**MARKS AND RECREATION**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up profile of an earth pony filly with the handle of a paintbrush in her teeth. Light yellowish-brown coat; blue-green eyes; short, curly, two-tone pink mane/tail tied back with blue bows, no cutie mark. This is Kettle Corn, who stands in the Cutie Mark Crusaders’ clubhouse and intently plies her brush on a canvas placed just o.s. Daytime sky can be seen through the nearest window. She backs off after a few seconds, the camera cutting to her perspective and panning briefly from the easel to a still-life display of assorted fruits and a bottle of milk set up on a crate a short distance ahead. When the view shifts back to Kettle, she has risen to her hind legs and is adding a few more strokes.*)

**Apple Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Okay!

(*Zoom out as all three Crusaders cross to her, Sweetie Belle levitating a clipboard. A turn of Kettle’s head reveals that she wears her mane in two pigtails, each with its own bow.*)

**Bloom:** Let’s see how your still life’s comin’ along, Kettle Corn.

(*The young artist steps to one side and proudly indicates her canvas—which displays nothing but a red circle whose start and end points do not quite meet. All six observing eyes pop wide in mild shock.*)

**Sweetie:** (*smiling weakly*) Well, that certainly is…round.

**Kettle:** (*eagerly*) I can make it rounder! (*Back to work she goes.*)

**Bloom:** I’m afraid that’s all the time we have today. (*Stop; Kettle removes brush from mouth.*) We’ll try somethin’ else tomorrow. (*Close-up of Kettle.*)

**Kettle:** (*setting brush down*) But I like circle painting. (*Zoom out slightly to frame Scootaloo on the start of the next line.*)

**Scootaloo:** And on the way to figuring out what you’re meant to do, you’ll find a ton more stuff you like. That’s what makes looking for your cutie mark so great.

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

(*All three see her out, Bloom opening the door for her and stepping out onto the platform as Sweetie sets her clipboard down. Cut to a close-up of the yellow filly, whose face registers very great surprise, and zoom out quickly. No fewer than five foals are waiting in line on the ramp, Pipsqueak, or Pip, is at their head.*)

**Bloom:** Sorry, everypony. We’re closin’ up shop. (*Her perspective of them.*) We’ll have to help y’all tomorrow.

**Foals:** (*dejectedly*) Awww…

(*Back to her, closing the door as they disperse, then inside.*)

**Scootaloo:** I don’t know if we *can* help them tomorrow. Working with blank flanks one at a time takes forever.

**Bloom:** If only there was a way we could help a whole herd of ’em at once.

**Sweetie:** (*grinning suddenly, squashing Bloom’s cheeks*) That would be perfect! We’d save time, *and* they could help each other!

**Scootaloo:** (*catching on, rearing up briefly*) Just like we used to! Oh, but it’d have to be somewhere big enough to handle all those blank flanks.

**Sweetie:** (*after a moment’s thought*) Somewhere outside, with tons of activities to try!

**Bloom:** Are you two thinkin’ what I’m thinkin’?

**Crusaders:** Cutie Mark Day Camp!

**Bloom:** And I know just the place! Applejack used to go there when she was little.

**Scootaloo:** (*rearing up, wings buzzing*) Camp Friendship!

(*The exclamation earns her a pair of very funny looks as she settles back to all fours.*)

**Scootaloo:** Oh. Sorry. (*blushing, scratching back of head*) I thought we were all gonna yell that one too.

(*Her sheepish grin is met by a pair of knowing smiles, and all three break into a round of laughter. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a cluster of balloons floating on the ends of strings in front of a building in Ponyville. Each is stenciled with one of the Crusaders’ cutie marks in white, and one more promptly rises to join them. Stacks of flyers bearing pictures of an archery target and canoe/oar at a wooded lakeshore are set on a table by Sweetie, and a red/pink/magenta-striped flag is run up a pole, bearing the trio’s insignia of a caped, rearing filly in bright pink with a purple outline. A longer shot frames all three at the table; the balloons are tied down to one end, and Bloom secures the pole’s lanyard. A crowd of adults and youths begins to gather during the next lines.*)

**Bloom:** Attention all blank flanks!

**Scootaloo:** And blank-flank affiliates! Come to our Cutie Mark Day Camp to find out what you’re truly good at!

**Sweetie:** Bond with other blank flanks, and find out what you’re meant to do together!

(*Inquisitive murmurs pass among the onlookers as they move in a bit closer. Rumble, the younger brother of Thunderlane, takes notice of the display and cringes, keeping his face turned away and doing his best not to notice as he slinks by.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*waving)* Hey, Rumble!

(*So much for a quiet exit, then; he turns to face them.*)

**Rumble:** (*casually, waving back*) Oh, hey, Crusaders. (*moving on*) Look, I can’t stop. (*Bloom grabs a flyer.*) Gotta meet my brother for… (*Close-up; he sighs almost inaudibly.*) …something.

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) No problem. (*crossing to him; passing him the sheet*) Just wanted to make sure you heard about our Cutie Mark Day Camp. The first session’s tomorrow.

(*After she has galloped back to the table, he grits his teeth in a sudden flare of hostility, throws the flyer down, and grinds it under a hoof. He is interrupted by the arrival of Thunderlane and picks up the balled paper.*)

**Thunderlane:** Well, what you got there, little brother?

**Rumble:** (*tossing it in a trash can*) What? Oh, nothing. Come on! (*hovering*) I want to show you a new dive roll I’m trying.

