**THE LAST CRUSADE**

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Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to a road through the outskirts of Ponyville during the day. A small figure gallops over a rise and into view, speaking in a young male voice.*)

**Figure:** Cutie Mark Crusaders!

(*Zoom out quickly along the road and into the town as the figure pelts along, resolving into Skedaddle—the light blue unicorn colt who was one of the attendees at Cutie Mark Day Camp in “Marks and Recreation.”*)

**Skedaddle:** Cutie Mark Crusaders! (*A stallion he passes gets spooked into dropping the apple he holds in his mouth.*) Cutie Mark Crusaders! (*Close-up.*) Cutie Mark Crusaders!

(*This shot picks out a cutie mark on a haunch that had previously been bare, but his pistoning legs turn it into an indiscriminate blur.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s., distant*) We’re at my house!

(*He slams on the brakes and heads back up the block. Cut to just inside the closed front door of a house; he pushes this open from the step.*)

**Skedaddle:** (*jumping in place, legs windmilling*) I GOT MY CUTIE MARK!! (*Sweetie Belle steps into view toward him.*)

**Sweetie:** You did?

(*Cut to frame all three of the Cutie Mark Crusaders entering this front hall from the kitchen, where two mares sit at a table. One is an earth pony, Holiday: light brown coat, mane/tail in two shades of pinkish-red, dark red eyes, small blue flower earrings, pale blue scarf. The other, working a sewing machine, is Lofty: cream-colored coat, two-tone blue-green mane/tail cut short and a touch rumpled, dark blue-green eyes, older than Holiday, square jaw, the edge of a blue turtleneck collar visible above the top of a chair that obscures most of the rest of her. Their cutie marks are hidden by the furniture/wall placement, and Lofty’s tribe cannot be immediately identified beyond the fact that she is not a unicorn. An open suitcase rests on the floor near her.*)

**Crusaders:** That’s great, Skedaddle!

**Sweetie:** Yeah! What’s it for?

(*Close-up of his haunch; he pivots to show it off clearly—a length of rope fashioned into a looping knot.*)

**Skedaddle:** Knot tying! (*Zoom out.*) And I never would’ve gotten it without all of you!

**Apple Bloom:** (*to Scootaloo/Sweetie*) Did we suggest knot tying? (*They puzzle it out as he zips over to them.*)

**Skedaddle:** (*to Sweetie*) First I tried sailing, like you said. (*to Scootaloo*) Next I tried fishing, like *you* said. (*to Bloom*) Then I tried rowing, like *you* said.

(*He mimes each action as it is named.*)

**Skedaddle:** But my oar broke. (*Sit.*) So I used my fishing line to tie it back together— (*springing up with gusto*) —AND I GOT MY CUTIE MARK!! (*Yell; shake Scootaloo.*) I can’t wait to tell everypony!

(*He dashes out the door, which the little pegasus closes in his wake, and all three trade a high five in close-up. The next three lines overlap.*)

**Bloom:** All right!

**Scootaloo:** Yeah!

**Sweetie:** Woo-hoo!

**Mare voice:** (*Australian accent*) Oh, how exciting!

(*Cut to within the kitchen, framing all five occupants. Holiday’s cutie mark is now visible as a sailboat and sun, Lofty’s as a needle and spool of thread, and this shot establishes the latter as a pegasus. Holiday is the one who spoke.*)

**Holiday:** You three truly have a gift for helping ponies.

**Scootaloo:** Aw, thanks, Aunt Holiday, but I’m not sure we can take credit for this one. (*Close-up of Holiday.*)

**Holiday:** Of course you can. You encouraged that colt to try new things, and because you all believed in him, he succeeded. (*Pan to Lofty, who shuts off her machine.*)

**Lofty:** (*flipping through sheets of sketches*) I could use that kinda help. Hmph.

**Scootaloo:** (*snickering*) Come on, Auntie Lofty. You already have your cutie mark. (*Lofty pokes at it and smiles.*)

**Lofty:** Lotta good it does me. (*lifting cloth*) I can’t decide what theme to give this quilt! Ugh, I’ve run out of inspiration.

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) How ’bout apples? (*All five again.*) Puppies! Kites! (*The Crusaders move toward the table, one by one.*)

**Sweetie:** Or cotton candy, or ballet! (*Close-up of the trio.*)

**Scootaloo:** What about a Wonderbolt quilt?

(*Chuckle from the o.s. Lofty; cut to her, smiling again.*)

**Lofty:** See? Leave it to you three to come up with more ideas than I’ve had in a year. Now *that’s* talent.

(*The sound of a cuckoo clock’s engaging mechanism catches her off guard; cut to this wall-mounted timepiece as it signals the hour, then zoom out to frame Holiday.*)

**Holiday:** Goodness! (*leaving her chair*) We’d better get going or we’ll miss our train home!

(*She addresses Scootaloo as Lofty scoops fabric pieces into the suitcase, closes it, and slings it onto her back.*)

**Holiday:** I left you plenty of healthy food for the weekend.

**Lofty:** (*following her toward front door*) And *I* left you cookies. (*Chuckle; three-way gasp from the Crusaders.*)

**Holiday:** (*opening door*) The Cakes’ll stay with you tonight, then Rarity, and Rainbow Dash after that. (*ruffling Scootaloo’s mane; Lofty hefts a second bag*) Remember, we’re just a few stops from Ponyville if you need us.

