**LEAP OF FAITH**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade to a patch of quiet daytime sky and tilt down to Applejack and Big Macintosh goofing off in a pond outside Ponyville. They are playfully splashing at each other, the big stallion wearing the blue duck inner-tube float he used in “Pinky Apple Pie” instead of his hitching collar.*)

**Apple Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Just one more time? (*Cut to her on the shore, “floaties” on forelegs.*) Please? (*The others stop splashing.*)

**Applejack:** All right, but this is the last one.

(*Grinning ear to ear, the little pony charges toward the water’s edge.*)

**Bloom:** (*leaping to a rock, then Macintosh’s back*) Woo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! (*Somersault to Applejack’s back.*) Whoooooo!

(*She comes down on the lifted orange-tan hind legs, which launch her across the pond so that she splashes down in the general vicinity of Granny Smith. The elderly mare is seated in a beach chair near a basket of apples and snoozing in the sun, but the displaced water crashing into her face snaps her awake in an instant—and leaves a fish on her head to boot. She sputters and chokes her way to full consciousness, the fish falling off.*)

**Granny:** Who done that? (*Bloom swims out to the others, spitting out water in a fountain.*)

**Bloom:** Sure wish you’d come swimmin’ with us, Granny.

**Granny:** Uh… (*The fish flops back into the pond.*) …sorry, dear. I just can’t bring myself anywhere near that there swimmin’ hole.

**Bloom:** How come? (*Close-up of Granny; zoom in slowly.*)

**Granny:** (*wistfully*) Well, I wasn’t always this way.

(*Tilt up quickly into the sky, which becomes an old, sepia-toned, black-and-white silent film whose edges—perforated for the projector’s sprockets—remain in view at left and right. A leader countdown appears briefly, going from 3 to 2 before giving way to a dock on which a pony steps into view, wearing an old-style swimming outfit covered with white polka dots. Zoom out to frame it a young Granny, her braided mane covered by a large cloth bathing cap that matches the suit.*)

**Granny:** (*voice over*) Time was, I was an aqua-pony all star.

(*Her past self waves to an o.s. crowd. Cut to a high-dive tower that overlooks a very small container of water, set up in the middle of a street in a Western-style settlement.*)

**Granny:** (*voice over*) In fact, I was the only Apple to ever come close to breakin’ the Equestria high-divin’ record.

(*The onlookers cheer and she steps out to the end of the diving board, pausing only for a brief bounce before leaping into space.*)

**Granny:** (*voice over*) Fallin’ six stories into a deep-dish pie pan takes a toll on the hindquarters!

(*Before she can hit the water, the film skips and burns away, the background music going to pieces as well. Behind it, in the present day, an extreme close-up of Granny’s old, nostalgic eyes is revealed. Zoom out slowly.*)

**Granny:** Oh, I was so sore, took years before I could even look at the water again. (*wincing*) Just the idea of swimmin’ makes my whole body ache. (*She gets out of her chair and lifts each hind leg in turn.*) Besides, these old legs can’t even paddle fast enough to stay afloat.

(*A few steps bring her into a puddle, part of the aftermath of Bloom’s big splash. As soon as her hooves touch the water, she goes into a series of surprised yelps and flails that bring her perilously close to toppling. However, she manages to get all four limbs planted firmly.*)

**Bloom:** Boy! (*to Applejack*) I sure would hate to be afraid of swimmin’. You think I’ll ever be scared of the water?

(*A glance o.s. causes her eyes to pop in sudden surprise; she sinks a bit, grimacing in fear as a shark fin cruises slowly past. Bloom leaps up with a yell, her hooves windmilling fast enough to keep her above the surface, and bolts for shore. Granny’s jaw drops open ever so slightly at the sight—and then the fin rises, part of a bathing cap on her smiling grandson’s head.*)

**Macintosh:** Nope.

(*He and Applejack share a good laugh at the prank. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the family traveling along a path through the meadows. All four are dried off and changed out from their time at the pond, and Macintosh has all their gear in a cart he is pulling. He now wears his collar in place of the duck float and shark-fin cap, and Applejack totes a pair of saddlebags.*)

**Bloom:** Wow, Granny! I can’t believe you were a high diver! (*Close-up of the group.*)

**Granny:** The best one in Ponyville.

**Bloom:** Do you think I could be a high diver?

**Macintosh:** (*emphatically*) Nope!

**Applejack:** Absolutely not!

**Bloom:** But—

**Granny:** (*sternly*) Now you hold your horse feathers, little seed! I never said bein’ a high diver was a smart decision. It’s incredibly dangerous!

**Bloom:** I know, but— (*Granny whirls to face her; all stop.*)

**Granny:** But nothin’! It is the riskiest, scariest darn-fool thing I ever did do! That’s not to say I don’t wish I was still young and spry and confident, *but*… (*smiling*) …let’s leave the flyin’ through the air to the pegasi! (*Wink.*)

**Bloom:** (*puzzled*). Wow. When you put it that way, doesn’t sound so fun.

(*During this line, a procession of murmuring ponies begins to make its way past the family, coming up from behind. Many of them are sporting bandages and bound-up injuries in varying degrees of severity; the hindquarters of one are supported on a wheeled dolly, while the front legs walk normally to pull the body ahead. A jaunty calliope melody begins to make itself heard through the hushed voices.*)

**Applejack:** Wow. I wonder where everypony’s headed.

(*After glancing back and off to one side, the four Apples turn their gazes down the path, the camera panning to frame the injured throng. After a few seconds, the youngest and oldest family members smile and start walking after them.*)

**Applejack:** Now where in Ponyville do you two think you’re goin’? (*Bloom and Granny stop.*)

**Granny:** (*gesturing at an ear*) Aw, quit bein’ such a worry-worm and follow your ears. (*She starts off.*)

**Bloom:** Come on, Applejack. Aren’t you curious?

(*Yellow hooves move after green; her two siblings remain in place, a distrustful glance passing from one set of green eyes to the other. Cut to a rise in the path, beyond which a red/white-striped circus tent has been set up. The calliope is heard much more clearly at this close range, and Applejack and Macintosh gain the top as the camera angle shifts slightly to frame the ponies streaming into the entrance.*)

