**APPLEOOSA’S MOST WANTED**

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Notes: I have chosen to retain the “Appleloosa” spelling in this transcript despite the

episode title, in keeping with the prevailing practice in both fan works and

merchandise.

Unless otherwise noted, all ponies except for already-established characters are

earth ponies.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a slow pan across a stretch of desert land on which a festival is in full swing. It is daytime. Ponies in Wild West-style apparel pass back and forth, and assorted events and tents/stalls are set up in the background. Apple Bloom advances into view in the fore, surveying the goings-on with a smile.*)

**Bloom:** (*turning toward camera*) Aren’t you glad y’all came with me to see Applejack compete in the Appleloosa Rodeo?

(*The setting, therefore, is the frontier settlement that played host to the events of “Over a Barrel.” Cut to a head-on shot of the filly; Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle stand a few steps back.*)

**Scootaloo:** Totally! This place is a cutie mark gold mine! There’s barrel racing…

(*On the end of this, pan quickly away from the trio to a course set up for this contest. A stallion weaves through a row of barrels, nudging each as he cuts his turns. A second pan brings the camera to a mare whirling a lasso in her teeth; a pony-shaped scarecrow stands on a pole before her.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) …roping contests…

(*The dummy is snagged and yanked from its perch. Pan quickly to a group of stallions in clown makeup and outlandish attire, goofing for the spectators.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) …rodeo clowning…

(*One, balanced on a rolling barrel, mows another one down. Pan quickly to two mares galloping side by side along a racetrack.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) …steeplechase…

(*They bound over one hurdle, then another, and the camera cuts back to Bloom; Scootaloo and Sweetie cross to her.*)

**Bloom:** If we can get into some of these events, we could all three walk off the train back in Ponyville with brand-spankin’-new cutie marks!

**Scootaloo:** (*eyeing her own haunch*) Wouldn’t a barrel look good here?

**Bloom:** (*eyeing hers*) I want a lasso!

(*Looking off to one side, Sweetie notices Applejack’s cousin Braeburn, left foreleg bandaged and in a sling to keep it clear of the ground.*)

**Sweetie:** (*hesitantly*) I-I don’t know. All these events look a little, well…dangerous.

**Bloom:** No risk, no reward.

**Sheriff Silverstar:** (*from o.s.*) All right, everypony, listen up!

(*Cut to him, standing on the porch outside his office and addressing two stallions with gold stars on their hats—his deputies. A third stallion is listening, and the Cutie Mark Crusaders make their way toward the group.*)

**Silverstar:** We need a big presence at this here rodeo, so make yourself plenty seen! I want that lowdown varmint to know we mean business!

**Sweetie:** (*to Bloom, Scootaloo*) I hope nothing bad is going on.

**Bloom:** A cutie-mark-a-palooza *and* a lowdown varmint? This is shapin’ up to be the most excitin’ rodeo ever! (*She and Scootaloo rear up briefly.*)

**Scootaloo:** Yeah! Come on!

(*They peel out, as does their unicorn gal pal after a moment’s uncertain pause. Pan from their former location to an alley formed by one wall of the office—which shows the barred window of a jail cell—and a stack of hay bales. Visible on the masonry is the colossal shadow of a stallion’s head and forelegs, nearly twice as tall as the average pony and showing the outline of a disproportionately small hat. The image backs out of view down the alley; cut to an extreme close-up of one hoof being lifted away, leaving a print in the dirt. An impression of a horseshoe fits entirely within this indentation, suggesting that the hoof is too large to be shod with standard sizes. Zoom in slowly on this and fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a twirling lasso, then zoom out. The stallion wielding it flicks the loop forward, past a nearby hay bale, and snags a second one at a much greater distance. This is dragged along the ground and flung upward, falling away from the rope, to land on the extended forelegs of a mare crouched on a bale that is part of a very tall stack. She tosses it up to a second mare standing at a higher elevation, who catches it on her head and heaves it up again; next it lands on a second stallion’s back and he gives it another boost. It goes to Applejack, who bucks it in a high, tight arc to its final resting place on the slightly irregular pinnacle of this whole assembly. A bit of tottering; once the bale stabilizes, the camera zooms out to frame the group’s efforts—more a tower than a pile, perhaps three dozen levels high. Braeburn steps into view in the foreground to check their progress.*)

**Braeburn:** Woo-hoo! Yee-haa! That’s my cousin! Go, Applejack, go! (*Applejack crosses to him.*)

**Applejack:** Whoo! (*wiping forehead*) It’s been a dog’s age since I got to compete. All the rodeos ’round Ponyville are closed down for some reason.

**Braeburn:** Well, I guess havin’ injured kinfolk in Appleloosa sure paid off, then, huh, cuz?

**Applejack:** (*tipping hat*) Just doin’ my best to fill your horseshoes, Braeburn.

**Braeburn:** Keep tossin’ like that and I’ll be out of a job.

(*She gives him a high five on the hoof of his injured foreleg.*)

**Braeburn:** Ow! Ow! (*Applejack shudders at her mistake.*)

**Applejack:** Sorry. (*looking around*) Say, where’s my sister and her friends?

**Braeburn:** Uh-oh. (*He finds them nowhere in sight.*) Gee, uh…I guess I got so caught up watchin’ you that I— (*She leans angrily toward him.*)

**Applejack:** You said you’d keep an eye on those fillies! How am I supposed to focus on practicin’ if you’re not gonna—

**Braeburn:** (*smiling, pointing ahead*) There they are!

(*Zoom out slightly to frame the Crusaders approaching from behind Applejack. Bloom wears a headband decorated with apple-marked pennants, in addition to her bow; Scootaloo sports a giant sombrero whose crown is styled as a cactus, with apples around the brim; and Sweetie has acquired a caramel apple.*)

**Braeburn:** Heh…right where I left ’em.

(*The sombrero falls over Scootaloo’s eyes; she shoves it back up, but this bit of millinery-related mirth does nothing to improve Applejack’s mood. Cut to her and Braeburn.*)

**Braeburn:** Aw, don’t be mad. (*He glances at his bad leg, then hams it up.*) OUUUCH! My foreleg! Hurts so much!

(*Giggles from the o.s. Crusaders; cut to them. Scootaloo’s hat falls again, and she shoves it up from her eyes as the camera zooms out to frame Applejack stepping over to address them on the start of the next line.*)

**Applejack:** Y’all can’t go runnin’ off like that, you hear? Backstage at a rodeo ain’t no kind of playground.

**Bloom:** (*chastened*) Sorry, Applejack. We won’t wander off again. (*Scootaloo, smiling, gives her a nudge; she smiles as well.*) But, uh, speakin’ of the rodeo, what would you say about me and the Crusaders maybe competin’ in one teensy-weensy little event or three?