**Lofty:** She knows, Holiday. See you next week, slugger! (*The mares head out.*)

**Scootaloo:** Bye, Aunt Holiday! Bye, Auntie Lofty! (*She shuts the door behind them.*)

**Sweetie:** Your aunts are so nice!

**Bloom:** Yeah! It’s really cool they’d watch you while your parents are gone.

**Scootaloo:** I know! I just wish they lived closer. (*dreamily*) Nopony bakes like Auntie Lofty.

(*A knock jolts her out of this reverie; cut to just outside the door, where a delivery-uniformed Derpy Hooves has just dropped off a postcard on the step. She lifts off as Scootaloo opens the door and picks it up; after a quick read, her wondering stare yields to an ecstatic gasp.*)

**Scootaloo:** They’re coming home today!

**Sweetie:** Who? (*Zoom in quickly on Scootaloo.*)

**Scootaloo:** MY PARENTS!!

(*Now it falls to the other two Crusaders to boggles as she adopts a gleaming-eyed, ear-to-ear grin. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Ponyville schoolhouse and zoom in slowly. On the start of the next line, cut to a slow pan across the classroom. Cheerilee is teaching with the help of a portable blackboard on a rolling frame that shows a sketch of the weather factory in Cloudsdale. One desk is empty, and Scootaloo is not present among the pupils.*)

**Cheerilee:** Today, we’re going to learn about the pegasus weather factory…

(*The sound of a door latch and creaking hinges interrupts her lesson; cut to Scootaloo peeking out from the entrance she has just opened.*)

**Cheerilee:** (*from o.s., pointedly*) …once everypony is in their seats.

(*With an apologetic grin, the filly shuts the door and gallops back to take her seat.*)

**Cheerilee:** (*spinning board, pointing out sketches on other side*) The factory specializes in snow, rain, sunshine, and… (*clearing her throat, impatiently*) …Scootaloo, may I help you?

(*Scootaloo has left her desk and is standing on a countertop so she can peer out a window.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*thinking fast, grabbing two blackboard erasers*) I…just noticed your erasers needed dusting.

(*Chuckling weakly, she pounds them together and sends up enough chalk dust to set off a round of coughing from front to back. It takes a few seconds for air and lungs to clear; cut to Cheerilee.*)

**Cheerilee:** Uh, why don’t we hold off on the lesson until after lunch? (*A quick mulling of the options.*) How about Show and Tell? Does anypony have any— (*Scootaloo races up and faces the class.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*rising to hind legs, hovering briefly*) My parents are coming home to Ponyville today!

**Snips:** (*from o.s., suspiciously*) Wait. (*Cut to him.*) They don’t live here?

**Scootaloo:** (*standing up*) Nope. Their jobs are way too important for that. (*Jump onto the countertop.*) They travel to the farthest, most dangerous places in Equestria to study unknown plants and fierce creatures.

(*Accompanied by the following. Spin a globe; point out a remote island; hold a magnifying glass up to one eye; rear up ominously as the lights dim for a moment. She then darts back to pace at the front of the room.*)

**Scootaloo:** And what they learn helps pony science and medicine! (*dramatically*) I’d go with them, but it’s too dangerous.

(*The other colts and fillies trade baffled/skeptical glances when the camera cuts to them; back to Scootaloo on the start of the next line, hurling herself through the air, landing on her back and quickly springing upright.*)

**Scootaloo:** Once, my mom had to wing-wrestle a wyvern, and my dad got trapped in a chimera’s cave for *three moons*. (*drawing a chalk stroke under one eye*) He still has the scars to prove it.

**Snips:** (*from o.s.*) Pffft! (*Cut to him.*) You’re makin’ that up! Nopony has *that* kinda job.

(*He is brought up short by a series of thundering impacts that shake the entire schoolhouse. All eyes turn nervously toward the door, and the camera pans quickly to it just in time for a roaring cragodile to bash it open and lumber in. Students gasp, scream, and flee to get as far from the creature as they can, Bloom jumping clear of her desk an instant before it is chomped to splinters. They end up huddled together on the countertop by the windows, with the exception of Cheerilee, who grabs Scootaloo and jumps onto her own desk.*)

**Cheerilee:** IT’S A CRAGODILE!!

(*And it targets these two with a headlong charge—the chalk now gone from the filly’s cheek—but stops just short at the sound of the door being flung open and a shadow falling over it. The source is a leaping earth pony stallion, his features almost completely lost in silhouette due to the sunlight pouring in under him, but a light-colored, short-sleeved bush shirt with a coiled rope attached to its hem can be immediately discerned. A split second later, the cragodile finds itself on the receiving end of an impressive flying tackle and being pinned to the floor on its belly. The new arrival, Snap Shutter, is a bulky brown stallion with an unruly, deep purple mane/tail, red-violet eyes, dark brown hoof tips, stubble along the jawline, and a cutie mark of a camera and half-folded map. The bush shirt is white with gray trim, and the mane is covered by a battered, dark brown “crusher” hat with several large animal teeth tucked into its band. He speaks with an Australian accent.*)

**Snap:** Easy there, marshmallow! Time you were in your crate for your nap!

(*One nip at the rope is all he needs to fashion a loop and cinch the mighty jaws together. The struggle continues until a second shadow casts itself over the room, its source a tall, pinkish-red pegasus mare who lands to give the cragodile a stern glare. This one, Mane Allgood, has a long mane/tail in blond and white, the former tied back, and deep purple eyes; her cutie mark is hidden for the time being by her spread wings. She wears a bush shirt similar to Snap’s, but green and buttoned to the neck.*)

