

ON YOUR MARKS

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Cutie Mark Crusaders' clubhouse during the late afternoon. Zoom in slowly to the sound of a gavel banging within.)

Apple Bloom: *(from inside)* Hear ye, hear ye! *(Close-up of her at the lectern inside.)* The first post-cutie-mark meetin' of the Cutie Mark Crusaders is now in session!

(Her big grin slips into bewilderment as the camera zooms out to frame her two best buddies rapturously regarding their own hard-earned cutie marks—Scootaloo standing, Sweetie Belle sitting on her haunches. After a few seconds' worth of indignant glaring, she clears her throat loudly to snap them out of it. The attempt is only half-successful, though; Sweetie whips her head up, while Scootaloo turns briefly in place to keep an eye on her own haunch.)

Sweetie: O-Oh! I'm sorry, Apple Bloom. *(dreamily, standing up)* I was distracted by the radiance of my cutie mark. Uh, did you say something?

Scootaloo: *(same tone, crossing to lectern)* I mean, it's pretty amazing how the colors just pop off your flank. It's kinda hard to look aw— *(She runs headfirst into it.)*

Bloom: Look. I know our cutie marks are amazing, but...is that all we're gonna do now? *(She hops out from behind.)* Just spend our days starin' down at our own flanks?

Sweetie: *(sighing sadly)* I guess not.

(The blissful expression that steals across her face, and the turn of her eyes toward her own haunch, give the lie to her words. Across the room, Scootaloo has remained firmly in her reverie.)

Scootaloo: *(buzzing wings, circling again)* Yeah, I suppose that could get real boring.

(The yellow filly finally succumbs to the shared vibe.)

Bloom: Yeah.

(And then she kicks herself out of it with a vigorous head shake.)

Bloom: This is ridiculous! We need to go out and do somethin'! *(The others come around.)*

Sweetie: Wow! You're right! *(Close-up of Bloom.)*

Scootaloo: *(crossing to her)* Yeah! We need to go try new stuff like we used to!

Bloom: Exactly!

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* Like square dancing!

(Cut to her, now decked out in a sparkly cowgirl outfit with boots on all four hooves. She tries out a few steps and tips a wink to the camera.)

Scootaloo: *(from o.s.)* Or mountain climbing!

(Pan quickly to her, sporting a short-sleeved shirt, lederhosen, and a Tyrolean hat as she lets go with a sonorous yodel. On the start of the next line, a second pan shifts the view to Bloom, clad in a mash-up of the two outfits: Scootaloo's shirt and lederhosen shoulder straps, Sweetie's skirt, and headwear with the Tyrolean's crown and the cowboy's brim in place of her bow. She wears boots on only her hind legs.)

Bloom: Or square dancin' on the mountain we just climbed!

(She proceeds to demonstrate both activities at once by dancing and yodeling; when she finishes with a wink, the other two jump over to her.)

Crusaders: Yeah!

Bloom: And the more things we try, the more chances we'll have to finally get our cutie marks! *(hurrying off)* Come on!

(The other two stay put, aiming thoroughly puzzled looks after her and then at each other.)

Sweetie: Um... *(Bloom stops at the door.)* ...Apple Bloom?

(As the very weirdly dressed filly pulls the door partway open, Scootaloo and Sweetie pull their clothing far enough back to expose the shields emblazoned on their haunches. Their expressions might best be translated as "are you that flipping dumb?" She catches the hint, drags her skirt up to get a good look at her own mark, and lets a supremely embarrassed grin and blush stand as her response. Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to a slow tilt down the length of a sheet tacked up on the wall inside the clubhouse. It is the one seen at the start of “Crusaders of the Lost Mark,” covered with drawings of activities that have all been crossed out—failed past attempts at earning their marks.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Wow. Did we really only ever do things just to get our cutie marks?

(Cut to the trio, now sitting on their haunches and free of their outfits. Bloom’s bow is back in her usual place.)

Sweetie: I don’t know. Maybe?

Scootaloo: Aw, come on. We did lotsa stuff that didn’t have anything to do with getting a cutie mark.

Sweetie: Of course we did.

Bloom: Absolutely!

(All three begin to think back, the view undergoing a wavering dissolve to a white-ringed, softly focused flashback of Bloom’s very brief foray into hang-gliding during “Call of the Cutie.” A flash, and the Crusaders stand over the wreckage of Fluttershy’s table in “Stare Master,” hammers in mouths and doctor’s reflectors strapped to foreheads. Another flash shows them trying their hooves at deep-sea diving in “The Show Stoppers”; from here, a wavering dissolve shifts the action back to a very chastened trio in the present.)

Sweetie: Hm. *(Close-up; she stands up.)* So now that we don’t have to *do* stuff to get our cutie marks, what is it that the Cutie Mark Crusaders actually do?

(Zoom out; the others are up, and all three think hard before Bloom breaks out in a grin.)

Bloom: We do exactly what we got our cutie marks in!

Crusaders: Helping other ponies!

Scootaloo: Ponies without cutie marks! *(Sweetie zips over to her.)*

Sweetie: Or ponies who’ve forgotten their special purpose! *(Bloom pops up between them.)*

Bloom: Exactly! *(She puts a foreleg over each set of shoulders.)* We just have to find ponies who need our help!

