**APPLEJACK’S “DAY” OFF**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Ponyville Spa during the day. Zoom in slowly and cut to a screenful of steam, which slowly dissipates to yield a close-up of Rarity in a sauna room inside. The prim unicorn sits wearing her favorite robe, a towel across her eyes, and a blissful smile on her face. As she voices a contented sigh, the camera zooms out to frame the entire room. A door opens to admit Aloe.*)

**Aloe:** Um…Miss Rarity? Eh, how much longer are you planning to stay in here, darling? (*Cut to Rarity; she flips the towel off her eyes and catches it.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, dear! I-Is somepony else waiting?

**Aloe:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, no, no. (*Both again.*) I-I just don’t want you to get all—what is word?—pruney.

**Rarity:** Oh! Uh, well, I’m just waiting for Applejack. It’s been so long since we’ve had a relaxing day at the spa together. I’m quite certain she’ll be along any moment.

(*With a smile and nod, Aloe backs out and shuts the door. Rarity floats the towel up and drapes it over her entire head, a fresh billow of steam clouding the view. It clears away in time with the door opening to let in Applejack, who has donned a robe of her own and ditched her hat in favor of towels wrapped around her mane.*)

**Applejack:** Hey there, Rarity! (*sitting next to her*) I really tried to get here earlier. I just can’t believe how much time my chores are takin’ up these days. At least now we’ll finally get to spend some quality spa time together, right?

**Aloe:** (*from o.s.*) Okay, fillies, that’s it! (*She is now at the door.*) We’re closing up for the day.

(*Away she goes, shutting the door and missing the swift deflation of the workhorse’s mood.*)

**Applejack:** Aw, shucks, Rarity. I guess I missed the whole day. I sure am sorry.

(*The towel over her friend’s visage is levitated away, revealing that everything from the neck up—including the horn—is now a wrinkled, waterlogged mess. Rarity lifts an open pocket watch on a front hoof and regards it gloomily.*)

**Rarity:** Me too.

(*The timepiece is lowered, and the eyelids come down for a squelchy blink that brings an almighty grimace to the orange-tan face. Snap to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the sun shining above a treetop in Sweet Apple Acres, the camera pointing up toward it from somewhere above ground level. Tilt down to bring Twilight Sparkle and Rarity into view, coming up over a rise in the path and followed by Spike toting a tall, tottering stack of empty pie pans. The white mare, walking ahead, has shed her spa robe and pocket watch and properly dried herself out from the sauna mishap. Twilight catches up after a few steps.*)

**Twilight:** Hi, Rarity!

**Rarity:** Morning, Twilight, Spike. (*noticing his load*) Good heavens, that’s a lot of empty pie plates.

**Spike:** (*trying to sound casual*) Uh…yeah! We were just heading to pick up some fresh pies. (*Chuckle.*) I don’t know why we keep running out at the Castle.

(*A second chuckle is followed by a stumble that brings him within an ace of littering the road with cookware, but he gets everything re-balanced with an embarrassed little grin. The Princess rolls her eyes with a smile.*)

**Spike:** What are you gonna get?

**Rarity:** Applejack, actually— (*sourly*) —although I’m quite sure she’ll be too busy once again.

**Twilight:** What do you mean?

**Rarity:** (*dejectedly*) Oh, nothing. It’s just that Applejack and I haven’t had one of our spa days in ages.

**Twilight:** You two really should set aside some time.

**Rarity:** Darling, I have been trying for *moons!* But Applejack is so busy these days, it’s next to impossible.

**Twilight:** Wow. I didn’t realize Applejack had so much to do.

(*They approach the main barn; cut to Applejack in the kitchen—hat on, robe and towels gone, and deep into a round of apple pie production. The sound of a buzzer draws her away from a bowl of dough and over to the oven, which she opens so she can pull out a set of finished pies on a tray, using a potholder in her teeth to move the lot safely. A slam of the oven door, and the freight of steaming desserts is deposited on a free patch of kitchen countertop space. She slides one pie onto a towel just big enough to hold it and starts across the kitchen with it; cut to just outside the sill of one open window as she sets it down alongside a second one and pulls the cloth away. Steam curls up from both crusts as she leans proudly over them and the camera zooms out slightly.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) Hey, Applejack! (*Longer shot; here he comes.*) Another order of pies, please.

**Applejack:** Sure thing, Spike!

(*The empty pans are handed over, then returned in no time flat with a full load of apple goodness. However, the added weight sets him to stumbling and yelping backwards as a visibly irked Rarity strolls up to take his place.*)

**Rarity:** I don’t suppose those pies are the last chore on the schedule for today?

(*She pronounces the first syllable of “schedule” as an “sh” sound, typical for speakers of British English, rather than the “sk” favored by American speakers.*)

**Applejack:** (*groaning, clapping hoof to face*) Land sakes! Is it time for our spa day already?

(*To which Rarity’s only response is a very dirty look.*)

**Applejack:** (*hesitantly, smiling*) Rarity, why don’t you go on ahead and I’ll meet you there?

(*The dirty look persists and is followed up with a scoffing sigh.*)

**Rarity:** Please, Applejack, let’s not kid ourselves.

**Applejack:** Well, it ain’t ’cause I don’t wanna, but the work on the farm has just been takin’ up more and more of my time. (*Twilight joins them.*)

**Twilight:** I hate seeing you two not spending time together. Can’t you get somepony else in your family to take over for a bit?

