**THE BREAK UP BREAK DOWN**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of a pie baking in a hot oven. Heart-shaped cutouts mark the crust, and the pan in which the dessert rests has the same contour. The camera points out through the door’s transparent window to frame the décor of the kitchen at Sweet Apple Acres, and the very worried face of Big Macintosh rises into view to peer in at the pie. From here, cut to a profile close-up of the big workhorse as he turns his attention to a kitchen timer on a nearby countertop; after a long, searching stare from the green eyes, the dial ticks ahead by one minute. Sweat beads on the red face and a growl builds in his throat as the device obstinately refuses to advance any faster.*)

(*A longer shot frames both him and Spike in the kitchen, which is liberally bedewed from floor to ceiling with assorted spills and splatters. The daytime sky is visible through the windows, and Macintosh sits on his haunches.*)

**Spike:** You said it, Big Mac. This is taking forever! (*crossing to oven*) I know it’s wrong to cut corners when it comes to gifts from the heart, but…this is an emergency, right?

**Macintosh:** (*nodding emphatically*) Ee-yup.

**Spike:** (*voice raised*) Discord? A little help! DISCORD!

(*A great deal of nothing happens, prompting a heavy sigh from the little guy, but Macintosh is quick to whisper in his ear.*)

**Spike:** (*brightening*) Yeah, oh, good idea!

(*A grinning nod from the stallion; Spike chuckles, clears his throat, and jumps onto the broad back as Macintosh stands up.*)

**Spike:** Captain Wuzz! Are you prepared to enter the world of Ogres and Oubliettes?

(*Being the fantasy role-playing game that Discord played with the two in “Dungeons & Discords.” An almighty poof, and the chaos master has materialized in the kitchen, the shock wave pitching them aside. He is dressed in his archer outfit from that episode, braided blond mane and all—including the parsnip-transformed talons that resulted from his backfired “Transform into Root Vegetable” spell—and his eyebrows have gone the dark gray of his character.*)

**Discord:** Huzzah, fellow adventurers!

(*Behind him, the background dissolves to the gridded fantasy landscape he conjured up for their game, studded with giant dice.*)

**Discord:** (*conjuring/drawing bow and arrow*) Shall we storm the ramparts of Squizard’s castle to reclaim Calico’s Ring of Imperceptibility?

(*Back to Macintosh and Spike, who have respectively fallen to haunches and all fours on the kitchen floor. Following an embarrassed little smile and grin from the pair, Discord eases off the tension on his bowstring.*)

**Discord:** You did summon me for a rousing Guys’ Night of Ogres and Oubliettes, did you not?

**Spike:** Uh…sort of. But… (*thumbing over shoulder toward oven*) …do you think you could magically hurry up this pie real quick first?

**Discord:** You seem to be mixing up the lord of chaos with a second-rate clown magician for hire.

(*During this line, he exchanges his outfit for a royal red robe, crown, and gold scepter topped by a model of his own head, fixes his talons, and then switches right back again. As he presses the digits of his lion paw together, ready to snap himself out of the joint, Macintosh and Spike shoot upright in a panic.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-wait! (*Discord relents.*)

**Spike:** This needs to go in the mail today or it’ll never get to Sugar Belle in time for Hearts and Hooves Day! (*Macintosh blushes and laughs soppily to himself.*)

**Discord:** (*scornfully*) Please. (*Close-up.*) Can’t you see that that holiday is a commercialized ruse, pushed on you by the greeting card industry?

(*A pointed throat-clearing by the o.s. Macintosh brings him out of his rant; cut to the oven window as a hefty hoof taps on it, then zoom out to frame its whimpering owner.*)

**Discord:** (*exasperatedly*) Fine. You owe me for this.

(*A snap changes his outfit to the baggy, wildly colored garb of a circus clown, complete with ridiculously oversized bow tie, bushy orange wig, and red rubber-ball nose. His talons are back to normal, and he twirls a magic wand that has appeared in his lion paw to instantly move the pie from the oven to a midair spot near Macintosh’s eye level. Pony and dragon trade a gleeful high five as it descends a foot or two.*)

**Discord:** Keep your eye on the pie—it’s magic time!

(*A tap of the wand against the crust fills the screen with a white flash, which fades to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of the pie, now steaming quietly as it rests on a countertop, and tilt up slightly as Discord leans over for a deep sniff. He has shed both his clown and Captain Wuzz getups and returned his eyebrows to their normal white.*)

**Discord:** This smells…uh…palatable.

**Spike:** Well, pies really *are* Sugar Belle’s thing, but I think that makes this all the more special. (*to Macintosh*) It shows you’re interested in what she cares about.

**Macintosh:** (*grinning*) Ee-yup!

**Spike:** *And* he’s planning a big romantic Hearts and Hooves dinner. It was my idea to bake the invitation inside.

(*A shove from the draconequus sends him tumbling to the floor, and a lion-paw snap magicks said invitation—a greeting card stained with dough and filling—up for a quick inspection. The crust caves in slightly at its removal. Cut to Discord’s perspective as he opens it; the front bears a heart nestled in a horseshoe, as does the interior along with a hoof-written message.*)

**Discord:** (*reading*) “Happy Hearts and Hooves Day, Sugar Belle. Meet me in my barn at sunset…” (*Back to the three.*) “…for a surprise.”

**Spike:** Pretty clever, huh?

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup!

