**GOING TO SEED**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Sweet Apple Acres at sunrise, then cut to a sleeping rooster on the roof of a chicken coop. He stirs himself to reluctant wakefulness with a yawn and crows for the start of the day; pan across the yard to the main barn and cut to a patch of kitchen floor, where Applejack sets down a food bowl loaded with pancakes. Her dog Winona is there in an instant to start chomping down the short stack, scattering crumbs all over the boards, and she turns her attention to the other three family members seated at the table. Both Apple Bloom and Big Macintosh are barely awake, the former sitting on a cushion and letting her chin clunk onto the table, the latter with a badly rumpled mane and a jug of blueberry syrup in his teeth, its contents starting to dribble out. Granny Smith, on the other hand, looks no worse for wear than she usually does. Applejack serves each one a plate of pancakes on the next line, slipping Macintosh’s into place just in time to catch the oozing syrup and lifting Bloom’s head back to slip hers under her chin. The blonde has traded her hat for one of the three breakfasts, and Granny digs in even before she finishes speaking.*)

**Applejack:** I know we’ve had this day marked on the calendar for quite a while… (*crossing kitchen*) …but it’s finally here. (*This last jolts Bloom and Macintosh.*)

**Macintosh:** (*spilling syrup on table*) Ee-yup.

**Bloom:** Sure is.

**Granny:** What?

(*Cut to Applejack, now standing near the door; one corner of a map of the grounds is visible on the wall behind her.*)

**Applejack:** The Confluence—a harvest a hundred moons in the makin’, when every apple comes ripe at the same time.

(*She gestures to the map on the next line, the camera zooming out to frame all of it—different orchard sections coded by the family members’ coat colors, with a legend at the bottom matching these up to the wearers’ cutie marks.*)

**Applejack:** Big Mac’s been up late workin’ on this schedule so we can be sure not to miss a single tree. All it’ll take now is a few days of hard work. Who’s with me?

(*Her eyes pop at hearing no response save a hearty snore; its source is Macintosh, who has dozed off and let the syrup run over both the tabletop and his pancakes, which are serving as a makeshift pillow.*)

**Bloom:** (*moaning, disheartened*) That looks like a lotta work.

**Granny:** Aw, don’t you worry, chick-a-piddy. We got this Confluence under control. I got us some help!

**Applejack:** (*crossing to table, donning hat*) That’s great, Granny! Twilight and the others are too busy at the School to lend a hoof. We could sure use some more muscle. Who’d you get? (*Bloom grins hopefully.*) Braeburn? Honeycrisp?

**Granny:** (*laughing, singsong*) Even better!

(*The orange-tan mare puzzles over this bit, only to be interrupted by a babel of muffled meowing and a knock at the door. It bursts open, revealing dozens of cats wedged into the frame and squirming to shove in; when they finally pop free, old Goldie Delicious stands at the threshold.*)

**Goldie:** (*waving*) Well, howdy, y’all!

(*One feline latches onto the back of Macintosh’s head and starts to use his mane as a scratching post, snapping him awake with a shout so that he and his pancakes tumble backwards to the floor. The jug of syrup has gone over sideways on the table. Goldie’s other pets have already spread throughout the kitchen.*)

**Goldie:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. Now *that’s* how you wake a pony up. (*Bloom crosses to her.*)

**Bloom:** Goldie Delicious! (*The two embrace; Goldie pats the red mane.*)

**Goldie:** Granny told me y’all could use a helpin’ hoof with this here Confluence, so I came a-runnin’. (*Macintosh tries to yank the cat off his head, his face clean of syrup.*)

**Applejack:** Well, with the harvest this big, we’re grateful for all the help we can get… (*under her breath; Macintosh pulls it free*) …I guess.

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup!

**Goldie:** It’s too bad y’all ain’t ever caught the Great Seedling. He’d-a granted you a perpetual harvest, Confluence or no.

(*A burst of energy takes hold of the filly’s face, while the two elder siblings just laugh gently.*)

**Applejack:** The Great Seedlin’? Well, now, I haven’t thought about that old mares’ tale for years.

**Goldie:** (*needled*) The Great Seedlin’ ain’t no mares’ tale! (*reverently*) He’s a magical earth spirit—

(*On her second sentence, the camera tilts up slowly and stops on a thought bubble forming above her head, putting her out of view. A deer-like male creature bounds across within this, plants sprouting in his wake. The coat is layered, starting with pale gold around the legs/belly/haunches and darkening to orange at the head; leaves stand in place of the tail and ears, and other leaves and flowers are studded into the back and neck. The expansive antlers are heavy with leaves and fruits.*)

**Goldie:** (*from o.s.*) —all the colors of the harvest— (*Leap over one farm, then another, each instantly becoming thick with fruit-laden trees.*) —that travels from farm to farm, daring ponies to catch him.

(*The Great Seedling turns to the camera on this last, showing golden brown eyes, and becomes a hazy silhouette to evade a net swinging toward him. As Goldie continues, the view within the bubble fades to gold, then in to a tilt down to him bowing toward a stand of empty trees; Magic glows around the antlers, causing the boughs to swiftly bear an apple crop that remains even as the seasons cycle around them.*)

**Goldie:** (*from o.s.*) And those that have the ingenuity are rewarded with crops that are always in bloom.

(*The bubble pops to frame her, now plenty het up, and Bloom hanging on every word.*)

**Goldie:** And he’s as real as you and me! (*The filly grins broadly; cut to Applejack and Granny.*)

**Granny:** As I’m up to recall, Apple Bloom used to love settin’ traps for the Great Seedlin’ when she was a young’un.

(*She and Macintosh chuckle over this reminiscence; Applejack shoots them a brief dirty look, but comes out of it with a smile.*)

**Applejack:** Well, I’m pretty sure she’s outgrown the whole thing by now. Right, Apple Bloom?

(*No response; the only living things anywhere near Goldie are her cats. Elder and younger glance worriedly around the kitchen until Bloom’s voice cuts in; on the next line, cut to frame her in the doorway leading to the living room. She has slung up her saddlebags and miscellaneous supplies, including a butterfly net, and has put on a helmet covered with leaves and twigs for camouflage.*)

**Bloom:** Or maybe I’m big enough now to finally catch him! (*Zoom in quickly on her determined features.*) Who’s with me?