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) Wish I could. But Granny, Big Mac, and Apple Bloom all have chores of their own. And today they’re all busy takin’ the harvest to market.

(*The winged unicorn’s face splits in a grin of sudden inspiration.*)

**Twilight:** I know we’re not farmers, but I’m sure Spike and I could handle things for a little while.

**Applejack:** (*uncertainly*) Maybe…

**Twilight:** Is there one chore we could do? (*Close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Well… (*smiling*) …I suppose if you two got started on feedin’ the pigs, I could maybe leave for an hour? (*Rarity leans eagerly toward her.*)

**Rarity:** Ooh! An hour of spa perfection? I can work with that!

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) Perfect! (*Cut to her.*) You head off to the spa, and Spike and I’ll take care of things here.

(*The growing clatter of pans is heard under the end of this, and here comes Spike right on cue—still managing strangled little cries of panic as he does his best to keep the pies from hitting the ground. Just as he and they topple backwards o.s., Twilight fires up her horn and the camera zooms out to frame all four. Dragon and desserts are all floating overhead in a cloud of her magic, but Applejack is far from reassured at the last-second save.*)

**Spike:** Uh…yeah. We totally got everything covered.

(*The earth pony turns her face away from the window, not quite managing to hide her cringing expression. Dissolve to the four standing outside a fence that encircles an outbuilding topped with several little pig-shaped carvings; several of these animals are penned in, wallowing gleefully in mud, and feed troughs stand ready. The pies have been stowed away, and Applejack holds a scroll in a front hoof. Holding this out to Twilight, she sighs heavily.*)

**Applejack:** Okay. This list pretty much covers everything you need to know to feed the pigs.

(*The intended recipient floats the scroll away in a magic glow, only to have it yanked right back again.*)

**Applejack:** But, uh, maybe I should go over it with you just to— (*The aura whips it out of her grasp.*)

**Twilight:** Applejack, please. (*passing it to Spike*) If there’s a list involved, I am one hundred percent on top of it.

**Applejack:** (*forcing a smile*) Uh…right.

(*She and Rarity set off across the grounds; cut to Twilight, waving goodbye.*)

**Twilight:** And don’t worry about things here! Spike and I have totally got this! I mean, it’s just feeding the pigs. How hard can it be?

(*A scaly violet hand reaches into view to tap her on the haunch.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) Uh, Twilight?

(*Purple eyes pop wide as they flick toward the ground; cut to a longer shot of the pair. Spike has unrolled the document so that it stretches several feet across the dirt and grass, and both are taken aback by the extent of it.*)

**Twilight:** (*small voice*) Whoa.

**Applejack:** (*to Rarity*) I’m glad we’re doin’ this, Rarity. I’ve been putting work before our spa time for too long. I know we’ve only got an hour, but I can’t wait to have a steam.

**Rarity:** A steam is just the start. I know exactly what we’ll do, and an hour will be perfect.

(*Wipe to the pigs in their wallow, seen from just beyond the top of their surrounding fence, and zoom out to frame Twilight and Spike on the start of the next line.*)

**Twilight:** Okay, Spike, ready with that list?

**Spike:** Ready!

**Twilight:** Let’s do this!

**Spike:** (*reading*) “Step one—open the gate.”

(*Twilight swings a gate in the fence wide open, eliciting exactly no additional reaction from the porkers whatsoever, and gives Spike a quizzical glance.*)

**Spike:** Okay… (*reading*) “Step two—close the gate.”

**Twilight:** Huh?

**Spike:** (*pointing to one line*) Mmm—that’s what it says.

(*So Twilight pulls the gate shut. Again the pigs do nothing of interest.*)

**Spike:** (*reading*) “Step three—walk away.”

**Twilight:** (*really confused*) Walk away? (*leaning toward him*) Really?

(*His only response is a noncommittal shrug and grunt. Wipe to Applejack and Rarity walking side by side down a Ponyville street.*)

**Applejack:** I just hope Twilight and Spike can handle things until I get back.

**Rarity:** Now, Applejack, if we are really to enjoy this time together, you simply must give yourself over to the idea that you are off duty and try to relax. (*Close-up of Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** I know. (*smiling*) You’re right. I really am glad we’re doin’ this. And as long as it’s only an hour, I-I’m sure everything will be just fine. (*Zoom out to frame Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** Exactly! (*pulling ahead*) Now, kindly step this way. (*gesturing toward the Ponyville Spa*) Relaxation awaits.