**Mane:** And that means now, mister!

(*With a submissive whimper, it allows itself to be escorted out the door and into a large, open crate by Snap, who lets go of the rope for the last few steps. The hatch drops to pen it in, and Snap kicks the door shut as Mane crosses to him, giving a clear view of her mark—a compass and gust of wind—and the two trade a nonchalant high five. Once Scootaloo gets her wits about her, she gasps happily and darts out from behind the paralyzed Cheerilee to hug each in turn.*)

**Scootaloo:** Mom! Dad! (*Squeal of joy.*)

**Bloom:** (*stepping closer, to the others*) Still think she’s makin’ it all up? (*They clamber off the countertop, except for Snips.*)

**Snips:** (*shaking head*) Nuh-uh!

(*He hops down after them, and Scootaloo stays up front as the others sit again, with Bloom taking over Scootaloo’s desk.*)

**Scootaloo:** Everypony, meet my parents—Snap Shutter and Mane Allgood! (*Close-up of Snap.*)

**Snap:** (*removing hat*) Heh. Sorry to make such an entrance. Just brought back a few mates from our last adventure. (*Pan to Mane on the next line.*)

**Mane:** We couldn’t wait another moment to see Scootaloo. I hope we didn’t interrupt anything.

(*Cut to a close-up of Cheerilee’s quivering hooves and tilt up to her face, green eyes shrunken to freaked-out points over a rictus grin.*)

**Cheerilee:** (*small voice*) No, I, uh…think…class is dismissed.

(*Wipe to just outside the schoolhouse door. Parked off to one side is a wagon stacked high with crates that hold the cragodile and a host of other exotic critters. Foals spill out onto the front walk, talking excitedly, as the camera pans ahead to the Crusaders and Scootaloo’s parents. Snap has put his hat back on and rested a hoof on the top of Scootaloo’s head.*)

**Snap:** Crikey! (*Close-up; he hunches down and holds it flat to his forehead.*) You’re nearly as tall as me now, Scoot.

**Scootaloo:** (*waving him off*) Aw, come on, Dad.

**Mane:** (*from o.s.*) Oh, Scootaloo— (*The entire family.*) —we missed you.

**Scootaloo:** (*hugging her*) Me too, Mom. Did you get all my letters?

**Mane:** And read them twenty times. (*ruffling her mane*) But they’re never as good as the real thing. (*wrapping a wing around her*) It’s so good so see you.

**Snap:** I say we celebrate with ice cream sundaes! They don’t have those in the jungle, that’s for sure.

**Mane:** Why don’t you all come? Our treat.

(*The other two Crusaders are quick to scamper up on either side of their friend and grin their approval of this suggestion with her. Wipe to a pan through a busy ice cream parlor, an employee carrying a tray of loaded bowls past, and stop on the five sitting around a table with their own treats.*)

**Scootaloo:** And Princess Twilight said we’re such good friendship tutors, she might even let us teach a class!

**Snap:** Good on you, Scoot!

**Mane:** What an honor! (*Snap takes a bite.*)

**Scootaloo:** I can give you a tour of the School if you want— (*Sweetie eats.*) —I mean, if you’re staying for a while this time.

**Snap:** Oh, you’ll be seeing plenty of us.

**Scootaloo:** (*gasping, wide-eyed*) Really?

**Mane:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm, because we’ve taken a new job assignment that will let all of us live together!

**Scootaloo:** (*gasping, leaning across table*) I can’t believe it! (*hovering out of chair*) That’s awesome!

(*Cut to the Crusaders’ side of the table; Bloom offers a hoof for a high five once she lands.*)

**Bloom:** All right, Scootaloo! (*Scootaloo thumps her hoof against it.*)

**Sweetie:** Woo-hoo! (*Cut to Snap on the next line.*)

**Snap:** We never planned to be away for so long in the first place. We just kept discovering things that could help Equestria, and nopony else had the experience to finish our job.

**Mane:** (*leaning forward*) But with all that’s happened lately—Sombra’s return, the destruction of the Tree of Harmony—we decided our family should be together.

(*Each parent extends a hoof toward Scootaloo, who grins and lays her front pair across them so they can pull her close.*)

**Scootaloo:** This is the best day of my life! (*She nestles against Mane.*)

**Snap:** We’ll stay in town for the weekend so you can pack your things.

**Scootaloo:** (*floored*) Wait. *What?!?*

**Mane:** We’re all moving to Shire Lanka! That’s where our new job is.

(*“Lanka” is pronounced so that its first syllable rhymes with “bank.”*)

**Scootaloo:** But…my friends are in Ponyville!

**Snap:** You can come back and visit ’em, or they can take the train to us. There’s one every month.

(*The orange filly’s brain seems to have stopped working, but the yellow one picks up the slack by gathering her in.*)

**Bloom:** But Scootaloo *can’t* leave! (*Sweetie wraps them both up.*)

**Sweetie:** We’ve been together our whole lives!

**Mane:** It’ll be a big change for everypony, but it’ll be a good change. Give it time. You’ll see. (*All six young eyes water up.*)

**Scootaloo:** The only thing I see is the end of the Cutie Mark Crusaders!

(*She is the first to begin shedding tears, and the other two look to be only a step or two behind as the view fades to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Crusaders’ clubhouse, zooming in slowly, and cut to an extreme close-up of a gavel’s sounding block inside. Bloom’s hoof reaches into view to pound the mallet listlessly against it; cut to her standing behind the lectern and wiping tears from her eyes. All three look and sound very weepy until further notice.*)