(*His big goofy grin and giggle are met with Discord’s weary sigh and a snap that returns the card to the pie, the crust plumping back up. The big guy claps giddily over it, then sets to with wrapping paper and twine as Discord and Spike lean in to check out his efforts.*)

**Spike:** (*warmly*) Awww…

(*Close-up of the end result: a box bearing a tag marked with a scatter of sugar cubes to the left of a bell.*)

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) …Sugar Belle. (*pointing out symbols*) See? (*All three again.*)

**Discord:** (*disdainfully*) Well, you two certainly have bought into this romance nonsense hook, line, and sinker.

**Spike:** (*dryly*) For a formerly friendless immortal despot, you’re pretty cynical.

**Discord:** I’m a realist. And love, like all things warm and fuzzy, isn’t real.

**Spike:** (*smugly*) Aw, come on. You act tough, but deep down you’re a softie. I mean, you don’t have tea with Fluttershy every weekend because you like tea.

**Discord:** But I *do* like tea! Every tea, all the teas!

(*An instant later, he has popped up on a television screen displaying a kitchen and donned a chef’s white toque and stained jacket, as well as a red bow tie and pencil-thin mustache. Various plants and flavorings used in the making of different types of tea scroll past as he speaks, his voice sounding slightly tinny as if coming through an old speaker.*)

**Discord:** Chamomile, Earl Grey, green, white, yellow, mate, lemon, ginger, chai, spearmint, peppermint, hibiscus… (*Deep breath.*) …cinnamon, pumpkin spice!

(*“Mate” is pronounced “mah-TAY.” The screen slides down and o.s., reverting him to his normal appearance and voice as he straightens up to face Macintosh and Spike. With an irritated grumble, the lovestruck equine bites down on the box’s twine wrappings and starts toward the door; cut to the barnyard as he throws it open and sets out.*)

**Spike:** (*to Discord*) Tell you what. While Big Mac mails his incredibly romantic gesture, I’ll show you the splendors of Hearts and Hooves Day in Ponyville. I bet I can prove you believe in love.

**Discord:** Fine. Call it a gentleman’s wager. (*extending lion paw to Spike*) Loser mows my lawn for eternity.

(*The offer catches Spike very much off guard, but he grabs one furry digit—all that he can hold, given the size mismatch between their limbs—and shakes. Close-up.*)

**Spike:** Is it like a riding mower, or…? (*Discord reaches into view, holding a pair of…*)

**Discord:** (*from o.s., gleefully*) Tweezers!

(*The baby dragon swallows hard, now knowing fully what he has just gotten himself into. Dissolve to the interior of a post office, where a uniformed Derpy Hooves is on duty behind the counter. Having just accepted a package from the departing Cherry Berry, she consigns it to one of the cubbyholes in the wall rack behind her as Macintosh trots up. He sets his box on the counter and, at her nod, breaks into a high-spirited whinny as hearts briefly appear in his eyes. The big lug takes a page from Pinkie Pie’s playbook and hops out of the place.*)

(*As for the box, it is scooped up and slotted into a cubbyhole, a hoof reaching in from the other side to pull it away. Derpy finds a smudge of ink on her hoof, transferred from touching the label, but wipes it clean on her collar. Cut to a back room filled with barrels and bins of letters, a conveyor belt for packages, and a roll-up gate at which a delivery wagon has backed up. Three pegasus mares are on the job, one each at the rack, belt, and gate, and they flip/kick/toss pieces back and forth with practiced ease. Macintosh’s box trundles along the belt, the sugar cubes on its label now smeared beyond recognition, and makes its way across the room to become part of a stack of three. The other two go in the bins, while this one lands among the wagon’s cargo and is hauled away in a boil of dust kicked up by the wheels.*)

(*When the haze clears, the view has shifted to a long shot of the main barn at Sweet Apple Acres. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Apple Bloom:** (*voice over*) Hear ye, hear ye!

(*Cut to the Cutie Mark Crusaders in the barn. She stands on a hay bale to face Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle, who sit with boxes of Hearts and Hooves Day paraphernalia before them.*)

**Bloom:** This special Hearts and Hooves Day meetin’ of the Cutie Mark Crusaders is now in session. First order of business— (*Close-up.*) —helpin’ my big brother decorate the barn for his big date with Sugar Belle tonight, and—

(*A rustling stops her short and gets on her nerves in a hurry.*)

**Bloom:** (*sighing*) Hel-loooo?

(*The source of the disturbance proves to be the other two rummaging through their boxes.*)

**Sweetie:** (*to Scootaloo*) It seems like everypony’s got somepony special but us.

**Scootaloo:** When’s it gonna be our turn? (*Knocking from o.s.*)

**Crusaders:** Huh?

(*Bloom trots across the space; cut to just outside the door as she opens it in close-up. Nothing out of the ordinary comes to her eyes right away.*)

**Bloom:** Huh?

(*Zoom out to frame a box resting on the ground, then cut to inside the barn again as Scootaloo and Sweetie cross toward the door to the sound of its slamming shut They are soon intercepted by the yellow filly, who has the twine wrappings in her teeth; Scootaloo gasps happily.*)

**Scootaloo:** Who’s it from? (*Bloom sets it down.*)

**Bloom:** Can’t tell.

(*A close-up picks it out as the one containing Macintosh’s pie.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) It’s all smudged, but it looks like it’s addressed to… (*All three.*) …Bell? Hmmm…

(*After a moment’s thought, her unicorn colleague sucks in an incredulous gasp that pushes her lung capacity to its very limit.*)

**Sweetie:** *Sweetie Belle!*

(*Under the influence of her horn, the label is yanked off and the paper/twine ripped away so she can put a hoof to the box lid. Despite its rough handling at the post office, the pie is entirely intact, cushioned by a nest of paper hearts in varying shades of pink. Sweetie lifts it free.*)

**Sweetie:** Somepony certainly went through a lot of trouble… (*Gasp.*) …for me, on Hearts and Hooves Day!

**Scootaloo:** (*gasping*) You don’t think…?

**Sweetie:** Could it be? (*Bloom pops up to separate them.*)

**Bloom:** Hang on a minute. Mysterious package…smudged address… (*smiling*) …no idea who it’s from… (*slyly*) …hmph. I know what this is. (*to Sweetie, beaming*) You got a secret admirer!