(*Back to Applejack on the end of this, her mental processes thoroughly gummed up by this proposition. She gets snapped out of it by a sudden interruption from Braeburn.*)

**Braeburn:** (*pointing*) LOOK OUT!!

(*A rumbling noise asserts itself and both full-grown Apples turn their eyes skyward, the camera following quickly to stop on the hay bale high-rise. It is now swaying crazily to and fro as if Discord had turned all the bales to foam rubber, and it begins to topple directly toward the Crusaders. They have just enough time for one three-part scream of terror before Applejack dives across in a flying tackle that carries them all to safety, but the headband, sombrero, and caramel apple are lost under the thundering tumble of bales. Dust fills the screen, then clears to show the four sprawled out at the corral fence that rings this practice field.*)

(*Applejack looks up with a hitch of breath, and the camera cuts to a long overhead shot of the area. The bales have crushed a set of bleacher seats and part of the fence, and Braeburn is on the far side of the mess.*)

**Applejack:** What the hay just happened? (*Ground level; all stand up and Braeburn crosses to them.*)

**Braeburn:** You fillies all right?

**Crusaders:** Uh-huh/Yeah.

**Silverstar:** (*from o.s., disgustedly*) Sugar and salt licks! (*Pan quickly to him.*) Well, I’ll be. (*Applejack steps over to him.*)

**Applejack:** What is it, Sheriff?

(*His eyes are fixed on a certain spot of ground, and she turns her head down to study it as well. Cut to their perspective—a large hoofprint with an undersized horseshoe, a match for the one left by the unseen stallion in the prologue. Zoom in slowly on this, then cut to Applejack, Braeburn, and Silverstar.*)

**Braeburn:** (*apprehensively*) Is it *him?*

**Silverstar:** Ain’t no doubt. (*Zoom in to an extreme close-up.*) It’s Trouble Shoes.

(*A mournful harmonica tune begins at this point, causing him to pop his eyes wide open with a surprised little neigh, and the camera cuts to a longer shot of the tableau. The music comes courtesy of a rodeo clown standing a short distance away from the three. Finally noting their surprise after several seconds, this newcomer drops the instrument, letting it dangle from the cord attached to both ends that loops around his neck. Giving a thoroughly embarrassed grin, he quickly backs away; the Crusaders exchange slightly puzzled glances over the entire incident.*)

(*Dissolve to an overhead shot of the street outside Silverstar’s office. His two deputies stand on the porch, impassively regarding the knot of clamoring ponies gathered here. Cut to just behind them, the camera now aimed over their heads toward the doorway.*)

**Mare voice 1:** Is it true? Is Trouble Shoes here?

**Stallion voice 1:** You ain’t gonna shut down the rodeo, are you? (*Silverstar steps out onto the porch; the group falls silent as he speaks.*)

**Silverstar:** All right, now, I called for a meetin’, not a mob scene!

(*Among the crowd, one stallion resignedly throws the torch he carries over his shoulder, while another sullenly puts down the pitchfork he holds.*)

**Silverstar:** (*pacing*) Now, as many of you know, the Equestria rodeo circuit has been plagued by the dirty dealin’s of a notorious outlaw. (*A mare rushes to the front of the crowd.*)

**Mare 1:** He knocked barrels every which way at the Hoof City Rodeo! Nearly crushed my Aunt Bay Mare!

**Stallion voice 2:** That’s nothin’! (*Cut to this speaker.*) He sabotaged the steer pen at Pinto Creek Rodeo, settin’ off such a stampede they canceled the whole dadgum thing!

(*Grumbles of assent from the crowd; they quiet again as Silverstar paces and speaks.*)

**Silverstar:** Now, now, it’s true we had an incident this mornin’ at our own Appleloosa Rodeo. Hay bale stack came down prit’ near on top of three little fillies.

(*Cut to said fillies—being closely watched by Applejack and Braeburn, with big sister worriedly running a hoof through little one’s mane—during the second half of this, then back to Silverstar for the next line.*)

**Silverstar:** I examined them hoofprints myself and, uh… (*Extreme close-up, his eyes narrowing.*) …it was Trouble Shoes, all right.

(*A round of gasps from the crowd; he begins to pace again.*)

**Silverstar:** (*dejectedly*) I reckon I oughta cancel this rodeo like all the others done. (*Concerned looks flash between the deputies; he zips back front and center, with new fire.*) But dag-hoof it, this has gone far enough! We’ll double the patrols! (*rearing up*) This rodeo will go on!

(*The onlookers clear a path as he descends from the porch and strides through them, followed by the deputies.*)

**Silverstar:** Appleloosa ain’t gonna be intimidated!

(*As the others follow him, voicing defiant cheers and whoops, the camera slowly zooms in on Applejack, the Crusaders, and Braeburn.*)

**Bloom:** Glad that’s settled. So, uh, Applejack, about me and my pals competin’ in the rodeo…

(*She trails off into a nervous little chuckle as the blond apple expert shoots her a very dirty sidewise glance. Cut to a long shot of a house and zoom in.*)

**Bloom:** (*from inside*) Don’t send us home! It’s not fair!

(*Inside, a grim-faced Applejack sets a dispirited Bloom’s saddlebags in place as Braeburn watches over the other two Crusaders, already loaded up and equally glum.*)

**Applejack:** Now quit your bellyachin’. (*Zoom out slightly to frame the whole room.*) I can’t have y’all around here with some outlaw on the loose. (*Close-up; she too deflates.*) Aww, maybe I oughta call it quits and go home too.