(*Cut to just inside the closed flaps, which Macintosh pushes aside so he and Applejack can step in. He has unhitched himself from the cart, and she has ditched her saddlebags. Both let their eyes wide in disbelief as the camera zooms out to frame the crowd; Bloom and Granny make their way along the aisle as the music stops. The edge of a stage comes into view, illuminated by footlights. As Applejack and Macintosh peer around, the lights begin to dim and the other two family members find spots in the front row.*)

(*Cut to a head-on view of the now-darkened stage. A covered wagon has been parked up here, with one side facing the audience; a blank display screen is mounted on this. A crank protrudes from one end, and a smokestack juts upward from the piping mounted above it. Two dim spotlights pick out the vehicle before all the lighting comes up to full power. Every voice in the tent instantly falls silent; cut to a close-up of the crank, which begins to turn in a magical grip. A control panel can now be seen mounted above it, with two lights that come on after a few rotations, and the smokestack begins to emit puffs of steam in a steady rhythm. Extreme close-up of the screen; a poster is reeled down in front of it, showing the deep purple silhouettes of two unicorn stallions bowing to each other. They are identical in height and build, but with slightly different mane styles, and one has a mustache while the other does not. Their boater hats have floated off their heads and are turned toward each other, crown to crown.*)

***Jaunty calliope melody with xylophone/glockenspiel, brisk 4***

***C major, shifting to A major and back after every four bars***

***Spoken rhyming lines are indicated with one asterisk (\*)***

(*Zoom out quickly to frame the entire stage. Through the curtain behind the wagon, the shadowed outlines of these two unicorns can be seen—Flim and Flam, the brothers who tried to take over the Apples’ cider-selling business in “The Super Speedy Cider Squeezy 6000.” Each stands on the same side as his silhouette on the poster: Flim to stage right, Flam to stage left. The crank has stopped turning, but the steam spurts continue.*)

**Flim:** Thank you one and all for your attendance, and we guarantee that your time here will not be spent in vain!

**Flam:** In fact, we think it will prove to be the most valuable time you’ve ever spent!

(*The second of these lines is accompanied by the following. Curtain rises, exposing the brothers; spots are switched on for them to step into; a new poster reels in—an apple with one slice cut away, which stands separate from the rest. A second curtain is down behind the tableau. Cut to Applejack and Macintosh.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Macintosh*) The Flim Flam Brothers! This should be interestin’.

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

(*On the start of the next line, cut to a long shot of the stage and zoom in slowly.*)

**Flim:** Welcome one and all to the demonstration of a lifetime!

***Tuba in***

**Flam:** A demonstration of a better life! (*They trade places.*)

**Flim:** A demonstration of a better time!

(*New poster: a pensive Doctor Whooves, question marks floating above his head.*)

**Flim:** And if we haven’t captured your interest just yet, by the time we finish, an unfortunate phenomenon practically guarantees that we will! (*Flam steps over and throws a foreleg across his shoulders.*)

**Flam:** A phenomenon? What’s that? (*Flim pushes the foreleg back.*)

**Flim:** (*touching his temple*) It’s a circumstance perceptible by the senses, but in this case, it’s the simple fact that…

***End of previous exchange includes one extra bar of A major***

***Key shifts back to C major on start of the following verse***

***Tuba/xylophone/glockenspiel out; banjo/drums in***

(*New poster: cartoonish depictions of various scowling microorganisms.*)

**Flim:** There’s ailments all around us in everything we touch and see

(*Side cutaway view: germs stream into the mouth and lungs of a pony taking a breath. An arrow emphasizes their motion.*)

**Flam:** A sickness that lies waiting there in every breath you breathe

(*He puts hooves to throat; now Flim shakes his shoulders. New poster: one microbe plants its flag on a beach as another sails in on a boat.*)

**Flim:** Disease will up and grab you as it crawls from land and sea

**Flam:** It’s amazing how infected that the natural world and all its things can be

(*His brother crosses to the other side of the stage.*)

\* **Flim:** Now I understand that some of you don’t think you’re sick. (*Flam zips out into the crowd, inspecting a couple of injuries.*)

\* **Flam:** But twisted hooves and aching joints don’t heal all that quick!

***A major***

\* **Flim:** Consider just how dangerous this world is! You might

(*Flam startles one mare into falling over and knocking down her entire row of spectators like dominoes.*)

**Flam:** Slip and fall, break or sprain something here tonight

(*Flim catches the old stallion at the far end. He and Flam zip back onto the stage; now the screen shows both their faces.*)

***Glockenspiel/tuba/accordion in (C major)***

**Flim, Flam:** But luckily for you, we’ve got the thing you need

And it’s easier when all you need’s the cure

(*Zoom in to a close-up of the screen as a new poster rolls down: a bottle of medicine whose label depicts silhouettes of their heads.*)

The Flim Flam Miracle Curative Tonic

(*winking*) Is just what the doctor ordered, I’m sure

***Tuba/accordion out; xylophone in***

\* **Flim:** Now I know our claims seem fantastical!

\* **Flam:** Impractical!

(*They get out into the audience again.*)

\* **Flim:** Improbable!

\* **Flam:** Impossible!

(*A poof of pink smoke, and they are back onstage.*)

\* **Flim, Flam:** And magical!

***A major***

(*The crowd moves a few steps closer.*)

**Flim:** So we welcome every suffering pony to make their way up to the stage!

**Flam:** Now don’t crowd—

**Flim:** —and we’ll prove our tonic’s effectiveness before your very eyes!

***C major***

**Flam:** (*pointing*) You there!

(*Cut to a pale blue-gray earth pony stallion near the front row as a spotlight picks him out. Gray mane/tail, small black eyes greatly magnified by huge spectacles, old brown hat and ragged denim overalls, crutches gripped in both forelegs. This is Silver Shill.*)

**Flam:** (*from o.s.*) Come up here, good sir! (*He hobbles forward; cut to the stage as he climbs up to the pair.*)

**Flim:** I’ll wager you’re tired of those crutches, my friend.

**Flam:** Try taking a sip of this!

(*On these last two words, cut to a close up of a bottle of tonic being lifted in his magic. It is floated over to Shill, and the cork is pulled out so the contents can pour down his throat. He swallows, grimacing a bit at the taste, and the crowd watches anxiously for any result. Cut to a close-up of the pale rear hooves; one at a time, the crutches fall away and the front hooves that had been hooked into them touch down on the stage planks. Tilt up to Shill’s wondering face, which he lifts to face straight forward before breaking out in a shining-eyed smile.*)

