

THE SHOW STOPPERS

Written by Cindy Morrow

Produced by Sarah Wall

Story editing by Rob Renzetti

Supervising direction by Jayson Thiessen

Co-directed by James Wootton

Transcribed by Alan Back (ajback@yahoo.com)

Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to Applejack leading the Cutie Mark Crusaders through a stretch of the Sweet Apple Acres orchards. Apple Bloom walks point for the three fillies.)

Bloom: Where are you taking us?

Applejack: *(now o.s.)* We're almost there, young'uns.

Sweetie Belle: *(walking o.s.)* I've never been here before.

(Applejack nudges her way beneath some overgrown fronds, and Bloom pushes on one with her head until it bends almost double, snapping back to hit Scootaloo in the face.)

Scootaloo: Ouch! *(Bloom lifts it.)*

Bloom: Oh. Sorry.

Scootaloo: Are we there yet? *(Sweetie ducks underneath.)*

Sweetie: There? Where? What? I don't even know what we're doing! *(All four stop and look straight ahead.)*

Applejack: Here we are!

Bloom: What are we lookin' at?

Scootaloo: I have no idea.

Sweetie: What *is* that thing?

Applejack: Cutie Mark Crusaders, welcome to your new clubhouse!

(Zoom out as she speaks to frame what is just in front of them: a treehouse that has clearly seen better days and had no maintenance for quite some time. Broken windows, door hanging ajar, sagging roof and platform railings. A ramp in two sections leads up from ground level to the door, but this also is on the verge of collapse. The upper section has a rope tied to its bottom end, leading straight up into the branches, so that it can be pulled up to prevent intruders from entering. One of the window shutters promptly does a nose-dive to the ground; the Crusaders seem rather less than thrilled. This sequence is the first to give a clear view of the sky, marking the time as during the day.)

Applejack: *(walking off)* Well, don't thank me all at once. *(leading them up the ramp)* This was my clubhouse when I was your age. Sure, it hasn't been used in a while, but it's empty and on a

secluded, private part of the farm. (*Zoom out to frame all of it.*) And it's all yours!

(*A chunk of the roof chooses this particular time to cave in.*)

Applejack: It just needs a little, uh, TLC.

Scootaloo: TLC as in “tender loving care” or “totally lost cause”?

Bloom: Applejack, we're supposed to turn *this* into our new clubhouse?

Applejack: (*leaning a foreleg against the wall*) Well, maybe y'all would get your cutie marks when you discovered your talent for—

(*The section of wall under her hoof cracks and gives way, dumping her into the treehouse with a cry and releasing a cloud of dust. Her hat winds up on the platform. Cut to just inside the new hole; the Crusaders peek in around its edge, and their benefactor woozily pokes her head up from the pile of broken boards.*)

Applejack:—uh, housecleanin'?

(*Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the library, then zoom out to frame Scootaloo at a distance from it. She has her saddlebags on her back, a pencil in her teeth, and a drawing-covered sheet of paper pinned under one hoof. A toy scooter sits nearby. After a bit of thought, she adds a detail to a sketch of the library, nods, and moves her hoof to let the page roll itself up. This goes into the bags in close-up and the flap closes; zoom out to frame her now on the scooter and wearing a crash helmet. The pencil has been put away.*)

(*Flapping her little wings a couple of times to warm them up, she peels out so fast that any casual observer would swear she had a jet engine mounted behind her. Down the street, threading the needle between two mares who have stopped to talk, toward a pile of construction materials that includes a plank leaning on a couple of crates. She veers toward this last and drives straight up the incline, doing two midair 360-degree spins—first herself and the scooter, then the scooter alone. The performance earns a round of gasps and smiles from the onlookers, but Scootaloo does not slow down even a bit. Instead, she races on past Granny Smith, out for a constitutional with the help of the walker seen in “The Ticket Master.” Her passage sends the elderly mare into a hard spin and leaves her balanced on top of the walker.*)

Granny: (*mumbling angrily*) Not so fast!

(*Again, the four-wheeled daredevil pays no mind and zooms on into Sweet Apple Acres, jumping*

a log and ducking a low branch along the way. Her eyes pop at the sight of another branch, this one covered with birds and too low to duck. In slow motion, she leaps up off the scooter, scattering the birds, and neatly goes over the branch as her toy coasts under it. Normal motion resumes as soon as she lands back on the thing with no discernible loss of speed.)

(Cut to Bloom at the base of the treehouse ramp, which now looks rather better than it did. She has a paintbrush in her teeth and finishes touching up one last spot just before Scootaloo bursts through the bushes. The yellow filly has time for one panicked grimace, but Scootaloo hits the brakes hard. In close-up, Bloom realizes that she is not about to become roadkill and stands up straight. Zoom out to frame both, with Scootaloo having stopped inches away from her.)

Bloom: Whoa! Hey, Scootaloo.

(Close-up of the latter, who takes off her helmet.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Back already? You're amazin' on that scooter.

Scootaloo: Thanks! *(looking up)* Wow, Apple Bloom!

(Long shot of them and the structure, which has been completely renovated and now appears ready to be put back into service as a clubhouse.)

Scootaloo: You did all of this?

