A Bedtime Secret

Written by: MalevolentSpoon

A cooling seasonal rain poured down, dampening the rolling apple orchard that is Sweet Apple Acres, the storm clouds slowly blowing in from the northwest. The early night sky glowed a beautiful shade of deep blue as the moon slowly rose upwards. Inside the farmhouse, Applejack stood by her little sister Applebloom's bed, tucking her in for the night. Applebloom looked out the window and shivered nervously.

"Aw, now don't you worry none... just a quiet summer shower, is all..." said Applejack, smiling comfortingly. "Now come on... best get ta sleepin' right quick. It's gettin' mighty late," It wasn't, but Applejack knew very well how her little sister got around the idea of a storm.

"Ah dunno, sis..." she said worriedly. "Ah... um..."

"What is it, shug? Come on, ya can tell me..."

"Um... sis? Could ya maybe... tell me a bedtime story? Ya know, ta help me get ta sleep?"

Applejack smiled again, "Why, absolutely! What story would ya like ta hear? 'Mare in the Moon'? Maybe my cutie mark story?" Applebloom thought for a moment, then shook her head. "Hmmm... how 'bout... 'The Maiden and the Mage'?"

Applebloom suddenly perked up, "Ah wanna hear the story about yer' new hat!" she said, pointing at Applejack's head. "Ya havn't told that one,"

Applejack was surprised. She forgot that she wore *that* hat today. Applejack blushed, turning away. She watched the raindrops hit the window, deep in thought. There was a reason she hadn't told that story yet.

"Ah don't think so shug... not tonight." she said flatly, shaking her head.

"Aw, come on! Please?"

"Well...Ah don't think yer' quite ready-"

“Please?”

“Ah’d really rather not-”

“PLEASE?”

“Applebloom, Ah just-”

“PLLLEEEEAAAASSE?” Applebloom gave her that “puppy dog” stare of hers. Applejack was strong, but even *she* can’t say no to *that*.

She sighed heavily. “Alright... fine! If’n ya reckon yer’ old enough ta ignore yer’ big sister as much as ya do,” Applebloom smiled innocently, “yer’ old enough ta hear this. But not a word about it ta anypony, ya hear? Especially Big Mac...” she stopped and briefly checked over her shoulder, making sure the stocky red stallion wasn’t eavesdropping. She turned back to Applebloom and chuckled dryly.

“Ya know... ya shud’ see about that look a’ yers. Just might be yer ‘special talent’. Anyways, here we go...”

She took in a deep breath... and began.

‘Bout a couple weeks ago, Big Mac and Ah were wanderin’ the fields, checkin’ up on all the fresh Red Delicious apples that had started growin’ in on the west field. It was a mighty peaceful day... lot like this here past week. The wind was blowin’ in real soft from the southeast. We were s’posed ta get rain later that afternoon, but no clouds were up just yet.

Anyways, Mac and Ah started talkin’ ‘bout next Apple Buck Season. Ah was still a little sore at him for this year, what with leavin’ me to do it all by myself. Ah knew it wasn’t his fault, but Ah hurt myself so bad Ah didn’t really care. We decided ta call in some extra help next year, if anything ta make it all go faster.

Ah suddenly remembered Ah forgot somethin’ back at the house, so I headed

back while Mac hitched up the tiller and started off towards the south field to finish his work from yesterday.

“Course, you know about those new trees we planted down there that week. That is, if’n ya was payin’ attention when Ah done told ya.”

“Uh... yeah! Right! Course Ah do, sis!”

“Right... anyways,”

When Ah got back out, who would’a thought that Ah would see none other than ol’ “pretty princess” Rarity walkin’ over ta meet me.

Now, don’t get me wrong... Rarity’s my friend and Ah would always have time for her. Its just, well... Rarity and Ah don’t tend ta see eye-ta-eye that often. She’s always been so persnickety, and Ah... havn’t. She always has to make everything *perfect*, while Ah just wanna get the job done. And that ignorance o’ hers always drove me nuts. *She* drove me nuts! Ah found out later, in more ways than one.

But that day she seemed... different. Ah reckoned it might’a been excitement, but she was actually *nervous!* About what, Ah couldn’t tell ya... ’least not right then. She waved me on over, and talked real quiet-like.

“I’m so glad you’re here, Applejack. Do you have a minute?”