***Music pauses***

(*A round of gasps from the crowd is followed by assorted reactions from the Apples: Bloom grins, Granny strokes her chin thoughtfully, and Applejack and Macintosh gape at the recovery.*)

***Music resumes; tuba/accordion in***

(*Shill gathers up his crutches.*)

**Flim, Flam:** That’s why you’re so lucky, we’ve got the thing for you

(*He and the brothers form a high-kicking chorus line.*)

Just come on up, we’ve always got some more

(*They step back; Shill works his way offstage, and the backing curtain rises to expose shelves of the tonic ready to go.*)

Of the Flim Flam Miracle Curative Tonic

(*Shill, now at the entrance, tosses the crutches aside, twirls in place, and cheerfully walks out.*)

**Shill:** I won’t need these crutches to dance out the door

***Tuba/xylophone/glockenspiel out (D major)***

(*Close-up of Bloom and Granny.*)

**Granny:** (*to Bloom*) Now how do you like that? (*Zoom out to frame Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** I don’t. There’s somethin’ funny about this whole thing. (*Lights dim.*)

***Music pauses, then resumes as a melancholy accordion/tuba melody (slower 4)***

(*Up onstage, Flim turns to face the crowd, having switched his boater for a kerchief tied under his chin. A solitary spotlight picks him out.*)

**Flim:** Now some of you may suffer from feelings of despair

(*He zips down to eye the old stallion he caught earlier, now upright.*)

You’re old, you’re tired, your legs won’t work, there’s graying

in your hair

***Banjo in***

(*Flam joins him.*)

**Flam:** Just listen and I’ll tell you that you don’t need to fear

***Full instrumentation, with original jaunty feel and brisk tempo (C major)***

(*He prods/pulls at each body part he names.*)

Your ears will work, your muscles tone, your eyes will see so clear

(*The oldster smiles broadly at the prospect, and the two salesponies strut through the crowd. Flim has traded the kerchief for his boater.*)

**Crowd:** Luckily for us, you’ve got the thing we need

The answer to our problems in a jar

(*Flim and Flam float out a couple of bottles.*)

The Flim Flam Miracle Curative Tonic

(*Zoom out to frame the entire gathering, with them at the center.*)

Is the greatest ever miracle by far

(*Onstage, the wagon’s display reels down a new poster: a run-down stallion with lumps all over his tongue. Flim darts up to this, and the crowd starts to sing “tonic, tonic, tonic” under all lines through the remainder of the song. As he speaks, he cycles through two more pictures: a set of hooves dotted with burr-like growths, then a shaggy stallion whose rear half has shed a good bit of its fur—even down to the skin in the area around the tail.*)

\***Flim:** It cures the reins, the spurs, and the Clydesdale fur blight!

(*Now Flam steps up and rolls through three more as he speaks: a glum, stubby-legged mare standing among taller ones, then a poorly nourished pony whose neck is so long that the head is cut off by the top edge of the poster.*)

\***Flam:** Hoof-eria and horse-entery cured in just a night!

(*Here goes Flim, finding ponies with the next three symptoms—the last manifesting itself as a set of filthy, misaligned teeth.*)

***A major***

\***Flim:** You’ve got swollen hooves and hindquarters, a terrible bridle-bit cleft?

(*Flam moves here and there, lifting a pony’s tail that has lost all its hair.*)

\***Flam:** Saunter sitz and gallop plop won’t give your tail some heft!

(*Flim’s turn to follow suit, ending by opening a stallion’s mouth to expose the rash at the back of his throat.*)

***C major***

\***Flim:** Mane loss, hay fever, or terrible tonsillitis!

(*They jump onto the stage; the screen shows a bottle of tonic now.*)

\***Flam:** You heard it here, folks! This is the only place in all of Equestria

you’ll find it!

(*The display cycles through three images of a mare being doused with the stuff: shrinking, growing, aging.*)

***A minor***

**Flim:** It can make you shorter, taller, or even grow old

**Flam:** But who’d want that

**Flim:** When with one drink

(*Cut to Granny and zoom in slowly.*)

**Flim, Flam:** You can be young again?

(*Zoom out quickly to frame all four Apples; she holds up some coins.*)

**Granny:** *Sold!*

***Song ends abruptly; crowd stops singing***

(*The two hucksters smile shrewdly; Flim floats up a bottle of the brew.*)

**Flim:** Congratulations, Granny Smith! You just made the purchase of a lifetime!

(*On the second sentence, he sends it out and the camera cuts to her; the money leaves her grip and the tonic is placed in it. The camera then pans to Applejack and Macintosh.*)

**Applejack:** (*fearfully, to him*) Are you as worried as I am?

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

(*The corner of her mouth twitches into the hint of a grimace as both look toward the matriarch. Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to an expanse of calm water. An apple is thrown in, tied to the end of a line, and bobs at the surface; cut to a long shot of Applejack, Macintosh, and Bloom sitting on their haunches at the edge of a small ridge overlooking a riverbend. The apple is on a fishing line attached to a rod held by Macintosh, and Bloom balances a pebble on her hoof. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Bloom:** Boy! I just can’t believe all the things that Flim Flam Tonic can do! (*Close-up; the others do not share her enthusiasm.*)

**Applejack:** When somepony says somethin’s too good to be true, it usually is. (*Bloom drops the pebble; Macintosh starts reeling in.*)

**Bloom:** You mean Granny wasted her money? (*Close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Well, I don’t know about that, but I don’t think there’s a tonic in Equestria that can make an old pony young again.

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) Hoooowwww-dyyyy!