(*A half-crazed grin splits her face, bringing a sly smile to Goldie’s and a slightly weary “here we go again” expression to Applejack’s. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the kitchen. One of the cats has gone to work on the pancakes Macintosh dropped. Beyond the window, the sky has advanced into morning.*)

**Applejack:** (*crossing to Bloom*) Apple Bloom, you haven’t hunted for the Great Seedlin’ since you were little. Why would you want to start again now?

**Bloom:** The Confluence is so big! He’s bound to show up! And if we catch him, he’ll make all the apples ripe all the time! Right, Goldie? (*Applejack scowls back at her…*)

**Goldie:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm, that’s right, young filly. (*…and rolls her eyes.*)

**Bloom:** (*shuddering happily, rearing up*) Just imagine—Sweet Apple Acres would be the busiest orchard in Equestria! (*trotting toward door*) Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got work to do.

(*The mare just boggles after the filly. Cut to the yard; the kitchen door opens so Bloom can make her exit, along with a cat or two.*)

**Applejack:** (*calling after her*) Don’t forget, we have *actual* work to do too!

**Goldie:** Nothin’ like a little filly enjoyin’ the harvest, mmm-hmm.

**Applejack:** (*to her, normal volume*) I don’t mind Apple Bloom havin’ fun, but there’s honest-to-goodness work to do that doesn’t have a thing to do with an old legend.

**Granny:** (*from inside*) Oh, quit worryin’, sugar booger.

(*Cut to her, having gathered up the breakfast dishes.*)

**Granny:** (*putting them in sink*) Apple Bloom can hunt for the Seedling all she wants. (*sternly*) If you’re so frettified about work, why don’t you and your brother get to buckin’ your own selves? (*Long pause; Macintosh has curled up with a cat and gone to sleep.*)

**Applejack:** Granny’s right.

(*She pulls the map off the wall, rolls it up, and turns to the conked-out stallion.*)

**Applejack:** Come on, sleepyhead. (*Macintosh begins to stir.*) Let’s get to work.

**Macintosh:** (*yawning, drowsily*) Ee-yup.

(*This is as far as he gets before dozing off again, but his feline sleeping buddy yanks itself loose of the great hooves and hops away, jostling him back to the real world and Applejack’s disapproving scowl. Dissolve to Bloom galloping downhill and along a path that threads through the orchards; she passes Applejack and Macintosh, both setting up baskets at the bases of trees and ready to get to the day’s tasks. Applejack is more than a little surprised to see her brother buck his tree hard enough to make it bend back and forth as if it were made of rubber, discharging enough fruit to fill his basket and then some. He grins and cocks an eyebrow smugly despite his still-disheveled appearance; she counters with a 360-degree spinning kick that allows her to strike three trees, then smirks as they each drop a basketful of apples. Now it is Macintosh’s turn to give her a nasty look, but both stop short at the sound of Granny’s distant laughter and look to the next hill over. Here they find the old green mare slowly pushing a basket into position with her head as Goldie gets set to buck.*)

**Granny:** And if she had two of them, it would’ve been a pair of pears! (*Both laugh.*)

**Goldie:** Is that right?

(*Hooves meet wood, the impact toppling her forward so that she lands on her back.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Macintosh*) As much as I appreciate her volunteerin’, I’m not sure how much help Goldie’s gonna be.

**Goldie:** (*now on haunches, wiping face with a handkerchief*) Oh, now, that reminds me of the time Dottie—now that’s my cheetah, you understand— (*Tuck it under her shawl.*) —she found out where I keep the catnip!

(*Granny bucks a few apples down on this line, then laughs with Goldie after its end.*)

**Bloom:** I love hearin’ her and Granny spinnin’ yarns— (*crossing to a tree with the map tacked up*) —but it looks like the harvestin’s up to us. You’re gonna have to redo that schedule.

(*This document has actually been updated from the version seen in the kitchen; the tracts have been reapportioned and a fifth color added—pale blue, corresponding to Goldie in the legend.*)

**Macintosh:** (*groaning*) Ee-yup.

(*Cut to Applejack, who spots Bloom at the edge of a clearing; the youngster has unloaded all her gear and is rigging up a cage to drop on an intruder from the branches of a tree.*)

**Applejack:** And as much as I’d rather Apple Bloom were helpin’, I-I guess there’s no harm in her huntin’ the Great Seedlin’ for a day… (*smiling uncertainly, glancing over shoulder*) …right?