Bloom: Yep. *(Slow pan across it; she continues o.s.)* I fixed the broken shutters, sanded off the splinters, rebuilt the roof, painted... *(Back to them.)*

Scootaloo: That's so cool! What's Sweetie Belle up to?

(Cut to a screenful of bushes and zoom in through them to reveal the third member of the group. She is standing on a picnic table and singing quietly, in B major, while dusting it with her tail.)

Sweetie: We are the Cutie Mark Crusaders...

(Humming, she jumps down and dusts one of the seats.)

Sweetie: ...never stop the journey...

(A nearby tree is next to get cleaned off as she starts humming again.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* There you are, Sweetie Belle!

(She stops; pan to Bloom and Scootaloo walking up, the latter having shucked her saddlebags.)

Bloom: *(to Scootaloo)* See? I told you we could find her by following her totally awesome voice.

Scootaloo: What's that sweet tune you're singing?

Sweetie: *(sheepishly)* Oh. I was just working on our new Cutie Mark Crusaders theme song.

Bloom, Scootaloo: Cool!

Scootaloo: Teach us? (*Bloom nods encouragingly.*)

Sweetie: Well, I've only come up with one part— (*smiling*) —but okay!

(Wipe to the Crusaders' new headquarters as Applejack walks to it and up the ramp, her hat back in its usual place atop the tousled blond mane. Sweetie's voice is heard singing in B flat minor, with chord changes played on a piano.)

Sweetie: (*from inside*) They all say that you will get your mark
(*Inside; Applejack peeks in a nicely curtained window; Sweetie is o.s.*)

When the time is really right

Bloom: (*from o.s., slightly off key*)

And you know just what you're supposed to do

Scootaloo: (*from o.s., loudly, badly off key*)

And your talent comes to light

(This last line throws Applejack into an eardrum-smashing paroxysm, but she quickly shakes it off and pokes her head in.)

Applejack: Well, uh, I'll be, Cutie Mark Crusaders. You've done one fine job with this place. So what's next?

(A shot of this entire corner frames Bloom's handiwork: pictures and Scootaloo's sheet of sketches on the walls, a potted plant on a side table, interior thoroughly cleaned out. Little sister trots over, followed by her compatriots in turn.)

Bloom: Well, now that we have a real-life clubhouse...

Scootaloo: (*indicating her sheet*) ...and a map of Ponyville...

Sweetie: ...and a Cutie Mark Crusaders theme song...

Applejack: (*uneasily, to herself*) Theme song?

(Cut to Bloom; the others pop out from behind her in turn.)

Bloom: ...we're gonna go out in the world and discover our talents!

Scootaloo: A new adventure!

Sweetie: And earn our cutie marks!

Bloom: We'll leave no stone unturned!

Scootaloo: No mountain unclimbed!

Sweetie: No meal uncooked! (*Back to Applejack.*)

Bloom: (*from o.s.*) No song unlearned!

Applejack: (*slightly panicky*) Well, okay, then! (*composing herself*) Sounds like you have a plan. (*She looks back toward ground level.*) I gotta, uh...leave no apple unpicked! (*waving*) See y'all later!

(She departs. Close-up of Scootaloo.)

Scootaloo: Are we ready to get our cutie marks, ponies? (*Bloom and Sweetie jump over to her.*)
Crusaders: (*high-fiving*) Ready!

(*Tilt up from them to the map on the wall and zoom in on the sketch of the barn at Sweet Apple Acres, then dissolve to the actual property. Here, the three trot along and into the barn with buckets of slops balanced on their heads. Scootaloo dumps these into a feeding trough, Sweetie rings the chow bell by pulling its rope with her teeth, and Bloom jumps up to grab a hanging rope in hers and pull down, opening a gate. They make the mistake of standing directly in front of this, though, and are swiftly trampled by a herd of squealing, hungry pigs. As the porkers chow down, one of them meanders back to the befouled Crusaders and licks at the muck covering Sweetie. Bloom is first to get up, throwing an eager look toward her haunch; zoom in and pan to the others' to emphasize the fact that they are still blank. Dejection all around.*)

(*On the map, the barn gets crossed out and a dotted-line path makes its way to Sugarcube Corner. Dissolve to the real thing and cut to a close-up of Sweetie inside, hunkered down and licking her chops before a stack of taffy slabs in different bright colors. Tilt up slightly to frame Scootaloo, who reaches for the topmost ones, then cut to a longer shot. The Crusaders—cleaned up from their pig-slopping fiasco—are gathered around a taffy machine; Sweetie now has the slabs balanced on her head, and Scootaloo starts throwing them in from her perch on a stool. Once several have been added, Bloom throws a lever with her nose to fire up the rig. The other two pitch in a few last chunks and trade a high five as it starts to work the gooey mass—which snags Scootaloo's tail because she is standing too close. The little earth pony and unicorn try to pull her free without success; all three get yanked into the machine and stretched in unexpected directions as a six-eyed, rainbow-striped tangle. Cut to just outside the front door, whose bottom half opens to let out the world's worst pony conga line—they are glued one to the next with strings of taffy and not a bit pleased. As they try to break loose of each other, Scootaloo throws a glance toward her hindquarters; zoom in and pan to each in turn, showing nothing but taffy back there. More low spirits.*)

