**SOMEPONY TO WATCH OVER ME**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the main barn of Sweet Apple Acres at sunrise. Zoom in slowly to the sound of indistinct, muffled voices, then cut to an extreme close-up of the knob on a closed door inside. The voices are coming from its other side, and an anxious Apple Bloom stands up into view to put an ear to the wood. This does nothing at all to decipher the conversation; in a longer shot, she begins to pace the floor while Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle sit on their haunches nearby. Bloom’s nerves string themselves tighter and tighter with every step that clops against the planks. Cut to her perspective of the door, zooming in slowly, then to her with lower lip caught in teeth and repeat the zoom as her eyes begin to quiver under the stress. She has stopped pacing and sat on her haunches, facing the door, and the voices can no longer be heard at this point.*)

**Scootaloo:** Whatever they decide, Apple Bloom, we’ll be here for you.

**Sweetie:** Totally. Even though it could change everything for you— (*Cut to Bloom; she continues o.s.*) —forever, and ever!

(*Any semblance of calm in the yellow filly’s demeanor goes right down the drain when she hears these last three words. The doorknob begins to rattle a bit, and the door swings inward a fraction. Scootaloo and Sweetie move toward their friend as the hinges creak ominously. The first shadow to emerge from the gloom beyond has an outline around its head that resembles the brim of Applejack’s hat, and all three Cutie Mark Crusaders snap to stolid-faced, haunch-sitting positions as she steps out. Right behind her are Granny Smith and Big Macintosh; the three grown ponies, their eyes solemnly closed, line up facing the three young ones. Sweat begins to dribble down Bloom’s face, but she maintains her composure.*)

(*The eyes open, and Granny aims a searching glance toward each of her two oldest grandchildren before addressing the Crusaders.*)

**Granny:** (*slowly, weighing every word*) So, we here have decided…

(*The Crusaders sit up a little straighter, toughening themselves for whatever pronouncement might come next. However, the deadly serious mood breaks when the faces under the blond, orange, and white manes break out in broad smiles.*)

**Granny:** …that you’re old enough to stay home alone and take care of the chores yourself for the afternoon!

(*Cut to the Crusaders on the end of this; initial dumbstruck reactions give way to happy gasps, but Bloom quickly recovers herself and puts her forelegs out to hold the others back. All three drop to all fours, their previous stoicism re-establishing itself.*)

**Bloom:** I accept your decision.

(*Exeunt the trio, down the hall and around a corner. Bloom, Macintosh, and Granny turn away as they disappear from sight, leaving only their shadows visible against the far wall. The quiet is suddenly shattered by a cacophony of giddy squeals and exclamations from the youngsters, surprising the older ones for only a moment before they smile to themselves again. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the sun peeking over a cloud in a blue daytime sky. Pan/tilt down to the barnyard, where two wagons stand side by side. Each has a brown/white-striped awning that covers all sides and ends. The side awning panels are each decorated with a picture of a pie, and each roof sports a large model of this dessert bobbing on the end of a spring. One wagon’s awning is completely closed up, but the other has its side panel open to expose shelves beneath; a few pies are already laid out on these, and Applejack walks over with three more balanced on her nose. Macintosh is hauling in five more on his back, while she has a pair of heavy-duty saddlebags on hers. She noses her pies into place on the shelves with a grin; now Bloom zips out of the barn with three more perched on her head.*)

**Bloom:** (*breathlessly*) Stayin’ home alone, by myself! (*galloping across yard*) On my own!

(*Not paying attention to the path, she runs smack into Applejack’s rump and falls backward onto her own. The desserts are launched skyward; a horrified Applejack angles her head to follow their trajectory, then dives across the grass with forelegs desperately outstretched. One, two, three pies stack themselves neatly on her hooves, and the green eyes shoot a hard glare back at the yellow filly—whose mood does not shift a bit.*)

**Bloom:** I can’t believe I’m really doin’ it! (*Applejack gets the pies stowed away.*)

**Applejack:** Now hey there, filly. I know you’re excited— (*She lowers the awning.*) —but bein’ the only pony here to take care of the day’s chores is a big responsibility. (*Walk to the front end.*)

**Bloom:** (*saluting*) I know it!

(*She steps after Applejack, who has buckled herself into the harness of this wagon; Macintosh is in the other.*)

**Bloom:** And it means everything to me that y’all think I’m grown-up enough to handle it. I won’t let you down. (*Granny crosses to them, wearing her own saddlebags.*)

**Granny:** Well, if’n I’m gonna make my train, I best to be off. When Great-Aunt Pineapple says a pony’s gots to arrive by a certain time, you’d better be there! (*She turns to Bloom, patting her head.*) You be sure and take care now, Apple Bloom. (*walking to Bloom, Macintosh*) Y’all take care as well. I don’t know which of your delivery routes is tougher.

(*Close-up of the blond mare, who gets a map handed to her and takes it in her teeth; on the next line; cut to Macintosh, who takes a second one in his hoof and eyes it with trepidation.*)

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) You’re each headed to a mighty hard-to-reach town. (*Cut to frame all three; Applejack puts her map away in her bags.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup. (*Zipper closed.*)

**Applejack:** We know, Granny. That’s the only reason I agreed to let Apple Bloom stay behind alone.

(*Cut to the little sister on the end of this line.*)

**Bloom:** (*puzzled*) It is? (*Macintosh has now stowed his map as well.*)

**Applejack:** (*smiling, lifting Bloom’s chin*) Oh, I didn’t mean it like that, sugar cube. It’s just…I take your job as my big sister real serious— (*inclining head toward bags*) —which is why I spent all night makin’ this.