(*Zoom out quickly to frame all five again.*)

**Braeburn:** No! You can’t! (*smiling*) This rodeo is important to Appleloosa, and with you in there, we got a real shot at winnin’. (*pushing Applejack out the open front door*) Come on now, you head on back to practice and don’t worry none about these three. (*Cut to the grinning Crusaders; he continues o.s.*) I won’t let ’em outta my sight.

(*Before Applejack can get a word out, the door is swung shut in her face and Braeburn wastes no time in securing it: bolt latch, deadbolt lock, chain bolt. He then pushes a chair in front of the door and positions it to face into the room.*)

**Braeburn:** You hear? (*sitting*) Y’all ain’t leavin’ my sight.

(*Cut to the Crusaders and zoom in slowly as uneasy looks pass from one to another, then back to Braeburn, giving them his best no-nonsense stare with forelegs crossed as best he can. A dissolve changes day to night, as seen through the window, and shows him fast asleep and half-slumped/fallen forward off the chair. As he snores vigorously, the camera cuts to just outside that window; Bloom peeks over the sill, raises the sash, and climbs out onto the porch after a wary look back and forth. Scootaloo follows suit, the two heading purposefully across the planks; when Sweetie takes her turn, she tumbles inelegantly to land on her chin. All three have shed their saddlebags.*)

**Sweetie:** (*following them*) I thought we weren’t gonna wander off again. (*Now they are well away from the homestead.*)

**Bloom:** This ain’t wanderin’. We know exactly where we’re headed—to find Trouble Shoes.

**Sweetie:** But isn’t he a dangerous criminal?

**Bloom:** We only need to find him. We don’t need to capture him. (*jumping ahead; Scootaloo follows*) The Sheriff can handle that. (*They land on the top rail of a fence.*)

**Scootaloo:** And once he’s in jail, we’ll be competing! And then it’s—

**Bloom, Scootaloo:** (*high-fiving each other*) —cutie mark city!

(*Down they go to the other side; up comes Sweetie, only to lose her balance and hit the ground wrong again. By the time she gets upright, the other two have moved several yards along a path heading into a misty, overgrown forest. She glances behind herself with some measure of trepidation before starting off after them.*)

**Sweetie:** (*to herself*) Worst idea *ever*.

(*Another backward glance, and she carries on along the foreboding route. Dissolve to a close-up of an owl perched on a tree branch, facing away from the camera. It swivels its head 180 degrees and hoots into the night, the yellow-tinted whites of its eyes seeming to glow in the dank gloom. Pan to the Crusaders on the move, red-gold and violet and green eyes flicking here and about in search of any hint of trouble. Bloom stops short, having stepped into a too-big hoofprint marked by a too-small horseshoe—matching the one identified earlier by Silverstar as belonging to Trouble Shoes—and the others pull up to either side.*)

**Bloom:** It’s another giant hoofprint!

**Sweetie:** Do either of you have any idea where we are?

(*A lightning strike scares all three of them, Scootaloo so badly that she bolts away and huddles down with face pressed to the grass as rain begins to fall. She looks up after a moment.*)

**Scootaloo:** Uh, maybe we should head back and try again later.

**Bloom:** Come on, before we lose the trail!

(*She trots off; after a beat, Scootaloo shrugs resignedly toward Sweetie and follows. The little unicorn stands irresolutely in place until another lightning bolt scares her into galloping ahead with a cry. Cut to a close-up of another of Trouble’s prints, which quickly begins to fill with water under the rapidly intensifying rain, then dissolve to a stretch of leafy treetops and tilt down to frame the Crusaders. The forest path is now dotted with large puddles, and their pace has slowed considerably.*)

**Sweetie:** (*borderline whining*) Come on. We’ve gone far enough. (*Close-up of her and Scootaloo.*) It’s time to go back. (*Both stop.*)

**Scootaloo:** The rain is only getting worse, Apple Bloom. (*Sweetie nods.*) Let’s come back tomorrow.

(*The young earth pony has continued her progress, but halts as well after a few more steps.*)

**Bloom:** Maybe y’all are right. (*returning to them*) So, how do we get back? (*That gives the other two a very unpleasant jolt.*)

**Sweetie:** You mean you don’t know?!

(*Here comes some more lightning, sending them into a panic-stricken three-way huddle. Dissolve to a long shot of a barn standing in a field and zoom in. Applejack trots in through the open main doors, away from a fresh tower of hay bales—evidently the result of a serious practice session. Inside, drenched from hat to tail, she meets with the other four ponies who took part in making the stack seen at the start of this act.*)

**Applejack:** Whoo. Good job, y’all. I know they need lots of mud for the rodeo tomorrow, but I wish they woulda warned us about this rainstorm.

(*A whinny is heard from outside; she looks over her shoulder and spots a sopping-wet Braeburn limping into the barn.*)

**Applejack:** Braeburn? Where are the girls?

(*He can only manage a very nervous little laugh before the view cuts to a very long overhead shot of the barn and zooms out slowly.*)

**Applejack:** (*from inside*) *WHAAAAAAT?!?!?*

(*Her voice echoes faintly, somehow managing to make itself heard even among the lightning and thunderclaps that rip the air. Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of a few playing cards lying face-down on a table, with the rest of the deck placed nearby. Silverstar’s hoof reaches into view and slams down four cards, face up: two fours and two deuces.*)

**Silverstar:** (*from o.s.*) Ha! (*Tilt up to frame him; he emphasizes every word.*) Fish my wish.

(*A longer shot reveals that he and his deputies are gathered around a table in his office for this game.*)

**Deputy 1:** Gol-dagnabit! (*Throw down cards; glare away disgustedly.*)

(*At the same time, the other one voices a crushed moan and plops onto the table face first. The victor tips his hat with a smirk as the clatter of galloping hooves approaches the building. There is the slam of the office’s batwing doors being flung open; on the start of the next line, zoom out to frame Applejack and Braeburn now inside, both freshly sodden from the rain.*)

[*Animation goof: Braeburn’s right foreleg is bandaged in this shot, rather than his left.*]