(*Green eyes flick confusedly toward the water; cut to behind the trio. Here comes the old mare, lazily doing the backstroke downstream and dressed in her old swimming outfit and bathing cap. Now seen in full color for the first time, they are red with white polka dots, and the collar and belt are dark purple. Macintosh’s fishing rod drops forgotten to the grass, and all three stand up.*)

**Bloom:** (*shrilly, panicked*) Granny?!?

**Applejack:** Hang on now! We’ll get you!

(*As she gallops toward the edge, Macintosh moves ahead a step or two, removes his hitching collar, and tosses it forward. It hits the water and floats there, but Granny keeps right on swimming past the improvised life preserver. She has flipped onto her belly to do a front crawl, but by the time Applejack has shifted to gallop along the ridge, she is already working on her breaststroke. A buck from the orange-tan rear hooves brings down a tree, which falls so that it juts perpendicularly into the river for Granny to grab onto. However, she just veers calmly around its end, now doing the backstroke again, and carries on.*)

(*Applejack slides down the ridge’s rock face, followed by Bloom and then Macintosh, and all three stop on the riverbank just in time to see Granny walk placidly onto the sand.*)

**Bloom:** Granny! (*They gallop toward her; she shakes herself dry.*) I thought you were too afraid of the water to swim! (*All slow to a stop.*) And-and what about your hip?

**Granny:** (*pulling out tonic*) Well, I reckon it might have been a problem before I had myself a dose of that there Flim Flam Tonic.

**Applejack:** I’m not so sure that tonic really does anythin’.

**Granny:** (*scornfully*) “Doesn’t do anything”? What d’you call this?

(*Taking a swig and tucking the bottle away, she goes into a quick bit of high-speed song and dance that ends with her lying on the bank, on her flank and propping her head up cockily on one foreleg. She tips a wink to her grandchildren, catching them off guard.*)

**Applejack:** I’m glad you’re feelin’ good, but how do you know it’s from the tonic? (*Granny stands up.*)

**Granny:** I looked out at the water this mornin’— (*Long shot of the family as she continues.*) —and I felt the same terifyin’ aches and pains I always do. (*Close-up.*) But one sip of that magic elixir, and it all went away. (*Zoom out slowly.*) Why, I might even get a head start on my chores! (*zipping over, nudging Macintosh*) What do you say, Big Mac-a-doo? (*bucking at air*) Up for a little afternoon applebuckin’?

**Macintosh:** (*slightly flummoxed*) Uh…no.

**Granny:** Oh, quit your bellyachin’!

(*She grabs one of his forelegs to pull him away; pan to Applejack and Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** Gee! It looks like that tonic works after all. I wonder what’s in it.

**Applejack:** (*narrowing her eyes*) I think maybe it’s time we found out.

(*Dissolve to the moon in the starlit night sky and tilt down to the sound of approaching hooves and the calliope.*)

***Same melody/tempo as Act One (C major)***

(*Tilt down to frame the sisters coming up over the last rise toward the circus tent, now liberally festooned with strings of lights. The next four lines, heard distantly, run under their conversation.*)

**Flim,** **Flam:** …got the thing for you

Just come on up, we’ve always got some more

Of the Flim Flam Miracle Curative Tonic

**Shill:** I won’t need these crutches to dance out the door

**Bloom:** So you’re just gonna walk up and ask them how it works?

**Applejack:** I guess. Though if it’s a genuine cure, I don’t suppose they’ll be too keen on sharin’ the recipe.

(*Close-up of the tent entrance on the end of Shill’s line. He and the amazed crowd are heard clearly at this point, and out he comes, high-stepping into the night air just as he did during the daytime medicine show. However, his glasses have a different shape now. Once he is well in the clear and the flaps have fallen shut, he stops to wipe his brow and pull off his hat.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Wait a second. (*His face goes slack; pan to frame her and Applejack now nearby.*) That’s that same pony from before!

(*Big sister trains a searching glare on Shill, who cringes at the unwanted attention and races away.*)

**Applejack:** Hey!

(*She and Bloom start after him. Cut to the area behind the tent, with walls of tarps hung up to form a makeshift alley and shield against prying outsiders. Shill gallops through the area, grazing a couple of barrels when he skids on a sharp turn, and Applejack/Bloom are right behind him. When they hit the turn, though, they slide hard enough to knock the barrels over. Shill stops next to a four-wheeled machine with a smokestack at one end, organ pipes at the other, and a display screen on one side—a fully exposed backup version of the covered-wagon rig Flim and Flam used for their pitch, perhaps. He looks around, finding himself cornered, as the sisters close in.*)

**Applejack:** Now hold it right there… (*Close-up of the two.*) …Mister, uh…

**Shill:** (*from o.s., voice trembling*) Shill. (*Cut to him, backing up toward the tent.*) Silver Shill.

(*When his rump hits a support post, he realizes that he has nowhere to run and voices a moan.*)

**Shill:** What do you two want? (*Foreleg up to shield his face.*)

**Applejack:** Our granny took some tonic, and we want to know how it works.

**Bloom:** Granny couldn’t swim before, and now she can— (*suspiciously*) —just like *you* couldn’t walk, and now *you* can. (*Long shot of the area, panning slowly.*) But what are you doin’ back here? I mean, if the tonic cured you and all…

(*Close-up of the sweating, shaking Shill on the end of this. He swallows hard, and Applejack turns her attention away from him, finding the two discarded crutches—one now with a hook mounted on its upper end—propped against a table, along with a third one and a cane. A look elsewhere shows her a couple of wigs on plastic pony heads, one with a matching beard and mustache, and a third wig with fake glasses attached. Her eyes pop as she figures it out.*)

**Applejack:** Because he’s part of the act! (*glaring at him*) It’s time for you to tell the truth! (*She leans into his face.*) You never needed crutches at all, did you?

**Shill:** (*stammering*) I, uh…

(*One desperate flick of a hoof hits a lever on the backup rig, releasing gouts of steam from the organ pipes and into the pair’s faces. He clears out.*)

**Applejack:** Hey!

(*By the time the machine stops and the view clears, he is gone. Applejack casts her eyes around the alley and points past Bloom, and the two gallop off in opposite directions, little sister following the big one’s cue. Applejack emerges from behind the tent, just in time to spot Shill racing back in through the front entrance as the crowd departs.*)

**Applejack:** Huh?

(*Cut to just inside the flaps; she shoves one aside to look in, and the camera zooms out slightly to frame the forelegs and chests of the smooth-talking twins.*)

**Flim:** Well, if it isn’t our most favorite Apple!

(*Cut to them, standing in front of the stage next to two bulging bags—one open and full of coins, the other tied shut.*)

**Flam:** What brings you back to our humble abode? (*Shill peeks out from behind Flim’s legs and gets a dirty look from Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** (*advancing on them*) You two charlatans sold my granny a bottle of tonic, and now she’s off actin’ like a filly again!