(*Back to Bloom as she finishes; “this” is a very, very long scroll whose end unrolls as it drops into view. The whole thing is then tossed down, landing on her head and covering her face.*)

**Bloom:** What is it?

**Applejack:** (*as Bloom pulls it partly away*) Just a little list of helpful reminders.

**Bloom:** (*reading*) “There’s some soup for you in the ’frigerator.” (*Cut to Granny, slightly taken aback; she continues o.s.*) “Be sure not to heat it up too much.” (*Pan to Macintosh, also puzzled.*) “If it’s hot, blow on it to cool it off.” (*Cut to Bloom.*) “And take little sips. If you gulp, you could get hiccups.”

(*She shifts the lengths of parchment off her head.*)

**Bloom:** You don’t have to worry about me. I can take care of myself *and* the chores. I’m ready for this.

**Applejack:** Huh…I guess you are. I’m just not so sure I am. (*Little sister zips over to her.*)

**Bloom:** *But* you trust me and believe I’m grown-up enough to handle this, right?

(*A big ingratiating grin comes as the capper to this line; Macintosh and Granny return it and nod heartily, but Applejack lets go with a heavy sigh when the camera pans to a close-up of her.*)

**Applejack:** Right. (*The others start out.*) Okay, then. Good luck, little sis. (*She is suddenly shoved forward.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s., hastily*) Okay, great, see you soon, bye!

(*On the end of this, cut to her pushing the rear end of Applejack’s wagon to get it rolling. The latter catches up to Macintosh, throwing a slightly uneasy smile back over her shoulder, and a cabbie stallion helps Granny climb into his taxi carriage. Once she is properly seated, he hitches himself up and starts galloping; there is a round of goodbyes among all four Apples, from both on and off camera. Bloom waves after her departing siblings and watches intently until both have dropped out of sight over the farthest rise, then turns jubilantly away from the road.*)

**Bloom:** (*jumping around*) Woo-hoo! I’m alone! At home! I’m home alone! (*She flops onto her back; overhead shot, zooming in slowly.*) This is gonna be so awesome!

(*Dissolve to Applejack and Macintosh pulling their wagons through a stretch of forest. Applejack, in the lead, keeps throwing unnerved glances around herself in contrast to her brother’s calm, steady progress. All too soon, sweat starts trickling down the orange-tan face and she gets to chewing her lower lip and biting a hoof for a moment. In close-up, she stops short with a grunt only to get bumped forward by the o.s. Macintosh; a sheepish chuckle, and the camera pans back to him. Rubbing his head from the impact and shooting her a dirty look, he begins to pull around.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Sorry, Big Mac. (*Head-on view of both; he comes up alongside.*) I was just frettin’ a bit about Apple Bloom. You think she’s gonna be okay on her own?

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup. (*He starts ahead.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing, following*) I just keep on thinkin’ of things I forgot to put on her list. Like, I didn’t write down that if she wants to get a spoon out of the drawer, she needs to open the drawer first.

(*Close-up of the red stallion, whose expression is equal parts concern and irritation; zoom out to frame Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) I know I’m prob’ly just being silly…

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

**Applejack:** …but I know I’d feel a heap better if I could just check on Apple Bloom one last time.

(*Furtively, she begins to drop back—but not without attracting a popeyed look of surprise from Macintosh. All eight wheels stop once she has completely backed out of view; cut to frame him looking back up the road at her. She has turned her wagon completely around.*)

**Applejack:** You go on ahead and make your delivery. (*heading out*) I’m just gonna take a quick peek and then I’ll make mine.

(*She completely misses his eye roll that might best be translated as, “Who’s more neurotic—Twilight Sparkle or my sister?” Shaking his head resignedly and walking toward the camera, he resumes his journey. Fade to black as his form fills the screen.*)

(*Fade in to a long shot of the barn.*)

**Bloom:** (*from inside*) Okay. Number one-seventy-two.

(*Cut to a stretch of Applejack’s very long list unrolled on a table inside, one end spilling over the edge, and pan to Bloom on the start of the next line. Each item has a check box next to it, and all but the last two are marked off.*)

**Bloom:** (*reading*) “Make sure to pump the bellows to keep the stove warm.”

(*She darts over to the kitchen stove and jumps a few times on the bellows attached to it at floor level, causing spurts of flame to issue from the burners. Extreme close-up of one of the empty boxes; a pencil checks it off.*)

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

(*Back to her, now standing at a closed door and reaching for its knob.*)

**Bloom:** (*voice over*) “Make sure the hats-and-bows closet is fully stocked.”

(*During this line, she opens the door; behind it is a mass of these two items, most of which are duplicates of the ones used by Applejack and Bloom, but a few are slightly darker shades. They totter a bit, threatening to spill out into the hall, but she quickly slams the door and puts her back against it for good measure. Extreme close-up of the last empty box, being marked.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Check! (*Cut to her at the table; she spits the pencil from her mouth.*) That’s everything on Applejack’s list.

(*Longer shot of the table, which is in the kitchen. Among the items ranged about the tabletop and floor are jars of jelly, a stack of folded linens, another of bowls, a cooking pot and a bowl of noodles with sauce.*)

**Bloom:** And now that my chores are done— (*She lets go of her end; the sheet rolls up and away from her, ending up on the floor.*)—since there’s no one else here, I get to make all the decisions!