**Bloom:** I now call our last-ever Cutie Mark Crusader meeting to order. First item of business… (*bawling*) …CRYYYYY!!

(*Zoom out to frame this entire end of the room. Scootaloo and Sweetie, sitting on their haunches, are quick to follow suit; saline puddles accumulate on the floor around Scootaloo’s pounding hooves as she throws herself down.*)

**Scootaloo:** You can’t let the blank flanks down just ’cause I’m gone. You gotta keep being CMC’s without me.

**Sweetie:** (*wiping nose, sniffling*) How? (*Bloom leaves the lectern.*) There’s only two of us! (*Scootaloo gets up.*)

**Scootaloo:** Maybe you can find a replacement for me.

**Sweetie:** No, we can’t! You’re the only…you!

**Bloom:** Nothin’s gonna be the same! (*crossing to Scootaloo*) Who’s gonna ride their scooter ahead of us everywhere we go?

**Sweetie:** (*ditto*) Or—or—or put on plays with us, or go camping with us, or just…hang out with us?

**Scootaloo:** Well, it’s worse for me! (*sobbing, throwing herself at their hooves*) I have to say goodbye to both of—

(*The sound of the opening door dries up all three sets of leaky waterworks in an instant. Cut to just behind them, the camera aimed at a hovering Rainbow Dash who has just let herself in.*)

**Rainbow:** (*pulling out three tickets*) Guess who just got three front-row tickets to the Wonderbolts show next week!

(*And the waterworks kick into gear all over again, leaving her at a loss.*)

**Rainbow:** (*putting tickets away*) Uh, that is not the reaction I was expecting. (*She lands; Scootaloo crosses to her, sniffling.*)

**Scootaloo:** Thanks for the tickets, Rainbow Dash, but I can’t go. (*The other two join them.*)

**Bloom:** Her parents are making her move super-far away from Ponyville!

**Rainbow:** (*popping up to a hover*) *What?!?* (*turning Scootaloo’s face toward hers*) No way! Scootaloo belongs here! (*Touch down; cut to the Crusaders.*)

**Sweetie:** And now we’ll probably never see her again! It’s hopeless!

(*All three youngsters fall against each other, sobbing and wailing and crying in a way that would rival Rarity for unbridled histrionics.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., waving a hoof into view*) Whoa, whoa, whoa. (*They quiet down; cut to her.*) I cannot believe you’re giving up so easily. You’re the Cutie Mark Crusaders. Solving tough problems is what you do.

(*Scootaloo is first to dry her eyes and put on a tentative smile; the others do likewise in turn.*)

**Scootaloo:** We *are* pretty good at coming up with ideas.

**Sweetie:** That’s right! When we work together, we’re unstoppable!

**Bloom:** I can’t believe we didn’t think of it before! It’s list time, y’all!

(*She returns to the lectern, unfurls a sizable sheet over its top, and gets out a pencil.*)

**Bloom:** First question—why do Scootaloo’s parents want to move to Shire Lanka?

**Scootaloo:** That’s where their new job is.

**Sweetie:** (*gasping deeply*) What if we get them a job here instead?

**Bloom:** (*tossing pencil aside*) Yeah! They like dangerous creatures, right? (*She pulls a book from a shelf and leafs through it.*) We gotta have some of those around here, like, uh… (*Show a couple of pages to the others.*) …timber wolves!

(*She has found a set of diagrams detailing various bits of their anatomy. Cut to Scootaloo.*)

**Scootaloo:** Dad knows all about those—and cockatrices, and bugbears. They only study super-rare animals. (*Sweetie steps up next to her.*)

**Sweetie:** Then maybe we need to give them an animal nopony’s ever heard of! (*Cut to all three on the next line.*)

**Bloom:** Uh, then how would we hear about it?

**Sweetie:** Because we’re making it up! (*beckoning*) Come on!

(*Outside the clubhouse; the Crusaders gallop eagerly down the ramp and a still-perplexed Rainbow puts her head out after them.*)

**Rainbow:** (*holding up tickets*) Soooo…you want these tickets, or…?

(*Dissolve to the outskirts of the Everfree Forest, a set of clawed footprints leading in from the vicinity of Ponyville. Scootaloo hops out from a clump of bushes, followed by her parents, and points along the trail; Snap has a camera along around his neck.*)

**Scootaloo:** This is what I wanted to show you. (*ominously*) The tracks of the mysterious Everfree Banshee Beast! (*Cut to the adults.*)

**Mane:** Hmmm…they’re like nothing I’ve ever seen!

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Legend says it has five claws…

(*Back to her on the end of this, showing off groups of claw marks in a tree trunk—only three per group, though.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*grabbing a three-leaved plant*) …and three wings! (*slyly*) And it’s super-dangerous if you get close. If only somepony could prove it exists.

**Snap:** Hmmm…easy enough. (*He bends to inspect one track.*) We’ll follow the spoor.

(*He and Mane advance, now both hunkered down, only to be headed off by one shuddery, slightly panicked daughter.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*grinning hastily, pointing to one side*) I think I heard something this way!