(*Both mares close the gap between themselves and the building; cut to just inside the front door as Rarity’s magic takes hold and swings it inward to admit them. A cut to their perspective and slow pan discloses a waiting room filled with customers; the lavender mare attendant from “No Second Prances,” with a cutie mark of two tea candles, is behind the reception counter. Among the crowd is Rainbow Dash—reading on a couch, dressed in a robe and hind-leg slippers styled with the head of her tortoise Tank. Zoom in quickly on her to the sound of Rarity’s sharp, incredulous gasp.*)

**Rarity:** Rainbow Dash!

(*Rainbow drops her book with a stunned neigh and tries for a moment to disappear by mashing herself in the couch cushions.*)

**Rarity:** What are you doing here?

(*Back to the two new arrivals, who giggle to themselves at this unexpected discovery.*)

**Applejack:** Yeah! I didn’t think spa treatments were your thing, exactly.

**Rainbow:** *What?!*

(*She shucks off her robe and pitches it away, but the slippers stay in place as she hops down from her seat. A quick bit of hind-leg shaking sends them flying as Applejack and Rarity cross to her.*)

**Rainbow:** (*hovering briefly, stammering a bit*) Oh, they’re totally not—at least not the frou-frou kind.

(*Earth pony and unicorn voice an “is that so?” noise in unison.*)

**Rainbow:** Yeah, I, uh… (*poking at a spot under one wing*) …I think I tweaked something at Wonderbolts practice the other day. (*with bravado*) I just came in for a deep-tissue sports massage.

(*And here comes Lavender, who speaks with a heavy Eastern European accent similar to Aloe and Lotus.*)

**Lavender:** Ah, Miss Dash. I am so sorry, but we are running just a tad behind, and we are not quite ready to start your pampered muscle massage and indulgent hooficure just yet.

(*Phenomenally bad timing for Rainbow, perhaps, but Applejack and Rarity smile at the revelation—the latter with just a hint of wicked enjoyment. The speed demon claps a hoof to her face.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh! (*Lame chuckle; she turns to Lavender.*) I-I’m pretty sure that wasn’t what I signed up for.

**Lavender:** (*checking a clipboard*) But they are your usual—

**Rainbow:** (*hastily*) And it seems like you’re really busy today anyway. I’ll just come back tomorrow. (*to Applejack/Rarity*) Uh, see you two later! Have fun! (*whispering, to Lavender*) But put me down for the same thing.

(*Her wink being acknowledged with an understanding nod, she swoops overhead toward the exit. Lavender turns to resume her work.*)

**Applejack:** (*chuckling, making air quotes with hooves*) Too bad Rainbow Dash just *hates* those “frou-frou” spa treatments. She could’ve joined us for a nice steam. Hoo-wee! I can’t wait.

**Rarity:** (*giggling*) Indeed. Although if they couldn’t fit Dashie in, I wonder just how far behind things *are* running. Obviously we’re on a very tight schedule.

(*Pronounced as before. She leads Applejack toward a curtained-off doorway; cut to the other side as she steps through and runs flat into the rump of a pony standing just within. Regaining her senses, she pulls in a deep gasp before the camera pans ahead of her. The one she ran into is Caramel, his mane wrapped in towels, and he is only the last in a very long line of clients that stretches along the hall.*)

**Rarity:** (*trying to play it off*) Oh, well, maybe not everypony is waiting for the steam room.

**Caramel:** Oh, no, no, that’s exactly what we’re waiting for. Oh, I hope you’re not in a hurry.

(*Zoom in on Applejack and Rarity as they trade apprehensive little grimaces, then snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the line, which snakes around a corner; Applejack and Rarity are visible in the far distance.*)

**Applejack:** So everypony here wants a steam bath? (*General grumbling assent; close-up of the two.*)

**Rarity:** Well, the solution is obvious. (*smiling*) We’ll simply have to start our short time at the spa with something else. (*She starts forward; Applejack bars her path with a foreleg.*)

**Applejack:** Huh! Nothin’ doin’! I came here to have a steam, and that’s just what I’m gonna get.

**Rarity:** But—but—it’ll take most of our hour just to get through this line!

(*Aloe steps through the curtain, all smiles.*)

**Aloe:** Rarity! My favorite customer! (*She plants a kiss on each white cheek, then turns to hug Applejack.*) And Appleyack!

(*The farmer is caught out by this sudden display of affection, but manages a smile and a pat on the back before the pink mare pulls away.*)

**Aloe:** Well, it certainly has been a long time since you two were here together. So lovely to have you back.

**Rarity:** Well, I wish I could say the same.

(*She points an irritated foreleg ahead of herself, the camera zooming out quickly along the line until it stops at the corner.*)

**Aloe:** Oh, yes, the wait time for the steam room certainly has been getting worse lately. (*Close-up.*) *But* I’m sure we’ll be able to accommodate your usual treatments.

**Applejack:** Not without my steam!

**Rarity:** (*aside, to Aloe*) Apparently Applejack won’t consider starting her time at the spa without a steam, and we only have an hour.

**Aloe:** That is a problem. (*Applejack strides grimly ahead.*)

**Rarity:** Applejack, where are you going?

(*Cut to a closed door at which the line terminates. The pony at the head of it is Spoiled Rich, Diamond Tiara’s mother. Applejack rounds the corner, Rarity and Aloe a few seconds back.*)

**Applejack:** Um…why are y’all just standin’ here?

**Stallion customer:** (*groaning*) Just waiting for the steam to build up.

**Spoiled:** Without steam, a steam room’s just a room, and I’ve got plenty of those at home— (*very snooty*) —because *I* live in a mansion.