(*Cut to her, dancing by a wind-up phonograph in the living room.*)

**Bloom:** (*voice over*) If I want to listen to music… (*to camera*) …I can!

(*She sits sideways in a rocking chair, reading a book; others are piled nearby on the floor.*)

**Bloom:** (*voice over*) If I want to read a book… (*to camera*) …I can!

(*The kitchen again; she jumps onto the table.*)

**Bloom:** If I want to just stand here in the kitchen talkin’ to myself… (*standing on one hind leg*) …I can!

(*The front door is visible through a doorway behind her, and Applejack throws it open. She has unhitched herself from her pie wagon and shucked her saddlebags.*)

**Applejack:** Apple Bloom! (*A yelp from the latter.*)

**Bloom:** (*losing balance*) Whoooaaa!

(*Down she goes, upsetting the table and sending assorted jellies flying amid a great clatter of kitchenware. Where she ends up is on the floor, sprawled out spreadeagle amid a brand-new mess with the upended noodle bowl on her head.*)

**Bloom:** (*groaning*) Applejack? (*Big sister rushes into the kitchen.*)

**Applejack:** I came back to check on you, and I’m so glad I did.

(*She takes in the extent of the damage and spillage—which, in a series of cuts from place to place, is seen to involve most of the kitchen. As she continues, Bloom stands up and begins to shake the mess off herself.*)

**Applejack:** I never thought about how dangerous things are around here.

**Bloom:** Thanks, but I’m really gonna be okay. (*Applejack yanks her into a tight hug.*)

**Applejack:** You are now— (*looking her straight on*) —because I’m here, and I’m stayin’! (*Another hug.*) No way am I leavin’ my little baby sister home alone all by herself.

(*And no way is she noticing the resentful expression making its way onto the little baby sister’s face—at least not until Bloom disentangles herself.*)

**Bloom:** I’m not a baby! I can take care of myself! And what about those pies you’re supposed to deliver? (*She walks off across the kitchen.*)

**Applejack:** Pies? Huh. Family’s way more important than pies. (*She trots across, broom in teeth.*)

**Bloom:** But I’m fine! And actually… (*Applejack starts sweeping.*) …this was kind of your fault.

(*The blond apple farmer stops and takes her chompers off the handle.*)

**Applejack:** I know. (*She grabs Bloom’s cheeks.*) I should never have left you alone.

(*Not at all the response Bloom had hoped to hear, based on her wide-eyed stare in response as Applejack backs off.*)

**Bloom:** But I don’t need you lookin’ after me. I’m perfectly capable of stayin’ home alone—really!

(*A glance around herself, and she dashes away and comes back with one end of the unrolled list, the last bits of food residue falling away from her.*)

**Bloom:** Just look! (*reading*) “There’s some soup for you in the ’frigerator.” (*She glares at the appliance; cut to Applejack, looking out a side door.*)

**Applejack:** What was that? (*Pan to Bloom at the fridge.*)

**Bloom:** Watch me!

(*Open the door. Jump up to grab the top shelf and the full noodle bowl and cooking pot placed there. Set the entire unit shaking from her impact and tip over an open jar of grape jelly resting on top. As the viscous purple contents stream down, Bloom has only time for one panicked glance upward before taking a glob to the face.*)

**Bloom:** Whoa!

(*Scrabbling for any bit of firm purchase, she instead gets hold of the pot and drags it down with her, dumping the soup it holds as she falls o.s. The bowl goes over the edge as well, showering its contents. Applejack turns her attention away from the door.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, no!

(*She hurries across the kitchen; cut to a very grumpy Bloom, sitting on her haunches amid a puddle of leftovers and drenched in the stuff. Zoom out as Applejack reaches her.*)

**Applejack:** This is worse than I thought! (*Bloom starts to shake herself off.*) Well, don’t worry, Apple Bloom. I’m here now and I’m not leavin’ you home alone ever again.

(*As the yellow filly starts to lick gunk off a hoof, Applejack loops a foreleg around her for a surprise hug.*)

**Applejack:** I’m stickin’ right by your side— (*pulling her upright*) —always!

(*Zoom in slowly on Bloom’s flabbergasted countenance and snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the barnyard. Applejack stands here, looking about the place, then sets out across it.*)

**Applejack:** (*calling out*) Apple Bloom?…Apple Bloom?

(*The object of her search is currently hiding around a corner of the barn and cleaned up after her kitchen mishaps.*)

**Bloom:** (*to herself, as Applejack walks o.s.*) Applejack’s just overreactin’ a bit. (*walking away*) I’m sure she’ll snap out of it.

(*She gets the daylights scared out of her upon very nearly running into Applejack ,who has come around to the kitchen door.*)

**Bloom:** Whoa!

**Applejack:** You need somethin’? I’m right here.

**Bloom:** (*irritably, touching Applejack’s shoulder*) I know you mean well, but I don’t need you watchin’ over me. I can take care of things myself!

(*She gallops off as the overly protective big sister chuckles good-naturedly to herself, then stops near a pile of fallen leaves among the apple trees.*)

**Bloom:** Look!

(*Close-up of the handle of a farm tool—likely a rake, given the situation—propped against a tree. She snatches this up in her teeth and strides along, plying it against the ground and sending up a few scatters of leaves, but after a few steps she stops and her eyes pop in sudden surprise.*)

**Bloom:** Huh?

(*She tilts the handle upward, the camera following the motion to frame the rake’s business end—which has had a pillow tied on to cover the ends of its tines. Bloom lets it fall from her mouth.*)

**Bloom:** (*angrily*) Hey! (*Applejack walks over, grinning.*) Who put pillows on this rake?

**Applejack:** (*chuckling innocently*) Oh, I don’t know. (*pinching Bloom’s cheek*) Maybe someone who really loves her little sister and doesn’t want her to get an owie?