(*“Address” is pronounced with the emphasis on the first syllable, as occasional heard among speakers with a Southern accent. All three start bounding in a circle around the treat, squealing and shouting out their glee at these new romantic developments. Dissolve to a pan along a Ponyville street, every building fully decked out for the day and setting the tone for the many ground- and air-based demonstrations of affection. The camera stops on Discord and Spike as they emerge from a side road, the dragon voicing a contented sigh.*)

**Spike:** Another Hearts and Hooves Day. Love is in the air, Discord. Look at all these happy couples.

**Discord:** How can they be happy if they aren’t playing Ogres and Oubliettes?

**Spike:** As a great dragon poet once wrote to his beloved… (*Close-up.*)

“I love you with the utmost clarity.

(*He stops to pull a heart off a nearby bush.*)

I love you, dear, my sweet, sweet Rarit—”

(*Rhapsodizing turns to rancor as the camera zooms out to show Discord lounging alongside and trying to construct a model in a bottle. He has donned gold-framed pince-nez eyeglasses, strung on a cord around his neck, and is manipulating a pair of long tweezers.*)

**Spike:** Are you even listening?!

**Discord:** Of course. Love is…something, something, and Discord is great. I don’t know.

(*He pivots to the dragon, tossing the bottle aside.*)

**Discord:** (*impatiently*) Can we play O-and-O now? (*Spike has discarded the paper heart.*)

**Spike:** Sure, after you admit you believe in love and… (*Eyes pop.*) …Sugar Belle!

(*He dives into the bush and yanks Discord in after him—the latter now having ditched his specs—with almost no time to spare before that particular unicorn trots past. Both peek out to watch her making a beeline for the front door of Sugarcube Corner, whose top half is open.*)

**Spike:** Big Mac’s girlfriend! (*She lets herself in through the bottom half and closes it again.*) What’s she doing in town so early?

(*Cut to the shop floor; the two guys peek in over its edge to find Mrs. Cake speaking with Sugar.*)

**Mrs. Cake:** (*chuckling a bit*) Well, Sugar Belle, I-I’m sure Big Mac won’t be expecting it. (*Outside; Spike gasps and he and Discord duck away.*)

**Spike:** She’s planning her own romantic surprise for Big Mac? What if she goes to Sweet Apple Acres before Big Mac’s ready with his surprise? (*socking fist into palm*) We’ve gotta warn him!

(*He begins to run away from the front step, all grim resolve, but manages no more than a few steps before a contemptuous little scoff escapes Discord’s throat and a snap zaps them away. Cut to the Sweet Apple Acres kitchen, where Macintosh is tending a soufflé on the stove.*)

**Macintosh:** (*singing to himself*) …fflé, cookin’ a sou…

(*His melody is lost under the arrival of Discord and Spike, the latter still keeping every bit of his forward momentum and trailing off into a yell as he skids to a face-first halt against the oven. Tilt up from him to Macintosh, the impact jarring the soufflé.*)

**Macintosh:** (*as it collapses*) Ee-whoa!

**Spike:** (*now o.s., woozily*) Mig Bac… (*Longer shot; he staggers across the kitchen with a groan.*) …Mig Bac… (*Shake the head clear.*) …I mean, Big Mac! We just saw Sugar Belle! She’s at Sugarcube Corner, but I think she’s on her way over here, now! You gotta keep her away from here until the barn’s finished!

(*The scarlet pony gasps sharply and steels himself.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup!

(*He gallops out, leaving the other two behind; Spike leans against a cabinet, using an arm to prop himself up.*)

**Spike:** I wonder what she has planned for him.

**Discord:** (*chuckling richly*) We don’t have to wonder.

(*His snap takes them away from the cooking area and back to the bush near Sugarcube Corner. Spike arrives in the same leaning position, but the lack of support for his hand causes him to fall in among the greenery, a pained grunt floating back out. He pokes his scowling face clear.*)

**Spike:** Will you warn me next time you do that?

(*The chaos master offers a sheepish grin just before the front door swings open to let Mrs. Cake and Sugar out. At nearly the same time, the guys catch sight of Macintosh pelting down the street toward the bakery.*)

**Mrs. Cake:** (*whispering, to Sugar*) Just be honest with him. I’m sure Big Mac will—

**Spike:** (*to Discord*) Ohhh! She hasn’t seen him yet! Take note, Discord—this is what love is all about.

(*Whereupon Discord vanishes himself and pops up next to Spike in the bush, now equipped with a notebook and pencil to get the essentials down.*)

**Discord:** (*dictating as he writes*) “Spike: ‘Love is about spying in the bushes.’”

**Spike:** Make fun of me all you want— (*pointing in Macintosh’s direction*) —but look at Big Mac’s face and tell me you don’t believe in love.