(*There follows a collective eye roll at this shameless display of chutzpah. Once it wears off, Applejack steps over to run a critical eye over a valve on a pipe bend that protrudes from the wall on the far side of the door. Mounted above it is a pressure gauge whose needle is at the bottom of the scale and not moving one iota. A hoof tap against this causes a momentary spurt of steam and a brief, small waver in the reading.*)

**Aloe:** It *has* been taking longer for the steam to reach the Ponyville Day Spa quality. We even had to add a warm-towel service.

(*The end of her words is underscored by the grinding of wheels against floor, and a zoom out frames a unicorn stallion attendant using his magic to push a cart stacked with steaming towels to the head of the line. Mint-green coat, medium blue eyes, darker blue mane/tail, white collar and headband to match those worn by other employees, cutie mark of a bucket of water being poured out to evaporate into steam. Green seems a little bit dispirited.*)

**Aloe:** So sorry for the delay, everypony! Please help yourselves.

(*In a split second, the patrons have picked the cart clean. In another one, the used towels have been thrown back on board—and an errant one has fluttered down to cover his face. He levitates it away and onto the pile and magically rolls the lot away, face now broadcasting a distinct degree of disgruntlement. Cut to a spot near the head of the line, every stallion and mare wearing a nice toasty towel up top, and pan to Applejack and Aloe.*)

**Applejack:** So if you’re not gettin’ enough steam— (*glancing overhead*) —that must mean there’s not enough hot water.

(*Overhead shot of the hall. She is eyeing a steam pipe that runs along the ceiling. Rarity moves a bit closer.*)

**Rarity:** Oh, Applejack, honestly. (*Ground level; she floats out her pocket watch and checks it.*) Can’t we just start with a hooficure? (*Applejack starts to pace.*) We’re going to run out of time!

(*Realizing that neither Applejack nor Aloe is paying her any mind, she tucks the watch away and moves along with them. Cut to a doorway through which the line extends; the procession traces back and around the nearest corner, working its way through the building to follow a serpentine pipeline.*)

**Applejack:** Hmmm…

(*Now she breaks into a purposeful trot, eyes fixed on the ceiling as she passes an open room in which Mrs. Cake is getting a massage from Lavender, then one in which Mr. Cake is getting his back worked on by Bulk Biceps—dressed in the jersey and headband he sported in “Castle Sweet Castle”—and feeling every bit of the pain that goes with it. The pipe runs through the wall above a closed door, which Applejack opens; cut to a head-on view of her, eyes going wide with surprise as she steps through to the sound of rumbling machinery. Zoom out quickly to show that she has entered a boiler room whose walls are lined with pipes. She descends a flight of steps, Rarity and Aloe following at a distance, and breaks into a gallop along a utility corridor. All three come to a stop at an elbow in the overhead pipe; she looks one way, then another, and points along its length.*)

**Applejack:** Hah! Now what do we have here?

(*Cut to the answer, which proves to be a laundry room in which Green is magically loading a batch of towels into one of the washer/dryer units that line one wall. Opposite these is a row of manually cranked wringers mounted on tubs; the back wall plays host to shelves stacked high with neatly folded towels.*)

**Rarity:** (*from o.s., dryly*) The laundry room, of course.

(*Cut to the trio. She brings her watch out to check the time, then puts it away.*)

**Rarity:** And at this point, I’m considering soaking my hooves in one of the machines so my time here isn’t a total loss!

**Aloe:** The Ponyville Day Spa prides itself on sanitary conditions, and fresh linens are integral part.

**Applejack:** Well, sure, but—have you *always* run every single one of these here machines full-bore, all day, every day?

**Green:** (*Eastern European accent*) The answer is no. But ponies sure do love that warm-towel service.

(*Accompanied by the following. Use his field to close the machine he was loading. Move down to another one. Cut to within it as he magically opens its door and takes hold of the freshly dried linens within. Once he finishes, the camera cuts to the laundry room again and the towels whisk into the air, neatly folding and stacking themselves before settling onto the cart and being rolled toward the camera. Fade to black as they fill the screen, then snap to the room as he disappears around a corner. Applejack trots across the floor to stare after them, deep in thought.*)

**Applejack:** Hmmm…

(*Off she goes, trailed by Rarity and Aloe. Seeing him push the cart out of the boiler room and down the hall, she wastes no time in closing the gap. As the wheels squeak along the floor, he levitates a towel into each of the rooms occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Cake. An over-shoulder glance informs him of the trio’s close pursuit; they freeze and offer up a round of innocent smiles/grins—and one forced-casual wave from Applejack. He gives them a suspicious glare as he continues his rounds, and they keep a more respectful distance.*)

(*Now he passes through a doorway and rounds a corner, coming up on the line of sauna enthusiasts. As they catch sight of him, he stops and glances back at the three mares in close-up, the camera panning slightly to put his cart out of view.*)