“Why, sure! C’mon! We can talk on the way... Ah got some work needs doin’ over in the south field.” We started walkin’ through the orchard. As always, Ah was checkin’ over all the trees as we went.

“Applejack, I... I need to talk to you about something. Something rather... *private*.” Ah looked over at Rarity, thinkin’ she might been jokin’. She wasn’t, which was mighty surprisin’. Rarity usually went ta Fluttershy or even Twilight about that sorta thing, not me.

“Ya know ya can trust me, Rarity. What’s on yer’ mind?”

“I’m sorry, but I’d really prefer to talk somewhere else.”

Ah got kinda annoyed at that. “What’s wrong with my orchard?”

“Nothing! Nothing at all! Its just... I’d really prefer we talk about it someplace else. I don’t feel... *comfortable*... about discussing it here.”

Now Ah was real curious. “Well, if’n ya say so... where’d ya have in mind, exactly?” She thought for a spell before she answered.

“I know you won’t like it... but I want you to join me for a spa day tomorrow. It’s the only place where I feel we can really have some privacy.”

Ah should’a known she was gonna say that. Ah hated that frou-frou place, and she knew it! Now Ah was mighty irritated. “Now what in the name of Celestia could be so dang important that ya have ta drag me off ta that stupid spa o’ yours!? Ya know darn well Ah hate that place!”

Ah stopped, quickly regrettin’ snappin’ at her like that. The way she looked at me, Ah thought she might start cryin’. She always took things so dang personally. We were just shy o’ the field now.

“Ah... Ah’m sorry... but Ah don’t have time ta spend all day away from home. Ah got work ta do, Rarity! Ah can’t just up and leave anytime Ah want! Why can’t ya understand that?” Ah turned and started walkin’ again. Rarity whipped right around and sat down in front o’ me, lookin’ madder than a hornet.

“There you go again, always thinking that nopony works harder than you! I have been absolutely *swamped* lately! I’ve worked till far past midnight every night this past week! The fact that I’ve managed to keep my image up so well with so little beauty sleep deserves praise in its own rites! Of course *you* could never understand such a thing...

“It’s true, my job isn’t quite as... laborious... as yours is. But that doesn’t give you the rite to say you work harder than me! Every time I make a dress, EVERY TIME, I have to probe the deepest reaches of my creativity to try and make each one as unique as possible. No two can be alike, unless the customer says otherwise. Do you have any idea how hard that is? Your job is always the same, year after year... while mine can change entirely in a split second!” It was only then that Ah noticed how serious she was. She wasn’t just sayin’ it ta try and sound superior, like she usually did,... she really meant it! And Ah felt plum terrible for doubtin’ her.

“You’re right, making dresses isn’t hard. Making every dress shine in it’s own way, while still keeping the customer’s wants and needs in mind, *is*.” That’s all she said ta me. She got up and started walkin’ away, but Ah stopped her.

“Alright, alright. Ah’m sorry Ah said that. It was mighty wrong for me ta assume ya don’t work as hard as yer’ always sayin’ ya do. Ah just been real busy lately is all, and Ah can’t get away from here right now...”

Rarity turned back and looked up at me, just about in tears. Her tone was real hard when she talked. “I never said... I was doing it for *you*.” That really stung, for some reason, and Ah felt myself startin’ ta get angry again.

“Aw! So it *is* all about you! Ya know what, go bug somepony else. Ah’m sure Fluttershy would just LOVE ta spend time with ‘ya. Celestia knows Ah sure can’t!” Ah started off towards Mac again, but all of a sudden Rarity was on top o’ me, puttin’ me in the dirt. Ah flipped over and bucked her off o’ me, but she got right back up and charged at me, knockin’ me down again. We started wrasslin’ all over the place, twistin’ and turnin’ over each other. Ah’d never even *heard* of Rarity bein’ this mad at anypony before. It kinda scared me.

Big Mac passed by with the tiller, decidin’ ta just let us have our little scrape. My hat, my *favorite* hat, flew off my head durin’ the tussle... landin’ right in front o’ the tiller’s blades.

Applebloom gasped. “Yeah... that was our reaction”

By the time Mac stopped, the deed had been done. My favorite hat was sittin’ there, well... *everywhere*... in a million pieces. Ah crawled over and picked up the biggest chunk, not quite sure how ta take in what just happened. Mac unhitched himself and started backin’ away from me. Probly a good move on his part. Ah reckon Ah sat there starin’ at what was left o’ my hat for close ta five minutes. And every second, Ah was gettin’ madder n’ madder.