(*Back to the map, where Sugarcube Corner gets crossed out and the next dotted line snakes over to the Carousel Boutique. Dissolve to the exterior of that establishment, where ponies start to gravitate toward a sign that a now-clean Bloom has set up by the front door. She is ringing a bell in her teeth, and a close-up shows that the sign depicts a bottle of hair tonic and a happy mare sporting a sleek hairstyle. A customer walks in; cut to another inside, with foil sheets tucked into her mane in preparation for having it dyed. Her whole body is wrapped in the pony equivalent of a neckcloth. Tilt down to frame Scootaloo dumping various colors of dye into a bowl and Sweetie mixing the lot; they too have removed all the taffy from themselves. Outside, Bloom's ringing is interrupted by the emergence of this mare, who is wailing over the fact that her mane is now striped red, green, and orange and fluffed out like a clown's wig. Scootaloo and Sweetie step out, Bloom puts her bell down, and all three glance toward their haunches. Close-up of Bloom's, panning to each in turn; still no cutie mark, and down in the dumps they go.*)

(*Back to the map; the Carousel Boutique gets crossed off and a dotted line works its way to a patch of farmland and apple trees. Zoom in on this and dissolve to the trio in a clearing among the trees of Sweet Apple Acres. Bloom and Sweetie sit opposite each other on their haunches at a*

small table, with a deck of cards in front of Sweetie and a triangular box lying flat in front of Bloom. Scootaloo jumps excitedly behind Sweetie. Zoom in and cut to a close-up of Sweetie; she flips the top card off the deck with her teeth, exposing a heart on its face, and the box panel facing her has a slot to hold a card. Zoom in on the heart, then cut to Bloom's side; her panel shows six buttons—circle, star, heart, four-leaf clover, square, triangle. The red-maned filly concentrates intently for a moment and presses the circle button, causing that card to slide into view in the slot on Sweetie's side. Scootaloo and Sweetie both shake their heads at the mismatch. Now the young unicorn flips a second card, a star, but Bloom hits the square button instead; up comes a clover, and Bloom nearly sends herself into a convulsion trying to puzzle this one out. She comes out of it with a sudden burst of inspiration and hits all six buttons at once; Scootaloo and Sweetie smile broadly only to get hit with a sudden fusillade of cards from the panel. Bloom checks her haunch, but a close-up and pan to the others shows that this attempt at mind-reading has come up as short as all the others—with the same effect on their mood.)

(Back to the map, where the field gets scratched out and a dotted path heads up to a mountain peak. Dissolve to the real thing, swept by wind and snow; the roped-together Crusaders struggle up to the summit, with Bloom in the lead. Sweetie, on the low end, slips suddenly up and over the top, throwing the other two off balance so that they all fall down the other side. A zoom out reveals that the “mountain” is really a small vertical projection from a slab that stands only a few feet tall. The fillies end up in a heap on the grassy meadowland at its base, and their expectant looks toward their hind legs put an end to their enthusiasm for mountaineering when nothing comes of it.)

(On the map, the peak gets crossed off and the dotted line works down to a lake. Dissolve to a point near its bottom, where the Crusaders swim into view, having traded their mountaineering rope for diving masks and swim fins. They pass o.s. right, then beat a hasty retreat to stay ahead of a slightly annoyed squid. Back to the map, where the lake is X'ed out; the next dotted trip shifts the action to the library. Zoom in on this sketch, the last one left, and dissolve to the exterior of this building, where Twilight Sparkle and Cheerilee are approaching the open front door. Inside, Spike is waiting for the pair.)

Spike: I had nothing to do with this!

Twilight: What is going on here?

(Pan to the other side of the reading room; “what is going on” turns out to be an avalanche of books and scrolls. Bloom and Sweetie are on top of the mess, and Scootaloo pokes up on the next line, throwing a flurry of loose papers everywhere. They have shed their underwater gear.)

Bloom: Hmph. Well, we sure aren't gettin' our cutie marks for bein' librarians.

Spike: Huh! I should think not. *(Annoyed look from Twilight.)* What?

[Animation goof: When the camera cuts back to him and the two adults, Cheerilee is now wearing a set of saddlebags.]

Twilight: *(crossing room)* Girls, I think you're going about this the wrong way. Instead of trying

to do things in areas you're not familiar with... *(They dig out and line up; Cheerilee crosses to them.)* ...why not try doing things in areas that you already like?

Cheerilee: And I have the perfect place to start.

(A quick dip into her bag, and she has a scroll in her teeth; close-up of this as she unrolls it on the floor—a poster. Stars and musical notes are around the periphery, and a pony-tailored pair of tragedy/comedy masks are at the center, in one of several spotlights. Lines of text are printed under the masks, and the Crusaders step in close to read these.)

Bloom: “Showcase your talents...”

Scootaloo: “...for all to see.”

Sweetie: “Perform in the Ponyville School Talent Show!”

Cheerilee: There'll be all sorts of awards. *(Cut to Bloom and pan to the others in turn; she continues o.s.)* Best dramatic performance, best comedy act, best magic act... *(Shift to frame all five ponies.)* ...surely you can find *your* talent.

Bloom: This *would* be the perfect place to discover our talents! Jugglin'!

Scootaloo: Acting!

Sweetie: Magic tricks!

Bloom: Square dancin'!

Scootaloo: Tightrope walking!