(*Flim tosses Flam an indulgent smile, then turns it on her.*)

**Flim:** What’s so bad about that?

**Applejack:** If she keeps gallivantin’ around like a yearlin’, she’s apt to drop from exhaustion, or worse! What’s more… (*pointing at Shill; he slinks away*) …I know for a fact that your friend here is dressin’ up as a different pony every night so he can pretend to be cured!

**Flam:** Oh, well, well, well, that’s quite an accusation.

**Flim:** But let’s say that it’s true.

(*Both unicorns zip away; now Flam pops up behind a table set with a full cash box, a bag full of the night’s revenue, and a few scattered coins.*)

**Flam:** Hypothetically—

(*He sweeps the lot aside and is joined by Flim, who levitates an old-style fruit/vegetable juicer onto the table.*)

**Flim:** —theoretically—

**Flam:** —as I understand, your granny was a famous aqua-pony.

**Flim:** The star of the show, once upon a time.

(*Cut to Applejack on the end of this, then back. Flam levitates a bag up and dumps its contents—apples and leaves—onto the table.*)

**Flam:** But hasn’t set so much as a hoof in the water since?

**Applejack:** Until today. That’s right. (*Flam briefly juggles a few apples.*)

**Flim:** Well, then even if our tonic *were* nothing more than a mixture of apple juice and beet leaves—

**Flam:** —hypothetically— (*He tosses one of each to Flim, who catches.*)

**Flim:** —theoretically—

(*Another lob drops them into the juicer’s feed hopper in close-up, and a shot of magic works the lever to bring the plunger down on it. Pan slightly to frame Flam, who has crouched down near the spout from which liquid is now running to fill a bottle under his control.*)

**Flam:** —the fact is that Granny is happier now than before she tried it.

**Applejack:** (*dumbfounded*) I guess. (*Flim whips over to her.*)

**Flim:** So, the question is… (*Flam crosses the floor, floating the now-full and corked bottle.*)

**Flam:** …do you really want to be the pony who takes all that happiness away?

(*He smugly sends the freshly squeezed product to rest on the hoof of the mare whose ironclad righteous fury has completely drained away.*)

**Applejack:** I… (*Bloom steps into view outside the open flaps.*)

**Bloom:** There you are! (*walking in*) I’ve been lookin’ all over! Did you find out what’s in the tonic?

(*The apple farmer finds herself caught between the simple honesty of this query and the self-assurance of the brothers’ paired gazes. She does not speak until Bloom has moved a bit closer.*)

**Applejack:** Honestly, Apple Bloom, as long as it works, I don’t suppose it really matters. (*Her own words do not sit well with her.*)

**Bloom:** Well… (*smiling*) …if it doesn’t matter to you, then it doesn’t matter to me either, sis.

(*Said sis returns the smile weakly, but drops it as soon as she has turned her face ahead to lead Bloom away. Cut to just outside the tent as they emerge, with Flim and Flam whisking over to call after them from the entrance.*)

**Flim:** That’s the spirit! (*Both wave goodbye.*)

**Flam:** Come back anytime!

(*Shill rises slowly into view between them. Dissolve to the pond, where Macintosh, Bloom, and Granny are enjoying the water in a splash fight. It is the following day, and all three have their respective swimming gear in place. Macintosh has added a pair of foreleg “floaties” as well. Applejack does not partake in the fun, but instead sits moodily on a swing hung from a tree on the shore.*)

**Bloom:** Hey, Granny! (*Close-up of Applejack; she continues o.s.*) Think you could buck me over the water? (*Cut to Granny.*)

**Granny:** I don’t see why not! (*beckoning*) Come on, Big Mac! Toss her this way!

(*Back to Applejack, who jumps off the swing in a sudden panic and gallops toward the water.*)

**Applejack:** Granny, wait! (*She stops and shields her eyes.*)

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) Woo-hoo-hoo!

(*Her laughter floats to the shore, joined by that of Bloom, and the worried mare drops her foreleg to stare dumbfounded. Zoom out to frame the three swimmers; Granny is now floating on her back, flipping Bloom upward on her hind legs as Macintosh watches.*)

**Granny:** Uh, what were you sayin’, dear?

**Applejack:** (*backing up to swing, sitting on it*) Granny, don’t you think you should take it kinda easy? (*Granny now has Bloom on her shoulders.*)

**Granny:** I been takin’ it easy for too long! (*tossing her off*) And now thanks to that Flim Flam Tonic, I don’t have to. (*Bloom puts her head up from the water.*)

**Bloom:** Granny… (*swimming to her*) …do you think I could be an aqua-pony like you?

**Granny:** Of course you can, sapling. (*Cut to a very worried Applejack; she continues o.s.*) There’s nothin’ to it but to do it.

(*Quite a reversal from her Act One insistence, to be sure, and it hits her other granddaughter very funny. Her mental machinery begins to work as she puts a hoof up to stroke her chin.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Well… (*Longer shot; she and Granny climb out.*) …the Ponyville Swim Meet is comin’ up. (*Macintosh follows them.*) We could enter together!

(*Back to Applejack, whose gears might be about to freeze up at this bit of news.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) A legendary water pony like you? (*Back to the three swimmers.*) We’d be a cinch to win! (*Macintosh shakes himself dry; close-up of Granny.*)

**Granny:** (*mumbling thoughtfully*) I don’t know. Bein’ back in the water is one thing, but a competition is a pony of a different color. (*She nods emphatically; zoom out to frame Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** (*dejectedly*) Oh. Okay.

[*Animation goof: Macintosh’s collar appears around his neck during this exchange, underneath his duck float.*]

(*An aged green hoof touches her shoulder comfortingly; Applejack holds up a bottle of tonic, eyes it probingly, then sets it down and climbs off the swing with a smile.*)

**Applejack:** (*crossing to others*) I don’t know, Granny. A swim meet sounds pretty safe. And after all, if that tonic lets you swim in a river and a swimmin’ hole, a pool should be no problem at all.

**Granny:** (*smiling*) Well, I’ll be a tart turnover, you are right! (*Stomp for emphasis.*) All we need now is more tonic!