**Green:** Eh, you are all wanting towel?

**Applejack:** (*pointing*) Looks to me like you don’t have any left.

(*A pan ahead reveals that her assessment is on the money; all his immaculately folded towels are gone, having been wrapped onto heads. They are quickly replaced by a blizzard of crumpled ones—and as before, one drapes itself over his face. He levitates it away with a sour look.*)

**Green:** Well, like I said, warm towels are big hit.

(*He swings the cart away, but Applejack is more interested in a valve on a pipe that runs up the wall, with little spurts of steam chuffing out around it. The green eyes go wide with a sudden realization, and the camera zooms in quickly to an extreme close-up of one pupil. Its highlight reflections fade from view, replaced by a quick series of black-and-white images: the valve…a shivering customer…the cart, stacked with fresh towels…a load of used ones being flung into a washer/dryer and the lid slamming shut before the camera follows its steam line at high speed to stop on the zeroed-out pressure gauge she noted outside the sauna. From here, zoom out quickly to frame Applejack, bewilderment giving way to a new determination.*)

**Applejack:** I think I’ve figured out the problem! (*pointing to valve*) You’ve got a small leak.

(*Pan quickly to the gauge, its needle starting to rise slowly.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s., tapping it*) And that means the steam takes just a little longer to build up. (*To the head of the sauna line.*) And while ponies wait— (*Their towels cool off and they shiver; she leans into view.*) —they get cold.

(*Pan quickly to the upper end of a stack of ready towels, which swiftly becomes a mound of used ones as they take advantage of the offering.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Cold ponies start wrappin’ themselves in towels…

(*To the laundry room; the put-upon Green levitates them into a machine as she leans into view.*)

**Applejack:** …and all those dirty towels have to be cleaned.

(*Cut to inside the rig; the door is slammed shut and the drum begins to fill with water. During the next line, the camera pans to an adjacent unit full of hot vapor and towels.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Because Ponyville Day Spa prides itself on cleanliness.

(*The door is opened and the laundry is levitated out; cut to Green maneuvering the steamy freight around a corner. He stops short, finding Applejack, Rarity, and Aloe standing in his way. Long pause.*)

**Green:** (*hesitantly*) Eh, what?

**Applejack:** (*pacing*) Basically, losin’ steam makes you use more towels. That means you do more laundry, which uses up the hot water you need to make more steam— (*He pulls the cart back and out of sight.*) —so the problem just keeps gettin’ worse.

(*The issue begins to dawn on the waiting customers, sparking a round of smiles and understanding murmurs.*)

**Aloe:** Ahhhhh! I had no idea. (*Close-up of Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** (*a bit snippy*) Wonderful. Now that we’ve solved the great steam mystery, we can finally get back to our…

(*She cuts herself off upon floating up her pocket watch and reading off the time. What she sees causes her to pull at her cheeks in supreme frustration, the watch falling away.*)

**Rarity:** …significantly less than an hour of relaxation.

(*Hooves let go of face, which scrunches up in what might be an attempt to hold back angry tears.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Rarity, are you kiddin’? (*Cut to her.*) I can’t just leave things like this. (*She turns to the leaky valve, all business.*) I’m gonna need my tools.

(*The fussy unicorn utters a vexed sigh and rolls her eyes. Dissolve to a close-up of Applejack’s hind legs and tilt up to her midsection. She is standing up on these two limbs, and she snaps on a tool belt and fills its pockets with useful implements. Once safety goggles go on over the steely green eyes, she stands on all fours, ready to tackle the malfunctioning utility system.*)

(*After a tap on the bad valve, and with a captive audience, Applejack brings up a magnifying glass to scrutinize it even more closely than before. In the background, Rarity loses interest and walks off; cut to an extreme close-up of a cucumber slice, which falls away from the camera to cover one eye. The other is already equipped in this fashion, a mud mask is slathered onto the white face, and she relaxes on a lounge chair. Extreme close-up of a wrench tightening a bolt on the valve housing; one by one, the jets of steam hissing out around it cease, and the pressure gauge begins to rise—a leak remedied.*)

(*Cut to a close-up of Lotus, the handle of a file gripped in her teeth, and zoom out to show her working on Rarity’s rear hooves. The unicorn allows herself a serene little grin at this bit of pampering. Meanwhile, Applejack has now applied several turns of cloth wrapping to the valve housing. A hard pull on the free end in her teeth quiets still more leaks, and the gauge rises again. Extreme close-up of one of Rarity’s closed eyes, the cucumbers and mud mask gone; a mascara brush is applied to the lashes, and a zoom out shows her now lying on her belly so Lavender can put it to work. She sighs in supreme relaxation and bliss.*)

(*Cut to a close-up of the repaired valve.*)

**Applejack:** (*from o.s.*) Whoo! (*Aloe steps up for a look.*) Now that that leak’s fixed— (*Zoom out; she stands just behind.*) —ponies won’t get so cold they use up all those towels. (*Rarity steps up, far from happy.*) And without all that laundry, there’ll be plenty of hot water for all the steam anypony could want.