(The clubhouse exterior; she gallops down the ramp.)

Bloom: Come on!

(The others are quick to follow her through the trees. Dissolve to an extreme close-up of Big Macintosh’s cutie mark, the muscles beneath it flexing as he makes his way across the Sweet Apple Acres grounds, then cut to a wagon piled high with apples. He walks up, a full tub balanced on his head; as soon as he dumps the contents in, Sweetie puts her head up over the rear gate to address him. It is now the following day.)

Sweetie: But are you sure you feel content?

Macintosh: *(passing her, smiling)* Ee-yup. *(He hitches himself up; Scootaloo is now on his head in place of the tub.)*

Scootaloo: Not even a tinge of dissatisfaction?

Macintosh: Nope.

(Once he gets the wagon moving, inertia causes her to lose her grip on the orange mane and tumble to the ground. She and Sweetie scramble to pull even with him, and Bloom gets out in front and walks backwards to face him.)

Bloom: Not even the slightest naggin' sensation that you don't really know what your purpose is in life, or why you have a big apple as a cutie mark?

(Not paying attention to where her hooves are touching down, she trips on an unseen obstacle and falls to the ground. The other two fillies stop short, and Macintosh rears up sharply to avoid crushing his little sister with a hoof or wheel. The wagon flips forward just long enough to disgorge its entire freight of apples, which bury the red workhorse from top to bottom. He shoves his head up to clear air; spits out the fruit lodged in his mouth, and gives the Crusaders a fed-up glare through narrowed green eyes.)

Macintosh: Nope.

(Cut to the downcast trio, zooming in slowly, then wipe to a slowly turning ceiling fan. The camera is pointing up at it, and Bloom's determined, smiling face pops into view in close-up.)

Bloom: The important thing to remember is that there is no rush. *(Scootaloo joins her.)*

Scootaloo: The three of us tried for the longest time, but it just comes when it comes. *(Sweetie ditto, between them.)*

Sweetie: And it's totally normal to feel confused and maybe even a little lost. But being a blank flank is nothing to be ashamed of. *(Scootaloo pushes them aside.)*

Scootaloo: So if you're having even the slightest problem—

Sweetie: —or concerns or questions—

Bloom: —we want you to know that we are here to help.

(The sound of a new voice catches them off guard; they turn in its direction, and the camera cuts to the speaker at the doorway of this room on the start of the next line.)

Mrs. Cake: I don't think they're too worried about it yet.

(The open toybox and the crib at which the Crusaders are standing establish this exchange as taking place in Sugarcube Corner. A few happy coos float up from between the barred sides, the fillies glancing in with some befuddlement; cut to their audience—Pound and Pumpkin, the latter deciding to suck on a front hoof rather than worry about her special talent at this point.)

(Wipe to a close-up of old Mr. Waddle sitting in an exam room as a unicorn doctor walks up, levitating the business end of a stethoscope to place against his chest. The latter's eyes flick

downward, taking note of the hopefully smiling Crusaders seated before him, but a zoom in on the doctor's haunch picks out the stethoscope cutie mark on display past the hem of his lab coat. All three young faces fall at the sight.)

(Wipe to a busy office in the town hall. Several unicorns are floating scrolls overhead, and one at a time they unroll these for Mayor Mare to sign with a quill held in her teeth, then roll them up and carry them off. Here come the Crusaders, surprising the elected official noticeably; the camera zooms in to a close-up of the tan haunch and the blue-ribboned scroll on display there. Realizing that they have again made a fruitless trip, the little ponies back glumly out the way they came in, Sweetie pulling the door shut with her magic.)

(Wipe to them walking along a Ponyville street. They stop short with expectant grins as Filthy Rich walks by, a bulging money bag held in his mouth, and the camera zooms in quickly to a close-up of the three small ones that make up his cutie mark. General dejection all around.)

(Wipe to the three on the move down another block. They stop short again, finding a unicorn mare blowing a bubble from the wad of gum she is chewing. It pops, leaving a smear of pink goo across her nose and lips, and the camera moves on to her cutie mark—a gumball machine. Yet another round of disappointment.)

(Another wipe brings them to the meadows outside Ponyville proper. This time, the object of their focus is a white stallion whose well-coiffed mane/tail/mustache are dark brown with a few scattered lighter strands. He wears a bow tie striped in red, white, and blue like a barber pole, and a tilt down from his face reveals the crossed comb and scissors of his mark. Crushed at having found yet another pony whose talent is clear to see, they take their leave of him.)

(Dissolve to the exterior of the Ponyville schoolhouse and pan slowly toward the playground. Bloom lies gloomily across one of the swings, Sweetie sits in another, and Scootaloo sits on her haunches facing them.)

Bloom: This is gonna be a lot harder than I thought.

Sweetie: Who knew there were so few ponies worried about their cutie marks?

Scootaloo: *(kicking at the dirt)* Kinda makes you wonder why we made such a big deal out of it for so long.

(This remark earns her a pair of quizzical glances.)

Scootaloo: What?

Bloom: *(hopping off swing)* The point is, helping ponies with cutie mark problems is what makes us special.