(*And she retrieves it from her bathing cap to take a fresh pull, while Applejack cuts her eyes to one side and grins evasively. Dissolve to an overhead shot of the path leading to the tent, filled with infirm ponies, and tilt up to frame them lined up at the entrance. Here, Flim and Flam have set up a fully stocked sales counter and are standing behind it.*)

**Flam:** Welcome, friends, and step right up! The next show starts in five minutes!

**Flim:** (*levitating a bottle*) But why not buy your tonic now and avoid the rush?

(*Shill shuffles up, wearing the wig/mustache/beard disguise from the layout behind the tent, and holds up a few coins.*)

**Flam:** Right this way, good sir!

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) We’ll take the whole case!

(*All turn toward her voice; cut to the patch of ground just in front of her and Macintosh’s hooves. A heavily laden sack of coins is dropped here, and the camera zooms out to frame the whole family standing among the prospective customers. Macintosh, Granny, and Bloom have shucked their swimming duds, and Macintosh has his collar on again. Flim and Flam step out from behind their counter, and they and Shill goggle at the sight of so much legal tender being brought to bear. The brothers grin broadly over the notion of being able to make this monster sale.*)

(*The crippled, dolly-rolling pony seen among the crowd in Act One—an earth pony mare, her head bandaged as well—trundles over to the Apples.*)

**Crippled mare:** Are you saying this stuff actually works?

**Applejack:** (*hesitantly, smiling*) It seems to work for Granny. (*Flim and Flam trade a look.*)

**Flim:** You heard it here first, folks! (*floating bottle out front*) Flim Flam Miracle Curative Tonic— (*floating bottle out front, gesturing to family*) —is Granny Smith-tested and Applejack-approved!

(*The unlikely spokes-pony’s eyes narrow to thunderstruck points at this proclamation, and the camera zooms in quickly to a close-up.*)

**Crippled mare:** If Applejack says it works— (*holding up money*) —that’s good enough for me!

(*There follows a tumult of voices whose owners lift their cash in hooves and magic auras. Applejack stands rooted to the spot, staring in mute confusion at the ponies surging past her on all sides as the camera zooms in slowly. She manages only a gobsmacked sigh before the view snaps to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to an outdoor swimming pool set up for a competition. Strings of lane-marker buoys stretch along its length, a high-dive tower has been erected at the far end, and ponies sit in bleachers at one side. Tilt up toward the tower’s height; a figure can be seen emerging onto the lower of its two diving boards, and a close-up frames a swim-capped earth pony stallion in detail. After a good bounce, he projects himself off the end, doing a somersault before splashing into the pool. Cut to a panel of three judges—two of them Lyra Heartstrings and Whooves—seated behind a desk under a canopy. They hold up score placards, Lyra using her magic and the others relying on hooves—7, 3, 8—and the stallion swims to the edge and hoists himself out. Applause from the spectators.*)

(*Cut to the end opposite the high dive and pan along it as three other stallions dive in, one per lane. Bloom and Granny stand at the corner, the old mare wearing her swimming togs, and get up to their hind legs.*)

**Bloom, Granny:** (*limbering up in unison*) Hoo-ha, hee-hee, ha-hoo-ha! (*They drop to all fours; Applejack walks over.*)

**Applejack:** Just remember, you two. The most important thing is to be safe—and have fun, right? (*Big nervous grin.*)

**Granny:** Fiddlesticks! With the routine we’ve been workin’ on, I’ll be a plum puddin’ if we don’t win this thing! (*She winks at Bloom, who grins hugely.*)

**Applejack:** Uh… (*forcing a smile*) …good luck, then!

**Granny:** (*scornfully*) Luck! (*Disdainful sputterings and hoots.*) Who needs luck? (*pulling tonic bottle from bathing cap*) We got tonic on our side!(*Bloom nods with gusto.*)

**Flim:** (*from o.s.*) Flim Flam’s Magical Curative Tonic!

(*Pan quickly to the brothers at a sales counter, wares at the ready. They are flanked by pictures of a beaming Applejack holding up a bottle, and plenty of buyers are paying attention.*)

**Flim:** Get your Applejack-approved tonic! (*Zoom out to put Granny in the fore; she drinks.*) Granny Smith drinks it—why shouldn’t you?

(*Cheers and clamoring from the assembled ponies; Applejack just voices a soft, weary sigh in close-up.*)

**Applejack:** Right.

**Granny:** (*from o.s.*) Now if’n you’ll excuse us… (*Cut to her and Bloom; she has stowed the bottle.*) …we got some swimmin’ to do!

(*A hush falls over the spectators in the bleachers, and grandmother and granddaughter go into their routine. They dive gracefully into the water, side by side in perfect synchronization, and glide toward the center of the pool. The red- and white-maned heads dip below the surface, and each puts a hind leg up vertically for a moment and pulls it down again. Now their heads come up and they pivot from one side to the other, extending a foreleg, before flipping upside down to leave only their hind legs in the air. These descend with barely a ripple, and Applejack stares in silent disbelief at the duo’s fluidity of motion.*)

(*Bloom and Granny come up side by side, each taking one of the other’s front hooves, and rotate about their point of contact as the judges take great interest. A bit of backstroke swimming brings them to a spot where they can each describe a pair of lazy semicircles, causing them to arc away from each other and back to the spectators’ delight. Next, Bloom rises clear of the water in a pirouette position, the hoof of her non-raised hind leg supported by one of Granny’s front ones; the former swimming superstar rotates her slowly as if on a turntable. The ponies at the sales counter are entranced by the exhibition, taking no notice of the smug expressions on the faces of the two huckster unicorns behind them. The routine ends with Bloom lifted high on Granny’s shoulders and letting water arc from her mouth like a fountain.*)

(*When they stop moving and lean to opposite sides, each with one foreleg outstretched toward the crowd, there is perhaps one second of dead silence. It ends when the bunch in the bleachers stars cheering and applauding wildly; the judges hold up their score placards, Lyra being the last to do so. The other two have awarded 10’s, but hers reads 01; getting a dirty look, she flips it over to show 10 and grins stupidly. On the sidelines, Applejack has doffed her hat out of respect, but now puts it back on.*)

**Applejack:** Well, I’ll be.

(*As Bloom and Granny hook their hooves onto the pool’s edge to start climbing out, a trophy is levitated over to them and set down in the water. Bloom hoists it triumphantly as cameras click and flashbulbs pop from o.s. Cut to a head-on view of the source: two photographers, stallion and mare, and a reporter mare. A few more pictures are taken during the next line.*)