Sweetie: Tiger taming! *(Cut to Twilight and Cheerilee.)*

Twilight: *(singsong)* My little ponies!

(Zoom out; the Crusaders cross to them. She continues in her normal speaking voice.)

Twilight: You're missing the point. Think about the things you already enjoy doing. Think about what you're already good at.

Scootaloo: Sure! We can do that.

Sweetie: Yeah! Sure we can.

Bloom: Well, whatever we do, we'll do it as...

Crusaders: *(standing on rear legs)* ...the Cutie Mark Crusaders!

(They trade a three-way high five. Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to the front door of the Carousel Boutique. Scootaloo, on her scooter and wearing her helmet and saddlebags, is pulling a wagon that contains Bloom, Sweetie, and several rolls of fabric. One rather annoyed older sister bursts out to yell after them.)

Rarity: Sweetie Belle! I told you not to touch my things! COME BACK WITH MY SUPPLIES!!

Sweetie: We're just borrowing them for the talent show! Don't worry, sis! I promise we'll bring them back!

(Wipe to a close-up of the wagon, now stopped, as a desk fan is placed into it. Zoom out to frame its donor: a tan earth pony stallion with a red-brown mane, light blue eyes, and a four-bladed fan cutie mark. In addition, he wears a light yellow shirt, green vest and bow tie, and a flat brown cap, and is standing outside a building's front door.)

Scootaloo: Thanks, Mr. Breezy! We'll return the fan to you real soon! *(They head out.)*

Bloom: What do we need this fan for?

Sweetie: Trust me on this one.

(Wipe to the team, now stopped outside a different location that has several paint cans stacked by the door. Scootaloo has shed her bags, her helmet lies next to the scooter, and she deposits a plank in the wagon to join several others, the fan, the fabric, and some cans of paint. Zoom in slightly as she names each item.)

Scootaloo: Okay, so that's six wooden planks, four-by-eight plywood, a box of nails, four cans of paint, and four brushes. *(Back to the original shot.)* Anything else?

(The sequence of zooms repeats itself on the next line.)

Sweetie: *(dryly)* Yeah. *Instructions* on how to use six wooden planks, four-by-eight plywood, a box of nails, four cans of paint, and four brushes.

(She throws a skeptical look to Bloom, who just shrugs; meanwhile, a vexed Scootaloo gets her helmet back on, herself in the driver's seat, and her wings in gear to peel out.)

Sweetie: Whooaa!

(Wipe to Twilight and Spike outside the library; Spike is holding a book, and Twilight addresses herself quizzically o.s.)

Twilight: *Ghosts, Goblins, and Ghoulish Figures?*

(Longer shot; the Crusaders are parked right in front of the pair. Scootaloo has her bags on.)

Twilight: Good heavens, girls! *(Spike puts the book in the wagon.)* What do you need a book like this for?

Scootaloo: You'll see. Thanks, Twilight! *(rolling out)* We'll give it back as soon as we're done with it!

Twilight: *(to Spike)* What do you think they're up to?

Spike: I have no idea, and I don't know if I should be excited or scared to find out.

(Dissolve to a long shot of the clubhouse.)

Bloom: *(from inside)* I'm glad we're doin' this as a team.

(Inside, they have spread out their supplies, and a helmet-less, bag-free Scootaloo brings one of the several cans of paint. Every destination on the wall map has been crossed out.)

Sweetie: Me too. *(puzzled)* Um...so what are we doing again? *(Scootaloo sets the can down.)*

Scootaloo: A super-awesome dramatic song for the talent show, of course!

Sweetie: Right! With super-cool scenery— *(unfurling a length of fabric)* —and amazing costumes!

Bloom: And mind-blowin' dance moves! *(She dances a bit, unsteadily.)*

Scootaloo: This is gonna be so amazing!

Bloom: Sweetie Belle, I think you should be the singer.

(A good assessment, judging from what has been heard from her in the past. However, the young unicorn surprises Bloom by fearfully covering the lower part of her face with the cloth.)

Sweetie: *(slightly muffled)* What? No way I'm singing in front of a crowd! *(She pulls the cloth away.)* Twilight said to do something we like to do. And I'd like to be like my big sister, and she's a designer.

Scootaloo: Fine, then. You can do the costumes and the scenery.

Bloom: Mmm-hmm, and Scootaloo, you're great at maneuvers on your scooter, so you should do the choreography. *(tottering from one hind leg to the other)* You know, all those dance moves. *(Scootaloo nods at this suggestion, but it only lasts a moment before she utters a pop-eyed gasp and goes into an emphatic head shake.)*

Scootaloo: Nah, I'd rather sing a wicked rock ballad!

(A microphone briefly appears in her grip as she does a bit of headbanging; it vanishes in time for the next line, which is directed toward Bloom.)

Scootaloo: Why don't you come up with the dance routine, Apple Bloom? *(Zoom in on the latter, thinking hard.)*

Bloom: Hmm...I'm not much of a dancer—but I do like kung fu! That's kinda like dancin'.

(She snaps off a few kicks, backward and forward, in all directions and throws in a few shouts for good measure as the other two duck and cover. Sweetie is first to react, dropping the cloth she has been holding on to this entire time.)

Sweetie: Then it's settled. Let's get started!