(*The tracks veer off the main trail and into a stand of moss-grown trees and shrubs. Zoom in on this as a tall, scrawny, vaguely reptilian shape lopes into view, then cut back to Mane and Snap. Notepad and camera are respectively brought to bear, and wings and hooves carry them toward the site. A large animal head made of stuffed fabric is magically swung up into view in the fore, the background wiping behind it to a patch of heavy undergrowth. The head has a pig’s snout, large bat-like ears, scales, and slit-pupiled eyes that are a quarter-turn out of sync. It is set on the end of a long, upright, serpentine body with mismatched wings, where it topples back and forth even as Sweetie’s grunts of exertion float up and she strains to set it correctly with her field. Finally she gets it right and this creation is seen in full: body hastily stitched together from whatever scraps of cloth might have been in easy reach, four clawed feet, Bloom’s tail jutting from the hindquarters.*)

**Bloom:** (*from within*) So the plan is—

(*Cut to her inside, Sweetie’s tail extending into view toward her face—these two are each wearing one pair of the creature’s feet on their hooves.*)

**Bloom:** —we let ’em get a picture, then we hide again. Right?

(*Pan ahead to the young unicorn, who can only manage a shaky moan as she holds up the front half of the fabric body with her head. A rustle of leaves is heard in the distance; cut to a long shot of the two explorers leaping out of a bush toward their quarry. The head turns toward them under Sweetie’s control, notes and a picture are quickly taken, and she peeks fearfully out through a loose seam as they move in.*)

**Sweetie:** Now the plan is…RUUUNNN!!

(*She and Bloom do so, making good time along the trail until they try to veer around a tree in opposite directions. The body catches on the trunk, elongates to an absurd extent as if it were made of rubber, and finally rips in half. Two yelling fillies and a rain of textile scraps wind up in an undignified mess on the forest floor, Bloom stuck headfirst in a bush and Sweetie lying on her belly. Both have lost their clawed booties, and they shake their heads clear as the camera zooms out and one brown-tipped hoof plants itself firmly in the foreground. Snap is clearly not amused by the amateurish deception, and Mane’s expression mirrors his when she arrives. An embarrassed little chuckle from Scootaloo draws their eyes as the camera zooms out to frame her a few paces back.*)

**Scootaloo:** Guess you solved the mystery.

**Mane:** (*pocketing notepad*) We’d better get back. (*trotting away; Snap follows*) There’s a lot to get ready before the house goes up for sale tomorrow.

(*Scootaloo lets her head droop with a downhearted moan. Wipe to a close-up of a wall calendar, with a particular Monday circled and all the days up to and including the preceding Friday crossed out. She leans into view and marks out Saturday with a pencil in her teeth, and a longer shot puts her in a bedroom whose contents have been loaded into boxes except for the bed and a dresser. All three Crusaders are here; she sits glumly on her haunches, the pencil drooping, while Bloom has a camera around her neck.*)

**Sweetie:** Don’t worry, Scootaloo. We have a new plan to keep you in Ponyville.

**Bloom:** We just gotta show your parents we’re a set of three. Then they’ll *have* to let you stay here with us.

(*She grabs the device and hits the shutter, filling the screen with its flash. When the glare clears, the view has shifted to a darkroom illuminated with dim red light. Snap has put away his own camera, and he transfers an empty box from his teeth to an unoccupied bit of tabletop. Placing a “bellows” camera inside, he reaches up to pluck down some snapshots that have been hung up to dry, but stops short after a glance down at the counter. Three as-yet-undeveloped pictures have been submerged in a tray of chemical solution; he nips these out, pins them on the line, and steps back. A different Crusader’s cutie mark appears on each photo, prompting a bit of puzzlement followed by a smile as something clicks in Snap’s mind.*)

(*Cut to Scootaloo’s bedroom; she has stowed her pencil and is closing a box, and Bloom no longer has her camera.*)

**Snap:** (*from hall*) Scoot, are these yours?

(*He steps in, pictures in teeth, and spreads them across the box top.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*smiling*) Yeah! Thanks, Dad! We’re sending them to the *Pony Book of Records*.

**Sweetie:** We’re the only three ponies in Equestria with the same cutie mark.

**Bloom:** The chances of that are so rare. It means we belong together forever.

(*All three pivot proudly to show off the shields on their haunches.*)

**Snap:** Yeah, but you *don’t* have the same cutie mark. (*Cut to them.*)

**Bloom:** (*scoffing*) Uh, sure we do! (*pointing to photos*) Look!

**Snap:** (*from o.s., pointing at Scootaloo’s photo*) Well, this part is the same—

[*Error: The order of the stripes on Bloom’s and Sweetie’s photos is reversed; this will be fixed in the next shot.*]

(*Close-up of the three snaps.*)

**Snap:** (*from o.s., pointing from one to another*) —but the picture inside each of these is different. (*All four again.*) I think it means you’ll stay best friends no matter where you go, and that’s really special. (*Out he goes.*)

**Scootaloo:** But…we… (*sighing, to Bloom/Sweetie*) …how do you argue with that?

(*These two exchange worried looks over her drooping head. Dissolve to the wall of satisfied past clients’ pictures in the trio’s clubhouse, tilting down slowly toward the lectern, and cut to a dispirited Scootaloo staring at them. She voices a heavy sigh as Sweetie looks on, not sure how to offer consolation; behind them, the door swings open to admit Bloom, saddlebags on back and determination in every particle of her bearing.*)

**Bloom:** All right, y’all. (*Zoom in quickly to a close-up.*) Time to take things up a notch!

(*Teeth go to one bag and extract a small bottle of purple liquid, which she sets on the floor, and all three cluster in around it.*)

**Scootaloo:** With prune juice? (*Close-up of it.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) It’s a potion I mixed up from Zecora’s book. (*All three again.*) Prune is only one of the ingredients.

**Sweetie:** What’s it do?

(*The aspiring potion maker now pulls a book from her bags, rests it on the floor, and opens it.*)

**Bloom:** (*reading*) “On this potion, please depend.

Any separation, mend.