(*Pan quickly up the block to the crimson Romeo, galloping in slow motion with hearts in eyes and others floating in the air behind him. Normal speed resumes with a cut back to Discord and Spike, the latter sputtering out his disbelief. Pan to Mrs. Cake and Sugar on the start of the next line.*)

**Sugar:** I hope he’ll be okay without me.

(*Macintosh’s gallop comes to a screeching halt, the hearts in eyes and air vanishing at remarkable speed. He hurls himself into the bush with a panicked cry and peeks out in close-up, the camera zooming out to frame all three occupants; Discord has ditched his note-taking tools.*)

**Spike:** Oh. Hey. We’re just…not spying.

**Macintosh:** Hush!

(*All three drop out of sight just before the two mares trot by without a care in the world, Sugar pausing only briefly to run a puzzled eye over the foliage.*)

**Sugar:** (*as Macintosh/Discord/Spike peek out after them*) I mean, he *has* been on his own before, so he’ll be fine, right?

(*Zoom in quickly on the surveillance crew, these words not sitting at all well with any of them, then cut back to the mares.*)

**Sugar:** (*sighing*) How should I tell Big Mac tonight? “You won’t need to come visit me in my village anymore”? (*Macintosh stares, dumbstruck; they stop.*) “We need to talk.”

**Mrs. Cake:** Just be honest with him.

**Sugar:** You’re right. Okay. “We’re finished.”

(*The sweat trickling down from the orange mane tells much about his state of mind, but the rest of his face gets into the act to slam on an emphatic postscript. Green eyes pop to panicked points as the mouth beneath them pulls in a colossal gasp overlaid on a freaked-out whinny. Zoom in quickly on his chest, the view resolving to a close-up of a large, beating red heart that turns to lifeless gray stone and shatters into pieces, then cut back to him. He topples onto his back in a dead faint past Spike in close-up.*)

**Discord:** (*from o.s.*) You’re right.

(*Zoom out to frame him back at work on his bottled model with pince-nez and tweezers.*)

**Discord:** She *did* surprise him.

(*The baby dragon claps a hand to his face with a disgusted groan. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of the main barn at Sweet Apple Acres. Zoom in slowly to the sound of Macintosh’s anguished wailing and cut to him in the kitchen, punctuating his crying jag with a long pull at a mug of cider. Spike moves up to the table at which he sits with chin plunked firmly on the edge.*)

**Spike:** Okay. Things seem bad. Maybe they’re really not. Maybe “we’re finished” was about the day. Uh, ponies say that, right? Like…like, “Hey, remember yesterday? That’s finished, ’cause it’s today.”

(*This farfetched bit of reasoning draws a highly skeptical, highly bloodshot glare from over Macintosh’s shoulder.*)

**Spike:** Maybe not that. (*A new idea hits.*) Oh! I know! (*Zoom in slowly.*) Maybe Sugar Belle has a wacky cousin who’s never been on his own, and she has to leave him in charge of her shop while she apprentices with Mrs. Cake, who does that, like, two days a week,—uh, no, no, three. That’s why she won’t need you to come to her village anymore, because…she’ll already be here.

(*This completely out-of-left-field bit of reasoning earns him a tentative grin, but he soon dismisses it.*)

**Spike:** Nah. I don’t even buy that one.

(*And here goes the heartbroken galoot all over again, bawling and guzzling.*)

**Macintosh:** She takes pie bakin’ seriously! Why’d I even try? I bet she thought I was makin’ fun of her!

(*He voices a long, lugubrious cry as Discord winks in to let his head hang down from ceiling level. He has shed his glasses and put away his model work from the end of Act One.*)

**Discord:** Oh, I hate seeing you like this, Big Mac. (*He slithers down to a standing position.*) And over a girl, no less. I’m calling an emergency Guys’ Night right now to cheer you up.

(*On the second half of this last sentence, he conjures up a handkerchief and the camera cuts to Macintosh as it is offered. The item is taken, used for an extremely forceful spell of nose-blowing, and passed back dripping wet.*)

**Discord:** (*revolted, wringing it out*) Besides, we can’t have you ruining any more of my thousand-year-old monogrammed handkerchiefs. These *are* silk, you know.

(*A snap transports them out of the kitchen. Cut to the tropical-styled nightclub to which Discord briefly took the others in “Dungeons & Discords,” only empty and silent now. The three appear on three adjacent seats at the bar, he now clad in the orange suit, red fedora, pencil-thin mustache, and other accoutrements he wore during that visit. As a milkshake settles in front of each, he claps a hat onto Macintosh’s brain case, then provides one to Spike once the latter points an irked finger at his own head. Discord has disposed of the hanky, and Macintosh’s eyes have cleared.*)

**Discord:** Class is now in session. (*He zaps himself in behind the bar.*) Lesson one—nothing can break your heart if you only love yourself. You’ve got to show everypony that you’re too cool to be bothered with so-called love.

(*Both forelimbs wrap to embrace the sinuous body during this line; at its end, he produces a monocle and peers closely through it at Macintosh.*)

**Discord:** Observe.

(*Another flash sends it away and deposits him next to Macintosh, where he leans insouciantly against the end of the bar under a spotlight that has suddenly flicked on.*)

**Discord:** (*lazily*) This is how cool guys lean against things. When you see a guy leaning against a thing looking this cool, you think, “Wow! That guy doesn’t have a care in Equestria. Not a guy who leans on things that cool.”

(*Spike stands on his stool and tries to copy Discord’s pose.*)

**Spike:** I don’t think leaning’s gonna help. (*He stands on his stool, tries to copy the pose, and addresses Macintosh.*) Am I doing it right? (*Slip.*) Whoa!