(*She goes the extra step by plunking a crash helmet onto the red-maned head; its owner just snarls quietly to herself. A rain of leaves tumbles down over the screen and clears to show her running a critical hoof over the bark of one tree; behind her, Applejack stands at another one, pulling with her teeth on a rope that runs up and o.s. into its branches. Bloom has shed the helmet.*)

**Bloom:** Hey, Applejack! Watch me buck these apples on my own without anything bad happenin’ to me.

(*She delivers a couple of solid strikes with her rear hooves and stands there smugly, but nothing more substantial than a few leaves comes down around her. Cockiness turns into total confusion after a moment.*)

**Bloom:** Huh?

(*A glance upward, and the camera cuts to the branches overhead—in which a net has been strung up to catch the dislodged fruit. A longer shot of the area reveals that every tree has been similarly equipped, thus explaining the rope Applejack was tightening. The big sister peeks out from behind a tree, either missing or ignoring the venomous glare coming from the red-gold eyes, and claps the helmet firmly back in place. Bloom’s snarl picks up a few decibels.*)

(*An apple tree floats across the screen, the view wiping behind it to show her trundling a wheelbarrow full of apples with the handle in her mouth. She has again ditched the helmet. One apple falls by the wayside in a brief jounce, but she keeps pushing on; in close-up, the thing lists a bit as the sound of mechanical work drifts back to her.*)

**Bloom:** Huh? Hmm.

(*It settles back onto a steady course, the camera zooming out to frame Applejack walking alongside with a screwdriver in her teeth and then cutting to a close-up of the front wheel. She has added a pair of training wheels, and she wastes no time in ramming the helmet back onto Bloom’s head. No snarl this time, only a very disgruntled glare.*)

(*Dissolve to a close-up of the front door, seen from inside with its top half open. The top of Bloom’s covered head comes into view from outside, and she lets herself into the barn only to stop with an incredulous look off to one side. A series of cuts and pans around the living room picks out a new series of extreme safety measures: bookshelves boarded over to keep their contents from falling, furniture covered in plastic, all breakable items and protruding corners well padded. She lets out a hearty growl of frustration.*)

**Bloom:** For the love of… (*sighing, walking in*) …you’ve gone and baby-proofed *everything!* (*Applejack peeks in behind her, no longer holding the screwdriver.*)

**Applejack:** (*chuckling*) Yep. (*walking in*) Your big sister let you down once, but I promise it won’t ever happen again.

**Bloom:** But really, I’m fine! (*crossing floor*) I can take care of myself! I don’t need you watchin’ over me! (*Applejack whips over and scoops her up as if trying to burp a baby.*)

**Applejack:** Aw, that’s sweet. I appreciate you tryin’ to make me feel better, but don’t worry. I’ll always be here for you… (*She slams a second helmet onto Bloom’s head.*) …always!

(*Yes, this helmet went right on top of the one already covering the bright red mane. Its presence is enough to send Bloom into a rising growl and grit her teeth to keep in what might have been a stream of wonderfully colorful language. Dissolve to a close-up of her, with no headwear except her bow and looking quite down in the mouth. She stands behind a railing, with her forelegs draped listlessly over it, and sighs heavily. On the start of the next line, zoom out to frame all three Crusaders in her bedroom. Safety rails have been added to both sides and the footboard of her bed, on whose mattress she is standing, and pillows are laid out on the floor alongside. Scootaloo and Sweetie are down among them.*)

**Bloom:** And that’s the reason I asked y’all to come over quick. (*The door is heard opening.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Hey, Apple Bloom! (*Cut to her, peeking in.*) You need anythin’? A snack? A hoof massage? Maybe a snack while havin’ a hoof massage? (*Bloom climbs down.*)

**Sweetie:** Why, that sounds delightful!

**Bloom:** (*through gritted teeth, covering Sweetie’s mouth*) No, thank you!

**Applejack:** (*as Bloom tries to close the door*) Okay, well, you can count on me being close by if’n you need anythin’.

(*Once the filly has finally shut Applejack out of the room, she sighs and crosses to the other two Crusaders.*)

**Bloom:** You see what I mean? (*sitting on haunches*) If this keeps up, I’m never gonna be able to do anything without Applejack hoverin’ over me.

**Scootaloo, Sweetie:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. (*Bloom paces past them.*)

**Scootaloo:** So what can we do? (*hoof to chin*) Hmmm…

**Sweetie:** Uh…

(*Cut to just outside the bedroom window; Bloom walks toward it as the others continue their thinking.*)

**Scootaloo:** Um…

(*As the young earth pony stares morosely out through the glass, the camera cuts to an overhead shot of Applejack’s parked pie wagon and zooms in slowly. When it cuts back to the window, her eyes widen with the inspiration that has just struck.*)

**Bloom:** Hang on a sec… (*smiling*) …I got it! (*Cut to her inside.*)

**Sweetie:** (*from o.s.*) What? (*She and Scootaloo gallop over.*)

**Bloom:** The pies! I’ll sneak out and deliver them. (*crossing to them*) Granny said that they were goin’ to some incredibly hard-to-reach town. (*walking to dresser*) If I can do it alone, that’ll show Applejack I don’t need somepony watchin’ over me.

**Scootaloo:** Just one problem. Your sister’s gonna come back and check on you any minute! (*She thinks hard.*)

**Sweetie:** Which means you need an escape plan.

**Scootaloo:** Oh! (*wings buzzing*) And I got an idea for one!

(*A lightning-fast gallop brings her to a wardrobe, which she opens to reveal an abundance of spare bows piled up in its bottom. She gestures at these with a shining-eyed grin; a moment later she has put one on her own head, clapped one atop Sweetie’s curls, and dived up over the bed rails and under the blankets. Bloom and Sweetie climb up to check the results, but all they can see of their friend is the back of her head due to the bedclothes and the position of her body. Her very loud and very inauthentic snores ring out for a moment before she sits up.*)

**Scootaloo:** See? (*adjusting bow*) It’ll look just like you’re sleeping in bed. Sweetie and I can take turns. (*closing eyes, half-opening one to peek at them*) That way, when one of us gets tired, the other can take over. (*She sits up.*) Brilliant, huh?