When Ah finally turned back at Rarity, Ah was so mad Ah couldn’t see straight. She told me later my eyes turned red, which wouldn’t have surprised me.

“Why... are you still here?” my voice cracked as Ah talked, “You’ve overstayed yer’ welcome, so Ah figure ya should leave... ’fore Ah do somethin’ Ah could regret doin’ later!” Rarity backed off, lookin’ more sorry... and scared... than Ah would’a thought

possible for her.

“Applejack, I... I didn’t...”

Ah took that hat piece and chucked it at her as hard as Ah could. “DIDN’T YA HEAR ME!? AH SAID ‘GIT! ‘FORE AH BUCK YA OUTTA HERE MYSELF!!” Ah screamed. Rarity was so terrified she didn’t move. Ah stomped my hoof down so hard it left a crater in the dirt. She must o’ finally got the message then, cuz’ she grabbed up that hat piece Ah threw at her and took off runnin’.

It started rainin’ then. Durin’ the whole thing Ah hadn’t noticed the clouds rollin’ in nearby, but Ah really could’ve cared less at that point. All Ah wanted ta do was sit there and cry, and that’s exactly what Ah did. Ah don’t know why, but yellin’ at Rarity like that really took it out o’ me.

Eventually, Mac got me up and helped me get back ta the house. Ah was in there for the rest o’ that day... not that Ah minded. Ah really just wanted ta be left alone.

“So ya weren’t really sick after all! Ah knew it!”

“No, Ah wasn’t... but Ah might as well have been Applebloom,” Applejack said solemnly.

Ya already know that Ah was up there for the rest o’ that night. Ah knew Ah still had a lot o’ work ta do, so Ah got up real early the next mornin’ ta make up for it. Ah remember that day went by pretty smooth-like... ’least... till about noon.

Ah was out tendin’ the trees in the east field when Ah heard somethin’ land behind me. Ah thought it was maybe Rainbow, but when Ah turned around it was actually that mail pegasus.

“What mail pegasus?”

“Ya know, that blonde one with...” Applejack leaned in to whisper, as if expecting the pony in question to be floating right outside. “*... with the funny eyes?*”

“Oh! Ya mean Derpy? She’s real fun, ya know. ‘Least when she aint workin’”

“Derpy? Who’s Derpy? Ah’m talkin’ about Ditzy.”

“Wait... aren’t they the same pony?”

“Ah don’t think-hey! Quit distractin’ me! Do ya wanna hear this story or not?” Applebloom nodded, to which Applejack sighed and continued.

Anyways, *Ditzy* landed behind me and gave me a salute. “Hey there Applejack! How’s business?”

“Ah reckon we’re doin’ okay, thanks for askin’. What can Ah do ya for?” Ditzy turned and dug in her saddlebag a second, then pulled out a good-sized package.

“Got this package for ya! Rush delivery!”

Ah got a little nervous when she said that. “Rush delivery, huh? Well thank ya kindly Ditzy! If’n ya see Dash, tell her Ah said howdy!”

“Can do!” she saluted me again, then took off. Ah looked down at the package, which had a little note on top. Ah opened it and read:

To Applejack,

No words can express my guilt for what happened, but it goes without saying that what I did was highly uncalled for. I know that if I tried to apologize in person, I’d probably never be heard from again. Therefore, I hope this will serve as payment, and as a token of my apology.

If you never want to see me again, I won’t hold it against you. If that is the case, then I want you to know that you were the best friend I ever had. And you always will be.

Sincerely yours,
Rarity

P. S. That “thing” I wanted to discuss with you yesterday? Just forget about it, it’s... not important. Not anymore...

That last sentence really threw me off. What on earth did she mean by that?

Ah put the note down and looked at the package that came with it. Ah was still mighty angry about yesterday, and Ah just about crushed it. But, somethin' Ah couldn't explain drove me ta open it. When Ah did though, Ah couldn't believe what Ah saw.

Inside the box, was a new hat. That didn't surprise me much, since Ah pretty much knew it was gonna be a hat 'soon as Ditzy gave the box to me. Ah just didn't expect it ta be so... *nice*.

Applejack took her hat off and handed it to Applebloom while she described its features to her.