(*He manages to lose his balance and drop o.s., losing his hat and sending up a pained grunt once he hits the floor. Discord hooks his digits into the corners of Macintosh’s mouth and pulls them up into a toothy grin, but they almost instantly sag into a grimacing frown once he lets go. By the time Spike is back up on his stool, the draconequus is behind the bar again.*)

**Spike:** We’re not like you, Discord. We can’t put on a front and pretend not to love. It’s impossible.

**Discord:** Lesson two—plenty of ponies in the pasture. Right, Big Mac? I know just the gal to make you forget all about Sugar Belle.

(*The mention of that name causes the green eyes to pop wide open in very painful surprise and utterly destroy Macintosh’s composure.*)

**Macintosh:** (*tearing up*) You said her name! (*He ends up crying with his head on the bar.*)

**Discord:** Oy vey.

(*His snap transports them from this place. Cut to the exterior of the busy Ponyville Café, nearly all of its outdoor tables occupied.*)

**Bloom:** (*walking into view with Scootaloo/Sweetie*) Okay. We finished decoratin’ the barn for Big Mac, which means we got the rest of the day to ourselves. There’s a whole town of possible admirers out there, and only three of us. But together, we’re gonna get to the bottom of this. (*rearing up*) Ready? Break!

(*They peel out in three different directions. Cut to Pipsqueak ambling along.*)

**Bloom:** (*racing up to him*) Excuse me! Pipsqueak, mind answerin’ a few questions? (*No response.*) No? (*circling to cut him off*) Late for somethin’? (*excitedly; he quails*) Are you Sweetie Belle’s secret admirer?

(*Now Scootaloo accosts a colt wearing a propeller beanie.*)

**Scootaloo:** Excuse me! I’m doing a research survey about sending pie in the mail anonymously. Would you say you’re pro-that or anti-that?

(*The inane premise brings a funny look from the would-be respondent. Cut to Snips and Snails out for a stroll as Sweetie pulls even with them.*)

**Sweetie:** Happy Hearts and Hooves Day. Did you boys happen to send any packages to me recently? (*smiling weakly; they regard her with trepidation*) It’s okay to say no. I won’t be offended. (*to herself, wincing*) Please say no, please say no, please say no…

(*Dissolve to the gridded game landscape and zoom slowly as a flash delivers Macintosh, Discord, and Spike to it, all dressed as their Ogres and Oubliettes characters from “Dungeons & Discords.” Macintosh is the knight Sir McBiggin, Discord’s talons have once again turned to parsnips now that he is Captain Wuzz, and Spike is the wizard Garbuncle. A snap from the archer creates a cardboard token decorated with a drawing of a female pony skeleton wearing boots, a deep pink neck scarf, and a pearl necklace and carrying a battle axe. The mane and tail are ragged and pale pink. The picture reacts with considerable confusion as Discord tips it toward Macintosh.*)

**Discord:** Sir McBiggins [*sic*], meet Skeleanor. She’s a level-eighteen bone warrior in Squizard’s mage army, but only to pay off skeleton student loan debts

(*Skeleanor somehow manages to blush despite having no blood vessels in the bony cheeks.*)

**Discord:** Get to know each other… (*Snap; both vanish.*) …why don’t you?

**Spike:** Wow! You’re really going all out to cheer up Big Mac! I’m impressed.

**Discord:** (*straightening up*) Yes, yes, I’m amazing. Anyway, since we’re in the neighborhood, care for a quick game of Ogres and Oubliettes— (*snarling, sweating, paw/talons to temples*) —*like I’ve been wanting to play all week?!?*

**Spike:** I take it back.

**Discord:** I’m helping our friend, first and foremost. (*He whips out a token of a spyglass.*) See for yourself.

(*Spike takes the device and holds it up to one eye, peering along its length as if it were an actual optical instrument. Cut to his perspective, framed as the view through a telescope: Macintosh and Skeleanor on the opposite bank of a stream and commiserating over the photograph of Sugar that Macintosh is showing her. When the camera cuts back to Spike, he stretches the playing piece out a notch, the drawn-on spyglass extending to match; from his perspective, a quick zoom in clearly picks out the photo. Back to Spike again.*)

**Spike:** I think he’s showing her a picture of Sugar Belle.

**Discord:** What?

**Spike:** And now he’s crying.

**Discord:** No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, he’s not. (*reaching for spyglass*) Let me see that.

**Spike:** Don’t touch it! I’m looking!

**Discord:** Give me that!

**Spike:** Cut it out, Discord! Quit it!

(*In a trice, Discord has popped the two of them over to the unhappy couple; the glass is now gone.*)

**Macintosh:** (*blubbering*) She used to do this thing where…her-her nose would wrinkle when she laughed— (*pointing at Skeleanor’s nasal cavity*) —right there! In that hole where your nose used to be! I never told her how much I loved “wrinkle-nosed cutie face.” (*collapsing, crying gushes of tears*) AND NOW I NEVER WILL!!

(*A fed-up groan from Discord is the prelude to a snap that takes the trio away, leaving a mildly puzzled/annoyed Skeleanor in their wake. Cut to the interior of the Sweet Apple Acres barn, on which the Crusaders have indeed done quite a job of decorating: bunting on the rafters and windows, hearts prominent in every feature of the décor from balloons to tablecloths to treats, a table set up to provide a candlelit dinner for two. The gamers reappear here, out of their characters’ outfits and with Discord’s talons restored, and Macintosh’s water works kick in as soon as he lands spreadeagle onto his belly.*)

**Spike:** Okay. I think we’ve had enough of the elite master of chaos’ remedies for a broken heart.

(*Macintosh stops crying on the end of this, after which Spike turns to him with a smile.*)

**Spike:** You know what I do when I have a problem too big to solve? (*Pace away a few steps.*) I hide from it! When she can’t find you, she’ll realize how much she misses you. Plus, if she can’t find you, she can’t break up with you.