(*He rockets away, but his elder sibling does not immediately follow, instead smoothing out the crumpled flyer for a careful inspection.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Come one, come all! (*Cut to the Crusaders at the table.*) Cutie Mark Day Camp is for blank flanks of all kinds!

**Thunderlane:** (*smiling*) Hmmm…

(*Dissolve to a small stage set up in a tree-lined clearing, with logs and stumps sunk into the ground for use as seats. A banner has been hung up over the stage, set with the same rearing-filly image from the flag inside a shield outline, and the Crusaders stand up here to watch as six laughing, cheering foals gather, including Kettle and Pip. None have their cutie marks. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Bloom:** Welcome, Cutie Mark Campers!

**Sweetie:** Who’s excited to be here? (*A round of enthusiastic responses.*) Well, we’re excited too! At Cutie Mark Day Camp, you’ll be able to try all kinds of things.

**Bloom:** Kayaking!

(*Pan quickly to a row of three kayaks—one capsized—and a rowboat floating at the shore of a lake, then again to the stake and titular objects all ready for a game of…*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Horseshoe tossing!

(*A third pan shifts the view back to Kettle in front of the stage; she holds up her paintbrush and circle drawing from the prologue.*)

**Kettle:** Circle painting!

**Bloom:** You can try ’em all. But the most important thing is that you’ll be tryin’ them together. (*She high-fives Scootaloo on the end of this.*)

**Scootaloo:** That’s what worked for us.

**Thunderlane:** (*from o.s.*) Then I bet it’ll work for these little guys too!

(*Cut to the campers, who turn away from the stage to get a good look at the speaker—Thunderlane, now clad in his Wonderbolt flight suit, goggles propped on forehead, and accompanied by a rather sullen Rumble. Zoom in on these two to the sound of a collective awed gasp; Thunderlane winks to them.*)

**Rumble:** (*to him*) I thought you said we were gonna go practice for the Wonderbolts’ Ponyville Extravaganza show!

**Thunderlane:** *I’m* going to Wonderbolt practice. (*ruffling Rumble’s mane*) *You’re* going to cutie mark practice.

**Sweetie:** And we’re glad to have you!

(*Accompanied by the campers’ charge toward the brothers. One of them, Skedaddle, addresses Rumble. Light blue unicorn colt, messy dark blue mane with yellow streaks, bright blue eyes.*)

**Skedaddle:** I can’t believe your own brother is a Wonderbolt!

**Scootaloo:** (*hastily*) Uh, Rainbow Dash is practically my sister and she’s a Wonderbolt too!

(*Her attempt to steal the spotlight gets her only a round of flat looks from the foals, who are quick to shift their attention back to Thunderlane and Rumble.*)

**Pip:** (*to Thunderlane*) Do you know Spitfire?

**Thunderlane:** I know she’ll be mad if I’m late. (*patting Rumble’s head*) Now you have a good time and try some stuff. (*chuckling)* Who knows what you’ll be good at?

(*Before him in the grass is a scatter of horseshoes. A light stomp on one flips it up so he can catch it in his mouth, and a toss of his head sends it across the clearing to clatter its way down the stake Scootaloo pointed out—a clean ringer. The crowd expresses its subdued admiration, with the exception of a sour-faced Rumble.*)

**Bloom:** All right! Looks like we’ve found the first activity of the day—the horseshoe toss! (*Hearty cheers.*)

**Thunderlane:** Well, wish I could stay and play, but it’s time to fly! (*lifting off*) Have fun!

(*Dark gray wings carry him up into a loop-the-loop, then back for one last roll and wide turn before he is gone. As before, every foal except Rumble wastes no time giving voice to his/her amazement. Cut to an extreme close-up of Scootaloo nipping up the horseshoe Thunderlane threw, then zoom out to frame all three Crusaders around the stake; she carries the projectile away.*)

**Sweetie:** Come on, Rumble!

**Bloom:** Step on up and show us how it’s done!

(*Stopping next to Rumble, Scootaloo removes the shoe from her teeth and offers it so he can glumly take it in his own, then escorts him to the throwing line.*)

**Kettle:** (*to Skedaddle*) No way he’s as good as his brother.

(*This remark does not go unheeded by the pegasus colt, whose eyes narrow in disgust. Once at the line, he does little more than simply open his mouth to let the shoe clank down at his hooves.*)

**Rumble:** (*with feigned disappointment, fading away*) Whoops. Aw, guess I won’t be getting my cutie mark in the horseshoe toss.

**Sweetie:** Don’t worry about it, Rumble. (*as Bloom nods*) Hardly anypony finds their calling on the first try. (*Cut to him.*)

**Rumble:** Eh, I wasn’t worried. (*Zoom out to frame Scootaloo alongside.*)

**Scootaloo:** Good! (*She throws a foreleg across his shoulders.*) ’Cause there’s a ton of other stuff to try. We’ll find you something you’re good at.