(*Cut to the other two, trading a smile; she continues o.s.*)

Friends together ’til the end.”

(*All three again.*)

**Bloom:** We just gotta dab a little on our hooves. Sounds perfect, right?

**Scootaloo:** Better than perfect!

(*Smiles broaden into grins as Sweetie levitates/uncorks the bottle and maneuvers it to dispense one drop each onto a yellow, orange, and white front hoof. The remainder is floated away toward a side table as the overall situation remains unchanged.*)

**Sweetie:** Is something supposed to happen?

(*She gets her answer when the three daubed forelegs vibrate wildly of their own accord like crazed tuning forks and pull in toward each other. A glowing pink rope materializes and wraps itself around the limbs, cinching them together and forcing the Crusaders into extremely close quarters.*)

**Sweetie:** Is *this* the something that’s supposed to happen?

**Bloom:** The book didn’t really say.

(*Their attempt to reach the door yields only a lot of wobbling/yelling and a three-way belly flop.*)

**Scootaloo:** Thanks for trying, Apple Bloom, but I might as well face it. I’m gonna have to leave Ponyville. (*They stand, one by one.*)

**Bloom:** Don’t give up, Scootaloo. (*lifting tied forelegs*) This just gave me an even better idea how to keep you here! Come on! (*They lurch toward the door…*)

**Crusaders:** Whoooaaa!

(*…and promptly topple o.s., landing with a thud. Pan slightly to frame them lying on the threshold.*)

**Sweetie:** Maybe we’d better see Zecora about fixing this first.

(*Dissolve to a close-up of the calendar from the wall of Scootaloo’s bedroom. Her pencil extends into view to cross out the Sunday immediately before the circled Monday; zoom out slightly as the writing implement is dropped. She has taken the calendar outside.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*over shoulder*) We’re running outta time!

(*Close-up of a shackle on a chain as Bloom snaps it onto one of her own hind legs, then cut to the base of a post as she clamps the other end around it. Scootaloo is similarly disposed, and a quick zoom out puts Sweetie right in there with them. The rope conjured up by the potion has been dispelled, and Bloom is no longer wearing her saddlebags. The post to which they are now anchored is supporting a “for sale” sign that points directly at Scootaloo’s house and has had a “sold” sticker slapped on.*)

**Scootaloo:** This *has* to work!

(*She stows her calendar as Mane and Snap emerge from the front door, respectively carrying a box and a set of saddlebags.*)

**Mane:** Scootaloo, I know you’re having fun with your friends, but we need to get all our things to the station.

**Snap:** We can’t miss tomorrow’s train. It’s the only one for a month.

(*Following a quick glance back at her friends, Scootaloo gathers her nerve.*)

**Scootaloo:** Then you’ll just have to go without me! (*Defiant stomp.*) I’m staying with the CMC’s! (*She sits on this last; the others do likewise in turn.*)

**Sweetie:** We are chained to this post!

**Bloom:** And nothin’ and nopony is gonna move us! (*A magic field uproots the sign, pulling it free of the shackles.*) No matter…

(*Longer shot, framing the necktie-wearing unicorn stallion who has just inadvertently derailed their protest—a real estate agent.*)

**Bloom:** (*deflated*) …what.

(*He walks off, towing the sign. A bit of silent strategizing on the adults’ part, and Snap crosses to the fillies with a smile.*)

**Snap:** We just sold the house, Scoot. (*Cut to him and Mane.*) I know this is hard to accept, but just—

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) It’s more than hard! (*Back to the Crusaders.*) It’s not fair! (*She stands.*) You’re making me pick between my family and my friends!

**Mane:** (*bending down, patting her*) Oh, Scootaloo, moving away won’t stop you three from caring about each other. Why don’t you sleep over with Sweetie Belle and Apple Bloom tonight? It’ll give you a chance to say a real goodbye.

**Scootaloo:** (*slapping her hoof away*) But I don’t want to say goodbye! (*sighing, tearing up, voice breaking*) You’re changing my whole life without even asking how I feel!

(*She gallops off sobbing, the other two heading after her, and all three sets of shackles fall clinking to the turf. Zoom in on Mane and Snap, who are perhaps starting to realize just how much of a wrench this is for their daughter, and fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the platform of the Ponyville train station and zoom in slowly. Its only occupant is Scootaloo, sitting on a bench with saddlebags slung up and spirits all the way down in her hooves. In close-up, she wipes away a few tears.*)

**Bloom:** (*from o.s.*) Scootaloo!

(*Pan slightly to frame her and Sweetie climbing onto the far end of the platform.*)

**Sweetie:** Where are you going? (*Scootaloo gets off the bench.*)

**Scootaloo:** To stay with my aunts. You heard my parents. (*wiping eyes*) There isn’t another train to Shire Lanka for a month. If I’m not on it, they’ll have to go without me.