(*Her good mood shifts to an exasperated scoff in record time.*)

**Applejack:** Big Mac!

(*Pan quickly to the hefty workhorse, who has gone to sleep with his head leaning against the map. He snaps awake, yelping and dropping the pencil in his teeth, and stumbles backward until one rear hoof lands squarely in the staked-down rope loop of a snare trap. It pops loose, dragging him clear of the ground to dangle upside down.*)

**Macintosh:** Whaaa—! (*Bloom pops up from a bush, holding her butterfly net.*)

**Bloom:** GOTCHA!!

(*Only after she has clapped the tool onto his nose does she realize that the whole thing is a bust.*)

**Bloom:** Awww, you ain’t the Great Seedlin’.

**Macintosh:** Nope.

(*Applejack claps a hoof to her forehead and drags it down her face. Wipe to a long shot of Sweet Apple Acres at sunrise of the following morning, then cut to the rooster perched on the chicken coop as he wakes and crows the start of the day. In the kitchen, Applejack pours pancake batter into a pan on the stove and sets aside the pitcher she has used to dispense it. The camera angle frames Goldie seated at one end of the table, already with a loaded plate.*)

**Applejack:** We fell behind a bit yesterday— (*flipping cake*) —so we need everypony at their best.

(*Cut to the table; Granny sits next to Goldie, munching into her own breakfast as the cat lover maneuvers her plate out of one pet’s reach. She glares at it, but fails to notice the one on her other side as it swipes one of her flapjacks.*)

**Goldie:** (*as Applejack brings a third plate in her teeth*) If’n that’s your brother’s best, we might be done for, mmm-hmm.

(*The first cat steals the rest of her meal undetected under these words, and Applejack turns to aim two puzzled green eye across the kitchen. Here comes Macintosh from the living room, looking just as much a frazzle as he did the day before and carrying the rolled-up map in his jaws. He has barely cleared the threshold when his legs tremble and give out, dumping him spreadeagle to the floor. Applejack crosses to him with a smile, having put down her plate.*)

**Applejack:** (*taking/unrolling map*) Uh, he was just up late workin’ out a new schedule so we can stay on track.

(*Revised once again, with quite a bit more red than before. Bloom gallops downstairs behind them on this line and bounds in to stand on Macintosh’s back, brimming with energy, as Applejack rolls up the sheet.*)

**Bloom:** I didn’t sleep either! (*trotting in place*) I was too excited! I can’t wait to see if I caught the Great Seedlin’!

(*She hops down and is out the door before either sibling can react; Goldie aims a smug smile at Applejack, who has stowed the map. Blue morning sky is now visible over the treetops.*)

**Applejack:** I hope you’re ready to cheer Apple Bloom up when her traps come up empty. (*A tense staredown.*)

**Bloom:** (*leaping back in*) Everypony! Come quick! You gotta see!

(*Old and young eyes trade thoroughly confounded glances as she bugs out again. Cut to Bloom topping a rise in the path; she stops dead and hops excitedly in place as the other four catch up.*)

**Applejack:** What in blazes is all the excitement about?

**Bloom:** (*pointing ahead*) Look!

(*Cut to just behind the sisters, framing a long overhead shot of a clearing just ahead, and zoom in slowly. Apples have been laid out on the grass to form a giant pattern of spirals and curlicues. The eyes of the other three female Apples pop wide open, Applejack uttering a stunned little neigh; Macintosh remains half-asleep.*)

**Bloom:** The Great Seedlin’ did this, didn’t he?

**Goldie:** Well, braid my mane! (*shading eyes, peering ahead*) These sure look like Great Seedlin’ tracks to me!

**Bloom:** (*jumping in place*) Ha! I knew it! He *was* here! The Great Seedlin’ was here! (*hugging/shaking Applejack*) Isn’t that amazing, Applejack? (*She gallops down toward the clearing.*)

**Applejack:** (*bewildered, scratching head*) Yeah. Amazin’.

(*Puzzlement slides into suspicion, in the form of a squinting glare aimed at Goldie from the corner of her eye. Zoom in slowly on the snickering old mare and fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a long overhead shot of the meadow as the five step to its edge, Bloom taking the lead and gasping in awe.*)

**Bloom:** Isn’t it beautiful? (*Ground level.*) I just can’t believe the Great Seedlin’ was really here!

**Applejack:** (*dryly*) Neither can I.

(*The intrepid young hunter picks up an apple and holds it for Goldie’s consideration.*)

**Bloom:** What do you think this means?

**Goldie:** (*chuckling*) Well, it looks to me like a challenge. (*poking Bloom’s nose*) The Seedling wants *you* to know that he was here— (*Pan slowly back toward Granny as she ambles over.*) —and he’s daring *you* to catch him, mmm-hmm.

(*She adds a nod in time with this last.*)

**Bloom:** You think I still have a chance?

**Granny:** (*nudging her*) You’re an Apple, ain’t you? (*Wink.*)

**Goldie:** Why, if you set enough traps, you’re bound to catch him.

**Bloom:** (*tossing apple aside*) You’re right! And that’s just what I’m gonna do! (*rearing up*) Look out, Great Seedlin’! Here I come!

(*She gallops back up the path, giggling merrily every step of the way, and the two old mares add a little mirth of their own as Applejack and Macintosh get to work picking up the apples.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Granny/Goldie*) Now why would you go and do a thing like that?

**Goldie:** A thing like what?

**Applejack:** You know what I mean! We got enough work to do without you distractin’ Apple Bloom by makin’ some apple tracks and pretendin’ the Great Seedlin’ did it.

**Goldie:** (*gasping, affronted*) I did no such thing!

**Granny:** What in the tater tarnation would make you say a thing like that?

**Applejack:** (*advancing slowly on Goldie*) Well, somepony did it—and *she* sure seems to be enjoyin’ this quite a lot.