(*The cheers from the rest of the group only serve to deepen his general distaste for the proceedings, and his sigh underscores it. The Crusaders’ flag waves past the camera on a pole, the view wiping behind it to a long shot of the foals gathered at the lakeshore. In close-up, Scootaloo dons her trusty crash helmet, picks up a double-ended oar, and demonstrates its use. A zoom out frames two campers already in the water, helmeted and life-vested, and starting to get the hang of maneuvering their kayaks. Scootaloo sets her oar down and glances away from them, surprise taking hold on her face; pan quickly in this direction to the third, capsized kayak seen earlier. It is positioned so that part of its length is on dry land, and she rushes over and flips it away to expose Rumble—also with helmet and life vest, but hunkered down to play hooky and enjoy a drink.*)

**Rumble:** Whoops.

(*Wipe to a pan along a row of foals practicing archery. The lower ends of their bows are attached to tree stumps, and they are up on their hind legs to aim and fire suction-cup arrows. Sweetie watches as their shots hit the targets with varying degrees of accuracy, then turns to find Rumble lackadaisically nocking an arrow and letting it fall even before he releases the string. All have shed their kayaking gear.*)

**Rumble:** Whoopsie.

(*Wipe to a close-up of a crank-operated phonograph on which a record is playing, then cut to a close-up of four sets of young hooves. Three are practicing a dance step in unison, Bloom’s among them, but Rumble remains motionless at the far end. A longer shot picks out the other two members of this class, who giggle along with Bloom as he glares at them with clear contempt. All four are up on the stage, while the phonograph rests on a small barrel just past one end. Bloom diverts her attention to give him a worried look, to which he responds by listlessly shifting one hoof and immediately falling off the stage. By the time the yellow filly can get over there, he has shifted to lie on one side.*)

**Rumble:** Whoops.

(*Concern takes hold as she lets her head drop ever so slightly. The entire scene is pulled away as if it were a book page being turned; behind it; wipe to a an extreme close-up of a pencil held in a magical aura to write a line on a sheet of paper. A longer shot frames the campers gathered around a long table under a canopy, the Crusaders watching from not far away; Scootaloo has removed her helmet. All campers except Rumble are working on their own compositions, and the pencil is being manipulated by Skedaddle.* )

**Skedaddle:** (*reading from page, sounding out one syllable at a time*)

“The first and last lines

Have five syllables, but the

Middle has seven.”

(*proudly*) It’s called a haiku.

(*Pan slowly down the length of the table to stop on an unenthused Rumble, the only one whose paper is blank. As soon as he touches the pencil in his teeth to it, the tip breaks and he spits it away.*)

**Rumble:** Whoops. I’ve tried it all.

(*shrugging, propping head on front hooves*) Time to tell my brother this

Camp isn’t for me.

(*The Crusaders approach.*)

**Scootaloo:** Come on, Rumble. Isn’t it fun just trying stuff?

**Rumble:** Not really.

(*He pushes his seat back from the table and flies off, the view shifting to an overhead shot of the table and canopy as the three aim worried eyes toward him and each other. Fade to white, which immediately retracts to become a gleam on Kettle’s haunch that fades to show a brand-new cutie mark of a quill pen writing a line. Zoom out to frame the overjoyed filly holding a paper and surrounded by cheering onlookers.*)

**Kettle:** (*reading*) “Haiku cutie mark!

And I never would have tried

Without Skedaddle.”

(*The blue colt blushes at the mention of his name.*)

**Bloom:** That’s what Cutie Mark Day Camp is all about.

**Sweetie:** Working together and helping each other. (*Cheers.*)

**Kettle:** But I can still come back, right? And maybe paint some circles?

**Scootaloo:** Of course! Let’s all meet right back here tomorrow.

**Campers:** Hooray!

(*All clear out, leaving the Crusaders to themselves.*)

**Sweetie:** Wow. I can’t believe we got a cutie mark on the first day!

**Bloom:** Yep. This camp was a pretty swell idea. Everypony’s really enjoyed it.

**Scootaloo:** (*sighing heavily*) Everypony except Rumble. He didn’t have much luck with anything.

**Sweetie:** Trying to find out what you’re meant to do can be frustrating. You remember how long it took us to get our cutie marks?

**Bloom:** (*shuddering*) I remember the nightmares.

**Scootaloo:** Well, we can’t let Rumble quit camp just because he didn’t find something he’s good at.

**Sweetie:** We’ll just have to convince him to come back and try harder.

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

(*They fall in line and walk purposefully away. Dissolve to an aerial obstacle course set up before three banks of bleacher seating in a clearing. Various Wonderbolts are going through their paces on it, and blue banners with yellow lightning bolts hang on poles behind the seats—this is the venue for the show whose practice Thunderlane left to attend earlier in this act. As Rumble watches, the only denizen of the bleachers, his brother does a few sharp turns to maneuver through the cloud hoops set before him. The high-speed moves shake the youngster only partway out of his deep blue funk before the Crusaders approach.*)

**Scootaloo:** Hey, Rumble!

**Rumble:** What are you all doing here?

**Scootaloo:** We just wanted to apologize for not finding anything you liked today.

**Rumble:** (*standing up, walking down bleachers*) Oh. Whatever. It’s fine. (*Bloom intercepts him.*)

**Bloom:** It’s not fine! It’s frustrating, and we know what it’s like.

**Rumble:** I’m not frustrated! (*Down to ground level.*)

**Scootaloo:** It’s okay. We’ve all been there. But we won’t give up on helping you.

**Sweetie:** We know you’ll get your cutie mark. (*rearing up*) Everypony does.

**Rumble:** Actually, I don’t need your help, because I don’t want to get my cutie mark!

(*Three more-or-less vertical panels slide in to fill the screen, each presenting a close-up of one gobsmacked Crusader.*)

**Crusaders:** *What?!?*

(*Snap to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the three fillies as Rumble strides away past them.*)

**Bloom:** I-I…I must have hay in my ears, because I thought I just heard Rumble say— (*He stops and glares scornfully back over his shoulder.*)

**Rumble:** You heard right! (*stomping*) I *don’t* want my cutie mark!

**Sweetie:** (*gasping deeply*) He said it again!

(*All three hurry to cut off his resumed departure.*)

**Scootaloo:** Not wanting a cutie mark is like not wanting to breathe!

**Sweetie:** Everypony wants to know what they’re meant to do!

**Rumble:** Hmph! Not this pony!

**Crusaders:** *Why?*

**Rumble:** Because cutie marks are silly! And…and they just force you into one thing your whole life!

**Sweetie:** That’s silly. Having a cutie mark doesn’t mean you can’t do other things.

**Bloom:** Yeah! Our cutie marks are in helpin’ ponies with their cutie marks, but I still like makin’ potions with Zecora.