Sweetie: But if we can't find anypony with a problem... *(Zoom out to frame the others on the start of the following; Scootaloo now standing.)*

Scootaloo: ...maybe we're not special. *(Long silence.)*

Bulk Biceps: *(from o.s.)* YEAH!!

(All three heads turn, surprised; pan quickly to the beefy white pegasus, sitting hunched atop the remains of a piece of playground equipment that has buckled under his weight. The Crusaders approach.)

Bulk: I know exactly what you mean. You can't find a cutie mark problem. I have a cutie mark problem. It's so confusing, and I feel like the solution is staring me right in the muzzle.

(He points a hoof at his own to emphasize this last, after which the fillies trade a round of smiles at having had an answer dropped into their laps.)

Bulk: *(puzzled)* What?

(Wipe to a head-on close-up of him, now smiling and with his tiny wings spread out full.)

Bulk: I see why you guys hang out here!

(Zoom out slightly to show him now inside the clubhouse and taking up almost its entire width. Bloom and Sweetie are each jammed in between one muscular flank and a wall.)

Bulk: It's cozy!

Scootaloo: *(with effort, shoving up past his shoulder)* The Crusader clubhouse is a safe place, Mr., um, Bulk. *(Cut to Sweetie.)*

Sweetie: A place where we've faced all kinds of cutie mark problems. *(Pan to Bloom.)*

Bloom: A place where we'll go on to solve even more, startin' with yours! *(Scootaloo shoves in next to her.)*

Scootaloo: No matter how long it takes!

Sweetie: Or how hard it is.

Bloom: We'll solve it because that's what we do!

Crusaders: Yeah!

(Extreme close-up of Bulk's chest. Three small hooves reach into view from either side, but cannot quite touch due to their owners being pinned against the walls. After a few of their grunts and groans float across, the camera cuts to frame all four again.)

Bulk: YEAH!! *(The others back off.)*

Sweetie: So what's your cutie mark problem?

Bulk: Oh! Right. *(pivoting to show his mark)* Uh, well, my cutie mark is a dumbbell. But I've lifted every dumbbell in Ponyville! *(Pout.)*

Scootaloo: Have you tried lifting other things?

Bulk: You mean, *not* dumbbells?

Sweetie: Yeah.

Bloom: Yeah.

Bulk: YEAH!!

(An overly enthusiastic stomp causes a good bit of the floor to collapse, dropping him o.s. and leaving the Crusaders stunned at the edges. A thud and grunt mark his meeting with the ground, but he quickly puts his head back up.)

Bulk: I mean, no. I hadn't thought of that. YOU GUYS ARE AWESOME!!

(Delivered with enough volume to set the structure vibrating. Bulk promptly ducks away again, then punches his head up through an intact patch of floorboards.)

Bulk: But...what happens when I run out of other stuff? *(Sweetie thinks for a second.)*

Sweetie: I guess you could teach other ponies to lift things?

Bloom: Yeah!

Scootaloo: Yeah!

Bulk: YEAH!! Wow! You three really have a knack for this! *(Down again.)*

Sweetie: That *was* easy!

Bloom: Maybe *too* easy. *(She crosses to Sweetie.)*

Scootaloo: What do you mean?

Bloom: Well, it's lookin' like cutie mark problems are few and far between.

Sweetie: And...?

Bloom: And what if we never find another one?

Scootaloo: Well... *(Bloom rounds on her.)*

Bloom: And even if we do, we could solve it so quick, it'll be like it never happened in the first place!

Sweetie: So?

Bloom: So... *(Zoom in slowly, her eyes widening in terror.)* ...then the Cutie Mark Crusaders don't have any reason to exist!

(Her unease quickly spreads to the orange and white faces, and the zoom continues for a moment before the view snaps to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of a crayon drawing tacked up on the clubhouse wall. It presents three interlocking circles, each marked with a different graphic: the Crusaders' cutie marks, a clock, and a pegasus glancing worriedly over his shoulder at his mark.)

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* The problem boils down to this.

(A conductor's baton floats into view, held in her magic grip, and taps the marks. Zoom out to frame her standing on a platform alongside the diagram; Bloom crosses to her on the next line.)

Sweetie: We don't need to go out and do things anymore to get our cutie marks. *(Toss the baton aside.)*

Bloom: Right, and— *(Scootaloo jumps onto her back.)*

Scootaloo: Ponies with cutie mark problems are hard to find.

(Close-up of the pegasus circle on the end of this; she points to it, then jumps off Bloom. The floor is now seen to be whole again.)

Bloom: Exactly. But even when we find problems— *(pointing to the overlap of all three circles)* —we're so good at solvin' them that most of the time, there's nothin' for the Cutie Mark Crusaders to do. So...

(She darts across the room and pulls a cord with her teeth, unrolling a detailed wall map of Equestria. A split-second later she is behind the lectern next to it.)

Bloom: ...I thought we should start figurin' out ways to search all of Equestria for cutie mark problems.

Scootaloo: That kinda seems like a lot.

Sweetie: I don't think Rarity would let me travel to the far reaches of Equestria looking for cutie mark problems.