**Goldie:** I’m enjoyin’ it because Apple Bloom’s enjoyin’ it!

**Applejack:** Uh-huh. (*to Macintosh, Granny*) And I suppose you two didn’t do it either?

**Macintosh:** (*shaking head*) Nn-nope!

**Granny:** O’course not! (*smiling*) But I s’pose it coulda been Goldie’s cats. Whyn’t you ask them?

(*Pan quickly to three of the animals in question on the grass—one licking an apple, a second pouncing on a different one and rolling away with it, a third licking itself clean. The epitome of brilliant pranking they are not.*)

**Goldie:** Have you considered that maybe it was the Great Seedlin’ after all? (*She and Granny offer sly grins.*)

**Applejack:** (*sourly*) Ha-ha. Very funny.

(*She scoops up an apple, shooting the older generation a foul look, and stalks away.*)

**Granny:** (*to Goldie*) I swear, sometimes I think she’s part mule.

(*This gets a grin. Cut to just inside the doors of the main barn, one of which is open to frame Applejack walking up to deposit some recovered fruit in a waiting basket. The sight of random farming implements being flung across the barn gets her attention, as do the tin cans hanging by ropes from the lintel.*)

**Applejack:** Apple Bloom?

(*Pushing the noisemakers aside, she steps in only to get a net immediately dropped on her. The source of the commotion proves to be Bloom, who is rooting around in a crate at the far wall.*)

**Bloom:** Do you know where there’s more rope? (*pulling out a toy swordfish*) I’ve got a lotta traps to make if I’m gonna catch the Great Seedlin’. (*It goes flying over one shoulder; she jumps out.*)

**Applejack:** That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. (*Another crate gets a once-over.*) I-I know you’re excited, but we sure could use your help today. Are you sure you want to spend time tryin’ to catch somethin’ that…might not even be real? (*She cringes as Bloom straightens up from her rummaging.*)

**Bloom:** What? But the Great Seedlin’ *is* real. You saw the tracks. You think those appeared all by themselves?

**Applejack:** I don’t know who made the tracks, but I don’t think it was the Great Seedlin’.

**Bloom:** Why not?

(*The blonde pulls her hat off and holds it to her chest.*)

**Applejack:** Because the Great Seedlin’ is just somethin’ to make the harvest fun for young’uns. (*putting it on*) And you’re old enough now to know that there’s a time for fun and there’s a time for work.

**Bloom:** But catchin’ the Great Seedlin’ *is* helpin’! He can make the trees blossom all the time!

**Applejack:** (*sighing*) All right, how ’bout this? (*smiling, poking Bloom’s nose*) If you help me with the harvest today, I’ll help you set traps for the Great Seedlin’ tonight. (*extending a hoof*) Deal?

**Bloom:** (*jumping in place, shaking it vigorously, hugging Applejack*) Woo-hoo! Yes! It’s a deal!

(*Big sister returns the hug before the view dissolves to a slow pan through the orchards at treetop level. One tree vibrates and drops its load of apples, the result of an effective buck; down below, Macintosh uses his head to bulldoze a barrel of apples onto a waiting cart as Goldie nips up a loose one and adds it to a barrel in which one of her cats is sitting. A paw casually bats it away, then does the same with the next one she drops in, to Macintosh’s visible surprise. Two yellow hind legs rise in the fore, delivering a series of bucks to the nearest trunk and slowly filling a basket, and Applejack loses a few apples from the one she is pushing. Here comes Bloom with hers.*)

**Applejack:** (*slyly, just a bit mockingly*) Kinda looks like those Seedlin’ tracks, huh?

**Bloom:** (*sardonically*) Sure—if there were hundreds of apples in a bunch of different lines.

**Applejack:** Well, if enough apples fell or got knocked down, by the wind, maybe…

(*A cat jumps across the grass, scattering the fallen apples even further; now Goldie crosses to the pair.*)

**Applejack:** …or animals. (*Both spectators regard her skeptically.*) I’m just sayin’ there’s a lotta possible explanations.

**Goldie:** (*wiping face with handkerchief, winking to Bloom*) And one of them is the Great Seedlin’!

(*Underscored with a nudge that brings a big grin to the young face, but Applejack finds it not a whit amusing as she zips closer. Goldie has stashed the hanky by this point.*)

**Applejack:** (*stomping*) And the rest of ’em ain’t! (*They glare daggers at each other while Granny steps up.*)

**Granny:** That ain’t what you thought when you was a foal. (*The angry eyes pop wide open at this revelation.*)

**Bloom:** (*crossing to Granny*) What does that mean?

**Granny:** Your sister was plumb loco about catchin’ the Great Seedling when she was your age, same as you are now. (*under her breath*) Worse, even.

**Goldie:** (*glancing at Applejack, pointedly*) Oh! Is that so? Do tell, Granny.

(*The green eyes in the orange-tan face roll disgustedly. Cut to Bloom and Granny, the former plunking her haunches on the turf, and zoom in slowly.*)

**Granny:** (*to Bloom, sitting*) Well, now, it musta been the last Conflu-inky, I reckon. I was a-s’posed to keep an eye on your sister, but she was slipperier than an apple seed.

(*The last few words are delivered in voice over as the view undergoes a wavering dissolve to the barnyard. A school-aged Applejack gallops out of the barn, not yet having earned her cutie mark or started to wear her hat, and is gone out the main gate as a younger Granny calls after her. The colors in this flashback are slightly washed out, and the view is faintly ringed with white. It is daytime.*)

**Younger GS:** Applejack! Get your flank back here! You’re s’posed to be sortin’ in the barn!

**Filly AJ:** (*calling back to her*) Sorry, Granny! I gotta check my traps or the Great Seedlin’ might get away!

(*She moves from one tree to the next to look over the devices she has installed—snare, suspended cage, tin-can alarm, and so on. Finding a whole lot of nothing, she pushes through a clump of bushes; tilt up slightly to put the ground out of view.*)

**Filly AJ:** Now where’d I put that trap? (*The snap of a twig stops her cold; she gasps softly.*) Wh-Wh-Whoa!

(*She plummets o.s. in a spray of leaves, a grunt and thud floating up; Younger GS walks by, annoyance writ large on her face.*)