**Sweetie:** (*nodding, grinning*) Mmm-hmm!

**Bloom:** (*smiling slyly*) You know what? (*Huge smile.*) It is! (*She jumps down to the floor.*) I got a feelin’ this just might work.

***Serene banjo/string/drum melody, moderate 4 (E major)***

(*Zoom in to a close-up as the background goes pink behind her, then zoom out. All three Crusaders stand here in separate spotlights.*)

**Bloom:** We’re gonna make my sister see

(*She hops downward off the crusts of floating pies.*)

I don’t need her watchin’ over me

(*The last one she lands on carries her close to the camera until her face fills the screen.*)

***Song ends abruptly*** (*Scootaloo’s hoof is shoved into her mouth at the same time*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Stop!

(*She leans into view as the sound of hooves on wood starts to approach from outside.*)

**Scootaloo:** No time for a song! Applejack’s coming!

**Sweetie:** If you’re gonna go, we’ve gotta get you out of here now! (*Cut to a point between the three; they pile up one front hoof each.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Cutie Mark Crusaders, let’s do it!

(*Zoom out to frame all three on the end of this as they pull apart and lift the hooves toward the ceiling. Cut to outside the window; Bloom shoves up the sash and hoists herself out, only to end up hanging by her forelegs from the sill.*)

**Bloom:** Whoa!

(*She drops out of sight an instant before the others rush up to try and grab her. There is a rustling sound from below o.s., accompanied by their uncomprehending stares, and the camera cuts to an equally flummoxed Bloom lying on her back. Her drop has been interrupted not by the ground, but by a row of hay bales that apparently have no business being in this particular spot in the space-time continuum. As she sits up to her haunches, a zoom out frames both the window and the fact that these bales are at the top of a pile that reaches to only a couple of feet below the sill. Bloom looks down toward the ground; tilt down to show that the pile is built as a wide staircase that stops right next to the wagon. She snaps a salute up to her friends, having realized that this bit of her sister’s overzealous baby-proofing has actually come in handy, and dives away as they wave to her. The sound of the wheels starting to turn drifts up to them, and she is quick to get into the harness and start hauling up the road.*)

(*The pegasus and unicorn fillies keep waving until Applejack’s voice snaps them back to reality.*)

**Applejack:** (*from hall, though door*) Everythin’ all right in there, sugar cube? (*They hurry back to the bed.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*whispering*) Quick! Get in while I hide!

(*Sweetie starts to clamber up over the rails as she darts to the now-closed wardrobe, opens its doors, and packs herself inside. The ersatz sleeper settles daintily in under the blankets, and Scootaloo pulls the wardrobe doors most of the way closed before a frantic thought hits her. The next three lines are also delivered in whispers.*)

**Scootaloo:** Sweetie, no! (*Cut to Sweetie; she continues o.s.*) You gotta sleep like Apple Bloom!

**Sweetie:** How does she sleep? (*Both again.*)

**Scootaloo:** Like she does everything— (*Hooves approach from outside.*) —with sass!

(*She pulls the wardrobe shut and Sweetie dives under the covers with a split second to spare before Applejack opens the door to check in. A look around reveals nothing out of the ordinary. She keeps her voice down throughout the following sequence.*)

**Applejack:** Huh. (*entering*) I guess you musta been so tuckered out, you sent your friends home and went to bed.

(*Close-up of Sweetie on the end of this; her face is turned away from the door, bus she is in a silent, popeyed panic. On the start of the next line, zoom out slightly to show Applejack now leaning over the rail toward her “sister.”*)

**Applejack:** Then again, you are a delicate flower. (*sighing, walking away*) Sleep tight, Apple Bloom. (*She stops at the door.*) I’ll check on you again in a bit.

(*Out she goes, pulling the door shut; just as quickly, Scootaloo opens the wardrobe to make sure the coast is clear. The lights go out, presumably from a switch in the hall, and both fillies let go with a relieved sigh. As soon as the door opens again without warning, they are back in their positions so Applejack does not spot the deception.*)

**Applejack:** Just checkin’ in on you again.

(*Still quiet, so she exits and shuts the door. Close-up of it; she puts her head in once more.*)

**Applejack:** Need anythin’ now?

(*The scene resets itself, with a cut rather than her exit/close, and she looks in again.*)

**Applejack:** How ‘bout now? (*Again; she holds a blanket.*) Need another blanket? (*Again; hoof to ear.*) Did I hear a cough? (*Again; she carries a full glass.*) Want a glass of water?

(*Cut to a close-up of a bedside alarm clock, which displays the time as 6:00. A dissolve shifts it to 6:15, and a cut to Sweetie shows her to be genuinely asleep and snoring—taking the charade just a little too far. Inside the wardrobe, Scootaloo lounges impatiently among the spare bows, but snaps to at the sound of the bedroom door being opened. She scrambles to get an eye to the crack of light between the wardrobe’s closed doors to the sound of Applejack’s yawn; cut to her entering the room.*)

**Applejack:** (*sleepily*) Just checkin’ in on you again. (*sighing, walking to bed*) Look at you, dozin’ so peaceful-like.