Scootaloo: Yeah. I'm sure we'll come across them in Ponyville. And when we do, we'll totally solve them because we're so awesome at it!

(She and Sweetie trade a high-five with an enthusiastic grunt, then turn their grins toward a suddenly dispirited Bloom.)

Bloom: But...what do we do until then?

Sweetie: Maybe whatever we want?

Bloom: What do you mean?

Sweetie: Well, we used to only do stuff to get our cutie marks or fulfill our destiny. But now we don't have to. *(Cut to Bloom; zoom in slowly.)*

Bloom: So...we can do things just for fun?

(She comes down from the lectern, instantly all smiles.)

Bloom: Are you girls thinkin' what I'm thinkin'?

Scootaloo, Sweetie: Sure am!

(The next three lines are delivered simultaneously, accompanied by a cheerful jump.)

Bloom: Makin' potions!

Scootaloo: Scootering!

Sweetie: Singing!

(Only after all twelve hooves touch wood again do they realize just how badly they have their wires crossed. Dissolve to a long overhead shot of Sweet Apple Acres, with a long, looping ramp leading toward the main barn, and pan to its other end as a crash-helmeted Scootaloo rolls up on her scooter.)

Scootaloo: (*addressing herself back o.s., miming actions*) Just remember—stomp, kick, and roll. After this, you two are gonna love scootering as much as me!

(*Cut to the other two Crusaders on this hilltop. She has been speaking to them, and they have their own helmets and scooters in easy reach but are clearly ill at ease over trying this new activity. Bloom dons her headgear with a weak smile.*)

Bloom: If you say so. (*Sweetie floats hers onto her own head; Scootaloo faces forward.*)

Scootaloo: Ready? (*performing actions*) Stomp, kick, and roll!

(*The sequence launches her off the hill and down the ramp, but neither of the others does anything more than watch as she whoops her way through the crazy turns. Entering a loop-the-loop, she jumps straight up and lets her scooter complete the circle, dropping back on as it emerges to continue the run without losing any momentum. Now she enters the final uphill run, which stops several yards short of the upper hayloft window, and launches herself across the gap. She lets go of the handlebars, and she and the scooter—both silhouetted by the sun—hurtle across the empty space in slow motion. Normal speed resumes as she re-establishes her grip, and she makes a perfect four-point landing in the loft and comes to a stop in a cloud of dust. Zoom out slightly until the camera is just outside the window.*)

Scootaloo: Ta-da!

(*She gives a “your turn” gesture; cut to Bloom and Sweetie at the top of the hill. Both have mounted their scooters, but have much less luck in getting themselves started. The earth pony topples to one side, while the unicorn rolls back and drops out of sight. Bloom, now covered in leaves, pokes her head up from the underbrush with a sheepish chuckle.*)

Bloom: I don’t think I did it right.

(*To which her winged counterpart responds with a glare and crossed forelegs. Wipe to the exterior of the Carousel Boutique, zooming in slowly to the sound of a note being blown on a pitch pipe—a B—then cut to a close-up of Sweetie inside. She is at a music stand, and she floats the pipe down from her mouth. Her helmet is gone, and those of the other two will be as well when they are seen next.*)

Sweetie: (*singing, holding each note out*) Do...mi...so...

(*“Do” rhymes with “so” here, as is customary when singing a musical scale. After the first note, the camera cuts to a longer shot that frames Bloom and Scootaloo before her, at a stand of their own. Sweetie’s three notes are B, E flat, and F sharp—the essential tones of a chord in B major.*)

Sweetie: It’s just a simple harmony.

(She levitates a sheet from her stand to theirs. Red-gold and violet eyes pop in perplexity, and a close-up of the stand reveals why: the music they have just received is crammed tight with enough notes to drive any virtuoso performer into a screaming fit. Zoom out slightly to frame them staring at it, knowing they have no chance to make this lot sound good. They trade a fearful glance, then turn toward Sweetie's beaming grin as she floats out the baton she used at the start of this act.)

Scootaloo: Harmony, huh? *(Tap baton on stand.)*

Sweetie: *(waving it to set tempo)* And-a-one, and-a-two, and-a-one, two, three!

(The next three lines are sung and delivered together.)

Bloom: So...

Scootaloo: Mi...

Sweetie: Do...

(Of the three, only Sweetie has managed to hit the correct pitch and a decent tone; the other two are hopelessly out of tune and have all the finesse of a jackhammer breaking concrete. The vocally gifted unicorn grimaces mightily...)

Scootaloo: Wow! That was simple!

(...and then snaps the baton in half. Wipe to the exterior of Zecora's hut in the Everfree Forest and zoom in slowly.)

Bloom: *(from inside)* It's just a dash...

(Close-up of a bowl of dirt on the floor inside. As she continues, one drop each of two different liquids falls onto the surface and is absorbed.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* ...and a drop, and a drip.

(Cut to frame all three Crusaders sitting on their haunches. Several bowls, a mortar and pestle, and racks of corked test tubes are laid out here, and the aspiring potion brewer completes her demonstration by spitting aside the now-empty tube she has just used. Zecora surveys a shelf behind them, then turns toward Bloom with a smile as a seedling sprouts from the dirt and grows a shiny red apple. Scootaloo and Sweetie reach to the racks; cut to Bloom.)

