motions*) Chimi-cherry or cherry-changa? Chimi-cherry? Cherry-changa? Chimi-cherry? Cherry-changa? Chimi-cherry? Cherry-changa? Chimi-cherry? Cherry-changa?

(*She keeps repeating these two names under the next line.*)

**Rarity:** (*to herself, exasperated*) When I get back, you’re gonna get it, Rainbow Dash!

(*Now she adds her own sotto-voce grumblings to Pinkie’s incessant repetitions as the handcar carries the two disheveled mares toward the horizon. Fade to black.*)