"The crown is made of straw, and ya gotta admit... the thatch-work is incredible. It's light and airy, but very strong. The hoof-rolled brim's also made o' straw, and reinforced with a leather strip on the inside. The whole thing was hand-dipped in natural oils, makin' it rain-proof. It was made just for me, down ta that there hat band... s'pose ta match my eyes," Applejack blushed slightly. Applebloom didn't notice, as she was too busy admiring the superior head-wear.

"Golly... sure is the nicest hat I ever saw. Miss Rarity must'a really tried ta make it special," Applebloom said as she reluctantly handed the hat back. Applejack smiled proudly as she put it back on.

"That she did, sugarcube... that she did. Now, where was Ah?"

Ah put the hat on my head for the first time, but was kinda disappointed that it didn't fit quite right. Sat kinda lop-sided.

"Wait... that's not right. It fits ya just fine!"

"Don't fret, I'm gettin' ta that part... now hush!"

Anyhow, Ah didn't know what ta think right then. Ah was mighty grateful ta Rarity for the new hat, but Ah was still torn up at her for attackin' me like that. Ah reckon Ah sat there arguin' with myself for a good long time. Finally Ah decided ta go visit her, if anything just ta say thank you.

Ah got there ‘round ten minutes later. For some reason Ah ran over there, and the adrenaline made me burst through the door without knockin’. Seein’ she wasn’t on the main floor, Ah ran up and threw the door to her studio wide open. Sure enough, Rarity was hard at work at some sewin’ machine. She looked up and nearly hit the ceiling when she saw it was me standin’ there. Ah reckon Ah deserved that, so Ah ignored it and walked over to her.

“Relax Rarity... Ah’m not here ta hurt ya. Ah just wanna talk,” Ah said as Ah stepped closer.

“I-I... I...”

“Ya don’t have ta say anythin’. Just listen,” she nodded, so Ah kept goin’. “Ah came by ta say thank you for makin’ me this here new hat. Ya didn’t have ta do that, as Ah reckon my behaviour wasn’t perfect yesterday neither... Ah know how Ah always say Ah work harder than everypony else, ‘specially you. And that’s wrong. Ah tend ta take advantage o’ ya that way, and Ah feel plum terrible ‘bout it.

“Ah reckon... Ah say that ta feel better about havin’ ta work all the time, about never havin’ any time for myself. But that’s no excuse. Ah been actin’ like a real snake-in-the-grass... and for that, Ah’m real sorry. Ah reckon Ah should be thankin’ ya even, seein’ as how if’n it wasn’t for you Ah’d be runnin’ around bull-headed as ever.” Ah tried ta smile, but Rarity just sat there starin’ at me. Ah thought about leavin’, but there was one more thing on my mind.

“Rarity... this is gonna sound wierd, but if’n yer so good at fashion, how come ya got my hat size wrong?”

Rarity snapped out of it and looked at me all indignant-like. “What on earth are you talking about, darling? You and I wear the same size hat! And believe me, I got more than enough information about your dimensions on that piece you threw at me. I assure you it fits perfectly!”

“Well that can’t be right... It’s been sittin’ lopsided on my head ever since Ah got it.” Ah shifted the hat around a little, so she could see what Ah meant. Ah expected Rarity ta rip the hat off my head and give it a good once-over, but instead she just sighed.

“I suppose now is as good a time as any... Applejack dear, take off the hat and look inside.” Ah looked at her all confused, but was in no place ta argue. Ah looked inside and saw how one side o’ the sweatband kinda bulged out a little. Ah dug my hoof in there, and pulled out a folded piece o’ paper.

“What in tar-nation?” Ah pulled back as the note started glowin’, un-folded itself, and was set down in front o’ me. Sittin’ back, Rarity motioned towards the note. Ah was mighty confused now, but Ah started readin’ anyway, and-

“Hang on... Ah’ll be right back,” Applejack turned and walked out into the hallway. She returned a few seconds later, a piece of paper clenched in between her teeth. She set the note down in front of her and turned back to Applebloom.

“Alright, here we go...”

My Dearest Applejack,

I have hidden this note in case of the event that I am not around to tell you the truth myself. No matter how you think of me, I would think it selfish of me not to tell you how I feel.

It goes without saying that you and I have known each other for a very long time, and I know we rarely ever agree on anything. But I think you and I have shared a “special” connection ever since we met. As, to be honest, you’re everything I want to be.