**Applejack:** (*out of breath*) Sheriff Silverstar! You gotta help! My sister’s gone, and her friends too!

**Braeburn:** I’ve searched and searched, but no sign of ’em anywhere!

**Applejack:** It musta been Trouble Shoes!

**Silverstar:** Now, now, hold on there. Trouble Shoes done a lot of bad things in his day, but nothin’ like that.

**Applejack:** You really want to take that chance?

(*Silverstar ponders this for a moment and, after exchanging glances with the deputies, pushes his chair back from the table and gets onto all four hooves.*)

**Silverstar:** Come on, y’all! (*Outside; he gallops into the rain, leading the others.*) Let’s ride!

(*Dissolve to Scootaloo leading the Crusaders through the woods; they duck to pass beneath a fallen log.*)

**Sweetie:** You sure about this, Scootaloo?

**Scootaloo:** I thought I was, but now I’m not. (*She and Sweetie stop at the edge of a drop-off.*)

**Bloom:** (*bringing up the rear*) So I pretty much got us completely and totally lost. How could this get any worse?

(*The proverbial question that should never, ever be asked under any circumstances. The answer comes when the saturated soil under their hooves gives way, dropping them screaming into a slide down the muddy incline and then into a watercourse loaded with far too many sharp bends for their liking. They fetch up in a mudhole at the bottom and stand up, Sweetie lying across Scootaloo’s back; the mud covering them dribbles away under the driving rain.*)

**Bloom:** We gotta get out of this rain. There’s no tellin’ how long this storm could last.

**Scootaloo:** (*pointing*) Look!

(*The motion dumps Sweetie into the muck again. Cut to their perspective of a cabin standing in a small clearing and zoom in slowly through the mist and deluge. It is mounted on a four-wheeled base, with a harness attached to one end—the pony equivalent of a house trailer.*)

**Bloom:** (*softly*) It looks abandoned. (*Back to the three; Sweetie stands up.*) Let’s go see if we can find some blankets or somethin’.

(*She gallops toward the structure, leaving the others to trade an uncertain look. Cut to just inside the front door, which swings open to reveal the three on the porch, now dried off. Lightning forks across the sky, spooking them into a rush over the threshold. The furnishings suggest that the owner is not a wealthy pony by any stretch—or a very neat one, based on the lopsided stack of dishes on the kitchen counter and the visible cobwebs. Sweetie magically closes the door, and the three cautiously spread out to explore this new find.*)

(*Bloom stops in front of a set of shelves that display various random knickknacks; a cobwebbed horseshoe captures her focus immediately. Across the room, Sweetie examines a wood-burning stove, while Scootaloo examines a box of junk. The slow, muffled thudding of hooves brings her investigation to an abrupt end, and the camera cuts to the door and zooms in slowly as the sound rises in volume. The three fillies hastily back up toward each other and turn to face the approaching menace, all six eyes within an ace of popping from their sockets.*)

(*Cut to ground level, just in front of the door, as it swings open to expose the silhouettes of two broad forelegs. Tilt up to frame the rest of this figure, whose outline matches the large shadow cast on the wall of Silverstar’s office in the prologue. Comes now a tripartite scream of abject terror from the Crusaders; it is matched by the new arrival—a stallion—and he slams his head against the top of the doorframe, knocking a divot out of it. The light on him is still dim, but several features can be made out in this close-up: dark brown coat; unkempt, darker mane; small, battered tan hat; yellow-green eyes; broad “blaze” marking that runs down the length of his snout and surrounds his nose and mouth; stubble on the chin. Trouble Shoes has just come home.*)

(*Thrown severely off balance, he topples across the cabin and trips/stumbles back and forth, pulling down the window curtains and getting tangled in the fabric. Now his cutie mark can be seen—a large, upside-down horseshoe—along with an extremely short tail and very light brown coloration on his hoof tips. Trouble slams into the wall by the door, and the Crusaders cringe in sympathetic pain as the yells and crashes continue and a mug bounces across the floor. They bug out just before he falls backward toward them, coming down squarely on a potted cactus and smashing the table on which it stands. His eyes pop with the fresh agony; cut to a long shot of the cabin exterior as a new yell makes itself heard and a patch of the roof bulges outward—he has jumped up and bashed his head on the ceiling.*)

(*Inside, Trouble makes a four-point landing, his hat smashed by a pot on his head and the curtains still tangled around his midsection.*)

**Trouble:** Ow!

(*The cookware falls loose as he bolts blindly away and collides face first with a hanging lantern. It swings away, then catches him again on the return trip, and the view snaps to black. A high-pitched ringing noise starts up, such as one might experience after a blow to the head. The blackness splits horizontally, and the two halves of the screen retract in a manner similar to an eye opening—this is Trouble’s perspective, looking blurrily up at Bloom. He groans wearily, the sound muffled by the aftereffects of this cranial trauma.*)

**Bloom:** (*muffled*) Hello?

(*Blink; his sight begins to function normally, but the ringing continues.*)

**Bloom:** (*clearer, echoing slightly*) You all right?

(*Scootaloo and Sweetie step up on either side, their faces matching the concern on hers, and the view cuts to all four. The massive stallion has wound up flat on his belly amid a tangle of hooves, legs, and curtains. When he speaks, his voice is slow and gravelly, with the tone of one who has resigned himself to forever being the butt of Lady Luck’s jokes. Now seen in full light, his mane is dark gray and his hoof tips and blaze are the same shade of white. The ringing in his ears stops at this point.*)

**Trouble:** Surely.

**Bloom:** We didn’t mean no harm. We just came in to get out of the rain.

**Trouble:** Had some hot cider a-cookin’ in the kitchen. (*looking across cabin*) Doubt it survived.

(*Pan quickly to the thoroughly wrecked kitchen. Out of all the pans that had been hanging on wall hooks, only one is still there; it drops loose and clatters to the floor.*)

**Trouble:** I ain’t gonna rise to greet y’all. Awfully rude, I reckon, but as you can see, I’m the fresh casualty of an unusually unfortunate circumstance. (*He rests his head on the boards.*) My lot in life, I suppose.