(*Close-up of the blanket-covered sleeper, her bow the only visible part of her.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s., stroking her head*) Here I am, checkin’ up on you every five seconds, and you’re totally fine. (*Cut to Scootaloo; she is heard clearly through the crack.*) Maybe you don’t need me frettin’ over you all the time.

(*The orange filly’s face splits into a broad grin as she pulls in a huge gasp; cut to Applejack at the rail.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from inside wardrobe, through doors*) Wow! Apple Bloom will be so glad to hear that!

**Applejack:** Huh? (*On with the lights, yank the wardrobe open.*) Scootaloo?!

**Scootaloo:** Uh, um…n-no.

(*A freaked-out grimace from the mare; back to the bed. She reaches into view and yanks the covers off the snoozing Sweetie.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Sweetie Belle?! (*The latter wakes up, rubbing her eyes.*) But…where’s Apple Bloom? (*Cut to frame both.*) She’s not here! (*galloping past Scootaloo*) She could be anywhere!

(*A few articles of clothing are flung back past the wardrobe, hurled by Applejack in her ransacking of a dresser.*)

**Applejack:** She could be lost! Cold! Hungry! Itchy! Stuffed up! Needin’ to go to the bathroom!

(*Accompanied by the following actions: Briefly lifting the entire bed off the floor to look underneath, a dash o.s. that scatters a few more items around the room, and finally a cut to Scootaloo and Sweetie as they come together near the door.*)

**Sweetie:** Don’t worry, we know exactly where she is!

**Scootaloo:** Yeah! She’s making your pie delivery.

(*Back to Applejack, now rooting through the toybox, on the end of this line. She snaps her head out of it to look back at the pair with fresh terror in her eyes.*)

**Applejack:** What? (*wheeling to Scootaloo*) No! Didn’t she hear how difficult and dangerous it was?

(*She pulls in a colossal gasp, the camera zooming in on her stricken face and the background dimming behind her.*)

**Applejack:** *I may never see my little sister again!*

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a chastened Scootaloo and Sweetie, no longer wearing their borrowed bows, sitting on their haunches in the kitchen. Applejack’s pacing steps punctuate the air. The mess from Bloom’s Act One wipeout has been cleaned up.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Okay. (*Cut to frame her walking in.*) Rarity’s on her way here to look after you two. Now tell me. Did Apple Bloom at least bring flameproof boots?…A lion tamer’s chair?…A snake-charmin’ flute?… A hunk of ricotta?

(*She gets increasingly worked up with each successive query, and the two Crusaders’ reactions shift from puzzlement to fear until Scootaloo hunches down and Sweetie covers her eyes on the last one. Their lack of affirmative responses sends Applejack into a gasping, hoof-biting fit for a moment, but she recovers herself in time.*)

**Applejack:** Okay. Maybe there’s still time to catch her before she gets there. (*Cut to the two fillies; she continues o.s.*) When did she leave? (*They look to each other, then ahead.*)

**Sweetie:** It must have been hours ago.

(*A fresh wave of bug-eyed panic grips the farmer.*)

**Applejack:** Oh, no!

(*Dissolve to the upper reaches of a very dark, very misty, very unfriendly-looking patch of trees and tilt down slowly. The only light comes from a feeble red glow that has trouble penetrating all the murk. Here comes the silhouette of the commandeered pie wagon over a hill; as it rolls toward the camera, both its details and those of Bloom come into view. She is doing her best not to let fear and worry get the better of her in this inhospitable place, but the clouds of mist swirling around the filly have her very much on edge. Finally she stops and pulls out the map Granny gave to Applejack, but the poor visibility forces her to squint at the page.*)

**Bloom:** (*sighing*) I can’t see a darn thing in this swamp.

(*That problem gets fixed in a flash when a gout of flame briefly belches up from the ground, instantly consuming the map and causing her to cry out in fear. Several others pop around her, then stop as the terrain bubbles glutinously.*)

**Bloom:** Well, now at least I can see.

(*Another squint, this one aimed ahead; cut to her perspective of the fiery eruptions and of a dark, hunched silhouette making its way slowly toward her. A closer shot picks out the four legs on which it is moving and the long slim tail waving behind it, and it is voicing a low, menacing growl. A pair of narrowed yellow eyes opens as a broad sheet of flame roars up behind the shape—and then the head moves aside to its own right, revealing a tiger-like outline and a set of deadly long canines similar to those of the saber-toothed species. The movement exposes a second pair of eyes, which swing off to their left as part of a goat’s-head silhouette with long, curving horns. Now the tail comes into play, curling around next to the tiger’s head to show the yellow-eyed, hissing snake head attached to its end. Bloom can only recoil in horror, her hooves rooted to the crimson ground, as this beast stalks slowly toward her. The body’s front half and forelegs are those of a tiger, with a dark gray goat’s head attached to one shoulder, and the snake as its tail—a variation of the chimera from Greek mythology. Goat wears a small gold hoop in each ear, and the hind legs and quarters are those of this animal; the snake’s eyes go red as it is brought into the light, while the tiger’s go green.*)

(*The connection between brain and legs re-establishes itself, and Bloom slews the wagon around in a quick 180-degree turn to bail out. However, she gets only a few yards before a flame burst stops her short. Another turn, another blast; her next attempt is cut off by a cluster of them all in one spot. Easing away from the incinerating pyrotechnics, she finds herself eye to mouth with Tiger, who speaks in a raspy, mocking voice whose gender cannot be immediately discerned.*)