(All three fan out across the clubhouse. Dissolve to its exterior, where two of the three are working at ground level. Scootaloo sits on her haunches at a toy upright piano, and Sweetie has set up a small sewing machine. A light classical melody is heard from o.s., and the camera pans to its source: a wind-up phonograph set up on a small table. Bloom is over here, studying herself in a mirror propped against its edge. She does a few dance steps, counting off in time.)

Bloom: One...two...three...oh!

(The “oh” comes as she tries to do a twirl but lets it get out of control; it ends with her falling over onto Scootaloo’s tail.)

Bloom: Oh!

Scootaloo: Ow, Apple Bloom! *(Cut to Bloom; she continues o.s.)* What are you doing? *(She helps Bloom up.)*

Bloom: *(groaning)* I feel like I have four left feet. I can’t even spin right.

Scootaloo: Don’t be silly. You just gotta keep your head forward until the very last minute, like this.

(Balancing on one foreleg, she goes into a fast enough whirl to leave her visible as only an orange/magenta blur. The move ends as suddenly as it began, with her still perfectly balanced on that single limb; she walks back to Bloom.)

Scootaloo: See? Easy-peasy. You just gotta practice a bunch, that’s all.

Bloom: Wow! That *does* look easy! Thanks! Okay. Let’s try this again!

(She goes up on one hind leg and starts to spin—once, twice, but the third gets the better of her.)

Bloom: Ow! *(She drops o.s.)* Ouch!

(Cut to Scootaloo, who cringes at the continued thumps and crashes.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Ow...I’m okay!

Scootaloo: Keep practicing!

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Will do!

(Wipe to a close-up of the far left end of the piano keys. The Crusader composer reaches into view and taps a key; cut to a longer shot of her, once again seated at the ivories. The words that she sings bear no resemblance to her piano playing in key, time, or mood.)

Scootaloo: We fight the fight, walk the walk
Talk the talk, eat the...uh, food, like a...celery stalk?

(She stops playing and lets her hooves drop for a discordant jangle before voicing a frustrated groan.)

Scootaloo: I’ll never come up with anything! *(banging head on keys)* Never, never, never!

(A roll of fabric comes flying into view, unrolling over the top of the piano.)

Sweetie: *(racing after it)* Come back! Come back! *(She stops by Scootaloo.)* Dumb fabric. Hey, Scoot, how’s the song going?

(She gets her answer in the form of a big wet raspberry aimed at the sheet music set up on the piano, and proceeds to mimic it.)

Sweetie: Oh, my. Sounds serious.

Scotaloo: I'm just no good at lyrics. Coming up with words is, like...really hard.

Sweetie: Oh, they can't be *that* bad.

(reading) "With our cutie marks we'll rock Equestria.
We use our stomachs to digestia"?

(She gets a big goofy grin from the budding songwriter but does not return it.)

Sweetie: Um, well...these are, um, good, but... *(She sits on her haunches.)* ...how about after "we fight the fight"...

(She begins to sing in B flat minor, with a simple piano accompaniment similar to the first time she tried this in the clubhouse. Her voice gradually builds power as an amazed Scotaloo watches.)

Sweetie: There is nothing that we fear
(Close-up.) We'll have to figure out what we'll do next
'Til our cutie marks are here

(Pan to Scotaloo.)

Scotaloo: Wow! That's so awesome! Did you just come up with that now?

Sweetie: *(a bit sheepishly)* Yeah, kind of.

Scotaloo: Thanks! I'm totally using that.

(A quick duck down, and she comes up with a pencil in her teeth to scribble on the sheet music. Sweetie watches for a second, but a rustling from o.s. draws both fillies' eyes up from the paper and off to one side. Cut to the cause—Sweetie's fabric, which is merrily reeling itself out as it rolls downhill toward a small pond.)

Sweetie: Oh, no!

(The sound of a splash gets her hooves moving down to the edge of the pond, where the roll has gone into the drink. Dissolve to one long section drip-drying on a clothesline and pan to a couple of others; Sweetie has her little sewing machine up and running to piece together a garment. After a few seconds, she lifts it clear for a look—blue-violet, trimmed in light yellow at the collar and cuffs. Zoom in on the legs and pan slowly across all five—yes, five—of them.)

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* One, two, three, four...five?!

(She lowers the botched costume with a moan and sigh, a moment before Bloom spirals dizzily across in front of her and goes down flat on her back.)

Bloom: Ouch!

Sweetie: How's the spin coming along?

Bloom: I think I gotta just stick to punches and kicks.

(She gets a surprised eyeful of the costume that has four legs plus a spare and props herself up on her forelegs.)

Bloom: You know ponies only have four legs. *(Close-up of Sweetie, who moans sadly.)*

Sweetie: I'll never be a designer like my sister Rarity. *(Pan to Bloom as she stands up.)*

Bloom: Hey, it's no big deal. *(pointing)* Why don't you use the dressform?

(Pan quickly in the direction she has indicated and stop on one of Rarity's mannequins, standing among the apple trees.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* It'll help you with your patterns and help you put all the pieces in the right places.

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* Oh! Is *that* what that's for?

(Zoom out to frame a backdrop in progress, constructed from plywood and planks and depicting a house, a clock tower, trees, a cloud, farmland. The school-age artwork is liberally—and sloppily—decorated with a range of drab colors that do not at all match the vivid shades of the open paint cans sitting nearby.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Uh, maybe you should also clean your paintbrush between each color. *(Back to the pair.)*

Sweetie: Oh, I was wondering why all the colors looked like mud.