You are so strong Applejack. You never show fear or weakness, and you face every problem head-on without so much as a blink. Especially when the lives of those you care about are on the line. Even more impressive is how you use this strength for the benefit of others. Despite how hard you work, you always have time to lend a hoof to those who ask for it. Whether you’re helping a complete stranger save the world, or merely listening to the problems of a childhood friend, you always give them your best effort.

This is what I’ve grown to admire about you, Applejack. And probably why I’ve grown to look at you as more than just my friend. Our ideals have always kept us at leg’s length from each other, but I’ve wanted us to be closer. Every time I see you, I feel myself grow... happier. Because of this, it breaks my heart little by little every time we argue. I’ve always hated the thought of the two of us being angry at each other. At first I didn’t know why, but... recent events have changed my thinking and, I can think of only

one discernible reason why I feel this way.

I... I love you, Applejack.

I'm sure this is rather hard for you to understand, but I suppose it doesn't really matter now. What I did that day was unforgivable. I could make you a dozen new hats, but it wouldn't make a difference... I saw in your eyes the damage I had done. Whatever good thoughts you had of me were utterly destroyed, and will likely never return. But I still want to say again that, from the bottom of my heart, I am sorry. Despite everything, I still pointlessly hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me one day.

Watching from afar... forever just a heartless little foal,
Your Rarity

Ah couldn't believe what Ah just read. My mind was blank as Ah looked back over at Rarity. But Ah saw she was crying, and the reality o' the situation hit me like... well, like Big Mac's tiller. Ah closed my eyes and tried ta make sense o' the whole thing, but 'fore Ah knew it, Ah'd walked over and was huggin' Rarity real tight.

Ah broke away and looked her in the eyes. There was a million questions Ah could've asked her then, but Ah could only stumble out one.

"H-How long?"

Rarity turned away, then said, "A-Applejack? Do you r-remember that night? The n-night before you left for Manehatten all those y-years ago?" She looked back up at me. Ah thought for a second, then shook my head.

"That night... *sniff* I had asked you to come over to the Boutique. I knew you'd be gone for some time, so I wanted to give you a final farewell of sorts," she paused, "but there was an... accident. You left right afterwards, leaving me all alone. I suppose I couldn't blame you, considering the circumstances... but it still hurt.

"When you came back, you seemed to have completely forgotten what happened. I don't know why, but I was angry that you had run from me like that, and so you and I started arguing. And we have been since..." her voice trailed off. She started cryin' again.

Ah'd never seen Rarity like this before. Soon Ah started up and cryin' too. After a

few minutes, Rarity leaned back again. “F-For the longest time, I felt like I hated you. And I was content with that, but then... *sniff*... Twilight had her sleepover.

“I knew that if we stayed there, together, we would do nothing *but* fight. I didn’t want to upset Twilight, of course, but mainly... I didn’t want to repeat what happened all those years ago. I just couldn’t bare the thought of you being upset with me, so I tried my best to get along. Of course as the night rolled on, things between you and I got worse and worse. I thought for sure that that night would be it for us, but...” Rarity looked up, and Ah saw her smiling. It was a little smile, but it sure was an improvement. “... then came the whole incident with the tree branch. I could hardly believe that you, of all ponies, would let go of your pride and apologize to me. I thought I was imagining things, but I saw that you really meant it. My heart soared at that very moment. And from then on,” she took my hoof in hers, “I realized that I would do anything to be with you.

“I... I almost told you how I felt that very night. But you seemed so happy, so I said nothing. I didn’t want to risk spoiling the evening for you. That, and it would make things rather awkward for Twilight. After that, I became so busy with work that I havn’t had the opportunity. Then yesterday I had a brief moment alone, and I couldn’t wait anymore. That’s why I visited you... *this* was what I wanted to talk to you about.” she nuzzled my shoulder, then turned away from me. “But it doesn’t matter now... I could never forgive myself for what I did yesterday. I finally had the opportunity to tell you the truth, and I blew it...”

Ah don’t know how long Ah sat there starin’ at her, but it must’a been quite a while. Durin’ that time, my head was buzzin’ somethin’ fierce. Ah mean, one of my friends just admitted that she had her heart set on me. And it was *Rarity* of all ponies! Ah couldn’t even wrap my head around that!

It was right then Ah remembered somethin’ Ah forgot a long time ago...