**Photographer stallion:** That was some of the most amazing aquabatics I’ve ever seen. How in Equestria did you do it? Hard work? Lots of practice? (*Bloom and Granny climb out.*)

**Granny:** Yeah. (*pulling off bathing cap*) Uh, but mostly it’s the tonic! (*Flim and Flam zip over to the pair, throwing forelegs around shoulders, and hold up bottles.*)

**Flim:** That’s Flim Flam’s Miracle Curative Tonic, to be precise.

**Flam:** Buy it now while supplies last!

(*More photos are taken of the tableau—mare, filly, unicorns, trophy now standing on the grass—and a knot of ponies quickly gathers around them, talking excitedly about the new panacea. Applejack watches them hustle past her, her unease steadily growing; cut to Shill walking by the bleachers. The stallion has shed his overalls and donned a baseball cap and a black-and-white-striped referee’s jersey, and he has a tray of bottles slung around his neck. Another one, a unicorn, quickly flags him down and gestures at the tray, ready to buy; as Applejack glowers mightily, the latter floats a coin over, and Shill tucks it away and grabs a bottle for him to levitate off. This sequence reveals Shill’s cutie mark as a pair of silver coins. As soon as he turns aside with a grin, he finds himself nose to nose with one good-and-angry farmer.*)

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

**Shill:** Oh, things are going so well, Flim and Flam gave me a promotion. (*Chuckle.*) Just made my first bit as a sales-pony.

(*On the end of this, he dips his hoof in among the bottles and the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of the unicorn’s payment. Applejack’s confounded reflection appears on its surface; cut to frame both again.*)

**Shill:** (*putting it away*) No more costumes for this pony. (*She gives him a very funny look; he quails slightly.*) This is more of a…uniform. (*Extreme close-up of her queasy expression.*)

**Applejack:** If you say so.

**Shill:** I used to wonder if I was doing the right thing, you know, pretending to be cured, basically lying to folks about this tonic. But thanks to you, I realized that sometimes honesty *isn’t* the best policy.

**Applejack:** (*flabbergasted*) Thanks to…*me?*

(*The sound of Bloom’s voice catches her by surprise; on the start of the next line, cut to the brothers in front of their display. Both are holding up bottles, and the filly stands on the counter, fully dried off from the pool.*)

**Bloom:** With Flim Flam’s Magical Curative Tonic, my granny can do anything! Just ask Applejack.

(*All eyes turn in the direction of her pointing hoof, and the camera cuts to a long shot of Applejack and Shill and zooms in to the pop of flashbulbs. The sudden public attention sends the orange-tan mare into a panic within seconds, covering her face and squinching her eyes shut until she can take it no more.*)

**Applejack:** No! (*Zoom out; the photographers now surround her.*) This has gotta stop! If ponies keep believin’ that tonic can do things it can’t, who knows what’ll happen?

(*This line ends with a close-up of her and is followed by Shill’s hoof touching her shoulder. Zoom out to frame him, looking in the general direction of the far end of the pool.*)

**Shill:** (*glancing upward*) Maybe something like that?

(*Applejack follows his pointing hoof and gasps in fright. Cut to a long shot of the high-dive tower, whose ladder Granny is slowly ascending toward the topmost board, and zoom in. She waves gleefully toward ground level before resuming her climb, and she has dried off and put her bathing cap back on.*)

**Applejack:** *Granny!*

(*She peels out toward the tower; meanwhile, Bloom is nosing a deep-dish pie pan full of water into position at its base. Applejack reaches her once she has this in place.*)

**Applejack:** What in blazes does she think she’s doin’?

**Bloom:** (*proudly*) Granny’s gonna break the Equestria high-divin’ record!

(*All four eyes turn down toward the very small container; Applejack turns hers up toward the summit, then lets them pop wide open toward her sister.*)

**Applejack:** Land sakes!

(*Off she goes, the camera cutting to an overhead shot of the area and roving slowly toward the tower as she circles to the ladder. Flim and Flam have moved over for a better look. Granny, meanwhile, is at the top and stepping toward the end of the board. Out comes a fresh bottle of tonic, down the hatch go the contents, and up the ladder hurries Applejack. Granny tenses for a leap just as a badly winded Applejack gets her head and forelegs up to the edge of the platform. Her face shifts into popeyed surprise, as she has a perfect vantage point to watch Granny take one bounce and disappear over the edge. Pulling in a long, horrified gasp, the apple ace heaves herself up onto the platform and darts for a coiled rope hanging on a peg at one side.*)

(*Granny hurtles toward the pan with forelegs extended, the camera shifting between a close-up and her perspective of the rapidly approaching ground. The loop of a lasso whistles down into view after her; at ground level; it snags a hind leg when she has only a few feet to go before impact. The rope stretches perilously, finally bringing her to a momentary stop when her nose is close enough to touch the water, and she snaps back with a yelp. Inertia and gravity combine to bring her to a stop a few inches above the pan; up above, Applejack stands on the end of the diving board, straining every muscle to keep the free rope-end clamped in her teeth.*)

**Granny:** (*addressing herself upward, crossly*) Now what in tarnation did you do that for?

(*A little slack allows her to plant all her hooves on the ground, one of them splashing into the pan, and Applejack lets go of the rope.*)

**Applejack:** That was the most fool-pony thing I’ve ever seen anypony do in all my life! (*She turns away, slides down the ladder to the ground, and approaches the group.*) You can’t do a dive like that!