Bloom: Just a dash, and a drop, and a drip.

(Followed by a mild explosion from her o.s. pupils' directions; cut to them. The smoke clears to show them covered with soot and with manes/tails blown straight back. Scootaloo spits out the tube still in her mouth, and Bloom grimaces and drops her head while the zebra stares with consternation. Dissolve to a stretch of clubhouse wall, panning slowly across the numerous

taped-up pages showing activities that have all been crossed out, and stop on one that shows a pony plummeting on the end of a bungee cord during the next line. It has not been marked out.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* And even though Scootaloo thinks bungee jumpin' is the bee's knees...

(She leans into view to strike it off with a red marker in her teeth, then backs o.s. again. Pan to a second drawing, a beekeeper's hat and veil surrounded by the buzzing flyers.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* ...Sweetie Belle would rather *keep* bees. *(Lean in, mark it off, spit out the marker.)* Of course, I'm allergic.

(Longer shot of the interior. The rejected ideas stretch across most of the available space on at least three walls, and a few other candidates are strewn on the floor. Scootaloo and Sweetie are here, both cleaned up from their potion-making mishap.)

Bloom: Who'd have thought it would be so hard to find somethin' for us all to do together?

Scootaloo: Well, I know this might sound crazy, but...what if we *didn't*?

Bloom: Didn't what?

Scootaloo: Do things together...well, do *everything* together.

(That comment causes Bloom's brain to seize up for a fraction of a second; she comes out of it with an indignant scowl.)

Bloom: *(stomping for emphasis)* But we're the Cutie Mark Crusaders!

Scootaloo: And we always will be. *(eyeing bungee-jumping picture)* But I *really* want to bungee-jump! The speed! The height! The fall!

Sweetie: And I know you two aren't interested, but...I want to try crochet.

Scootaloo: Isn't there something *you've* always wanted to do on your own?

(The red-maned filly finds herself pinned by two eager grins; zoom in slowly on her as she ponders the question for a moment.)

Bloom: I don't know. I-I guess I figured we'd always do stuff together. But bungee jumpin' sounds just as scary as crochet sounds borin'.

Scootaloo: That's okay. Sweetie Belle and I can do the things *we* like, and you can do whatever *you* like.

Sweetie: Just as soon as you figure out what it is. *(Both grin again; cut to Bloom.)*

Bloom: *(uncertainly)* I guess. *(Sound of hooves moving across floor.)*

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

(Bloom shoots a surprised glance across the room and finds the other two now at the door.)

Scootaloo: *(opening it; Sweetie exits)* Then we can meet back here and talk all about what we've done!

Bloom: But I don't know what it'll be! *(Sweetie pokes her head back in.)*

Sweetie: You'll find something. (*Out again.*)

Scootaloo: Something awesome!

(She disappears in an orange blur. Cut to just outside the open door and zoom in slowly on Bloom as she lets go with a heavy sigh.)

Quiet acoustic guitar melody, moderate 4 (D major)

Bloom: Well, I guess now I have to.

(She sits down on her haunches, tail curled around her hind legs and bow drooping glumly.)

Bloom: I never imagined myself out on my own
(Pan across the pictures scattered across the floor; she pulls an archery sheet aside to expose one of a ballerina mare.)

Tryin' to find out what's next for me
(Move to the window; Scootaloo and Sweetie are galloping off.)
The Cutie Mark Crusaders have always been my home
(Turn away.) Maybe now there's more that I could be

(As the camera zooms out very slowly, the background dissolves to a stretch of riverbank and a life jacket appears on her.)

Strings in

Bloom: I guess as time goes by
(A similarly attired stallion leans down to tighten her jacket's belt with his teeth, and she boards an inflatable raft. Four others are already in.)

Everypony has to go out on their own
(The raft sets off down the river.)

Maybe someday I'll have to try
(It picks up speed over a set of drops, nearly throwing her clear; she is the only one of the five not enjoying the ride.)

Somethin' new that's just for me, a little somethin' that could be
(They reach calm water again.)

Just my own, and I won't feel so left behind

Strings out; woodwinds and glockenspiel accents in

(The next bump does pitch her out of the raft. Dissolve to a close-up of a large vat of grapes. She jumps in, having shucked her life jacket and set her bow back in place, and smiles back at Berry Punch and Cherry Berry across from her. All three put their hooves to work pulping the fruit.)

Bloom: We used to say that we'd be always side by side

(A few overly exuberant stomps bounce her off the vat's edge and over the side; once she gets her wits back about herself, she regards her purple-splotched limbs with sad wonder.)

Maybe things are changin' and this could mean goodbye

Strings, light piano/cymbal accents in

(Zoom in on her and dissolve to a close-up of a stallion standing before a canvas on an easel. He daubs paint from his hooves onto it, and the view cuts a slow pan across an art studio where he and several others are painting their own renditions of Tree Hugger—Fluttershy's hippie friend introduced in "Make New Friends but Keep Discord"—who stands on a box at the center of the room, balancing on one hind leg and raising her forelegs above her head. Bloom is among the group, having cleaned off the grape gunk.)