**Younger GS:** Bust my buds, where’s that young’un get to?

(*The camera zooms out slightly and angles itself downward to provide an answer, in the form of a pit whose branch/leaf cover has given way under Filly AJ’s weight. Cut to her lying at the bottom, mane/tail disheveled and matted with bits of plant matter; she rises to her haunches and looks worriedly around herself, then up at the surface—well out of her reach.*)

**Granny:** (*voice over, laughing*) She spent the better half of the day stuck in that trap!

(*Cut to Macintosh’s young self standing at the unhooked harness of a cart filled with apples. Bright Macintosh, father of him, Applejack, and Bloom—see “The Perfect Pear” for more details—removes the hitching collar from his own neck and drops it around his son’s. Needless to say, it is a few sizes too big for the time being.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) And missed out on helpin’ with the harvest because I was chasin’ somethin’ for little foals.

(*Bright connects the harness to the collar. On the next line, Colt BM strains to get the cart moving and Pear Butter—mother to the three younger Apples—passes in the fore, a loaded basket held by its handle in her teeth and toddler Bloom riding in one on her back as she sucks on an apple.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) I felt guilty everypony else had to work harder because of me.

(*Behind the curly orange tail, the view wipes to a close-up of a downhearted Filly AJ, a few tears spilling down her cheeks. During the next line, she wipes her eyes and glares up toward the surface, her expression hardening into bitter resolve.*)

**Applejack:** (*voice over*) So I decided right then and there, I was too old to waste any more time on the Great Seedlin’.

(*Wavering dissolve to her in the present; on the next line, cut to Granny and a suddenly pensive Bloom.*)

**Granny:** Oh, we finished the harvest just fine— (*giggling*) —but we laughed about that story for years!

(*Her laugh is answered by one from Goldie.*)

**Goldie:** (*walking away*) I’m still laughin’.

**Bloom:** (*crossing to Applejack*) I’m sorry that happened, Applejack, but…it won’t if you and me set traps together like you promised. (*Touch big sister’s chest; drop to haunches and smile.*) Plus we’ll get ’em done twice as fast and won’t miss out on any of the harvest.

(*She puts her front hooves together and slaps on her best “pretty please?” grin, prompting a smile from Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Then let’s get to work.

(*Bloom pops to all fours with a grinning gasp and lays a high-wattage hug on her sister before the two get moving. Wipe to a close-up of Bloom setting a stake in the ground with her mouth and giving it a hoof tap to secure it. Her next move is to bite the end of a rope, pull it toward the stake, and tie it off. A longer shot frames the trap in full as a cage made of branches and hanging from a tree branch, connected to the tightened rope and ready to fall if the stake is disturbed. Applejack has her map out and, after a bit of concerned study, rolls/stows it so she can turn her attention to the rig. Bloom gives the rope an experimental twang to check the tension, only to have it snap and drop the cage toward her. Here comes Applejack in a mighty leap to shield her; both end up penned in by the trap, along with two loads of apples that get dumped out of the baskets when the cage knocks against them on the way down. Both equine heads break through to daylight, the younger face grinning sheepishly under the older one’s glare.*)

(*A rustle of leaves fills the screen to hide them from view, and a zoom out frames these as a patch being laid out on an open stretch by Bloom. Applejack sneaks a moment to buck a tree while her attention is diverted, but the eyes of both are drawn by a commotion in the bushes. Here come several of Goldie’s cats, chased by Winona; the felines pass over the leafy spot easily, but the pursuer plunges through with a yelp and into the pit trap it was concealing. Winona peeks up, smiling and panting, and once again Bloom offers an apologetic grin in response to the irked green eyes. The cats peek in over the edge, as if to add insult to injury.*)

(*The boughs of an apple tree swing past the camera; behind them, the view wipes to a rope dangling from a slender trunk. Bloom wraps hooves around this and pulls, bending the upper end of the wood double so she can tie off the rope and stake down a loop for a snare. She jumps clear and hunches down behind a nearby tree to watch as Applejack shoves a tub of apples onto a cart; once this job is done, the mare joins the filly in her hiding place and both peek out to watch what develops. Granny and Goldie wander past, causing visible consternation for both sisters, but the elders each step through the loop without setting off the trap. Bloom, relieved, wipes sweat from her forehead as they clear the area—but the sound of lashing rope and a hard thud snap her back to the moment. She and Applejack wheel toward the device only to discover that Macintosh has fallen victim to it, hanging upside down by one hind leg and not looking all happy about the change of orientation. Winona races up, panting happily, and Applejack and Bloom break into gales of laughter strong enough to send them to their backs.*)

(*Dissolve to a slow pan through another tract of trees as the sisters place a new series of variously configured devices. As each one is set, they fade away from its location and appear elsewhere to install the next one. After several iterations, another dissolve puts them at a fence; Bloom sits laughing on one rail as Applejack finishes stringing up a set of tin cans. The sky has darkened to evening.*)

**Bloom:** It sure was fun settin’ up all those traps together.

**Applejack:** (*chuckling*) I forgot what a good time it could be. (*walking away*) If any two ponies can catch the Great Seedlin’, it’s us. (*Bloom climbs down and catches up.*)  
**Bloom:** I can’t wait to check in the mornin’.

**Applejack:** Now there’s still plenty of harvestin’ to do, so promise me you’ll help, even if all our traps are empty. (*They stop at the main gate, a rope net bundled at its top.*)

**Bloom:** I promise… (*Wink.*) …so long as you’re ready for the bountiful harvest the Great Seedlin’s gonna give us when one of our traps nab him.