**Tiger:** I’d stay where you are. This is the only safe spot around here.

**Bloom:** (*shuddering, backing away slowly*) It don’t look so safe to me.

**Tiger:** Oh, we just mean from the flames.

**Goat:** Yeah, not from us!

(*This one has a bleating feminine tone. Tilt up to Snake, reared up well above the body, on the start of the next line. It also speaks in a feminine voice, but with a sibilance that comes through on every S sound.*)

**Snake:** What was that? (*sighing impatiently*) Can you guys speak up?

**Tiger:** I was about to tell our guest how we haven’t eaten in days. (*Cut to Bloom on the end of this, then back to the chimera.*)

**Goat:** My sisters and I can never agree on what to eat. (*Tilt up to Snake; a mocking hiss.*)

**Snake:** Except…pie.

(*This exchange establishes Tiger as also being female, then. Bloom throws a glance back at her wagon, then gives the three-in-one predator a big squeaky grin.*)

**Bloom:** Well, unfortunately, I gotta get these pies to a town on the other side of the swamp, so, uh… (*Cut to the chimera on the end of this; profile view.*)

**Tiger:** Oh, you don’t have to worry about that.

**Goat:** Yeah! You don’t have to worry about anything anymore. (*Pan back to Snake.*)

**Snake:** Because we’re going to have our apple pie with a side of filly filet!

(*She lets hypnotic colors play across her eyes, but the effect is lost on Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** (*slowly backing up*) You don’t say!

(*Her weak laugh evaporates before the chimera’s growling/bleating/hissing advance. Soon enough she is sweating profusely and scared enough to jump out of her horseshoes, if she were wearing any.*)

**Tiger:** Now, sisters, on three. One! (*Rear wheels hit a tree and stop.*)

**Goat:** Two! (*Bloom backs up as far as she can in her harness.*)

**Snake:** (*hissing*) Three!

(*The creature lunges at Bloom, who gallops off to one side to that it gets only a faceful of tree bark. Moving at a pace that would make any Kentucky Derby winner take notice, she swerves back and forth to avoid the flame spurts, then yanks herself clean out of the harness. On she goes, not noticing the jettisoned wagon until she has opened up a large gap between it and herself; finally she slams on the brakes.*)

**Bloom:** No!

(*She starts into a charge back toward the vehicle; cut to her perspective, which is quickly blocked by the leaping chimera.*)

**Tiger:** Where do you think *you’re* going?

(*Back to Bloom, who slides to a stop and stands her ground before the beast. Any ideas of striking at her go away when a blast of fire issues up right in front of it. She takes advantage of the moment to rush toward the wagon, seen from her perspective, but Snake swings down with a furious hiss to cut her off. Seen in a longer shot, Bloom yells and doubles back the way she came, the reptilian appendage hot after her. Bloom describes a couple of circuits around the monster and clears out; in trying to catch her, Snake ends up wrapping herself around all four limbs and pulling taut. The miscalculation causes the chimera to thud down onto its belly.*)

**Tiger, Goat:** Ow!

(*Getting behind the wagon’s rear end, Bloom puts her head to the boards and starts to bulldoze the thing away. She switches to her forelegs, digging her rear hooves in for traction, and muscles the wagon onto a hilltop. Her nerve and strength fail her here, not helped by the sight of the chimera’s silhouette closing in through the mist. As the flames lick up to illuminate it fully and show it untangled, she leans a front hoof against the wagon and is quite surprised when that bit of impetus sets it rolling down the other side of the hill. It rattles and creaks its way into a patch of bushes and disappears from sight, but the adversary continues its steady climb and looms over her at the top.*)

**Tiger:** Where are the pies?!? (*Snake looks back down the hill.*)

**Snake:** They’re not back here. (*Dirty looks all around.*)

**Goat:** (*to Tiger*) This is your fault! You think you’ve always gotta be in charge!

**Tiger:** (*sighing, to Bloom*) You’re lucky, you know. You’ve got no idea what it’s like to have a sister constantly looking over your shoulder! (*Cut to Goat on the end of this.*)

**Goat:** (*under previous, looking away disgustedly*) Hmph!

**Bloom:** Uh, actually…

**Goat:** Let’s try listening to me for a change! And I say, if there are no pies, let’s settle for the filly filet!

(*Cut to said filly on the end of this; she backs up before Snake’s hissing advance.*)

**Snake:** Any last words?

**Bloom:** (*panicky*) I really wish my sister were here! (*Snake bares her fangs, ready to strike.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Hang on, Apple Bloom! I’m a-comin’!

(*Through the jets of fire, the big sister comes leaping in—regular saddlebags on her back, long dark gray boots on all four hooves, and with a glare of unbridled fury that could burn a hole through a battleship’s hull. She lands somewhat behind the chimera, whose three heads turn to look at her.*)

**Tiger, Goat:** Get her!

**Goat:** Hey! I thought I was in charge now!

(*The motley body rushes at the newcomer, dragging all the heads after it, but she tenses herself and leaps straight ahead. Mare and monstrosity gallop toward each other; at the last second, Applejack drops into a hind-legs-first slide that takes her under the chimera’s jump. Coming up into a standing position, she pulls a flute from her bags, styled after those used by snake charmers in India. That is, it has a mouthpiece and a wooden pipe drilled with finger holes, mounted opposite each other on a small spherical gourd. As Applejack plays a droning melody on the instrument, the notes float through the air, passing Snake and lulling her into hissing, swaying docility. A few more of them send her to the ground, fast asleep and dead weight.*)

(*The chimera whirls on Applejack with a roar from Tiger; having put away the flute, she whips out a folded wooden chair and unfurls it with one flick of her foreleg. The orange/black-striped maw opens in an enraged roar, but she holds the chair out in front of herself, legs first, and jams the thing in upside down. Tiger strains to wrap her jaws around this new obstruction, shakes her head mightily, and finally crushes the chair to splinters. She and Goat glare downrange; cut to their blurry, wavering perspective of the now-distant Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** (*echoing slightly*) Howdy!