Bloom: I always thought our friendship was all I'd ever need
(Seeing her own crude depiction side by side with another artist's more accurate, vividly colored one takes all the starch out of her.)

We've always been crusadin', what else is there for me?

(Zoom in and dissolve to a close-up of her mixing a bowl of batter with a spoon held in her mouth. She is now in a kitchen, and several other fillies are working on culinary projects of their own, including Diamond Tiara, Silver Spoon, and Twist.)

Bloom: I guess as time goes by
(She looks up with a grin; cut to within an oven, where a pie is baking up. The door opens so she can look in at it; outside, she whisks it out with a potholder in her teeth, sets it on a counter, and brings up three forks.)

Everypony has to go out on their own
(No other ponies are immediately ready to share the dessert, but behind her, Diamond is chomping into the pie she has helped make and Silver feeds a bite to the third filly in their group. Zoom out to put the deflated Bloom in the fore, trudging away.)

Maybe someday I'll have to try
(Dissolve to her in the street, walking away from this particular shop and with the forks no longer in her mouth. Crayon-drawn images of pastimes pop into being around her: soccer, fishing, knitting, carpentry.)

Somethin' new that's just for me, a little somethin' that could be
Just my own, and I won't feel so left behind

(She stops on a bridge over a stream and sits disconsolately on her haunches, the mental pictures fading away. Cut to a long shot of her, the sun shining brightly overhead, and zoom out slowly.)

Song slows to an end

(Close-up. A mare's voice with a heavy Russian accent perks up her eyes, ears, and bow.)

Voice: *(counting in time)* And one-two-three-four, two-two-three-four, one-two-three-four, two-two-three-four...

(During this line, the camera cuts to just behind Bloom, framing a two-story building with a prominent roof skylight and attached house. A sign over the door bears the image of a dancing pony in a tutu—a dance studio. Close-up of this detail, tilting down to frame Bloom now standing below it in wonder and smiling, then, on the last bar of counting, cut to within the studio itself. Three colt/filly pairs are receiving instruction, clad in sleeveless white shirts and dark purple pants; the fillies also wear leg warmers in front and toe shoes in back. Their teacher is a pale violet earth pony mare; two-tone blond mane/tail tied back, the former with a pink ribbon; red-violet eyes with pink shadow; dark purple, short-sleeved top; pink belt; white skirt that hides her cutie mark; leg warmers on all four limbs. She has barely gotten the last “four” out before Bloom barges in, startling the entire class to a dead stop.)

Bloom: Whatever kinda dancin’ y’all are doin’, you’re doin’ it together! And I want in!

(Her high-wattage grin is met by total silence from all seven, and she quickly drops it and tamps down her enthusiasm.)

Bloom: I-I-I mean, uh... *(Clear throat; teacher crosses to her.)* ...would it be okay if I enrolled in this dance class?

Teacher: Well, let’s see what you can do. We have a recital at Town Hall tonight, and a spot just opened up. *(whispering)* Tender Taps is a little too shy to perform.

(She points across the room, Bloom’s eyes following. Cut to Tender Taps, a colt sitting on his haunches in a corner and dressed as the others in the class. Earth pony; orange coat nearly the same shade as Scootaloo’s; short, two-tone violet mane/tail. He turns away from the wall, showing violet eyes in a very scared face, and manages the barest hint of a wave that Bloom returns.)

Teacher: But if you’re ready to step into a partnered routine...?

Bloom: That sounds an awful lot like friendship! And I’m ready for anything I don’t have to do by myself.

Teacher: Well, then! Dancing with partner will be perfect.

(At a clap of her front hooves, one colt goes into a warp-speed pirouette in the middle of the floor and deftly drops out of it to make a three-point landing, holding a foreleg out as invitation for Bloom to join him. She beams and crosses to him, placing one of her front hooves in his, and finds herself being danced back and forth across the studio. He then sends her into a spin that turns her into a whirling blur of yellow, red, and pink.)

Bloom: Whooooooooaaaaa...

(The two end up facing away from each other in opposite directions, he with a foreleg extended to his side. Once Bloom gets her equilibrium back, she seizes it and takes the lead for a few

steps. The other students twirl away, and colt and filly do likewise toward different corners, inadvertently chasing them.)

Bloom: Whoa!

(One equine slams into another, with the predictable result that all six students wind up in a semiconscious heap in the middle of the floor.)

Bloom: *(from within pile)* Whew! *(She pokes up behind them.)* I feel like that went pretty good, but let's give it one more whirl, because it's important that I do a good job partnering with my new group of friends.

(As the teacher approaches, the other six gather behind her and Bloom's grin goes bye-bye at the general tone of disapproval on every face.)

Teacher: Eh, now I'm think of it, you might be better as soloist.

(The newcomer's spirits sink another notch or ten at this failure to find a good group activity. Fade to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the studio and zoom in slowly.)

Teacher: *(from inside, sighing)* Partnering is a little advanced for you.

(Inside, she stands facing Bloom as the other students work on their steps.)

Teacher: But there's still lot you can do on your own.

Bloom: I'm sorry, but...doin' stuff on my own is exactly what I *don't* want.