**Applejack:** (*chuckling, offering a hoof*) Deal!

(*Bloom hops up to thump one of hers against it and gallops for the barn, while Applejack hangs back for a moment to grab a strand in her teeth and pull. The net unfurls as a curtain to block the passage. As they hurry inside, a long overhead shot of the barn and surrounding fields points up just how far they have gone in their efforts to Seedling-proof the whole place. A slow dissolve turns night into morning of the following day, and the rooster goes into his routine as before; now, though, he has barely enough time to start crowing before a great tremor shakes the grounds and drops him to his rump. Frantic panting is heard from both Applejack and Bloom as the camera cuts to them pelting toward the gate and leaping through the net, Applejack with saddlebags on back and rolled map in teeth.*)

**Bloom:** Come on, Applejack! If we hurry, we can check every trap and still stay on schedule!

(*They slow to a walk, approaching a litter of apples on the path, and Applejack puts the map in her bags.*)

**Applejack:** Now *that’s* what I like to he—

(*She cuts herself off abruptly as Bloom breaks into an enormous grin and the camera cuts to just behind them. The fruits have been placed to form a meandering trail that descends the downhill run before them and joins a vast network of loops and whorls in the meadow at its base. The display is similar to the one found by the group at the end of Act One, but on a much greater scale, and a second variation has even been placed on the next hill out.*)

**Applejack:** Whoa. (*Long gasp from Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** I don’t believe it!

(*She races ahead as Applejack shakes some sense back into her own head. An exhausted, pancake-chewing Macintosh trudges up, pulling a wagon with Granny, Goldie, and a few cats on the latter’s head as passengers.*)

**Goldie:** (*shading eyes, peering ahead*) This must’ve taken all night! (*Granny smacks Macintosh; he stops and snaps awake, swallowing the food.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup.

**Bloom:** (*from below hilltop, hidden from view*) Nothin’! (*She gallops up to Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** Huh?

**Bloom:** I checked all the traps near the tracks. (*Drop to haunches.*) Every one was sprung, but they’re all empty! (*She pouts, propping chin on front hooves.*)

**Applejack:** Every trap sprung? (*pacing ahead*) No way critters did this, or the wind. (*Bloom stands up.*) I-I can’t believe I’m sayin’ this, but… (*beaming*) …maybe the Great Seedling really *was* here!

(*The beam takes root on the yellow face, and the view fades to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the five Apples. Granny and Goldie are out of the wagon, and the cats are still perched firmly on Goldie’s head; Macintosh has fallen asleep again. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Goldie:** So, you’re finally ready to admit the Great Seedling might be real?

**Applejack:** I can’t think of anything else that coulda laid out these tracks *and* sprung all our traps.

**Bloom:** And if he left this many tracks behind, he’s practically beggin’ us to catch him! (*Goldie brushes off her cats.*)

**Granny:** I ain’t never seen anything like this before. (*Applejack leans excitedly toward her.*)

**Applejack:** Well, tell us what you *have* seen! Goldie, you too. We need to know it all if we’re really gonna catch him.

**Granny:** Sure. (*She and Goldie move past.*) Goldie and I’ll tell you all about the Great Seedling all day— (*Pause; pivot sternly back to Applejack.*) —while we work. (*Move on.*)

**Applejack:** (*floored*) Work? Apple Bloom and I don’t have time to work today! We’ve gotta set up traps in every row, even the carrots, just to be sure!

(*Now it is Bloom’s turn to register worry, poking Applejack to get her attention.*)

**Bloom:** Yesterday you said the Great Seedlin’ was just somethin’ to make the harvest fun for young’uns.

**Applejack:** That was before I thought we could actually catch him!

(*She grins with just the faintest touch of madness, lower lip caught in teeth, as Macintosh tiredly drags the wagon past them along the path.*)

**Applejack:** Besides… (*He voices a cavernous yawn.*) …Big Mac can make time in the schedule for us to set traps, right? (*He stops short.*)

**Macintosh:** Uh…y-yup? (*Shaky grin.*)

**Applejack:** Great! (*She nips the map out of her bags and tosses it to him.*) Get to it! (*galloping ahead with Bloom, brushing past Granny/Goldie*) Apple Bloom and I are gonna go capture us the Great Seedlin’!

(*These two start moving, annoyed by the lack of courtesy. Wipe to a stretch of loaded trees, against which the unfurled map is lifted into view. With the exception of one small corner split between Granny and Goldie, all of the territory needing attention has been assigned to Macintosh. Cut to a head-on view of him, no longer harnessed to his wagon and studying the page; he lowers it with a depressed sigh and clomps off into the trees. The broad hooves impact trunk after trunk in singles and pairs, bringing down showers of apples, but he just continues on mechanically without stopping to gather them up. He begins to cross off map sectors with a mouth-held pencil, then head-pushes a full barrel into his wagon and wipes his forehead with a heavy sigh. Another spot on the map gets scratched off, a bit more slowly this time.*)

(*Treetop-level view of the orchard, one cluster of branches after another shaking and dropping apples to mark Macintosh’s continued bucking. His next use of the pencil is considerably slower and more labored—the job is now really wearing him down—and he bucks a tree but gets only a few loose leaves for his trouble. Sleep-deprived green eyes stare wonderingly up into the branches, spotting not a single apple hanging from them, and a glance across the hills informs him that every tree in sight is bare. However, several areas on the map have not yet been crossed off as finished, leaving him with quite the conundrum on his hooves. A bark from Winona precedes her arrival along with Applejack and Bloom, the mare longer wearing her saddlebags.*)