**Macintosh:** (*catching on*) Ee-yup.

(*He wastes no time in getting upright and bounding across the barn to hide behind a stack of hay bales. Spike copies the tactic, diving into a bale near the opposite wall, and a snap turns Discord into one that plops squarely into the middle of the floor. Its efficacy as a disguise is somewhat compromised by his still-visible eyes and mouth. Comes now the sound of the main door being opened, accompanied by a widening shaft of light from o.s. that falls across the space; cut to the Crusaders entering the barn and looking rather down in the dumps.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*sighing*) I don’t get it. We asked every stallion in Ponyville.

**Bloom:** (*groaning*) There’s gotta be somepony we’re missin’.

(*She hops up to sit on one bale in the stack sheltering her brother.*)

**Bloom:** Somepony obvious. Somepony right in front of our noses! (*Macintosh listens intently.*)

**Sweetie:** Oh, well. (*smiling*) At least the barn’s looking great for Big Mac’s date.

(*Her improving mood quickly spreads to the other three faces, Macintosh casting an eye over the decorations. His contentment is short-lived, though, as a miniature Discord materializes on the bales next to him.*)

**Discord:** (*smugly*) Too bad there won’t be a date.

**Sweetie:** (*to Bloom/Scootaloo*) Sugar Belle is so lucky to have a non-secret admirer like Big Mac. (*Cut to Macintosh and Discord.*)

**Discord:** (*to Macintosh*) Well, she certainly doesn’t seem to have appreciated it.

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) I bet she’s gonna take one look at this barn and say, “What did I ever do to deserve this?”

(*The great red face hardens a bit as the chaos connoisseur leans in toward one ear.*)

**Discord:** (*pointedly*) Yes, what *did* she do to deserve this?

**Macintosh:** (*tearing up*) She…broke my heart!

**Discord:** Well, not yet, technically. In fact, she can’t break your heart if you break hers first.

**Macintosh:** (*with fierce, angry resolve*) Ee-yup!

(*Wipe to the exterior of Sugarcube Corner and zoom in slowly.*)

**Sugar:** (*voice over*) Thanks for the tour of Ponyville, Mrs. Cake.

(*Cut to these two on the shop floor inside. Two sacks of flour and a bottle of milk stand on the planks between then, and Mrs. Cake. adds a second bottle.*)

**Mrs. Cake:** Oh, my pleasure.

**Sugar:** I’m off to surprise Big Mac with the news. Imagine the look on his face when I tell him… (*somberly*) …“We need to talk.”

**Mrs. Cake:** (*laughing nervously*) Oh, dear me, no. I-I told you, don’t say it that way, or he’ll think you’re breaking up with him.

**Sugar:** (*taken aback*) Break up with him? Never! (*smiling warmly*) Why, without my favorite delivery pony, I couldn’t imagine being happy ever again. He knows that.

**Mrs. Cake:** Good! Save your mix-up for cake batter, that’s what I always say. (*Laugh.*)

**Sugar:** (*pacing*) He’s a good listener, that pony. I promise you, no mix-ups.

(*“That pony” appears just inside the door thanks to a bit of Discord’s magic, not a trace of good humor in his bearing.*)

**Sugar:** Ah! Big Mac!

**Macintosh:** Sugar Belle, we need to talk.

(*Cut to a close-up of the mare, zooming in slowly as the smile runs away from her face and her eyes flick fearfully from side to side, and fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the two ponies.*)

**Macintosh:** I know why you’re here.

**Sugar:** (*smiling hopefully*) You do?

**Macintosh:** But I have somethin’ to tell *you* first.

**Sugar:** Oh, can I go first? I’m gonna be— (*He leans into her face.*)

**Macintosh:** Stop.

**Sugar:** Oh. Why don’t we tell each other on three? One—

**Macintosh:** It’s over! (*He backs off.*)

**Sugar:** What’s over?

**Macintosh:** You, and me. It’s over!

(*Her breath catches in her throat as tears pool in the red-violet eyes.*)

**Sugar:** What?

(*Macintosh leans against the closed bottom half of the front door, propping a foreleg on its upper edge to emulate Discord’s pose during the nightclub visit in Act Two.*)

**Macintosh:** We’re breakin’ up.

**Sugar:** I…don’t understand. Why are you breaking up with me? And why are you leaning like that?

**Macintosh:** (*voice trembling slightly*) I…don’t know! (*Sugar crosses to him.*)

**Sugar:** Big Mac, please talk to me!

**Macintosh:** I…you…

(*Words having utterly failed him, he lets go with a frustrated yell and throws the door open.*)

**Macintosh:** (*tearing up*) This is why I don’t like talkin’! Words can hurt! *Words hurt!* Goodbye, Sugar Belle!

(*The bottom half slams shut as he gallops away, leaving a flabbergasted Sugar to dissolve into tears. Dissolve to the stallion plodding glumly down the street; the passage of Lyra Heartstrings brings him up short, and he glances over to see her and Bon Bon trading wrapped gifts and embracing. As he continues on his way, the camera cuts to a close-up of two items lying close together on a patch of grass—a small rock with the string of a pink heart-shaped balloon tied to it, and a stick adorned with a pink bow. The items prove to be Boulder and Twiggy, the respective pets of Maud Pie and her squeeze Mudbriar, who was introduced in “The Maud Couple.” They sit holding hooves under a festooned arch as Macintosh clomps away, his spirits sinking yet another notch.*)