(*The camera locks in and focuses on her, picking out her taunting wave; back to the chimera, which charges toward her anew. However, the sleeping Snake gets her head caught in the fork of a tree branch, causing her body to stretch as the rest of the chimera races ahead. Applejack holds her ground until the last possible second, then leaps away to let it crash into the trunk behind her. Tiger’s elongated canines punch all the way through the wood; growling and straining, the chimera tries with all its strength to pull free but cannot. Snake, meanwhile, keeps napping peacefully through all this tumult.*)

(*Once the struggles cease, Applejack stares Goat straight on; the head growls threateningly at her, but she just smiles and pulls a lump of something white from her saddlebags. Since the first three items she has used—the boots, the flute, the chair—have corresponded to the ones she reeled off while questioning Scootaloo and Sweetie, this can only be the ricotta cheese that ended her list. She tosses it casually toward the chimera and trots away; in close-up, the hunk lands neatly in the bleating maw and shuts it up in a twinkling as Goat starts chewing.*)

**Goat:** (*smiling, mouth full*) Mmm! Ricotta!

(*Zoom out to frame all of the immobilized beast. Tiger paws on the forelegs scratch weakly at the tree in front of them, but this thing is not leaving anytime soon. Applejack gallops up to the top of the hill where Bloom is standing.*)

**Applejack:** Let’s go!

(*With only the briefest break in her stride, she flips her sister onto her back and charges off. A slide brings them down to the swampland, and the booted legs launch them from one tenuous safe spot to the next as the flame spurts go off around them. Once they are on clear ground, Applejack shucks Bloom off her back and heaves for breath.*)

**Applejack:** You okay? (*Bloom smiles and nods.*)

**Bloom:** Thanks to you.

(*Relief turns to a supremely vexed glare in less time than it takes to say “what are you, nuts?”*)

**Applejack:** I told you, you need your big sister lookin’ after you! (*Cut to a downcast Bloom; she continues o.s.*) I’m just glad this wasn’t a whole lot worse.

(*The red-gold eyes narrow in frustrated anger on the end of this, after which the camera cuts to frame both again. As Applejack continues, Bloom turns away and walks o.s.*)

**Applejack:** I mean, sure, we lost the cart, and all the pies— (*Rustling from Bloom’s direction.*) —but at least you’re…

(*Words fail her and she stares straight ahead, poleaxed, as the sound of turning wheels begins to grow. Here comes the intact pie wagon out of the bushes it rolled into, pushed by a thoroughly disgruntled and fed-up filly.*)

**Applejack:** Huh…the cart! And all the pies! You actually got them all the way up here? In the dark? Through the Flame Geyser Swamp? Past that monster? (*Long pause.*) By yourself?

**Bloom:** Well…yeah.

**Applejack:** Huh. (*smiling*) Wow. That’s mighty impressive! (*crossing to her*) Anypony who can do that on her own, well…she don’t need somepony like me babyin’ her.

(*Cut to a close-up of Bloom and zoom in slowly as her smile widens, then cut to frame both as they share a sisterly nuzzle. Dissolve to a long shot of a ramshackle cluster of houses in a different, much less threatening patch of swampland. Strings of lights run from house to house, tables stand out in front, and the locals—all earth ponies—are enjoying the pies from the wagon, which stands with one side of its awning raised. Applejack, now without her bags, and Bloom are talking with one stallion; pan to another one at a table. He buries his face in a pie and comes up with cheeks bulging and smeared with filling.*)

**Stallion:** (*Cajun accent*) Mmm-mmm! *Andouille*! This pie’s even tastier than my mama’s swamp-water casserole!

(*Cheers and whoops from the others as the camera pans back across the grounds, then cut to a shocked old mare on a porch.*)

**Stallion:** (*from o.s.*) Aw, now, Mama, don’t be like that.

(*The celebration continues in full force, and the stallion who was talking to Applejack and Bloom grabs a pie off the cart in his teeth and walks off to join it.*)

**Applejack:** Just remember, you fellas wouldn’t be enjoyin’ these pies if it weren’t for my sister.

**Bloom:** (*beaming, nuzzling her*) And my sister!

**Applejack:** (*sternly, to her*) But this don’t change the fact that tryin’ to make this delivery on your own was a plumb crazy thing to do!

**Bloom:** (*deflated*) I know. (*Applejack voices an exasperated little huff.*)

**Applejack:** I’ll bet Granny Smith grounds you for a month for sneakin’ out! And if Big Mac, Granny Smith, and I *ever* have to be away for the day again…

(*On the end of this, cut to Bloom, who cringes hugely at the thought of whatever might come next. The next cut frames both sisters and the unexpected smile on the elder one.*)

**Applejack:** …I would totally trust you to stay home and take care of things on your own.

(*Back to Bloom on the end of this; she looks up, not believing her ears, and finds that Applejack’s warm smile is no illusion.*)

**Applejack:** I guess I did get a little carried away watchin’ over you. And if you hadn’t snuck out like you did, maybe I wouldn’t have figured that out.

**Bloom:** (*grinning ear to ear*) *Yes!* Now that is the kinda lookin’ out for me I can definitely appreciate. So, we’re good?

**Applejack:** Little sister… (*extending a foreleg; Bloom walks into a hug*) …we’re always good.

(*Cut to a long shot of the settlement full of happy ponies, then tilt up into the hazy night sky and fade to black.*)