(She clumps dejectedly toward the door; not noticing Tender's glance in her direction from his spot facing the wall. Outside, she opens the door and emerges onto the road as he peeks after her, having shed his practice outfit. It takes him no time at all to pull in alongside her; now his haunch can clearly be seen as unmarked. When he speaks, his voice carries exactly none of the overwhelming timidity that he displayed in the studio.)

Tender: Sorry it didn't work out.

Bloom: Tryin' different things with my friends was always fun, even when we were terrible. *(Both stop.)* Now it's just terrible.

Tender: *(circling to face her)* You weren't that bad. You just need to learn a few things on your own. Being a soloist can be fun.

(He shows off a couple of slow-tempo steps, then leaps to a clear patch of the road and goes into a frenetic tap dance on his hind legs, adding a bit of humming just for the fun of it. His next move is to launch himself toward a lamppost and swing around it, and he wraps up by jumping clear and sliding past Bloom on his hocks with a laugh. In a trice he is back up to all fours.)

Tender: You just have to do it with feeling.

(Now he breaks into a gallop toward a closed door, runs a few feet up its height, and pushes off into a deft backflip. Landing in a hind-leg split, he spreads his forelegs wide with an ecstatic grin; Bloom boggles at the spectacle, but deflates with a sigh.)

Bloom: Thanks, but...without my friends...I don't think I'll ever feel again. *(trudging past Tender)* Good luck at the recital.

Tender: Oh, I'm not gonna do that. *(He stands up.)* I mean, I want to. It's kind of all I think about. *(eyeing his haunch)* I bet someday my cutie mark will even be about performing! *(Face falls.)* But I-I could never dance in front of an audience the way I do in class. *(shivering)* That's t-t-t-terrifying!

Bloom: *(not stopping)* Yeah, okay. Nice meetin' you.

Tender: *(sadly)* You too.

(He tap-dances his way off the street. Dissolve to the exterior of the clubhouse and zoom in slowly as Scootaloo and Sweetie gallop toward it from opposite directions. The pegasus wears her helmet, safety goggles, and a vest with harness, and the unicorn's neck is draped in an overlong, multicolored, ragged scarf. The latter races up the ramp, but stops just short of the top at Scootaloo's words.)

Scootaloo: Sweetie Belle! You are not gonna believe this, but I think I like bungee jumping even more than scootering! *(She starts up.)*

Sweetie: Seriously? That's amazing! *(magically lifting scarf ends)* Look what I did! *(Close-up of Scootaloo.)*

Scootaloo: *(forcing a smile)* Wow! Uh...that's...um...

Sweetie: *(from o.s., cheerfully)* Horrible! *(Cut to her.)* But it was so much fun! Rarity showed me how, even though she says— *(mimicking Rarity's diction, letting ends drop)* —“Crochet is knitting's poorer cousin.” *(own voice)* But I loved it!

Scootaloo: Awesome!

(They start for the door. Cut to the dimly lit interior of the clubhouse; in the near-darkness, Bloom sits on her haunches facing the walls covered with rejected activity pictures. Quite a few have dropped to the floor around her. A shaft of light falls onto her and widens, thrown by the opening door, and the two adventurers step into view. Scootaloo has removed her helmet and goggles.)

Bloom: *(glancing toward them, frighteningly calm tone)* Oh. Hello, girls. *(viciously)* Have fun pursuin' your own interests?

(They are positively floored by this drastic mood shift.)

Scootaloo: Apple Bloom? What are you doing sitting in the dark?

Sweetie: Yeah. We thought you'd be out looking for things you'd like to do. *(Bloom stands up.)*

Bloom: *(chuckling dementedly)* Oh, I did. I looked all over town. *(increasingly unhinged, shading eyes)* I looked, and I looked, and I looked, and you know what I found?

(The other two can manage only a petrified little head shake before she lunges toward them in undiluted fury.)

Bloom: *Nothing!*

(One windowshade flies up, flooding the room with sunlight that washes out the screen. Fade in immediately to Scootaloo and Sweetie shading their eyes from the glare; when they dare to look across the space, their eyes bug out at the sight of X'ed-out pictures papering every wall, the ceiling, and most of the floor. One mentally strained earth pony stands at the heart of the disorder; overhead shot as the others cautiously advance toward her.)

Scootaloo: You tried every one of these? *(Close-up; Bloom nods bitterly.)*

Bloom: And each one just made me feel more alone than the next! I don't see how I'm supposed to be happy that we're not hanging out anymore!

Scootaloo: *(from o.s.)* Wait. *(Cut to her and Sweetie.)* I never said that. *(as Sweetie nods assent)* I just said we don't have to do *everything* together.

Sweetie: Like when there's something one of us wants to do that the others don't.

Bloom: *(taken aback)* Oh. Well, I guess that changes things.

Scootaloo: I can't believe you thought we didn't want to hang out anymore.

Sweetie: I can't believe you tried all this stuff and didn't find one thing you liked.

Bloom: Well...

(She turns to the ballerina drawing she had considered in Act Two, now marked out like all the others.)

Bloom: ...I kind of liked dancing, mainly because it looked like somethin' you couldn't do alone, but...I wasn't very good at it.