**Bloom:** (*hesitantly*) Are you…Trouble Shoes?

**Trouble:** That’s me.

(*The red-maned filly starts toward him, but Scootaloo throws out a foreleg to bar her path.*)

**Scootaloo:** Wha—what are you doing?

**Bloom:** I’m gonna unwrap him.

(*Now she crosses the floor to Trouble and gets a mouthful of curtain fabric, ready to make good on that statement.*)

**Sweetie:** (*crossing to her*) You can’t *do* that! That’s Trouble Shoes! (*Bloom drops the cloth and smiles.*)

**Bloom:** Aw, he don’t seem so bad.

(*Close-up of a patch of floor; one piece after another is tossed down, and in short order Trouble stands up to his full, very imposing height. He regards the Crusaders impassively as lightning cracks through the night, visible through the open door at his back.*)

**Trouble:** Of course, guests would arrive while I ain’t got no pie to offer. (*crossing cabin*) Score some more misfortune points for old Trouble Shoes.

(*One front hoof comes down squarely on a dropped banana peel, sending him skidding and yelling across the floor and o.s. A camera-shaking crash marks his impact; cut to the upper portion of a set of shelves, one of which holds three bowling balls. These roll over the edge one by one, and the camera tilts down to Trouble, sitting up on his haunches and rubbing his head through his hat. A sizable lump grows up, raising the chapeau clear of his scalp—he has taken three direct hits.*)

**Trouble:** Typical. (*pushing hat down; lump disappears*) Bad luck never rests.

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) You sure that’s bad luck? (*Cut to the Crusaders.*) Seems like maybe you’re just a little…um…

**Sweetie:** …klutzy? (*He snaps upright.*)

**Trouble:** (*indignantly, pivoting to show his haunch*) Tell that to the flank!

(*Zoom in to a close-up of the horseshoe marking on the start of the next line. He reverts to his usual defeated tone.*)

**Trouble:** Upside-down horseshoe—bad luck. (*Close-up of him.*) Follers me wherever I go like sour on old milk. (*clumping past Crusaders*) Y’all best vamoose before my bad luck rubs off and sticks to y’all. Get along! (*now at door*) Skedaddle!

(*Lightning; cut to a head-on view of the staring trio and zoom out quickly through the door, framing Trouble as well.*)

**Trouble:** (*pointing out*) AM-SCRAY! (*Inside again.*)

**Scootaloo:** Um…we don’t really know the way back to Appleloosa. (*Bloom and Sweetie nod.*)

**Trouble:** But of course I do. Wouldn’t you know it? My lucky day.

(*Dissolve to the gloomy-faced giant leading the fillies along the forest path. The rain has stopped, and the sky has cleared.*)

**Sweetie:** It’s actually kinda sweet of him to help us out like this.

**Scootaloo:** (*worried*) I know. What do we do if he takes us back to Appleloosa and the Sheriff arrests him? If I get a cutie mark for that, I’ll feel guilty every time I see it.

(*Her words start a thought in the other two young brains. Cut to a close-up profile of Trouble.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Say there, Trouble Shoes… (*Tilt down to her, walking alongside.*) …you might not want to take us all the way back to Appleloosa. The Sheriff sorta has it in his mind that you’re a no-good outlaw lookin’ to shut down the rodeo.

**Trouble:** My kind of luck he’d think that.

**Bloom:** But…is it true?

**Trouble:** Y’all like stories?

**Crusaders:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm.

**Trouble:** Just my luck. I was hopin’ you’d say no.

(*Dissolve to a close-up of Trouble as a colt in the time before earning his cutie mark. He wears the same hat as in the present, but he looks around himself with genuine happiness and wonderment. He stands behind a low wall, his forelegs hooked over its edge, with ponies to either side; zoom out to frame more of them. During the next line, cut to just behind him, framing a rodeo in progress.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) When I was a colt, I wanted to be a rodeo star somethin’ fierce.

(*Close-up of one hoof scraping against the dirt, then zoom out. He now stands in a corral, rearing up.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) But I just didn’t seem to have a knack for it.

(*He gallops toward a barrel and runs into it face first, his hat flying off to land on it as he tumbles backward with a yell. Two buffalo who happen to be looking on from beyond a nearby fence trade a laugh. Dissolve to Trouble with his hat back on and practicing some lasso tricks; cut to the buffalo, glancing sidewise at each other with mild befuddlement. They turn their eyes straight ahead again at the sound of his groan, and a cut back to him tells the reason: he has managed to hogtie himself but good. Trouble’s moan mingles with the laughter from the buffalo onlookers.*)

(*A dissolve, and now a hitching post has been set up as a hurdle. Two mares gallop into view and leap nimbly over it.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) I practiced and practiced and…

(*Here he comes, getting his hooves caught on the horizontal bar so that he spins wildly around it, visible as only a brown/white blur.*)

**Colt Trouble:** Whooaa…

(*The spin stops, dumping him upside down so that his hat falls off. Cut to a quartet of well-dressed ponies and zoom out. They are seated at a judges’ table placed in a section of rodeo arena seating, and the re-hatted Colt Trouble deftly whirls a lasso in his teeth. Various barrels stand on the dirt, including a three-high stack.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) …and finally I wrangled up the guts to audition for rodeo school. Right in the middle of that tryout, I knew I was doin’ what I was meant to. (*Zoom in on his haunch.*) And wouldn’t you know it. (*The upside-down horseshoe appears.*) In a flash comes this here cutie mark.

(*Distracted by its emergence, the aspiring rodeo star flicks the lasso so that it snags the topmost barrel in the stack, pulling it down and o.s. Its impact is accompanied by a splash. Cut to the four judges, whose wide-eyed stares give way to a round of laughter, then back to Colt Trouble. Here he stands, the barrel jammed vertically onto his body to cover everything but his hooves, which stand a puddle of water that has dribbled out. The brown/white head pops out through a break in the staves, utter mortification writ large across every square inch. He tries to push the container off himself, but it is stuck fast.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) I can still remember them judges a-laughin’. (*Hang head; trudge away, leaving a trail of puddles.*) I didn’t even finish my routine, ’cause right then I knew bad luck was my fate.

(*Dissolve to the same arena, the stands now populated by cheering ponies watching a race. Pan to frame Colt Trouble sneaking up to watch from behind some stacked barrels, having shed the one that fell on him. He rests his front hooves on one barrel.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) That fire for rodeo-in’ never did leave me, though. I couldn’t keep away from ’em.