**Rumble:** (*dryly*) And when was the last time you did *that?* (*The query catches Bloom off guard.*)

**Bloom:** (*stammering*) Um…I-I-I-think it was…uh…

(*She scratches the back of her head and begins to sweat, and the smile she offers up does nothing to shift Rumble’s skepticism.*)

**Bloom:** …well, we’ve been pretty busy helpin’ other ponies lately.

**Rumble:** Oh! You mean doing the thing you got your cutie mark for? *The thing you’re stuck doing for the rest of your life?*

(*Bloom’s spirits sink right down to her hooves, her eyes shining as if she might dissolve into tears at any instant, but she rapidly snaps back to herself as Sweetie crosses to her.*)

**Sweetie:** Okay. Maybe we *will* be doing that more than anything else. (*Both smile.*) But we love being Cutie Mark Crusaders.

**Rumble:** Well, that’s fine for *you*, but I’m not gonna be put in a box! (*He flies off.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*to Bloom*) A blank flank who doesn’t want a cutie mark? That’s gotta be the strangest thing I’ve ever heard.

**Bloom:** Granny always says, “Some ponies have to find their own hay.”

**Scootaloo:** Are you sure she didn’t mean “find their own *way*”?

**Bloom:** Oh. That would make more sense. (*Cut to Sweetie.*)

**Sweetie:** I can’t believe Rumble isn’t interested in getting his cutie mark either, but we can’t force him. (*Zoom out to frame all three on the following.*)

**Scootaloo:** And we’ve got a whole camp full of other ponies who *are* interested in cutie marks.

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

(*They start for home. Wipe to an oval racetrack in a meadow; several cloud hoops are already in position just above it, and Rumble brings another one down. After a quick look to make sure he is alone, he backs up into the sky and rubs his front hooves together.*)

**Rumble:** And here he comes. (*Charge down, threading through the hoops.*) The fastest, most elite flyer in Equestria…

**Thunderlane:** (*flying up past him*) Thunderlane!

(*The disruption sends the colt bouncing and yelling into the grass beyond the track’s edge. After a long, dizzy moment, he shakes his head clear with a groan as Thunderlane walks over to him.*)

**Rumble:** I was gonna say “me.” You’re not the only pegasus in the family, you know!

**Thunderlane:** Well, sorry, little brother. You’re right. (*pulling him upright*) You might be the most elite flyer in Equestria someday, but for now, you should try other things too. (*poking his shoulder*) Speaking of which, aren’t you supposed to be at camp?

**Rumble:** (*pushing him away*) Pfft! That camp is for losers who can’t do anything.

**Thunderlane:** (*smiling*) Great! So there’s no pressure. (*Cut to Rumble; he continues o.s.*) You could try everything and not be worried about looking bad.

**Rumble:** I’m not worried about that. I just don’t want to get a cutie mark in any of their ridiculous activities.

**Thunderlane:** Well, you’re still going back tomorrow. (*Smile; wrap a wing around Rumble.*) You can’t be a blank flank forever.

(*Close-up of the little guy, whose mind starts to work after Thunderlane backs away.*)

**Rumble:** (*to himself, smiling wickedly*) Ahhh…

(*Dissolve to the lakeshore, zooming in slowly on the cabins set back from it. A school bell rings out; cut to a close-up of a wall clock and zoom out. It is above a window in one cabin, and Sweetie is looking up at it.*)

**Sweetie:** All righty, Cutie Mark Campers! That’s it for jam making!

(*Longer shot: all the campers but Rumble are seated around a long table, with several freshly filled jars and a bowl full of the stuff before them. The tablecloth and a handy dishtowel are both liberally stained, as are various bits of Pip, and the Crusaders have been supervising.*)

**Pip:** But this is fun! And I didn’t get my cutie mark yet. What if I’m not good at anything else?

**Scootaloo:** (*circling to him*) You don’t get a cutie mark just because you’re good at something, or even because you like it. There’s more to it than that.

(*A light yellowish-brown hoof bearing a glob plants itself on the table and begins to draw a curve; cut to Kettle sketching it out. Several sheets marked with her previous tries are tacked up on the wall behind her.*)

**Kettle:** I’m real good at painting circles—

(*If nothing else, this particular one shows one improvement: the form is fully closed in.*)

**Kettle:** (*showing her haunch*) —but I got my cutie mark in haikus. (*Skedaddle zips over.*)

**Skedaddle:** Which is what I like! (*Kettle licks her hoof.*) But— (*Sigh.*) —I’m still a blank flank like you.

**Pip:** (*from o.s.*) So— (*Back to him.*) —you can’t get a cutie mark in something you like?

**Bloom:** Now we didn’t say that. (*Sound of the door being thrown open.*)

**Rumble:** (*from o.s.*) You don’t have to!

(*Pan quickly to him, shifting his stance from leaning cockily against the doorframe to standing on all four hooves.*)

**Scootaloo:** Rumble! You came back!

**Rumble:** (*very snarky*) Say bye-bye to painting circles. You’ll be too busy haiku-ing from now on!

**Kettle:** (*small voice*) But…I like circles.

**Bloom:** Come on, Rumble. That’s not how cutie marks work.

**Pip:** (*crossing past her*) So…that’s how cutie marks work?

**Bloom:** (*needled*) Am I speaking Old Ponish? (*Cut to the others, abandoning their seats; she continues o.s.*) I just said it wasn’t!