It was a stormy night. The humble village of Ponyville was calm as the residents stayed indoors, the winds outside swirling angrily. Most ponies tried to merely sleep it out, with mixed success.

But there were those who used the solitude to spend valuable time with one another. Families played games and enjoyed each other's company. Happy couples, married or otherwise, cuddled together for warmth and comfort. And little foals roamed about, causing all manners of playful mischief. A loud boom of thunder echoed outward,

rattling the very foundation of an admittedly stunning beauty salon.

The young unicorn filly shuddered with fright as the sound of an explosion erupted from her bedroom window. She wore her favorite dress - she had stitched it herself - but even its warmth couldn't stop her trembling. She was startled by the sudden sensation of a hoof on her shoulder. She turned and breathed a sigh of relief to see her earth-pony friend standing there, looking at her quizzically.

“Gosh... ya sure look scared...” the pony said with a concerned smile .

“W-what! I am most certainly NOT scared! You just snuck up on me is all...” the unicorn said defensively. She flipped her curled purple hair out of her eyes as she turned away.

The little pony girl smiled at her slyly. “Are too...”

“Are not!”

“Are too!”

“Are not!”

“Are too!”

“ARE NOT!”

“Aw yeah? Prove it!” the earth filly challenged.

“GLADLY!” shouted back the unicorn. She grunted as she concentrated, and her little horn began to glow. The little pony gasped as she was suddenly lifted off the ground and tossed onto the nearby bed with a thump! The unicorn opened her eyes, then began jumping for joy. “I DID IT, I DID IT! I finally used magic!” she shouted with glee. The earth-filly was less than amused, poking her head out of the twisted mass of blankets with a huff.

“Oh... that’s it! Yer’ goin’ down!” With that, she leaped off the bed and landed on the little unicorn, pinning her to the floor. She snorted happily at her victory. It was short-lived, however, as the unicorn filly brought her legs back and bucked, sending the earth pony flying back several feet. They each stood up, and began circling each other

slowly.

The earth-pony was first to move. She lunged forward, landing on the other. It wasn't long before they were tangled into one another in a fierce wrestling match. The two twisted and turned, rolling around the room until they abruptly ran into an end table. This gave the earth-filly the upper hand, and she pinned the unicorn down again.

The unicorn struggled, trying to pry lose. The table above them rattled wildly until a small decorative bowl fell down, landing on the back of the pony's head. For a moment, the world went black. But then the pony blinked back to reality to find quite the surprise.

The crashing bowl had pushed the fillies' muzzles up against one another, locking their lips in an unexpected kiss.

The earth-filly quickly reared back, landing on her rump as the unicorn sat bolt upright. They both sat there, at a loss for words as each stared red-faced and wide-eyed at the other. After about a minute, the unicorn looked down and opened her mouth as if to speak, but was cut off as her friend suddenly got up and galloped out of the room.

"Wait! I..."

She quickly followed suit, but by the time she reached the front door, she found it standing wide open. The other filly was long gone, the only reminder being the sounds of her distressed hoofsteps in the distant storm.

The young unicorn felt so ashamed, embarrassing so badly one of the only ponies who she thought she could safely call a friend. She felt tears well up in the corners of her eyes as she stared longingly out into the night.

Ah couldn't believe it! Ah remembered everything! The storm, the wrasslin', the bowl, the... the...

Ah shook myself outta my little trance and looked down at Rarity. She was really bawlin' now, and it broke my heart somethin' terrible ta see her like that. Ah lifted her face and looked right in her eyes as Ah talked. Those... *beautiful* blue eyes...

"Rarity... Ah forgive you. For yesterday." Her eyes grew into saucers then, "Ah've

been friends with ya for this long and, let's face it, Ah've stuck by ya through worse. And like Ah said before, it was my fault too... at least, kinda...

"To be honest, Rarity? Ah do remember that night. 'Least Ah do now. Ah didn't just up and run away from ya for no good reason. Ah would never do that to ya. Its just... Ah *was* embarrassed that happened. But there's more to it than that." Ah hesitated for what felt like the longest time, but finally got it out o' me,

"Ah... kinda wanted ta do it again... " Ah said.

Rarity looked more surprised than, well, than Ah did 'bout two minutes ago. "Ah always told myself Ah wasn't thinkin' straight cuz' o' that darned bowl. But hearin' you today... made me realize that Ah was wrong. For whatever reason, Ah've been hidin' the truth from myself. And you're right, eventually Ah just up and forgot about it. Ah forgot about you...