(*The loop around Granny’s hind leg has loosened enough to fall on the grass, so that she can step out of it, and she has moved clear of the pie pan.*)

**Granny:** Oh, quit your fussin’! I had enough tonic to do a dive ten times as high! (*Flim comes up on one side.*)

**Flim:** Twenty times, by my count. (*Flam on the other.*)

**Flam:** (*winking*) Thirty with a favorable breeze.

(*He floats a fresh bottle into her grip, and she glugs it down as Applejack glowers mightily. The sun shines through the glass, refracting into a spectrum of separate gleaming colors; Applejack covers her eyes against the glare, but lowers her foreleg to stare in hopeless confusion. Zoom in to an extreme close-up of those eyes as they pop wide open in dawning comprehension. Just as has happened to all of her friends save Twilight Sparkle, a gleam of rainbow light plays across her irises in response for a moment. Her face rearranges itself into stern resolve as the camera zooms out slightly.*)

**Applejack:** I hate to disappoint everypony— (*stepping toward crowd*) —but there’s no way Granny could’ve made that dive because this tonic *is a fake!*

(*She emphasizes her words by pointing at the empty bottle still on Granny’s hoof as she finishes. A collective gasp, after which the crippled mare with the dolly speaks up.*)

**Crippled mare:** But you gave it your stamp of approval! (*Pan to another spot in the crowd.*)

**Pegasus mare:** Are you saying you lied?

(*That question cuts its recipient to the quick, if her dropping head is any hint. After a long moment, she lifts her face again and lowers her eyebrows.*)

**Applejack:** (*deliberately*) I am. (*Another round of gasps; she continues at her normal pace.*) I didn’t mean to, but everypony seemed so much happier. (*Her perspective, panning across the dejected group.*) I couldn’t bring myself to tell you when I found out the tonic wasn’t real.

(*During this line, Flim grimaces, fidgets with his bow tie, and grins weakly. Back to Applejack, who pulls her hat off and holds it over her chest.*)

**Applejack:** I know it was wrong. I just hope with time, I can win back everypony’s trust. (*The hat goes back on; Bloom crosses to her.*)

**Bloom:** But…if the tonic *is* a fake, then how come Granny can swim again and what about all that aquabatic stuff we just did?

**Applejack:** (*smiling*) I reckon sometimes you can forget what you’re capable of— (*crossing to Granny, touching her shoulder*) —and it just takes a little extra confidence to remember that it was inside of you all along.

(*They share a tender embrace, but Applejack comes out of it with nothing but scorn for Flim and Flam as she advances on them.*)

**Applejack:** But tellin’ ponies your tonic can do things it can’t is just wrong! (*A brief cringe at this; then they smile back.*)

**Flim:** (*touching her shoulder*) But you just said it boosts confidence!

**Flam:** And that’s not all it does, folks!

**Shill:** (*from o.s.*) Yes, it is!

(*Pan quickly to him, now standing next to the high-dive tower. He has removed his tray of tonic and set it on the ground.*)

**Shill:** (*pulling off cap/glasses, throwing them down*) In fact, it’s not a tonic at all! I know ’cause I helped make it!

(*Now seen without the lenses’ magnifying effect, his eyes have a vivid blue color. The admission sets the brothers a bout of sweating, lower lip chewing, and throwing instantly unnerved glances at each other from the corners of their eyes when the camera cuts to them. On the start of the next line, cut to Shill as he walks over to the three Apple females.*)

**Shill:** Watching Applejack save Granny and then admit to lying, well, that made me realize I was making ponies believe in a thing that just wasn’t so.

**Applejack:** Believin’ in something can help you do amazin’ things. But if that belief is based on a lie— (*Cut to a bug-eyed Flim and Flam; she continues o.s. as they slowly back away.*) —eventually it’s gonna lead to real trouble. (*Back to the three Apples.*)

**Shill:** (*stepping closer*) Thank you, Applejack. (*He holds up the coin from his tonic sale.*) I got this through dishonest means.

(*Extreme close-up of it; once again Applejack’s face is reflected in the surface.*)

**Shill:** (*from o.s.*) That was a mistake I won’t be making again. (*Cut to frame both; he smiles.*) I’d like you to have it… (*He lifts one of her front hooves and claps the money onto it.*) …as a reminder of how you helped me finally see the truth.

**Applejack:** (*uncertainly*) I don’t know.

**Shill:** O-Oh, don’t worry. I’ll track down the pony I sold that worthless tonic to and give him another bit to replace this one. (*Cut to Applejack; he continues o.s.*) Honest.

(*Now the blond mare lets a smile play across her face briefly before glancing back toward Bloom and Granny.*)

**Applejack:** I’m sorry, Granny. (*She turns to them.*) I hope this doesn’t mean you’ll stop swimmin’.

**Granny:** (o*ffended*) Why in tarnation would I do that? I just can’t believe those two sales-ponies had me believin’ I could near fly!

(*The wizened face turns to glare back over the shoulders attached to it, as does that of Bloom; a longer shot indicates that Flim and Flam have gotten well clear of the irked bunch.*)

**Granny:** Hey, where’d they go?

(*All look around themselves, but no trace of the silver-tongued con artists can be found. Dissolve to a stretch of the Sweet Apple Acres orchards, the camera placed at a distance behind Applejack. Her hat is off, and she sits on her haunches under a tree with a mug of cider as Macintosh hauls a cart across the land. The group’s shared journal lies open before her, and she is hunched over it to write with a pencil in her teeth as the camera zooms in slowly. The coin Shill gave her rests on one of the pages. It is later in the afternoon.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over, dictating*) “Bein’ honest sure gets hard when it seems like the truth might hurt somepony you care about. But I think believin’ a lie can end up hurtin’ even more.”

(*Cut to Flim and Flam, moving their exhibit wagon hurriedly across a stretch of grassland. The display screen is blank, the canvas cover has been removed to expose the roll of posters within, and apples, beet leaves, and bottles are piled up around this. Flim pulls in the harness while Flam pushes; an empty bottle falls over the side and clatters to the ground.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) “Maybe some ponies don’t care about that—” (*Back to her.*) “—but I sure ain’t one of ’em.”

(*Lifting her head, she lets the pencil drop and addresses herself ahead o.s.*)

**Applejack:** Now you take it easy there, Granny! (*Close-up of Granny on a diving board as she finishes.*)

**Granny:** Oh, I plan to! (*bouncing*) Hoo, ha, a-whee!

(*The old green mare is still wearing her swimming outfit. Over the edge and down o.s. she goes for a cannonball dive, a splash of water pattering up, and the camera zooms out. The board is, in fact, only a foot or two above a large wading pool that already holds Bloom, and the filly laughs while getting into a splash fight with Granny. Back at the tree, Applejack stands up and trots toward the pool to get in on the fun. Zoom in to a close-up of the coin, which displays the same rainbow gleam that has already appeared on four previous occasions. “Iris out” to black, centered on it.*)