(*Close-up of a plate of well-sauced spaghetti on an outdoor table, a strand extending up at an angle from either side. A longer shot puts Cranky Doodle Donkey and his wife Matilda on either side, the former wearing his original dark toupee as seen in “A Friend in Deed.” Seated outside the Ponyville Café, they have actually caught opposite ends of the same long strand in their mouths and are sucking it in, drawing closer to a kiss and blushing bashfully in the bargain. All the other tables are occupied by happy couples, but Macintosh continues his unhappy perambulation past the property.*)

(*Dissolve from a close-up of his face to those of the Crusaders in the barn at Sweet Apple Acres, deep in dissatisfied thought, then cut to a chart they have set up on an easel. Mounted on it are seven photos in a rough circle—the four they questioned in Act Two, along with Sweetie, Chip Cutter, and Rumble. Those of the six colts are circled, with lines connecting them to that of the grinning filly. The sound of the door opening snaps them out of their ponderings and brings them around to a three-way smile.*)

**Bloom:** Big Mac! (*He trudges in.*) Oh, thank goodness! You gotta help us with this!

(*She gets no farther before a rustling from near the window marks Spike’s tumble out of the hay bale in which he concealed himself during Act Two.*)

**Spike:** (*to Macintosh*) Dude, how long have you been *not* hiding?

(*Discord pops into being, having resumed his normal size as opposed to the shrunken proportions he took on while hiding out with the workhorse earlier.*)

**Discord:** (*shrugging*) Oh. I should probably have said something.

**Macintosh:** Y’all should go.

**Spike:** Did you…did she…are you… (*A grave nod.*)

**Bloom:** Big Mac, what’s goin’ on? Where’s Sugar Belle? (*Macintosh squeezes his eyes shut and turns away.*)

**Macintosh:** Just go!

**Sweetie:** (*crossing to him*) But we worked so hard on this chart. (*He has now sat on his haunches.*) I think we’ve almost cracked it! If you could just—

**Macintosh:** (*standing*) Not right now!

**Sweetie:** But I can’t stand having a secret admirer who’s too scared to tell me who he is!

**Macintosh:** Maybe he doesn’t like talkin’!

**Sweetie:** But that doesn’t make any sense!

**Macintosh:** (*rounding on her*) Maybe he used to talk too much and it only ever got him into trouble!

(*The other five in the barn react as if he has just bashed them over the head with a full-grown oak tree, Sweetie’s eyes brimming with stunned tears. A long silence as the outburst sinks in on all sides.*)

**Spike:** (*sighing*) What if you’re right, Discord? What if love isn’t real at all?

(*The anatomical mishmash mulls over this idea, taking in the deflated mood that has settled over the rest. A glowing light bulb suddenly appears over his head in time with a wide-eyed smile of inspiration, and both he and it vanish.*)

**Macintosh:** I’m sorry, Sweetie Belle. I’m just mad and I’m takin’ it out on you.

**Sweetie:** (*smiling*) That’s okay. I bet it felt good to get it out, though.

**Macintosh:** (*perking up*) Actually, it did. Tellin’ you how I felt just then…

(*Now it is his turn to fall silent under the strike of an idea.*)

**Macintosh:** I gotta go! (*He bolts for the door.*)

**Spike:** Big Mac! Where you going?

**Macintosh:** (*stopping at doorway*) I gotta talk to Sugar Belle! (*Exit.*)

**Spike:** Discord, you gotta use your magic and—

(*Only now do he and the Crusaders take note of the joker’s exit.*)

**Spike:** (*shrugging*) Guess you have better things to do. Big Mac’s gonna need a miracle.

(*Dissolve to Sugar joylessly towing a cart filled with baking supplies away from Ponyville. The sky has advanced to late afternoon; she pauses for a moment to cast a doleful glance toward it and the festively decorated down spread out behind her, then carries on with a heartbroken sigh. As the cart rolls through a mud puddle, one wheel wobbles and breaks off the axle, stopping the forward motion—and then the entire cart topples toward that side.*)

**Sugar:** Of all the rotten luck.

(*Unhitching herself, she strains her magic to lift the cart back up to the level, then braces it with her forelegs and levitates the wheel back into place. The cargo is intact except for a few apples that have tumbled out. Her hind legs slip in the mud, dumping her onto her back and causing the wheel and cart to keel over again so that a few more apples hit the ground. The now-filthy mare cracks one eye open to stare blearily at a broad red foreleg extending toward her, then grabs hold and allows herself to be pulled upright. After a hasty wipe to clear the muck from her face, she finds herself looking Macintosh dead in the eye.*)

**Macintosh:** Caught you just in time! (*He lets go of her hoof and scratches the back of his head.*) We both know I don’t like to say much, but I’m gonna say somethin’ now. (*Deep breath; zoom in slowly.*) Even though I’m hurtin’, I wouldn’t trade this feelin’ for anythin’, because it’d mean givin’ up the good times we had too. And I only broke up with you because…you were gonna break up with me. I respect your decision, and you should know— (*tearing up*) —you’ll always be in my heart.

**Sugar:** (*confused*) I didn’t want to break up with you.

(*She rests her muddy hoof against his.*)

**Macintosh:** (*pushing it back*) But…you said you don’t need me to visit anymore. You said I’m gonna be on my own. I…I-I…I heard you said “we’re finished” when I was hidin’ in the bushes.