Bloom: You're not using power tools, are you?

(Clock wipe to Applejack, out for a stroll through the orchard.)

Applejack: The talent show's just around the corner. I wonder how the fillies are doin'.

(As she approaches the clubhouse, the sound of a backing rock track fades up—synthesizer, bass, drums. Dissolve to just inside the window, with the Crusaders' shadows cast onto it and the surrounding wall boards. Judging from their movements, they are trying to debug a dance routine and having a very rough go of it. The next five lines are delivered from o.s.)

Bloom: Oh! Sorry, Scootaloo! *(Applejack peeks in.)*

Scootaloo: That's okay...Ugh!

Sweetie: Oops. Sorry, Scootaloo.

(Close-up of Applejack, who winces at the sound and o.s. sight of each new misstep.)

Sweetie: Ouch!

Scootaloo: Oh, my bad, Sweetie Belle. Let's sing the chorus again!

(As an electric guitar part comes in, the blond head slowly eases down and out of sight, its owner not at all willing to find out what might be coming next. Cut to her, walking away from the clubhouse's ramp as the music fades out.)

Applejack: Well, gosh. Sure wasn't expectin' *that*. *(She looks up.)*

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* I think that sounded pretty good!

(A different camera angle reveals that she has found a spot to observe, unseen, as they step out onto the platform.)

Sweetie: Me too! You think we're ready? *(Applejack slowly backs away.)*

Scootaloo: Ready as we'll ever be.

(They zip over to another corner and spot Applejack trying to make her disappearance.)

Scootaloo: Hey! Did you see us practicing?

Applejack: Uh...yeah?

Bloom: Well? How did we do? How did we do?

Applejack: Uh...

Scootaloo: Speechless! See, girls? I told you that's what we're gonna do! We're gonna leave them speechless!

Crusaders: *(Scootaloo, Sweetie trading high five)* YAAAAY!! *(Cut to Applejack and zoom in slightly.)*

Applejack: *(to herself, uneasily)* "Speechless" is right.

(Snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a talent show poster tacked up on a tree. It is nighttime, and strings of pennants run from post to post in the background. Crowd murmuring is heard as the camera pans to frame the schoolhouse, with a banner strung up over its entrance, and a sizable audience gathered in the green space outside its boundary fence. A stage has been set up here; on it, two figures can be seen, one wearing a top hat and the other gripping one by the crown in its teeth. In close-up, these are revealed as Snips and Snails, respectively, both wearing black/dark-gray bow ties. They stand on opposite sides of a table on which a small rabbit sits—a magic act in progress.)

Snips: And on the count of three...

(Close-up of the rabbit; Snails sets his hat over it.)

Snips: *(from o.s.)* ...this rabbit will disappear... *(Cut to frame both as he continues.)* ...and

something tasty will reappear in its place! One...a-two...and a-three!

(He gets his teeth on the hat's brim and lifts it away, exposing an empty table in close-up.)

Snips: Wait! Wh-Where are they? Snails, where are the—

(Quick pan to an extreme close-up of his buddy's mouth. A bunch of carrots now protrudes from it and is being chewed unhurriedly.)

Snips: *(from o.s., wearily)* —carrots.

(The whole audience finds the faux pas quite amusing, but he does not.)

Snips: Snails! *(He chases Snails off the stage; Cheerilee comes on, no longer wearing her saddlebags from Act One.)*

Cheerilee: Um, how about a round of applause for the S&S Magic Act?

(The camera cuts to stage left, pointing out from the wings to frame her. There is a general stomping of hooves, the pony equivalent of applause; pan toward the backstage area on the next line.)

Cheerilee: Uh, now for our next act we have...

(Back here, three small figures in dark blue hooded cloaks huddle down together on top of a crate. Two of them—Scootaloo and Sweetie—have their manes swept and teased into spiky punk-rock styles and are wearing heavy, garish eye makeup—dark purple for Scootaloo, magenta for Sweetie. The third, Bloom, has a black cloth or bandana over her mane, whose fringe now comes down over her nose, and is checking her appearance in a hand mirror. Scootaloo is wearing dark purple shoes that match her eye makeup and sport pink/magenta dots, Sweetie's hooves are covered in light green, and Bloom has on black sleeves capped with pink accents over her hooves.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* ...Sunny Daze and Peachy Pie reciting their favorite poem, on roller skates! *(Two fillies roll past.)*

Sweetie: *(calling after them)* Break a leg!

Bloom: Sweetie Belle! What a thing to say!

Sweetie: No, no, no. You see, in the theater, it's considered bad luck to say "good luck." So you say "break a leg" instead.

(This shot is close enough to show that she wears sleeves like Bloom's, with magenta material above the light green ends. Now Twilight comes up to the trio; when they turn their heads toward her, Bloom's black bandana is clearly seen for the first time—decorated with white skulls.)

Twilight: My little ponies! How are you doing?

Crusaders: Nervous. *(Close-up of Twilight.)*

Twilight: Don't worry. You're gonna be amazing. Remember, just stick to what you know best. (*Zoom out to frame them; she leans in toward Sweetie.*) I can't wait to hear you sing, Sweetie Belle.