(*A dissolve, and now it is a full-grown Trouble who watches from this vantage point.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) So I’d sneak down and have a look— (*A couple of competitors gallop past.*) —and wouldn’t you know it…

(*Leaning forward for a better angle, he inadvertently knocks over all the barrels except the one on which he has propped himself up. A mighty grimace as the camera zooms in.*)

**Trouble:** (*voice over*) …bad luck’d strike again. (*Hunker down behind barrel; tilt down toward the ground.*) Just my lot in life, I reckon.

(*Wipe to the present-day forest canopy as he finishes, the tilt continuing to bring him into view so that his last few words are delivered on camera. Cut to the Crusaders, following.*)

**Sweetie:** Poor Trouble Shoes. I can’t believe those mean judges would laugh at him like that.

**Bloom:** (*smiling*) Don’t you see? They weren’t laughing *at* him. They were just enjoying the show.

**Scootaloo:** What are you saying?

**Bloom:** (*passing her*) Think about it. If we saw a rodeo *clown* doin’ what he did back in that shack— (*Stop.*) —we’d think he was the greatest! (*Cut to the Crusaders, now all stopped.*)

**Sweetie:** You’re right! He could still be in rodeos, just not the way he thought!

**Scootaloo:** So he’s been looking at his cutie mark wrong the whole time! It’s not bad luck, it’s—

**Silverstar:** (*from o.s.*) Gotcha!

(*Three pairs of young eyes turn fearfully ahead; cut to Trouble, being roped up by the two deputies. Applejack, Braeburn, and Silverstar are on the scene as well to box him in. All five are now dry from their chase through the storm.*)

**Trouble:** Just my luck.

**Silverstar:** Trouble Shoes, you’re under arrest for vandalizin’ the property and peace of mind of the good rodeo-lovin’ ponies of Equestria, not to mention filly-nappin’ and… (*Pause.*) …generalized mayhem! (*The Crusaders gallop over…*)

**Bloom:** Wait! (*…only to be stopped by Applejack’s foreleg.*)

**Applejack:** Braeburn, get these fillies someplace safe. (*She gallops ahead.*)

**Bloom:** Wait! No! (*Lunge; Braeburn pushes her back.*) Listen, Applejack!

(*Cut to the other three members of the impromptu posse and their prisoner; Silverstar walks point to escort them away as Applejack falls in.*)

**Crusaders:** (*from o.s.*) NOOOOO!!

(*Cut back to them, faces wracked with sadness and shock and regret. Zoom out slowly and snap to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the house in which Braeburn was watching the Crusaders. It is now the following morning, and the camera zooms in slowly.*)

**Bloom:** (*from inside*) But Trouble Shoes isn’t the menace everypony thinks!

(*On the end of this, cut to inside; Applejack sets her hat in place grimily as Bloom addresses her back. All three Crusaders are present and accounted for.*)

**Applejack:** Sakes alive, what’s with you? (*She turns to them.*) Why in tarnation would you want me to help get him outta jail— (*Cut to the Crusaders; she continues o.s.*) —when he’s the one who ran off with y’all to begin with?

(*All three young faces grimace as their owners fully realize the mess Trouble is now in. The sound of Applejack’s hooves crossing the floor is heard.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Now if y’all excuse me— (*passing them*) —I’m off to win the Appleloosa Rodeo hay bale monster stack! (*Sound of door opening.*)

**Bloom:** Um, Applejack?

(*Big sister does not break stride, her tail disappearing through the door before it swings closed behind her. Deeply unsettled looks pass from one filly to another before the view dissolves to just outside a jail cell—the one within Silverstar’s office. Its far wall displays a few hash marks, perhaps left by a former occupant to mark the days spent there, and Trouble stands atop his bunk on his hind legs to peer out the window. Zoom in slowly through the cell door as he lets out a heavy sigh, then cut to just outside the window bars.*)

**Trouble:** Well, at least I get me a view of one small corner of the rodeo.

(*A creaking of bedsprings is heard, followed by his abrupt drop out of view; his battered hat comes free of his head and falls on its own. A cut to inside the cell reveals that his bunk’s mattress has given way under his weight; now he sits on his haunches, the remains wedged around his midsection.*)

**Trouble:** Figures. (*Cut to Silverstar, seated behind a desk.*)

**Silverstar:** Aw, come on now, Trouble Shoes! I’m runnin’ outta mattresses!

(*Zoom out as he speaks. The cell door is directly across from him, and piled up in front of it are a great many bunks that have been ruined in exactly the same way. Trouble drops his head despondently, and Silverstar leans back in his chair for a nap and tips his hat over his eyes. The Crusaders peek in through a nearby window; Bloom and Scootaloo grin encouragingly at a very nervous Sweetie, who clamps her teeth onto her tongue and gets her horn working. A magic aura sputters into existence around a ring of keys hanging on the wall near the snoozing Sheriff and lifts it away from its nail. Sweetie concentrates a bit harder and whisks it away, earning a congratulatory nudge from Scootaloo that nearly breaks the spell. Bloom has already cleared out, and Scootaloo races after her as the keys float out under the batwing doors. As soon as they are out of view, the earth pony filly bursts into the office.*)

**Bloom:** Come on, Sheriff! You’re about to miss the hay bale monster stack! (*Silverstar is awake in an instant.*)

**Silverstar:** Jiminy! That’s startin’ already?

(*He charges out and down the street, completely ignoring Bloom and Scootaloo on either side of the doors and Sweetie hunkered down just past one end of the building. This last hops up to join her friends, the key ring clamped in her teeth, and all three dart into the office. Close-up of Trouble, the shadows from the cell door’s bars striping themselves forebodingly across his face. These slide away in time with the sound of the lock being opened.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Let’s go, Trouble Shoes! (*Zoom out to frame the Crusaders at the door. Sweetie has ditched the keys.*) This here’s a jailbreak!

**Trouble:** Ain’t no need. Can hear the rodeo just fine from this vantage.

**Scootaloo:** But we’ve got a plan to help you live your dream!

**Trouble:** Listen, y’all. (*He stands up, the bunk still jammed onto his body.*) I’m a known criminal. How you proposin’ on gettin’ me into a rodeo?