(*Close-up of the gauge, zooming out to show Green smiling at it with his cart.*)

**Green:** (*trotting giddily in place*) And I only have to be doing wash once a day!

(*The sauna door opens, letting out a cloud of steam, and he bolts in to take advantage of the services. Once the door has closed again, cut to Applejack and Aloe, the former shucking the last of her repair gear.*)

**Aloe:** Wow, Appleyack! Have you ever considered a career in the spa industry? I’m sure I can find something for you.

**Applejack:** (*laughing*) No, thanks. I’m just relieved I can finally relax in the steam. (*Cut to a still-irked Rarity; she continues o.s.*) What do you say, Rarity?

**Rarity:** Mmm—it sounds lovely, Applejack, but— (*floating up pocket watch*) —unfortunately, you spent so much time fixing the steam room, we don’t have any time left to use it.

(*The blue eyes send out an icy glare as the chronograph is tucked out of sight.*)

**Rarity:** (*to Aloe*) Honestly, how in Equestria did it never occur to you to check for leaks?

**Aloe:** There’s just so many other things to worry about. I suppose we get used to the way things are, and we don’t realize there was problem.

**Rarity:** You obviously need an outside eye to evaluate the situation. It’s lucky for you Applejack is too stubborn to relax.

(*The backhanded compliment throws the apple expert severely off balance.*)

**Applejack:** Uh—I’m sorry, Rarity. We’ll just have to do this another day. Twilight and Spike should be done feedin’ the pigs by now.

**Rarity:** Twilight is a very capable pony. I’m sure she can figure out what to do next.

**Applejack:** (*needled*) Look, I know Twilight’s a princess and an alicorn, but she *isn’t* a farmer. I’ve been doin’ farm work my whole life, and I’m not sure it’s somethin’ you can just figure out.

**Rarity:** (*taken aback*) Of course. (*Gasp.*) Why don’t we pop back so you can explain to Twilight what to do next, and then we’ll come back here and pick up where we left off? (*Grin.*)

**Applejack:** (*tentatively*) Well, I suppose I could try, assumin’ everythin’ went well so far.

**Rarity:** (*laughing airily*) Oh, Applejack, honestly. How could it not?

(*Dissolve to an extreme close-up of a shucked ear of corn dangling on the end of a rope, somewhere within Sweet Apple Acres. A quick pan brings Twilight into view, tongue clamped in teeth as she holds one end of a long pole in one foreleg. A bucket of slops is hooked onto the other, one hind leg is raised, and the other serves as her only precarious balance point. A rope is looped around her midsection to complete this bizarre set of circumstances. From here, tilt quickly up to a pulley attached to the end of a horizontal beam; the rope runs up and over this, trailing back toward the ground under the beam. One last pan/tilt down puts the free end of the rope in Spike’s hands; he stands in the barnyard, straining to keep his boss’s weight up while Applejack’s checklist lies open behind him.*)

**Spike:** Wouldn’t it be easier to just fly?

**Twilight:** I told you, Spike. We’re following Applejack’s list to the letter, and Applejack doesn’t fly!

(*Zoom out to frame all of her. The one hind leg is atop one of the posts in the fence that encircles the pigpen, and the ear of corn hangs from the free end of the pole she holds. Gravity and bad balance finally do her in, the pole and slop bucket flying as she pitches forward with a yell. Her number-one assistant loses his grip on the rope and realizes, too late, that he has put one foot within its loose coils. He is hauled up by that ankle much too fast for his liking.*)

**Spike:** Whoa!

(*Twilight plunges toward the hardpan, but stops inches short of a very painful belly flop. She moans wearily to herself as Applejack and Rarity return, and a cheerfully grunting pig regards her from its upside-down position in the mud. A zoom out tells the rest of the tale: Spike has managed to grab the fence’s upper rail and act as the anchor point.*)

**Applejack:** I’m sorry, Rarity, but I think I’m gonna have to finish these chores myself.

(*Rarity makes her extreme discontent known with a soft growl before the view fades to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the pigpen and the whacked-out apparatus Twilight and Spike have been using. The beam to which the overhead pulley is attached juts from above the hayloft window in one end of the main barn. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Rarity:** Twilight, darling! How in the world did you end up there?

(*Twilight gets her wings and magic going to gain a bit of altitude, untangle both ends of the rope, and float Spike back outside the fence.*)

**Twilight:** Spike and I were just trying to follow Applejack’s list as closely as possible. (*Spike settles down to read it over.*)

**Spike:** Mmm—maybe not the best plan. (*Twilight flies over to the other two mares.*)

**Twilight:** I’m sorry, Applejack, but we never even got started feeding the pigs.

**Applejack:** (*pacing past her*) That’s all right, Twilight. I know you did your best.

(*Picking up the slop bucket by its handle in her teeth, she sets it on a post.*)

**Applejack:** I guess a list can’t really capture all the ways I have of doin’ things.

**Twilight:** At least you two got to spend some time at the spa together.

**Spike:** Yeah! That must have been super-relaxing.

**Rarity:** (*snarky*) Well, if watching Applejack fix plumbing counts as relaxing, then yes.

**Twilight:** What about your hour of spa perfection?

**Rarity:** As it turns out, the Ponyville Day Spa had a few problems with their steam room, and *somepony* refused to relax until she had fixed them!