**Applejack:** (*to Bloom, wiping forehead*) Whoo! All right. Just one more hill to go!

**Bloom:** What’s wrong, Big Mac? (*Applejack checks the map.*)

**Applejack:** Huh. Is this right?

**Macintosh:** (*firmly*) Ee-yup! (*He trudges away.*)

**Applejack:** But that doesn’t make any sense. How can all these trees be bare if we haven’t bucked ’em yet? (*Goldie speaks up from the wagon, having climbed aboard.*)

**Goldie:** Seems like more work of the Great Seedlin’ to me. (*Applejack and Bloom grin.*)

**Bloom:** (*as both cross to her*) How do you mean?

(*Using her cranium, Granny slowly loads a filled barrel onto the vehicle.*)

**Goldie:** Well, closer you get to catchin’ the critter, the more mischievous it gets.

**Applejack:** You’re sayin’ the Great Seedlin’ is takin’ our apples?

**Granny:** Yes. Sounds like he’s fixin’ to throw you off the scent.

(*Gravity takes advantage of her momentary distraction and sets the container tumbling down the lowered tailgate, emptying both apples and cats onto the grass.*)

**Applejack:** Have you ever heard of anypony actually catchin’ him?

**Goldie:** (*knowingly*) Ohhhh, there are stories, but it’s hard to say for sure. He’s quite the trickster. Guess that’s why the reward is so great if you *can* trap him.

(*Macintosh slogs past, map in hoof and a jumbo-size scowl distorting his face.*)

**Applejack:** Well, his tricks have given me an idea. Settin’ traps is one thing, but I reckon if we keep watch over the trees that haven’t been bucked, the Seedlin’ won’t know what hit him!

**Bloom:** That’s a great idea! Anypony else want to stay up with us?

**Granny:** (*walking away, waving*) Eh, an old pony like me needs her beauty rest, but you young’uns have a good time.

**Goldie:** (*descending wagon tailgate*) My kitties can’t sleep unless they’re curled up on my haunches. (*Chuckle, head out after Granny.*) But I can’t wait to see the Great Seedlin’ with my own eyes once you catch him.

**Applejack:** (*to Bloom*) Guess it’s just you and me.

(*Yellow and orange-tan hooves sprint off together as Macintosh shoots an exasperated glare after them between checks of the trees and the map. Deciding at last that enough is too much, he rips a corner away in his teeth, spits it out while throwing the scraps aside, and turns back to what has become a one-pony job.*)

(*Dissolve to the barnyard and its plethora of intrusion counter-measures, seen from a nearby hilltop through a pair of binoculars. Night has come. The view pans quickly to a row of chicken coops, then a different portion of the yard, after which the lenses are lowered and the camera zooms out to put Applejack in view holding them. She has traded her hat for a leaf/branch-covered helmet similar to the one Bloom wore in the prologue. On the start of the next line, cut to a longer, head-on shot of her and Bloom. They are up on an observation platform built in a tree, both wearing helmets, and Bloom has settled into a sleeping bag.*)

**Bloom:** Too bad nopony else wants to come out, but I’m glad we’re doin’ this together.

**Applejack:** (*chuckling softly, setting binoculars aside*) Me too. It’s been a long time since I was on a real Seedlin’ hunt, and this is the first time doin’ it with my little sister. (*She gently pokes Bloom.*)

**Bloom:** (*yawning*) When did you start tryin’ to catch the Great Seedlin’? (*Cut to Applejack.*)

**Applejack:** I couldn’t have been much more than a foal. I remember our parents tuckin’ Big Mac and me in and tellin’ us all about the Great Seedlin’. I got so excited, I could barely sleep. So I—

(*The sound of youthful snoring snaps her out of the happy memory, and she looks over to find that Bloom is out like a light.*)

**Applejack:** (*softly, tucking bag edges in around her*) Don’t you worry, sugar cube. I won’t let him get away.

(*She picks up the binoculars and begins to sweep the area—but a cut to a later hour, as seen by the sudden darkening of the sky, leaves her sprawled out and snoring alongside Bloom. A little runnel of drool hangs from her open mouth, and the optical instrument dangles by its strap from one foreleg. A clatter of branches causes Bloom to snap awake and sit up.*)

**Bloom:** Huh?

(*Peering out over the orchards, she is rewarded with the sight of trees losing their apples. Her next two lines are delivered in hushed tones.*)

**Bloom:** (*shaking Applejack*) Applejack! Wake up! (*Green eyes pop open; binocs fall off the platform.*)

**Applejack:** Huh? (*rubbing eyes*) W-What is it?

**Bloom:** I think a trap went off! (*She points fearfully at the denuded trees.*)

**Applejack:** Well, let’s go check it out!

(*In seconds, both are down off their platform and keeping low as they ease across the grass. Pan slowly to follow them; now both keep their voices down for the next four lines.*)

**Applejack:** See anything?

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

**Applejack:** Don’t scare him off. We gotta lead him into one of the traps.

**Bloom:** (*whimpering*) I’m not worried about scarin’ *him.*

(*Neither one spots a silhouette galloping across the path behind them and stirring up quite a bit of dust. The coat and tail bristle with leaves and twigs, two fruit-laden antlers stand up from the head and no facial features can be discerned except for a pair of glowing, red-orange eyes without pupil or iris. Applejack and Bloom advance cautiously through the trees, but stop cold at the sound of a breaking twig; Applejack indicates the direction with a nervous grin, and both dash off that way. Taking cover behind a clump of bushes, they risk a glance over the leaves and get a good look at the intruder galloping by in the distance. Applejack grins, chewing her lower lip in anticipation, but Bloom shivers as if she might jump clean out of her skin at any moment. The silhouette bucks a tree…excitement and fear ratchet up a notch in the two sisters…and then a rattle of tin cans draws their focus to a string of them hung between two trees. Now the figure looms forebodingly up behind them, an apple dropping free to bounce off Bloom’s helmet. She looks down at it, puzzled, then up to get her first clear view of the new arrival—and brain-eating terror takes hold in one awful instant.*)