(*It falls off; the Crusaders respond with three very optimistic grins. Dissolve to a throng of cheering rodeo spectators, then cut to the stacking event in progress. Applejack and her four teammates are hard at it, having already gained quite a height, and another bale is swiftly lassoed, flung, and boosted to the peak. A tall vertical ruler has been set up, with a couple of arrow markers in place to indicate the efforts of other teams. The next three lines overlap, delivered by the Crusaders as they watch from the fence.*)

**Applejack:** Go, Applejack!

**Scootaloo:** You can do it!

**Sweetie:** Woo-hoo!

**Trouble:** (*from o.s.*) Well…

(*All three look in his direction; cut to a profile close-up of his face and zoom out. Clown makeup; red rubber-ball nose; fluffy blue wig topped by a tiny purple hat with a pale yellow feather; baggy polka-dotted shirt and heavily patched pants held up with suspenders; bandana tied loosely around neck; oversized red shoes on rear hooves. Classic rodeo clown, in other words.*)

**Trouble:** …how do I look?

(*The fillies laugh at his comical appearance, the camera positioned to show the hay bales on which they have been standing in order to see over the fence. Another bale makes its way up the stack as he steps across to watch over their shoulders; now, for the first time, he puts some real enthusiasm into his voice.*)

**Trouble:** Come on now! Stack them bales! (*Grins among the Crusaders.*) Woo-hoo!

(*Here comes the next one, up and up and up. Applejack’s buck causes it to land standing on end; it totters dangerously back and forth, eliciting a gasp from the crowd, then tips over to land flat like all the others. A pegasus mare flies up here, carrying an arrow marker in one front hoof, and checks the overall height of the stack very closely with a pencil in the other. This scrutiny brings the Crusaders and Trouble to the ragged edge of completely freaking out. Cut to an extreme close-up of the portion of the ruler next to the bale’s topmost corner; the mare sticks the arrow on to mark it—just above the highest one already in place. The tense silence turns into a cacophony of wild cheering once the camera cuts to the spectators.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Go, Applejack! (*Back to the Crusaders and Trouble.*)

**Bloom:** That’s my sister! (*To the triumphant team, walking off the field.*)

**Sweetie:** (*from o.s.*) No, mine!

(*A reminder of the day Bloom let her borrow Applejack as a big sister in “Sisterhooves Social,” no doubt. Now a gang of rodeo clowns takes center stage, gamboling and fooling about in assorted ways with balls, barrels, leaps; the crowd laughs at these antics, and Trouble manages a chuckle when the camera cuts to a close-up.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) ’Kay now, Trouble Shoes! (*Zoom out to frame the Crusaders next to him.*) You’re on!

**Trouble:** (*shocked*) Say what? I may be dressed like one— (*Cut to two clowns, one jumping over the other’s tumble; he continues o.s.*) —but I ain’t no rodeo clown!

(*Close-up of another performer, hunched and straining under a weight. A zoom out reveals this as three other clowns balanced on his back to make a diamond formation. Here comes a fifth at a gallop, leaping through the equine “hoop.”*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) You got your cutie mark all wrong, Trouble Shoes! (*Back to Trouble, chewing his bottom lip.*) You were born to entertain! (*Pan/tilt down to the Crusaders.*) You’ve got a gift for makin’ folks laugh, don’t you?

**Trouble:** But my cutie mark’s an upside-down horseshoe, and that means bad luck! (*He turns away, letting his head drop.*)

**Sweetie:** That all depends on how you look at it.

**Bloom:** (*sitting on haunches*) You always wanted to be a part of the rodeo, right? (*He turns back to her.*) Well, now’s your chance.

(*The hapless stallion mulls this over for a second or three and comes up with a smile and a new resolve. Those giant hooves are soon beating out a thudding rhythm as he gallops into the arena—but he stops dead after only a few yards, staring at the other clowns’ silly routines. His fearful glance toward the fence is met by the fillies’ smiles.*)

**Bloom:** (*waving him on*) Go on.

(*In close-up, Trouble takes a few hesitant steps away from the fence, but stops at the sound of something squishing under his hoof. Zoom out to show that he has stepped on a rubber ball, which shoots out and dumps him onto his face. The projectile bounces off the head of Braeburn in the audience, knocking him silly for a moment and drawing a laugh from those around him. Now Trouble stands up, throwing his head back so that the wig and feathered hat fly off to expose his usual headwear beneath. The next three lines overlap.*)

**Bloom:** All right!

**Scootaloo:** Yeah!

**Sweetie:** Woo-hoo! All right!

(*He gallops across the hard-packed dirt. Now Applejack comes up on the fillies’ side of the fence.*)

**Applejack:** There y’all are!

(*She holds up a large trophy topped by a figure of a pony hoisting three hay bales.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Bloom*) How ’bout your big sis, huh? (*They completely ignore her for some moments.*)

**Bloom:** (*absently*) Yeah, way to go.

(*Big sis shoots her a nasty look, then shifts her attention to the arena proper. Cut to the clowns, most of them bounding up onto a barrel and leaping off, then back to her on the start of the next line.*)

**Applejack:** Since when are y’all so into rodeo clowns?

(*The jesters continue their antics as Trouble gazes intently at them and then rolls his eyes wearily. He gallops to the barrel, but stops with his front hooves on its top and his rear ones on the bale placed behind it as a step. The next clown in line proceeds to run into him from behind, knocking him off and somersaulting ahead; cut to a close-up of Trouble lying on his back and zoom out. Laughs from the crowd greet the sight of the other clown standing on top of Trouble’s legs, hoof to hoof, and walking in place as if the big stallion were a treadmill.*)

(*Next the performers set up a row of three hoops, the outer two held up and a third balanced on a crouching clown’s hat. Three others charge up and leap through, the center one going in the opposite direction of the other two. Pan quickly to Trouble, now upright and shaking his head clear.*)

**Trouble:** (*glancing at his haunch, rearing up*) Just leave me be, cutie mark!

(*Off he goes, generating enough tremors to scare the daylights out of the stallion propping up the center hoop in his path. The outer two clowns drop their hoops and bail out, and the center one zips away, barely staying ahead of Trouble and getting a big laugh from the crowd.*)