"After Ah came back, all Ah remembered about ya was yer' 'queeny' attitude... which had a tendency ta drive me up and down the wall. We seemed so different, Ah never could understand how we were even friends... but we were. And that's the important thing.

"Basically what Ah'm sayin' is... Rarity? You have got ta be the most *annoyin'* pony Ah have ever met. Yer' prissy fuzz-budget attitude makes me wanna tear my mane out. And there have been times, yesterday was one o' them, where Ah wouldn't have hesitated ta givin' ya several good bucks ta the side o' the head!" Rarity started tearin' up again, but my smile stopped her.

"But! Yer' my best friend, and ya have been for as long as Ah can remember. And if'n ya wanna go further than that now, well... considerin' what Ah've learned today, Ah reckon there's no way Ah can say no..."

Rarity perked up a little then. "D-do you... *sniff*... do you r-really mean that?"

Ah almost can't believe what Ah did next...

"Well? What'd ya do? What'd ya do? C'mon, tell me! Tell me!" Applebloom said, excited. Applejack sighed and closed her eyes, her face glowing red.

"Ah... Ah kissed her, Applebloom. Ah really did..." Applebloom's face lit up,

portraying an odd mixture of shock, horror, and pure awe. One that only a child could muster. “Haha, you look funny.”

Anyhow, Ah’m proud ta say it was one o’ the greatest moments o’ my life. We stayed like that for what felt like forever, and that was mighty fine with me. The whole world could’a fell apart right then, and it wouldn’t have bothered us none. We finally parted, but only because we couldn’t breathe. We laid down together and kissed again. It was bliss.

We spent the rest o’ that afternoon just talkin’. We talked about everythin’. Business, our friends, our adventures... *us*... Ah reckon it was the first real conversation we ever had. And it sure as hay wooulдn’t be the last, ‘neither!

As Ah finally got up ta leave, Rarity stopped me again. “I just remembered, darling! I never asked you how your trip to Manehatten was.” Ah looked at her all confused-like, but after thinkin’ about it Ah realized she was right! Ah grinned, thinkin’ now’s as good a time as any ta cash in a neat trick Ah learned over there.

“Why I had an absolutely *dreadful* time, dear. It is a beautiful city, but during my stay I realized it’s just not the life for me. However, if I had the chance to go back now... I would take it. If anything just to take you with me.” Ah nuzzled her playfully.

Rarity was so excited she practically glowed. “WHY APPLEJACK, THAT WAS ABSOLUTELY MARVELOUS!! Why didn’t you ever tell me you could do that!? Oh please, please! Say something else!”

“Uh... somethin’ else?” Rarity looked mighty disappointed, but my grin told her Ah was just jokin’. We shared a good laugh ‘fore Ah kissed her goodbye, then Ah headed for home.

Ah don’t remember what time it was when Ah finally got back, and sure enough Mac & Granny Smith gave me heck for bein’ gone so long, but Ah didn’t really care. Life pretty much went back ta normal after that. But Ah tell ya, Ah’ve never seen Rarity so happy before. And Ah can’t help but smile too.

“Well, Ah guess that’s the end. Now please go ta sleep Applebloom.”

“Wait! What about the morale-o’-the-story?”

“Uh... well... Ah s’pose it’d be ta not lie ta yerself. If’n ya have feelings for somepony, let ‘em know as soon as ya get the chance, no matter who they are. If’n ya wait, ya could be too late.”

Applebloom yawned, then turned over and quickly fell asleep. Applejack tucked the note under her hat, then gave Applebloom a tender kiss on the forehead before she turned to leave. As she walked out into the hallway, she stopped and spoke to the darkness.

“So... how long ya been standin’ there?” She looked over her shoulder and saw her older brother standing behind her, just beyond Applebloom’s door frame. He held a now cold glass of milk in his hoof.

“Long enough, Ah reckon...”

“So the whole thing then?”

“Eeeyup.”

“Well... ya gonna give me flack about it?”

“Eee-nope.” He smiled at her, then walked right past towards his own room. Applejack couldn’t help but smile back as she finally turned in for herself.

As she blew out the lantern on her desk, she looked out her bedroom window towards Ponyville. The minor storm had long since dissipated, leaving nothing but the usual silence of a typical summer night. She blushed slightly as she closed her eyes.

“Good night, Rarity.” she said.