(*Applejack straightens up, having coiled the rope that Twilight and Spike were using.*)

**Applejack:** (*irked*) I’m sorry, but I just couldn’t let those spa ponies go another minute puttin’ up with problems they didn’t even know they had!

(*The fashionista rolls her eyes disgustedly; now Applejack rises to her hind legs and lets the front two rest on the top rail of the fence gate.*)

**Applejack:** (*opening/closing it*) Somehow they just got used to a huge bottleneck of ponies standin’ around waitin’. But I took one good look at that spa jam, and I knew I had to do somethin’.

(*She begins to follow the curve of the fence.*)

**Applejack:** Sometimes the simplest things can just derail a whole operation.

(*Stopping at a particular spot, she leans over the barrier and lets her forelegs and tongue flail everywhere, making a plethora of silly faces and noises that the pigs utterly ignore. After several seconds of this, she reverts to her normal demeanor and circles back toward the others.*)

**Applejack:** Whether it’s a leaky pipe or doin’ too much laundry. You can’t just stick to the same old way of doin’ things and expect them to get better.

(*Another stop, which leads into an impression of a strutting, squawking chicken. She keeps up the flightless-avian gymnastics as she continues.*)

**Applejack:** I mean, thinkin’ you can is just plumb ridiculous, right?

(*Her next move is to nip the coiled rope in her teeth and gallop away. Cut to Twilight, Rarity, and Spike, all utterly confounded by these most unusual displays; Applejack’s chuckle floats across to them, and the camera zooms out to frame her during the next line—standing on the end of the pulley beam. One end of the rope is around her midsection, the other is tied off to the pulley, and the pole with the ear of corn lies within easy reach.*)

**Applejack:** It’s funny when you realize the extra work they were doin’ was actually makin’ things worse.

(*A pull tightens the knots; then, as the other three gape in utter shock, she dives off the beam with the pole. She ends up describing a lazy arc over the pigpen and swinging the corn to get its inhabitants’ attention. Within moments they are all up and stampeding across the pen to keep after it. The vibrations of their passage dislodge the slop bucket Applejack set on a post, so that it tumbles and empties itself into a feed trough, and just as suddenly they have doubled back to gorge themselves. Close-up of Applejack as she swings slowly to a halt.*)

**Applejack:** I mean, I guess it’s possible to get stuck in a routine where you’re doin’ all this extra stuff and not realize it, but I can’t for the life of me think of how. (*perplexed*) Why are y’all starin’ at me like that?

(*Skeptical/puzzled sidewise looks pass between the other two equines as the baby dragon gazes silently across, his mind blown by this highly unorthodox technique.*)

**Rarity:** Um…are you certain everything you just did is entirely necessary to feed the pigs?

**Applejack:** What? Of course! (*She tosses the pole aside and starts to untie herself.*) Why would I be doin’ it if it weren’t?

(*With the knots undone, she drops to the ground. Again the blue and purple eyes betray their owners’ disbelief at her tactics.*)

**Applejack:** (*resting forelegs on fence gate*) See, this gate here used to squeak so loud, the pigs would run to the other side of the pen and never come out. (*opening/closing it*) So I open and close it to let them know it’s safe.

**Twilight:** But it doesn’t squeak anymore.

**Applejack:** Of course not. I fixed that ages ago.

(*She gallops to another spot, near the pigs—now wallowing in the mud again—and waves her forelegs at them.*)

**Applejack:** Then, I realized puttin’ a little fright into ’em got ’em all hustlin’ out of the pen.   
**Spike:** They don’t look scared to me.

**Applejack:** Well, no, they got used to it. (*circling back toward the others*) Which is why I started doin’ the chicken dance— (*miming it*) —to show ’em that if they didn’t get to eatin’ their food, the chickens would.

(*Gallop off; cut to the end of the roof beam. Now she is back up here, tied off to the rope.*)

**Applejack:** ’Course, bein’ a chicken, I couldn’t very well open the gate. (*She drops into a dangle, corn-laden pole in hoof.*) Gettin’ the food bucket to spill into the trough was just a happy accident, because one time I left it there by mistake.

**Twilight:** Uh, Applejack? It seems like everything you’re doing is to fix things that aren’t really problems anymore.

(*These words, and Rarity’s silent nod, touch off a brainstorm under the blond mane.*)

**Applejack:** Well, I’ll be. (*Rarity circles toward her.*)

**Rarity:** Hmm. (*smiling*) Maybe it isn’t so hard to get stuck doing extra work after all.

**Applejack:** Huh. I wonder if I’ve been doin’ that around here with anythin’ else.

**Rarity:** (*all business*) Well, there’s only one way to find out!

(*Cut to the four inside a henhouse. A basket of birdseed rests on the floor in front of Applejack, now free of the pulley rope. She tips a quantity out in front of one chicken, which hops out of its nest to eat, and she leans in to collect the now-exposed eggs into a bowl. The process is repeated at a second nest, after which Twilight and Rarity trade calculating smiles and Spike does a little thinking of his own. Clock wipe to a close-up of a pile of seed being dumped out from a bag held by Spike, then zoom out. He and Twilight are now standing outside the henhouse; she uses her magic to slide the door open, and the whole flock charges out in a mass of squawks and feathers to chow down. Inside, Rarity points out the ease with which Applejack can now take up eggs from all the nests, and the latter nods gratefully as she catches on.*)