**Bloom:** *I THINK THE GREAT SEEDLIN’S HUNTIN’ US!!* (*She peels out screaming; it gives chase.*)

**Applejack:** Apple Bloom! Wait!

(*She too hits the gas; up ahead, Bloom bobs and weaves and ducks to avoid one trap after another, but trips a snare and is yanked up and o.s. Her helmet falls to the ground, the only trace that Applejack can find when she gallops up and stops for a frantic look around.*)

**Applejack:** Huh?

(*Zoom out to frame the whimpering filly dangling by a foreleg. Applejack starts to the job of freeing her.*)

**Bloom:** *APPLEJAAACK!!*

(*Applejack gasps as her eyes follow her sister’s across the orchard and lock onto the emerging inky figure. Both scream, Applejack’s helmet falling off, and Bloom drops out of the snare and onto Applejack’s back for a high-speed escape. The pursuer keeps pace easily, bumping into trees and bringing down their apples without almost no effort, and Applejack slides to a stop upon reaching the main barn’s barred double doors. Bloom jumps clear and watches as her sister struggles to wrench the hefty wooden plank from its supports; the effort yields no results, though, and both can only stare aghast at the approaching beast. The rope net strung at the gate poses no obstacle, tearing loose and tangling in the expansive antlers. Applejack and Bloom are reduced to clutching at each other and trembling in mutual abject fear, certain that the end has come—and then the thing steps into full light for the first time. The “Seedling” is actually a sleepwalking Macintosh with dirt and hay matted onto all four hooves and wearing an apple-patterned nightcap. Draped across his back is a piece of lattice paneling, held in place by the ropes looped across his chest; leaves/twigs are stuck in this and his tail, and the “antlers” are actually long branches caught in the nightcap.*)

**Applejack, Bloom:** BIG MAC?!?!?

**Applejack:** He’s been harvestin’ in his sleep this whole time!

**Bloom:** *Big Mac is the Great Seedlin’?!?*

(*This exclamation kicks the big lug to full wakefulness. He stumbles forward with a shout, one hoof coming down on a skateboard that launches him into a sequence of traps laid out across the farmyard. The last of these is a concealed pit; cut to several yards down, the camera aimed toward the sky, as the other two peek in.*)

**Applejack:** (*echoing slightly*) Y-You okay, Big Mac? (*He straightens up to glare at them.*)

**Macintosh:** Nn-nope.

(*But he still comes around to a smile in response to their laughter at this very long string of misadventures. Dissolve to a long shot of the grounds and zoom in slowly; it is now the following day, and all five Apples have gathered in the yard. The barn doors stand open, framing the multitude of full apple barrels beyond and around them.*)

**Applejack:** And thanks to all of Big Mac’s late-night work—

(*Close-up; Granny and Goldie sit in rocking chairs, and Macintosh is properly rested and groomed for the first time this episode. Applejack has recovered and donned her hat, and Winona is with the group.*)

**Applejack:** —we brought in the whole harvest with time to spare.

**Goldie:** (*to Macintosh*) No wonder you were so tired all the time. (*Close-up of Macintosh.*)

**Macintosh:** Ee-yup. (*Pan to Bloom on the next line.*)

**Bloom:** I’m glad we solved the mystery, but…I really wanted to catch the Great Seedlin’ before I get too old to try.

**Applejack:** (*crossing to her*) You know what, sugar cube? (*ruffling her mane*) You’re never too old to be a filly. There will always be work to do, but havin’ fun together is somethin’ you never grow out of.

(*Grins from all three siblings. Cats pop out from the barrels stacked behind Winona, then duck away before she can swivel her head around toward them, then pop out again once the bewildered pooch turns to face front.*)

**Goldie:** (*standing, stretching, crossing to Applejack/Bloom/Macintosh*) Well, looks like you don’t need me no more. Time to get home before Dottie gets in the catnip again. I have stories about that, I’ll tell you what.

**Applejack:** (*chuckling, hugging her*) We’re real glad you came, Goldie.

**Bloom:** Sure are! (*hugging her*) Come back next year!

(*Taking a few steps away, the elderly mare uncorks a shrill whistle and produces a shopping bag from her mane. All the cats charge across in a surge of meowing and fur and pack themselves neatly into the container, and she gets the handles in her teeth and starts for the gate. However, a couple of loose carrots on the hard-packed earth bring her up short; she lets the bag drop.*)

**Goldie:** Oh! Looks like you forgot to clean up the carrots.

(*Zoom out quickly to show quite a few more of these root vegetables littering the yard in an irregular line. Applejack and Bloom gallop up for a closer look as Goldie lifts her bag and ambles away.*)

**Applejack:** Huh. Big Mac wasn’t harvestin’ the carrots, just the apples.

(*They throw him a questioning glance, but get only a puzzled grunt and shrug in reply. Cut to an overhead shot of one field and zoom out slowly, framing carrots laid out in the same grand designs as the apples in Act Two. Applejack and Bloom boggle openmouthed at the sight, but shift to big ecstatic grins in a hurry.*)

**Applejack:** You know what this means?

**Bloom:** Time for another hunt! (*They break into a gallop toward the camera.*)

**Applejack:** Look out, Great Seedlin’! Here we come!

(*All eight legs leave the ground in a joyous double leap, their speed rapidly decreasing to leave them caught in a midair freeze frame. “Iris out” to black, the aperture shaped like an apple.*)