**Trouble:** I aim to clear that there hoop!

(*The response intensifies as he plows through two stacks of barrels, and the hoop carrier leaps over a group of hay bales to get away. Trouble stops here, a barrel jammed over his head, and grunts/rears/bucks in an attempt to remove it. Having no luck, he gallops blindly about the area.*)

**Trouble:** (*muffled*) Come on now!

(*Close-up of two clowns as a third jumps onto their shoulders then zoom out. They are in turn supported by four others, and all seven are smiling broadly—but their happy mood swiftly turns to panic and they scatter just in time to avoid being hit head on. Trouble instead collides with the winning hay bale tower, de-stabilizing it enough to bring down its constituent parts on one clown after another. One bale finds Braeburn with unerring accuracy; he dazedly pops his head up from the end to the tune of uproarious laughter. Amid the center-arena chaos, Trouble finally comes to a stop, his suspenders giving way so that his pants fall down to leave his cutie mark fully exposed. Close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** That’s the best rodeo clown I ever seen!

(*She laughs; pan to the Crusaders, who add their own mirth to the background noise. Bloom and Scootaloo trade a high five over Sweetie’s head. As Trouble tries to pull the barrel off his head, sitting on his haunches and with his pants entirely gone, the plug in the side falls loose and the eye visible through the hole darts about. Cut to his perspective of the rowdy, happy bunch, their laughter somewhat muffled by the barrel as he turns his head from side to side, then back to him. Spotting Applejack and the Crusaders across the way, he finally wrenches the container loose and is rewarded with a gush of water that washes off his clown makeup. His rubber-ball nose is still in place, but it pops off to leave his true face in full view. His eyes pop wide open in terrified surprise, and the crowd pulls in a shocked gasp.*)

**Crowd:** TROUBLE SHOES!!

**Applejack:** What the hay?

**Mare 2:** He escaped from jail!

**Stallion:** Ruinin’ another rodeo!

**Mare 3:** Let’s get him!

(*Angry shouts start up, and the two stallions who discarded their torch and pitchfork during the town meeting in Act One instantly get them ready to use again. The Crusaders hurry out into the arena, placing themselves in front of Trouble.*)

**Bloom:** Wait, y’all! He ain’t what you think he is! (*Zoom out; Silverstar faces them.*)

**Silverstar:** Stand aside, young ’uns! (*His deputies step up.*) This one’s goin’ back to jail.

**Sweetie:** But he never wanted to ruin any rodeos! Those were just bad accidents! (*Applejack comes up from behind her.*)

**Applejack:** Sweetie Belle, what are you talkin’ about?

**Scootaloo:** (*to her*) Trouble Shoes has a gift for making ponies laugh! (*Cut to the judges, now staring wide-eyed; she continues o.s.*) He’s maybe the best rodeo clown I ever seen.

**Judge:** That’s true! He is awful funny. (*Back to Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** He thought his cutie mark was tellin’ him to keep away from rodeos— (*Tilt up to Trouble.*) —but deep inside he knew that’s where he was meant to be.

(*The camera motion puts her o.s. on the end of this line.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) He just didn’t know how to do it. (*Murmurs from the crowd, now far from hostile.*)

**Trouble:** What she says is true. (*removing hat*) This here, entertaining y’all with my klutzin’… (*Zoom in slowly.*) …that’s what I’m supposed to be doin’. I know it now. I didn’t mean no harm, honest. (*Cut to Applejack; he continues o.s.*) I just ain’t never loved nothin’ like I love the rodeo.

(*The orange-tan face comes over in a warm smile as he finishes; cut to frame both adults and all three youths.*)

**Trouble:** So I kept on sneakin’ back and makin’ a big old mess of things. (*He dons his hat again.*) Turns out I was just a-lookin’ at my cutie mark all wrong.

(*Cut to the crowd, every face showing a smile, then back to the arena floor on the start of the next line. The first words wipe away the cheery mood.*)

**Silverstar:** That may be so, Trouble Shoes, but you still gotta face charges for the problems you caused!

**Trouble:** If I done wrong, I’ll see to it that I take my med’cine and square my accounts.

**Silverstar:** Truth be told, we could understand all the trouble with the rodeos. But why’d you have to run off with these here little ’uns last night?

(*On the end of this, cut to a vastly surprised Trouble and tilt down to the little ’uns in question, all of whom simultaneously arrive at the uncomfortable realization that the jig is well and truly up.*)

**Bloom:** (*as all three grin weakly*) Uh…yeah. About that.

(*Dissolve to them in the midst of cleaning up the arena: Bloom sweeping up loose hay, Scootaloo pushing a bale, Sweetie rolling a barrel. The stands behind them are empty, the banners half torn down, and Applejack sits smugly on her belly atop a bale to keep watch over them. Her trophy stands on a nearby barrel.*)

**Bloom:** (*sighing*) You really want us to clean up all this mess Trouble Shoes made?

**Applejack:** Maybe it’ll teach you not to go wanderin’ off after I say not to. (*Sweetie tries to lift her barrel with magic.*)

**Bloom:** (*groaning*) Ain’t it bad enough that you get to go back to Ponyville with a shiny trophy, and all we’re bringin’ back is these same old blank flanks?

(*During this line, the spell fizzles out, the barrel rolls away, and Bloom lets her broom drop and gestures toward her haunch.*)

**Applejack:** Y’all helped Trouble Shoes realize what his cutie mark really means.

(*Cut to just within the arena entrance, the camera pointing out at him—now completely stripped of his wacky getup, and chatting pleasantly with the other clowns.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Ain’t that a nice feelin’ you can take back with you? (*The Crusaders smile.*)

**Sweetie:** I guess we did make things a little better.

**Scootaloo:** Does feel kinda nice.

**Bloom:** (*hopefully*) So we can stop now? (*Cut to frame all four, Applejack sitting up to her haunches.*)

**Applejack:** Nn-nope.

(*All three young faces fall, Bloom kicking at a spot of dirt. Zoom out slowly and fade to black.*)