(*Wipe to the quartet in a field. Applejack stands by a valve on an irrigation pipe, one of several that run in all directions through the plowed tracts. The feed and eggs have been left behind. She moves about, manipulating valves in sequence to send the water through one branch line first, then through both it and another one. After shutting the system down, she trots off and the camera pans to Twilight/Rarity/Spike. The two mares trade “I think we can do better than this” looks, while the dragon allows himself a bewildered shrug. Clock wipe to a slow pan through the field, Twilight standing by a valve at a pipe junction and Spike watching. Her magic spins the wheel open; at a different spot, Rarity uses hers to work the nearest valve as Applejack observes wonderingly. The upshot is to set the sprinklers going in several lines at once, prompting a mildly soggy wink from Twilight and a happy dance from Spike. Applejack beams at the result and gives Rarity a satisfied nod at the efficiency boost.*)

(*Dissolve to an extreme close-up of a hole in a chicken-wire fence. Applejack holds a piece up, trying to make it fit despite the mismatch in shape and mesh size, and the camera zooms out to frame all of her. The fence has already had one rough-edged repair job done on it, and the cutters and roll of fresh wire lying nearby tell of the effort she has put in to get this far. A snipped-out scrap of material has fallen near the cutters. Pan from her to Twilight/Rarity/Spike looking on; the first two trade slightly exasperated glances, Rarity throwing in an eye roll. Soon enough, Applejack has the patch crimped roughly into place, and she wipes her brow for a respite. It lasts only for a moment until the sound of rattling chicken wire surprises her back to herself; the source is the fresh roll, which has been levitated and unrolled in Rarity’s magic so the cutters can snip off a fresh length. The section of fence between two posts is neatly pulled away and the new one set in its place, and Applejack crosses to her, faces broadcasting pride and appreciation.*)

(*Dissolve to a slow pan across the grounds, seen from a nearby hilltop, and stop on Applejack eyeing the scene. She gives a relieved sigh and turns to glance over her shoulder.*)

**Applejack:** Thanks, y’all. (*crossing to Twilight/Rarity/Spike*) I guess I just got so used to doin’ everythin ‘a certain way, I didn’t realize there were any problems. (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Having a friend look at what you’re doing with an outside eye can really help. (*Pan to Rarity.*)

**Rarity:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. And I suppose if it weren’t for our unsuccessful time at the spa, none of us would’ve realized it.

**Twilight:** Well, now that your chores are streamlined, what are you gonna do with all the extra time?

**Applejack:** (*knowingly*) I think I have a few ideas.

(*Rarity, catching her meaning, lets a big grateful smile take hold on her face. Dissolve to the waiting room of the Ponyville Day Spa—previously known as the Ponyville Spa. Lavender is on duty at the reception counter as the door opens to admit Applejack and Rarity. It closes behind them as they cross the floor.*)

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) Think you can come up with enough things for us to do now that we have more time to relax?

**Rarity:** Oh, please. I could plan a week’s worth of treatments. (*Applejack chuckles.*)

**Applejack:** Well, let’s just start with the rest of the day for now. After all the work we just did on the farm, I am ready for some serious relaxation.

(*Their mutual smile of understanding is cut off by a sigh from a very familiar, raspy voice.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) Thanks for letting me know there was an opening.

(*Cut to her stepping out through a curtained doorway with Aloe—back in the robe and Tank-head slippers she sported during her too-brief visit in Act One.*)

**Rainbow:** I don’t know if I could make it without my pampered muscle massage.

**Aloe:** Don’t worry about it. Shall I put you down for another one tomorrow?

**Rainbow:** Oh, absolutely! Sometimes a girl just has to pamper herself, am I right?

**Rarity:** (*from o.s., singsong*) You certainly are!

(*Red-violet eyes pop in surprise as Rainbow pulls in a panicked gasp; pan to Applejack and Rarity, each adopting a slightly teasing smile/grin at this revelation.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sputtering a bit*) Oh, hey! I-I was just, uh, uh…

**Applejack:** (*leaning across, nudging her*) …gettin’ a “sports pamperin’”?

(*She backs off with a good-natured chuckle, leaving the Wonderbolt to grin sheepishly and rub the back of her neck. Rarity adds her own soft laugh.*)

**Rarity:** Don’t worry, Rainbow Dash. We were just heading in for some pampering ourselves. You could always join us.

**Applejack:** That is, if you don’t mind sufferin’ through one or two frou-frou treatments.

**Rainbow:** (*mock serious tone*) Uh, I suppose I could take it… (*All three head in.*) …you know, for you ponies.

(*All three laugh as the view fades to black.*)