(*The six campers gather before the renegade; both Pip and Kettle’s hoof are now clean.*)

***Stoptime swing melody with horns and drums, fast 4 (B major)***

***Spoken lyrics are in square brackets***

**Rumble:** Cutie marks are great, they say

[Pfft! Yeah, right!]

They make you special in your way

***Flute/glockenspiel in***

(*He crosses to Kettle and points at her new mark.*)

But that special mark that’s just for you

(*Jump onto the table.*)

Will erase the stuff you like to do

***Stoptime ends; electric bass, finger snaps, piano accents in***

***All other instruments out except for light percussion***

(*He slings the contents of the bowl at the camera; as the jam drains away, the view changes to show him leading the campers through the grass outside the cabin.*)

**Kettle:** So no more painting?

**Skedaddle:** No more haiku? (*Sweetie hurries to catch up.*)

**Sweetie:** Rumble, stop! That’s just not true!

***Piano/snaps out; bass, percussion, mandolin in; Indian accents for next two lines***

(*Close-up of a hypnotized cobra rising slowly into view. A turban-clad colt is playing a flute to charm it, but Rumble pops out from the headwear and steals the instrument.*)

**Rumble:** So you’re good at charming snakes

[Too bad!]

(*A cake topper consisting of a pyramid of happy foals under a rainbow rises into view; zoom out as a dissolve shifts the action to a kitchen, where a filly is presenting Rumble with a cake. He casually sweeps it into a trash can.*)

Or you bake delicious cakes

[Oh, well]

***Mandolin out; horns in***

(*A tree passes the camera; behind it, wipe to Skedaddle taking archery practice outside. Rumble peeks out from a nearby tree and grabs the lower portion of the bow.*)

Maybe there are lots of things

That you like to do

***Stoptime***

(*The string snaps back into place, sending Skedaddle flying instead of his arrow; he covers his eyes as he hurtles toward the target and ends up getting stuck in it.*)

Well, your options get pretty stark

Once you got that cutie mark

***Stoptime ends; woodwinds, strings, glockenspiel in for next two lines***

(*Rumble yanks Skedaddle loose and trots across the campground, followed closely by a confused Kettle, Skedaddle, and the snake-charmer colt, now without his turban.*)

**Rumble:** Blank flanks are better, nopony to tell you who you have to be

(*Kettle glances uneasily at her mark, and the rest of the campers fall in as he shoots skyward.*)

Blank flanks are better, keep your spirit soaring free

(*He touches down on the stage and paces sideways; the others sit before him.*)

So listen up, ’cause I ain’t lying, don’t need no mark, so why keep

trying?

(*Now he works his way down the line behind them, ending with Pip.*)

If you like just being you, then keeping that blank flank blank is the

thing to do

***All instruments out except bass and drums; flute accents on next eight lines***

(*He pulls a new scene down like a windowshade, presenting four campers standing under a spotlight.*)

**Campers:** [Blank flanks!] (*Scootaloo and Pip pop up in the fore.*)

**Scootaloo:** Cutie marks don’t limit you!

**Campers:** [Blank flanks!] (*Bloom leans in.*)

**Bloom:** They only show you what you *can* do!

**Campers:** [Blank flanks!]

**Pip:** But…what if you can’t do a thing?

**Campers:**  [Blank flanks!]

**Pip:** These cutie marks are frustrating!

***Mandolin, horns in***

(*An oar sweeps across the screen, wiping the view to a close-up of the side of the camp rowboat on the lake. Zoom out; Rumble is singing to Kettle, Pip, and Skedaddle as these three paddle along. All four are wearing helmets and life vests.*)

**Rumble:** You say there’s nothing you can do

**Others:** Yeah, exactly!

(*Rumble throws Pip’s oar overboard.*)

**Rumble:** A blank flank is the way for you

(*The brown/white colt shrugs to his fellow rowers, who jettison their oars in turn. Extreme close-up of Rumble’s face, zooming out; he is airborne and without the safety gear.*)

***Stoptime; mandolin out***

It’s no work to just be who you are

(*He produces a spyglass and peers through it; zoom in on the free end, which captures an image of himself wearing sunglasses, which he tips down to throw off a barrage of cutie marks.*)

No hunt to be some cutie star

(*“Star wipe” to the immobilized canoeing trio; he leaps back into the craft, helmet and vest in place again, then circles around to push it ahead.*)

You’re perfect just being you

Don’t bother with what you cannot do

***Stoptime ends; woodwinds, glockenspiel in for next two lines only***

***Capitalized lyrics are sung/shouted by campers in unison with Rumble***

(*The resulting wake sends out a cascade of water, which drains to show all the other campers but Pip on the shore; those who were in the canoe have shed their gear. Kettle daubs some yellow paint onto her haunch to cover her cutie mark as Rumble soars overhead and struts past the Crusaders, having also removed his helmet/vest.*)

**Rumble:** BLANK FLANKS are better, nopony to tell you who you have to be

(*A quick loop puts him into a hover above these foals; from here, he buzzes down past them and bursts up through a cloud to silhouette himself against the sun.*)

BLANK FLANKS are better, keep your spirit soaring free

(*A flash of white, and down he comes, landing to lead them in a trot across the site.*)

So listen up, ’cause I ain’t lying, DON’T NEED NO MARK, so

why keep trying?