(*The yellow filly gets an idea, and the white one picks up on it almost immediately afterward.*)

**Bloom:** Then we’re comin’ with you!

**Scootaloo:** Are you sure? I don’t want to get you in trouble.

**Sweetie:** Rarity won’t be mad.

**Bloom:** Applejack neither. I bet she’d do the same thing for her friends.

(*Scootaloo smiles and throws herself across to hug both at once, her tears now those of joy.*)

**Scootaloo:** You’re the best, you know that?

**Bloom:** *We’re* the best. (*Hold out a hoof.*)

**Sweetie:** Together!

(*She puts one of her own against it, and Scootaloo piles on a third as the whistle of an approaching train makes itself heard. It pulls in, stops for only the briefest moment, and is gone again; behind its caboose, wipe to the Crusaders heading up the front walk of a sprawling house in the countryside as night falls. Scootaloo’s knock at the front door is answered by Holiday, who gasps happily upon spotting her niece.*)

**Holiday:** Scootaloo! What a nice surprise. (*Lofty shoulders her way up.*)

**Lofty:** And *I’ve* got a surprise for you!

(*The youngsters find themselves at a bit of a loss until she brings out the quilt she was working on in the prologue. Every square is now decorated, many of them with the cutie marks of ponies who have benefited from their interactions with the Crusaders. Tilt down slowly, putting Lofty out of view.*)

**Lofty:** You three inspired me to finish my quilt. See? It’s Cutie Mark Crusader-themed. (*Back to her and Holiday.*)

**Holiday:** We love hearing the stories about all the ponies you’ve helped, so Lofty decided to celebrate the special job you three do. (*Scootaloo sighs despondently as Sweetie grimaces.*)

**Lofty:** (*deflating slightly, putting quilt aside*) It’s still a work in progress.

**Scootaloo:** It’s not your quilt we’re sad about, Auntie Lofty. Mom and Dad are back, and they’re making me move to Shire Lanka with them.

(*Mild bafflement from the two mares when the camera cuts to them.*)

**Holiday:** Snap and Mane are back? They didn’t tell me that.

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) Oh. (*Back to the Crusaders.*) I think the mail pony delivered your letter to my house.

(*Dipping her head to her bags, she fishes out the postcard that Derpy dropped off in the prologue. It is passed to Holiday, who takes in hoof so she and Lofty can both read in close-up.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*from o.s.*) I love my family— (*Cut to frame all five.*) —but I love being with my friends too. I don’t want to have to choose. (*Holiday tucks the card away.*)

**Lofty:** Well, then, why don’t your parents just stay in Ponyville? (*Cut to the Crusaders.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*petulantly*) Their job is too important. (*Bloom thinks for a second and gets a brainstorm.*)

**Bloom:** That’s it!

**Sweetie:** Is this another potion idea?

**Bloom:** No! Scootaloo’s parents are the only ponies in Equestria that can do what they do, right?

**Scootaloo:** (*hesitantly*) Right.

**Bloom:** Well, so are we! Our cutie marks prove it!

**Sweetie:** Yeah! Our job is to help other ponies find their purpose!

**Scootaloo:** And nopony else can do that! (*Gasp.*) So if my parents split us up, it’d be just as bad as them quitting *their* jobs!

**Crusaders:** Woo-hoo!

(*Scootaloo and Sweetie trail off into bubbly laughter, but Bloom’s mood turns pensive.*)

**Bloom:** Now how do we explain that to ’em?

**Holiday:** (*from o.s.*) Oh. (*Cut to her and Lofty.*) *You* don’t have to explain it… (*Lofty unfurls her quilt.*)

**Lofty:** …*they* will.

(*Zoom in slowly on the patchwork and dissolve to the kitchen and front hall of Scootaloo’s house. She enters from outside, no longer hauling her bags, as her parents busy themselves with packing. It is now the following day.*)

**Mane:** Feeling better, Scootaloo?

**Scootaloo:** A little. I just want to show you something before we go.

**Snap:** All right, but let’s make it swift. That train won’t wait.

(*Scootaloo leads them in a gallop out the door; cut to the street as they turn to head down the block, then wipe to them coming to a stop among a cluster of other buildings. She smiles as both of them react with total shock.*)

**Snap:** Sweet Celestia’s slippers!

(*Cut to a long shot of the upper portion of the town hall and tilt down slowly. Both it and the entire square have been tricked out in the fillies’ honor: balloons, pennants, confetti, banners depicting them and their cutie marks, and a broad aisle leading to the front steps. It is lined thick on both sides with ponies—friends, neighbors, classmates, clients—and Gabby and Terramar have even come in from Griffonstone and Mount Aeris, respectively. Mayor Mare stands at a lectern placed on the porch, flanked by Rainbow on one side and Bloom/Sweetie on the other.*)

**Mane:** (*from o.s.*) What *is* all this? (*Rainbow lifts off; cut to them as she crosses the space.*)

**Rainbow:** It’s Cutie Mark Crusader Appreciation Day! (*landing*) But we couldn’t start without all of them here.

(*Mane and Snap trade confounded looks as Scootaloo clambers onto her honorary big sister’s back for a flight over the crowd, which breaks into a chant of “CMC’s! CMC’s!” This continues until Rainbow has deposited her at the steps to take her place with the other two fillies.*)

**Mayor Mare:** These three ponies share a rare ability to help others find their true purpose. (*Cut to them; she continues o.s.*) It’s a job only they can do— (*Mane and Snap edge closer.*) —and only together.

**Mane:** (*smiling, to Snap*) That sounds familiar.

**Mayor Mare:** (*from o.s.*) In honor of all they have done— (*Back to her.*) —and continue to do for the ponies of this town, I would like to present the Cutie Mark Crusaders with a three-handled key to the city!