(*The admission gets him a very funny look from Sugar.*)

**Macintosh:** (*sheepishly*) That sounds worse than it is.

**Sugar:** (*smiling*) Oh, Big Mac, I was talking about my cousin! I have this wacky cousin who’s never been on his own, but I have to let him run my shop on weekends. Which is why you won’t be delivering to my village anymore, because I’ll already be here apprenticing with Mrs. Cake, who does that two days a week—uh, no, three.

**Macintosh:** (*floored*) Wait ’til I tell Spike!

**Sugar:** I’d never break up with you.

(*The two share a gentle nuzzle, the gunk all over her body notwithstanding, and he turns his attention to the cart. Within moments he has righted it, fitted the wheel back on, and hammered it into place.*)

**Sugar:** (*crossing to him*) I suppose there’s a lesson here somewhere about communication—talking instead of assuming, or “eavesdropping is wrong.” Wouldn’t you say? (*He stands to face her.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup!

(*She breaks into a snorty little giggle that causes her nose to wrinkle up slightly, prompting him to laugh in return.*)

**Macintosh:** Wrinkle-nose cutie face. (*He plants a kiss on her forehead.*) You musta been awful confused at my breakin’ up with you after you got my pie.

**Sugar:** What pie?

**Macintosh:** You didn’t get the pie I sent?

**Sugar:** (*shaking head*) Mmm-mmm.

**Macintosh:** Or the invitation?

**Sugar:** (*shaking head again*) Uh-uh.

**Macintosh:** Well, in that case… (*He sets her in the cart’s front edge and hitches himself up.*) …allow me to escort you to a Hearts and Hooves Day surprise!

(*Here come the cute little giggle-snorts again as he starts back toward Ponyville. Dissolve to a tract of orchard land in Sweet Apple Acres, the camera pointing past the end of the ramp leading up to the Crusaders’ clubhouse. Sweetie sits on a tree stump watching the sunset; she sighs sadly in close-up, but the camera pans to frame the approaching Bloom and Scootaloo in time with the sound of their scurrying hooves. Scootaloo’s teeth are clamped onto the edge of a plate that bears the pie Macintosh baked.*)

**Bloom:** Mind if we join you?

(*She pulls a slice free and holds it up for Sweetie to levitate over to herself. Hopping off the stump, the young unicorn smiles and takes a bite, only to drop it and clap a hoof to her mouth as her cheeks suddenly bulge out. The combination of a hearty burp and her magic extracts the invitation that had been baked inside; she opens it as Scootaloo chows down.*)

**Sweetie:** (*reading*) “Happy Hearts and Hooves Day, Sugar Belle. Meet me…”

(*The realization that the pie was never meant for her is a thunderbolt through all three minds.*)

**Crusaders:** *Sugar Belle?!?!?*

**Scootaloo:** You have got to be pulling our hooves!

**Sweetie:** It was all a mix-up?

(*Now they laugh over the absurdity of the day’s events.*)

**Sweetie:** Oh, it’s funny! I’ve been sitting here feeling sorry for myself for not having a special pony on Hearts and Hooves Day, but…remembering all the fun we had? I think I have *two* special ponies—my two best friends.

(*A three-way group hug as the camera zooms in.*)

**Crusaders:** Awww…

(*Dissolve to a close-up of Spike walking through Ponyville, Discord’s legs visible just behind. The dimmed light and the chirping of crickets point to night having fallen.*)

**Spike:** (*sighing contentedly*) And so ends another Hearts and Hooves Day. Despite a bumpy start, and middle, and ending—lot of bumps today— (*Longer shot; couples pass here and there.*) —love was in the air.

**Discord:** So was confusion, apparently, and a fair number of assumptions. (*Close-up of Spike.*)

**Spike:** But *you* have to admit, after seeing everything Big Mac went through, love is one hundred percent real.

(*The sound of Discord’s tuneless humming throws a healthy shot of sand into his mental gears; as the camera zooms out quickly, he looks back to find that his fellow traveler has deserted him.*)

**Spike:** (*annoyed*) Seriously?

(*Cut to the trickster, who has seated himself at a table outside Sugarcube Corner to work on his model in a bottle some more. Unlike the previous two instances, he is not wearing the pince-nez glasses.*)

**Spike:** (*crossing to him*) Discord, come on! I can’t believe you!

**Discord:** Who do you think broke Sugar Belle’s wagon wheel?

(*With a calculating twitch of the tufted eyebrows, he sets the container down on its side in front of Spike. The neck has been corked, and the finished product can now be seen in full—a small-scale replica of Sugar’s cart, one of whose wheels falls off on the same side as the actual one. Discord stands up from the table.*)

**Discord:** Ta-da! Happy Hearts and Hooves Day!

**Spike:** (*smiling knowingly*) You old softie. (*Laugh.*) I knew you had a heart! (*Discord leans down to him.*)

**Discord:** Speaking of how great I am, are you busy for the rest of the night?

(*His snap puts them in their Ogres and Oubliettes character outfits, including his parsnip hand.*)

**Discord:** Calico’s Ring of Imperceptibility isn’t going to reclaim itself, you know.

**Spike:** Ogres and Oubliettes? (*chuckling*) I thought you’d never ask. (*self-consciously*) Oh, and just wondering, no biggie, but…is Skeleanor gonna be there?

**Discord:** Spike, she’s an imaginary one-dimensional paper cutout skeleton.

**Spike:** Well, nopony’s perfect.

(*Giving the little guy a very odd look, Discord snaps to fill the view with a flash of white, which subsides to leave the screen black.*)