(*Now he approaches the uncertain Pip, who regards his own unmarked haunch sourly.*)

If you like just being you, then keeping that blank flank blank is the

thing to do

(*A hard push sends the Trottingham nature tumbling against Skedaddle; he starts to march and sing in time with the rest of them.*)

**Campers:**  Blank flanks forever

Blank flanks forever and ever

Blank flanks forever

Blank flanks forever and ever

**Rumble:** (*over previous four lines*) That’s it, blank flanks! Be proud of who you are! You don’t need some phony pony telling you you’re just one thing!

(*Overhead view: they are circling around him, and he rises toward the camera.*)

**Campers:** Blank flanks

**Rumble:** [Blank flanks!]

**Campers:** Forever

**Rumble:** [Forever!]

**Campers:** Blank flanks forever and ever

(*Reaching the apex of his flight, he darts down to land at the center of the other six, who slide together into a final pose.*)

**Rumble, Campers:** Blank flanks

***Song ends***

**Pip:** Whoopee! (*All disperse in Rumble’s general direction.*)

**Bloom:** (*stomping*) Now wait just an apple-pickin’ minute, Rumble! Where do you think you’re leading *our* campers?

**Rumble:** (*trotting to Crusaders*) They’re not *your* campers anymore. I’m starting a new camp.

(*One gray hoof scratches a line through the grass and into the dirt beneath, putting the Crusaders on one side and the rest of the foals on the other.*)

**Rumble:** Everypony on this side of the line is in Camp Blank Flanks Forever!

(*His new adherents cheer this declaration with gusto.*)

**Scootaloo:** Whoa, whoa, whoa! You *can’t* be a blank flank forever! (*They gasp.*)

**Rumble:** That’s just the kinda talk I’d expect to hear from Camp Cutie Mark— (*smiling smugly*) —which is why blank flanks need a camp where we can enjoy being blank flanks and appreciate our blank-flankiness without feeling pressured to get a cutie mark! (*More cheers.*)

**Scootaloo:** Now hold on, everypony.

**Rumble:** Blank flanks forever! (*He gallops off.*)

**Campers:** (*chanting, following him*) Blank flanks forever! Blank flanks forever! Blank flanks forever! Blank flanks forever!

(*They trail off into cheers and whoops, vanishing behind a distant stretch of bushes, as the Crusaders can only stare in purest disbelief.*)

**Sweetie:** What just happened?

**Scootaloo:** Has everypony gone mad?

**Bloom:** In a word, yes.

(*Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to Bloom pacing the floor in the jam-making cabin as Sweetie uses her magic to stack the filled jars into a pyramid.*)

**Sweetie:** I just can’t see what we did wrong. I thought everypony was having fun.

**Bloom:** (*sourly*) They were until that Rumble came and made a mess of things.

(*Scootaloo has taken up a post on a stool at one window and is peering through a spyglass.*)

**Bloom:** What are they doin’ now? (*She and Sweetie approach.*)

**Scootaloo:** It looks like…whatever they want.

(*At a tap from Sweetie, she vacates her perch; the young unicorn exerts her field over the scope and gets her eye to it while propping her forelegs on the stool. Cut to her perspective, panning slowly across a clearing in which the foals are doing much the same activities as they were before, including a bit of on-land kayak rowing practice. Rumble is napping under a tree; on the start of the next line, cut to just outside the Crusaders’ window, Sweetie’s eye magnified by the spyglass lens.*)

**Sweetie:** Honestly, it’s not all that different from what they were doing here. (*She lets it drop on the next line.*)

**Bloom:** Then what was the point? (*Inside: Scootaloo has caught it in close-up.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*bitterly, collapsing it*) Point is that Rumble is a mad-pony who must be stopped!

**Sweetie:** (*from o.s., touching her*) Now calm down, Crusaders. (*Cut to all three; she is down off the stool.*) We just need to talk to him again. The key is to remain calm.

(*She allows herself a confident little smile, an instant before the view cuts to a close-up of them standing among the camp cabins. Scootaloo no longer holds the spyglass, and Sweetie is gritting her teeth hard enough to fracture the enamel.*)

**Sweetie:** (*borderline unhinged*) *CUTIE MARKS…MAKE YOU…SPECIAL!!*

(*Cut to a long shot of them and Rumble’s faction, on opposite sides of the line Rumble drew, during this last. The dirt that clung to Rumble’s hoof when he drew the line of demarcation is now gone.*)

**Rumble:** (*stomping*) By putting you in a special little box!

**Sweetie:** (*leaning toward him*) *SPECIAL!!*

**Rumble:** (*ditto; they butt heads*) *BOX!!*

(*Bloom pushes her colleague back with a conciliatory little smile.*)

**Bloom:** Come on, Sweetie Belle.

(*The smile becomes a half-panicked grin as she quickly drags Sweetie back from the line.*)

**Bloom:** I think you remained calm long enough.

(*The murderous look in the green eyes shifts to a penetrating stare, which zeroes in on the splotch of paint that hides Kettle’s quill mark.*)

**Sweetie:** (*eyes popping wide*) Kettle Corn, you covered your cutie mark?

**Kettle:** (*pacing toward her*) I’m blank flank again,

Keeping my options open.

I’m more than haikus.