(*She holds up this item as she finishes—an oversized gold key whose head consists of three horseshoes attached to the shaft in a spiral arrangement. The ensuing round of full-throated cheering takes the naturalists very much by surprise, and Mayor Mare passes the key down for the Crusaders to hold aloft. The accolades continue overhead, in the form of three flight-suited Wonderbolts—Spitfire, Soarin’, Fleetfoot—zooming through the sky and leaving red/pink/magenta smoke trails in their wake. Following a sharp upward turn, they cut the smoke, double back, and carve the streaks into the outline of the shield on the Crusaders’ marks. Mane and Snap boggle at the display.*)

**Snap:** A full Wonderbolt salute! (*Here come Holiday and Lofty; the smoke slowly dissipates. Lofty is no longer carrying her quilt.*)

**Holiday:** Oh, I’m not sure you know just how important Scootaloo and her friends are, little brother.

**Lofty:** (*pointing*) But you’re about to find out.

(*Mayor Mare steps aside to make room for Skedaddle at the lectern.*)

**Skedaddle:** The CMC’s used their free time to set up a camp to help us blank flanks find our cutie marks.

(*On the second half of this line, cut to three foals standing on the steps; as one, they pivot to show their brand-new marks. Back to him and the Crusaders after they have done so; Scootaloo is now holding the key.*)

**Skedaddle:** The Cutie Mark Crusaders see the best in everypony, even when that pony can’t see it in themselves.

**Snap:** (*scratching head*) Well, I’ll be a three-tailed bandicoot. I had no idea how important Scoot’s club was.

**Rainbow:** Oh, it’s way more than just a club. The CMC’s have made a difference for everypony here.

**Terramar:** (*touching down side by side with Gabby*) And not just ponies. They help everycreature.

(*Two taloned fists thump amiably against each other.*)

**Holiday:** (*pointing ahead*) Whether it’s encouraging others to discover their special talent…

(*On this line, cut to Tender Taps, the colt who found his love of dance with Bloom’s help in “On Your Marks.” He tosses off a quick flurry of tap steps; next the camera shifts to Big Macintosh and Sugar Belle. He blushes as they nuzzle together, and Diamond Tiara gives the Crusaders a respectful smile and wave, remembering what they did for her in “Crusaders of the Lost Mark.”*)

**Lofty:** (*from o.s.*) …or inspiring them to do what’s in their heart… (*All three smile warmly; Bloom waves back.*)

**Holiday:** (*from o.s.*) …these three fillies offer the town something no other pony can.

(*Back to her, Lofty, and the couple as she finishes. A train whistle sounds off in the distance, sparking indecisive glances between Mane and Snap and bone-deep fright from the Crusaders. Bloom and Sweetie each rest a comforting hoof against Scootaloo, dreading whatever might come next—and then Mane beckons with a hoof as she and Snap smile. Scootaloo passes the key off to Sweetie.*)

**Rainbow:** (*outraged*) No way! (*She flies into their faces.*) After all that, you’re still gonna make her leave? (*She touches down.*)

**Mane:** We just want what’s best for Scootaloo. (*walking past her with Snap*) And until now, we thought we knew what that was.

(*They stop at the bottom of the steps, facing the fillies, and Snap sighs quietly.*)

**Snap:** Turns out you’re just like us, Scoot. (*Close-up of her downcast face, which shifts to surprise as he continues o.s.*) You have an important job that only you can do. (*Pan/cut slowly through the appreciative crowd.*) You love it, and it helps all of Equestria. (*Back to him and Mane.*)

**Mane:** Sometimes that means missing out on other things you love— (*touching Snap’s shoulder*) —like watching our daughter grow into a pony we’re very proud of.

**Snap:** Which is a long way to say…Scoot, if you want to stay, we understand.

(*All three Crusaders break into smiles, Scootaloo gasping and glancing to the others as if to confirm that her ears are telling her true.*)

**Scootaloo:** (*tearing up*) Really? (*She dives off the porch and sweeps both parents into a hug.*) Thanks, Dad! Thanks, Mom!

(*Pan away from them a short distance to frame Holiday and Lofty. As the earth pony’s eyes brim up, the pegasus passes her a handkerchief to dry then and flicks away a tear of her own.*)

**Mane:** (*as Scootaloo backs off*) Oh, sweetie, I’m just sorry we didn’t realize it sooner.

**Snap:** Our work is our life’s purpose. We could never quit, so there’s no way we can ask you to do the same.

**Lofty:** Maybe you shoulda thought of that *before* you sold the house. (*“Uh-oh” looks from one parent to the other.*)

**Holiday:** Lofty, don’t tease my brother. We already have a solution worked out. (*A moment’s confusion from Mane and Snap.*)

**Lofty:** Since the CMC’s make Ponyville such a nice place, we’ve decided to move here!

**Holiday:** You can live with us, Scootaloo, if you’d like.

**Scootaloo:** That would be amazing! (*hesitantly, to Mane/Snap*) Will you still come and visit?

**Mane:** (*foreleg around shoulders*) Of course!

**Snap:** (*removing hat*) Rabid bugbears couldn’t keep us away.

(*The well-used headwear is plunked onto the magenta mane in close-up as he finishes, and all three share a gentle embrace. Bloom and Sweetie bound down from the porch, Sweetie no longer carrying the key.*)

**Bloom, Sweetie:** (*chanting, circling to Scootaloo*) You get to stay here! You get to stay here! You get to stay here!

(*Now it is the fillies’ turn for a group hug and laugh, but the earth pony and unicorn come out of it with great trepidation.*)

**Bloom:** Uh, you *are* stayin’ here, right?

**Scootaloo:** Are you kidding? CMC’s forever!

(*A whooping three-way high five touches off a new round of cheers among the spectators. Tilt up to the upper reaches of the town hall and its decorations lauding the triumvirate, then fade to black.*)