Sweetie: (*a bit irritated*) Why does everypony always think I'm gonna sing? (*Surprise; zoom in on Scootaloo.*)

Scootaloo: Actually, Twilight Sparkle, I'm the main singer tonight.

Twilight: Oh?

Bloom: And I'm the main dancer! (*doing a chop with one foreleg*) Hai-yah!

(*This move exposes the skulls that decorate the rest of her black outfit.*)

Twilight: (*concerned; ears droop*) Oh?

Sweetie: And I'm in charge of— (*Stomping applause from the audience.*)

Twilight: (*now really scared*) —costumes?

Sweetie: And sets and props. How'd you know?

Twilight: Really, girls? Are you sure—

Cheerilee: Cutie Mark Crusaders, you're on next! Break a leg. (*They head toward the stage.*)

Twilight: Break a le—

(*Bloom trips and ends up on her face, but quickly gets back up to follow the others.*)

Rock synthesizer line, in 4 (B flat minor)

Twilight: Uh, good luck!

(*The cloaks are flung back into view, landing in front of one very worried unicorn. Dissolve to the stage; the curtain has been lowered, and the lights go down before it opens to expose three silhouettes standing in the near-total darkness. Three pin spotlights pick out the Crusaders' faces, leaving their eyes shadowed, as Scootaloo starts to sing—substituting force of lung for pitch and finesse just as she did during rehearsals. Even in the dimness, there is enough light to pick out the details of their outfits—unitards for all three. Bloom: black with white stars and pink hoof accents, pink bolo tie secured by a blue clasp. Scootaloo: dark purple with slashes of pink and magenta, and short foreleg sleeves. Sweetie: magenta with light green slashes and hoof accents. They stand on a small, circular, two-level dais, with Scootaloo at top center and the others standing on the lower step to either side of her, and the table that Snips and Snails used in their magic act has been removed.*)

Scootaloo: Look, here are three little ponies
Ready to sing for this crowd
Listen up, 'cause here's our story
I'm gonna sing it

Crusaders: Very loud

Drums/bass/electric guitar in

(As Bloom and Sweetie step down onto the stage, the lights come up to frame the end product of their work. Backdrop: constructed of plywood, showing a house, trees, and fields under a sunny sky and white clouds, all quite inexpertly colored. Slow pan across the crowd, whose facial expressions suggest that they are about to sprain their brains in unison trying to figure this lot out. Applejack voices an almost inaudible sigh of horror, realizing this is not some nightmare brought on by eating too much pie. Cut to Scootaloo and zoom out to frame Bloom, who dances in place to the music.)

Scootaloo: When you're a younger pony
And your flank is very bare

(Backstage, Sweetie pulls a rope in her teeth, hoisting the sun.)

Feels like the sun will never come
When your cutie mark's not there

(Now Bloom jumps up and throws a few punches and kicks.)

So the three of us fight the fight

(Sweetie unties a second rope; bats, a spider, and a ghost drop into view; the last hitting Scootaloo in the head.)

There is nothing that we fear
We'll have to figure out what we'll do next

Crusaders: 'Til our cutie marks are here

(Bloom starts dancing again as they go into the chorus.)

Crusaders: We are the Cutie Mark Crusaders
On a quest to find out who we are

(Scootaloo, not looking, steps off the platform edge and thuds down on the stage. Next Sweetie starts up a fog machine, which promptly goes into overdrive.)

And we will never stop the journey

(Sweetie rushes back onto the stage as mist begins to fill it, obscuring their images.)

Not until we have our cutie marks

(Tilt up to the top portion of the backdrop; the fog quickly spreads up here as well. A dissolve back to stage level shows the three dancing as best they can in the haze, but Bloom and Sweetie collide in midair and hit the boards. Sweetie winds up in the wings, next to a clock prop, and hustles it out.)

Scootaloo: They all say that you'll get your mark
When the time is really right

(Rushing in front of her, Sweetie trips and tumbles past the curtain, clock and all. A spotlight picks out a very surprised Bloom, who begins to dance.)

And you know just what you're supposed to do

(One kick drives a hoof through a backdrop; she tries to shake loose, dragging it with her.)

And your talent comes to light

(Scootaloo paces the stage dramatically.)

But it's not as easy as it sounds

And that waiting's hard to do

(On a catwalk above the stage, Sweetie puts a blue filter in front of a spotlight.)

So we test our talents everywhere

Crusaders: Until our face is blue

(The blue spot shines down, slightly off target; Scootaloo moves her head into it. In her sprint down from the catwalk, Sweetie brushes past the borrowed desk fan, turning it on.)

Crusaders: We are the Cutie Mark Crusaders

On a quest to find out who we are

(The fan's output wreaks havoc on the stage: leaves and feathers whirling, sun swinging overhead, Bloom and the backdrop jammed on her hoof being pushed toward Scootaloo's platform.)

And we will never stop the journey

Not until we have our cutie marks

(Both fillies sail gracelessly across the stage—Scootaloo due to the fan, Bloom from finally getting her hoof out of the plywood. Panicking, Sweetie rushes over to hold up that backdrop.)

Crusaders: We are the Cutie Mark Crusaders

On a quest to find out who we are

(At the other end of the stage, another flat starts to topple toward the spiky-maned unicorn. She finds herself pinned and trying to hold both up at once.)