**Sweetie:** You just haiku-ed right then!

**Rumble:** (*to Kettle*) Don’t let them get in your head! You’re an open-ended question. Blank flanks forever!

**Campers:** Blank flanks forever!

(*As they trot away from the face-off, Scootaloo deliberately lifts the spyglass—fully extended—and collapses it as if wishing it were Rumble’s skull. Bloom and Sweetie shoot highly concerned glances her way. Wipe to Pip hurrying along a trail.*)

**Pip:** Blank flanks forever!

(*He reaches Kettle, who is painting at an easel, and Skedaddle, who stands before a couple of horseshoes on the ground.*)

**Pip:** Blank flanks forever!

(*The two colts each get one in their jaws and let them fly, but Pip’s throw clatters to the dirt only a couple of feet ahead of him while Skedaddle scores a bang-on ringer.*)

**Pip:** Whoa! You’re cracking great!

**Skedaddle:** Thanks! (*Sudden, scared gasp.*) Oh, no! What if I get a cutie mark in it?

**Rumble:** (*crossing to him*) Then you’ll be stuck doing it forever! (*voice raised*) Blank flanks, no more potential cutie mark activities!

(*Any enjoyment that Pip and Skedaddle may have had for their game evaporates in a blink, the latter sadly kicking away the shoe thrown by the former. All around the clearing, items and equipment are dropped or abandoned out of pure shock—with the exception of Kettle, who shrugs and continues painting a circle on her canvas. Dissolve to the Crusaders standing dispiritedly at the end of the dock that juts into the lake as an oar drifts past; Scootaloo is no longer carrying the spyglass.*)

**Sweetie:** Well, Cutie Mark Day Camp is a bust.

**Bloom:** (*smiling*) No, it isn’t. It’s a swell idea! We just can’t seem to talk any sense into that…that Rumble.

(*A boom of thunder shakes the trio out of their down-in-the-mouth reverie, and in short order the source appears over the hills on the far side. Three Wonderbolts are flying in formation, leaving dark gray cloud trails behind themselves, and Scootaloo pays close attention as they arc from sight among the hills on their shore.*)

**Scootaloo:** Maybe we can’t…but I bet I know somepony who can!

(*Her determined grin sparks Bloom and Sweetie to trade smiles—calculating for the former, hopeful for the latter. Wipe to one ring in the obstacle course seen in the airshow venue at the end of Act One; after three ace flyers have gone through it one by one, the camera tilts down to frame Thunderlane addressing the Crusaders.*)

**Thunderlane:** Let me get this straight. My little brother upended your entire camp? How in Equestria did he do that?

**Sweetie:** Well…

(*After a deep breath that packs her lungs with every molecule of oxygen they can possibly hold, she begins to tell the tale at a speed that would earn the undying respect of Pinkie Pie.*)

**Sweetie:** …it started when he couldn’t toss a horseshoe or paddle a kayak or shoot an arrow or use a pencil, and we felt bad that he wasn’t good at anything, but now he doesn’t want a cutie mark at all because he’s afraid he’ll get stuck doing something he doesn’t like forever, you know?

(*Cut to a thoroughly puzzled Thunderlane and back during this torrent of verbiage. Once it subsides, Sweetie pulls in another bushel or two of air.*)

**Thunderlane:** No, I don’t. Rumble’s good at all that stuff.

**Bloom:** Well, that doesn’t make a lick of sense. (*An idea occurs to her.*) Unless…he was bein’ bad at stuff on purpose!

**Thunderlane:** (*sighing*) I was afraid of this.

**Scootaloo:** Afraid of what?

**Thunderlane:** Ever since I became a Wonderbolt, Rumble’s either watching me or trying to fly like me. (*Close-up.*) He won’t do anything else. That’s why I thought your camp was such a good idea.

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) I don’t understand. (*All four again.*) If Rumble wants to be a Wonderbolt someday, what’s wrong with that?

**Thunderlane:** Not a thing. But right now, he isn’t even giving anything else a chance.

**Bloom:** (*smiling, cocking an eyebrow*) Sounds to me like Rumble isn’t afraid of bein’ put in a box at all.

**Sweetie:** It doesn’t?

**Bloom:** Nope. I think Rumble’s already picked out a box. (*pacing*) He’s afraid he’ll get a cutie mark that’ll keep him from it.

(*The sound of tearing air accompanies a zoom out that frames the other Wonderbolts flying the course above the four ponies’ heads. Wipe to Rumble and company now lying listlessly among the trees of their campsite, with the exception of Skedaddle hanging upside down from a branch. After some seconds of nothing whatever happening, the face-down Pip lifts his head from the grass.*)

**Pip:** I don’t know how to say this, Rumble, but… Blank Flank Forever Camp is kinda…

**Skedaddle:** Boring?

**Rumble:** If we want to stay blank flanks, we can’t risk doing stuff.

**Skedaddle:** What if I get a cutie mark in being bored?

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s., distant*) Attention, blank flanks of Cutie Mark Day Camp!

(*Startled, he falls out of the tree; all others except Rumble get up and start moving eagerly toward the voice, and it takes Skedaddle only a moment to stand and follow them. Laughing and chattering among themselves, the six foals approach the Crusaders on a stage set up among the cabins—but stop short of crossing the line that separates them from it. Pip touches one front hoof to the grass beyond and draws back as if it were red-hot. This stage has bunting strung along its edges and a string of pennants overhead, and no log/stump seats are set up before it.*)

**Sweetie:** The Cutie Mark Crusaders are pleased to announce today’s special guest… (*gesturing overhead*) …Thunderlane!