And we will never stop the journey

Music stops *(zoom out to frame all three)*

Not until we have our cutie marks

Song ends

(Sweetie finally loses the battle against gravity and collapses under the two flats, followed in short order by almost every piece of scenery coming down on top of the trio. Nothing is left but a couple of trees and a jumble of smashed lumber, from which the Crusaders dig themselves out with anxious smiles. What they get is a plethora of hopelessly confused stares from the audience, with a couple of hostile glares mixed in. After a long, unnerving silence, though, the entire audience breaks out in gales of laughter that hit the three performers like a steel horseshoe to the ribs. They hunch down and slink off the stage; cut to them in the wings.)

Scootaloo: Wow. That did *not* go as well as I expected.

Bloom: I can't believe they're laughin' at us! *(They stop.)*

Sweetie: Was it *that* bad? *(Zoom out; Cheerilee and Spike are here as well.)*

Cheerilee: Back onstage, girls! It's time for the awards!

Sweetie: Back onstage? No!

Bloom: They'll just laugh some more!

Scootaloo: Yeah, what's the point?

Cheerilee: Now, girls, let's be good sports. You made a great effort. You should be proud. Now

come on!

(Out onstage, she and Spike emerge at one end, the performers—Twist, Silver Spoon, Diamond Tiara, Sunny Daze, Peachy Pie, Snips, Snails—standing at the other. The Crusaders tiptoe out and behind the group during the next line. The wreckage has been cleared from the stage. Snips and Snails are both wearing their top hats now, and Snails has finished eating the carrots he swiped from their act.)

Cheerilee: Let's hear it for all our talented fillies and colts! *(General stomping applause; cut to her.)* Our first award goes to...

(Quick pan to Snips and Snails; the Crusaders are hunched down behind them.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* Snips and Snails— *(They zip over.)* —for Best Magic Act!

(Applause and cheers. Pan to follow the stunned fillies as they back up behind Sunny and Peachy, then cut to a close-up of a medal being placed around Snails' neck by Spike: a cluster of three gold stars. A longer shot reveals that Snips has received one as well.)

Snips: Hey! *(laughing)* My medal is shinier!

Snails: *(needled)* Well, mine's bigger!

Snips: *(as both walk off)* Oh, yeah? Well...well, mine is, um...heavier?

(Neither the MC nor her assistant is too pleased at this bit of infighting.)

Cheerilee: The next award goes to... *(Quick pan to Sunny and Peachy she continues o.s.)*
...Sunny Daze and Peachy Pie, for Best Dramatic Performance!

(These two skate to center stage as she finishes, leaving the Crusaders in full view again, They receive drama-mask medals from Spike, as well as a round of applause, with a happy little gasp.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* And finally... *(Pan to her.)* ...the last award of the night goes to...

(In the audience, Applejack steels herself for the worst; the Crusaders do likewise in a close-up. Very long pause.)

Cheerilee: ...the Cutie Mark Crusaders! *(Close-up; the news floors them.)*

Crusaders: Huh?/What?

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* For Best Comedy Act!

(To a hearty round of cheers and applause, the camera cuts to a close-up of a cap-and-bells medal being hung around Bloom's neck, then pans to its counterparts on Sweetie and Scootaloo. Zoom out; they bow happily for the crowd and trot backstage, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they have hopelessly blundered their way into this victory.)

Bloom: Can you believe it? We won!

Scootaloo: I knew our act was awesome!

Sweetie: You know what'd be the best? If we won *and* we got our cutie marks!

(All three costumes are swiftly flung away, blacking out the screen momentarily when Scootaloo's flies toward the camera. The view clears to frame three fillies whose efforts on the second front have still yielded a whole lot of nothing; they sigh dejectedly as Twilight walks up.)

Twilight: Congratulations, ponies! Job well done!

Crusaders: *(woodenly)* Thanks, Twilight.

Twilight: Hey. You don't sound too excited.

Scootaloo: *(sighing)* We worked really hard *and* won a prize, but we still don't have our cutie marks.

Sweetie: Which is the prize we *really* wanted.

Twilight: Oh, girls... *(Cut to Bloom.)*

Bloom: *(brightening)* But we think we know why. *(Pan to the others; ditto.)*

Sweetie: Yes. We know why.

Twilight: Oh? Tell me. I'd love to make a special report to the Princess.

Sweetie: Well, maybe we were trying *too* hard.

Twilight: Yes? And?

Scootaloo: And instead of forcing ourselves to do something that's not meant for us...

Twilight: Yes? Yes?

Bloom: ...we each should be embracin' our true talent! *(Zoom in on Twilight's eyes.)*

Twilight: And that is...?

Crusaders: COMEDY!

(The violet unicorn's ears droop as her eyes pop in surprise; she might be wondering if she needs a sign with thirty-foot-high letters of fire to get the message across. Pan quickly from her to Applejack, Rainbow Dash, and Rarity, now all backstage.)

Applejack: Apple Bloom! You did it!

Crusaders: *(zipping to them)* Did you see our award? Weren't we funny?

(Twilight shakes some sense back into her head and allows herself a slightly exasperated smile.)

Twilight: One day... *(laughing softly)* ...one day.

(Fade to black.)