(*The dark gray stallion swoops down right on cue, leaving his cloud contrail, and pulls up to a hover. He has his goggles down over his eyes for the first time this episode.*)

**Thunderlane:** Hey, everypony! It’s me!

(*Only now does Rumble join the gathering. Big brother barrels down toward them, producing enough wind to stir leaves and manes and bring a round of awed murmurs. He follows this up with a string of loops and another pass.*)

**Bloom:** Anypony who’s interested, gather ’round for a day of camp activities with a genuine Wonderbolt!

(*The special guest drops straight down for a four-point landing and puts his goggles up with a grin.*)

**Skedaddle:** Uh, sorry, Rumble, but…cutie mark or not, I’m not missing out on this!

(*He hops the line and gallops off, followed by Kettle and a colt as Rumble glowers after them. These three surround Thunderlane.*)

**Kettle, Skedaddle, Colt:** Whoa…

(*Thunderlane hefts Skedaddle on a foreleg; pan to the stage, where Bloom and Sweetie trade a high five and Scootaloo gives them a smile. A dissolve frames the returnees, sweating mightily and grunting with the effort they are using to pull a rope that runs through their jaws. A longer shot puts Thunderlane on the other end, holding his ground without any visible effort but letting them have their fun. Another of Rumble’s campers changes sides, and the view cuts to a close-up of a horseshoe rattling its way down a stake to score a ringer. Zoom out; Thunderlane and the four foals are at the far end, and the stallion ruffles the new arrival’s mane in congratulation for making the throw.*)

(*The last filly on Rumble’s side tiptoes sideways toward the line just a bit, then a bit more, then a tiny bit more, and finally peels out at top speed to leave only him and Pip. With an apologetic grin, the little pinto bounds over the border to join the others. Cut to inside one cabin, whose wall is lined with Kettle’s circle paintings; Thunderlane and Pip are at a table, putting the finishing touches on a Popsicle-stick model of the Castle of Friendship. Once these pieces are in place, both laugh and the camera zooms out through one window to frame Rumble looking on from a few yards off. He turns his rancorous glare away, a fair bit of self-doubt creeping into the narrowed eyes, and makes to return to his own territory.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) All right, campers! (*He stops.*) It’s time for our last activity of the day! (*Cut to the Crusaders on the stage.*)

**Sweetie:** (*pointing to one side*) A Wonderbolt obstacle course!

(*Pan quickly in that direction to a course lined with various challenges: hurdles, zigzag tire run, hoops on poles to jump through, and so on. The camera drops back to a slow pan across the path.*)

**Sweetie:** (*from o.s.*) Just like the one they’ll fly through in their upcoming show! (*Back to the stage.*)

**Scootaloo:** But on the ground, since not everypony has wings.

(*Six foals cheer and stampede toward it, leaving Rumble alone beyond the line. He gazes ruefully down at it, extending a foreleg to step over and then pulling it back as old convictions war with new circumstances in his mind. Finally he gathers himself and the four gray hooves advance into what he had considered to be enemy terrain; realizing that the planet has not spun off its axis, he breaks into a huge grin and gallops to join the others. A look at the obstacle course shows him the fun that the other foals are having, but Thunderlane is nowhere to be found among them. A glance across the clearing informs him that the Wonderbolt has switched his goggles for a chef’s white toque and is tending a cooking pot near a canopy-covered table. A close-up shows that said table is already loaded with various foodstuffs; Rumble crosses to Thunderlane, properly confounded.*)

**Rumble:** Thunderlane, aren’t you gonna run the course?

**Thunderlane:** Nope! I know I’m a Wonderbolt and my cutie mark is all about moving fast, but I really like to cook!

**Rumble:** Since when?

**Thunderlane:** Oh, we take turns making the meals at Wonderbolt HQ. I didn’t want to at first, but now I love it. I just wish I’d tried it sooner. (*Wink.*)

**Rumble:** You do?

**Thunderlane:** Of course! There’s more to me than just flying. (*holding a mixing spoon out to Rumble*) And I bet there’s more to you too.

(*After a moment’s internal struggle, Rumble smiles gratefully and takes the handle in his mouth, earning a warm smile from his brother. Wipe to a slow pan along the lakeshore; two colts are preparing to shove off for a rowing excursion as the mud-splattered Crusaders, Kettle, and Skedaddle return to camp and an equally filthy Pip gallops ahead. Kettle has washed the paint off her haunch to display her cutie mark for all to see.*)

**Kettle:** (*to Bloom*) Obstacles are fun!

Running free through mud and dirt

Beats circle painting!

**Bloom:** That haiku pretty well sums it up.

(*They gallop past Thunderlane and Rumble, who have moved the cooking pot to stand in front of a cabin, but Scootaloo stops for a brief look before hurrying to rejoin her fellow camp counselors. Now Rumble wears a toque of his own and is stirring the chow.*)

**Scootaloo:** Looks like Thunderlane was right about the obstacle course getting Rumble to come back over.

**Sweetie:** (*calling out*) Hey, Rumble! Aren’t you gonna do our Wonderbolt course?

**Rumble:** I’m cooking today. Maybe I’ll do the course tomorrow.

**Bloom:** So you’re comin’ back tomorrow?

**Scootaloo:** You’re not worried about getting your cutie mark?

**Rumble:** Nah. I already know I’m a good flyer. It kinda runs in the family. I guess it’s time to see what other stuff I can do.

(*Pan from him to Thunderlane, who utters a sotto-voce chuckle accompanied by a flick of both eyebrows—a gently ribbing “I told you so.” With a round of smiles and grins, the Crusaders stack up one mud-caked hoof each to celebrate bringing the obstinate little colt around. Tilt up to the camp flag waving in the breeze and fade to black.*)