Sweetie: *(rolling eyes good-naturedly)* Well, you don't have to be good at something to have fun. *(Scootaloo nods.)*

Scootaloo: And being good doesn't always mean you will.

Bloom: *(wearily)* I know. *(smiling)* I met the best dancer in the world, but...he was so shy, he couldn't bring himself to perform, even though he really, really wanted to.

(Scootaloo and Sweetie trade a look at this bit of news.)

Sweetie: I don't suppose this dancing pony had a cutie mark, did he?

(Bloom finds herself facing a pair of knowing grins. Cut to just behind the heads of these two and zoom in slowly as her jaw drops and her brain latches on to Sweetie's unspoken suggestion. From here, dissolve to an auditorium in which a stage with a projecting runway has been set up. A stallion and mare do a dance routine under the spotlights for an audience in bleacher-style seats. Tender watches happily from the floor, but a door being thrown open jolts him out of the mood. He has donned his dance outfit.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* You're here!

(He looks behind himself, the camera panning slightly to frame all three Crusaders at the doorway. Scootaloo has now removed all of her bungee-jumping gear, but Sweetie continues to wear her misshapen scarf.)

Spectator: Shhhh!

(The dance ends and the performers bow for the cheering audience as Tender walks toward the trio. Cut to the backstage area; he opens a door and leads them in. The teacher and her other students are fully suited up, and the ones who just finished their routine come in from the stage.)

Tender: What are you doing here?

Bloom: You told me that you wanted to perform more than anything, but I was too caught up in myself to listen. *(grabbing his shoulders)* You're the best dancer I've ever seen, and I'm here to convince you to get out on that stage.

(He turns from her point-blank stare to regard the teacher, who is waving her charges toward the stage entrance, and indecision takes hold all over again. This camera angle exposes the mare's cutie mark as a cluster of horseshoes arranged in a dance-step diagram.)

Tender: Um, didn't I also tell you that dancing in front of other ponies is t-t-t-terrifying?

(Accompanied, as before, by a shiver on this last word to hammer the point home. He eases toward a gap in the curtains, getting a clear view of one audience section.)

Tender: I don't know if you noticed— *(pulling curtain back farther)* —but that auditorium is full of other ponies! *(He lets it drop back.)* I can't go out there! What if I'm bad? *(Bloom whisks over to him.)*

Bloom: We can go on together. No matter what, you'll look good dancin' next to me.

(As the crowd begins to cheer again, he risks a peek through the gap and sees yet more of the packed house, then lets the curtains fall shut.)

Tender: *(sighing)* All right. I'll do it. *(panicky)* But I don't have my costume and the backdrop is all wrong and we don't have time to change it!

(A calculating look passes between the three fillies in response to his full-body shiver.)

Bloom: Leave everything to us.

(He can only stare at his unlikely rescuers, jaw hanging slightly agape as he tries to sort out this very weird turn of events. The view dissolves to a close-up of him in the same place and position, but his dance togs have been switched for a lumpy, badly crocheted blue shirt—clearly one of Sweetie’s first essays in the craft. An equally lousy hat is settled onto his head thanks to her magic.)

Tender: *(very nervous)* I don’t know about this.

(On the start of the next line, zoom out to frame Bloom and Sweetie alongside. The yellow filly has been outfitted in a purple top and removed her bow, and the now-scarfless unicorn floats a matching, tall conical hat atop the red mane.)

Sweetie: Don’t worry. You’ll be just fine.

(She directs a wave overhead; cut to a catwalk, on which Scootaloo and a dreadlocked pegasus stallion stand at the ready. Both are wearing safety goggles, vests, and harnesses, and Scootaloo has her helmet on as well. Hanging from the underside of the catwalk is a scenery flat that consists of a sheet of cloth with a hastily drawn sun and clouds over a flower-covered hill. The winged filly returns Sweetie’s wave.)

(At floor level, the three fillies from the teacher’s class trot cheerfully into the backstage area and past Bloom and Tender, having played their part.)

Bloom: Here goes nothin’.

(Overhead, Scootaloo dives off the catwalk, descending on the end of a bungee cord hooked to the back of her vest. She snags the bottom edge of the flat, yanks it up and out of view, and makes a second trip to lower one showing the Manehattan skyline. Once she is back on her perch, she and the stallion trade a high five—doubtless he has been giving her a few lessons.)

(Bloom trots onto the stage and takes up a position just left of center, opposite the side from which she entered. When a whole lot of nothing happens for several seconds, she beckons frantically toward that end; her scared-stiff dance partner hazards the briefest glance around the curtains, then moves on to stand across from her. Violet eyes pop to pinpoints, taking in the spectators arrayed silently in the room, and Tender sweats freely and forces down a swallow.)

(Bloom taps off a couple of beats and points to him, but his hooves remain glued to the stage. Another couple of taps, another gesture, and he finally starts to move—but only a few tentative steps before he freezes in place again. She grimaces toward Sweetie in the wings, gets a hopelessly confused shrug in return, and realizes that she has no choice but to kick the performance off herself. Dancing around Tender in a swift, sloppy semicircle, Bloom advances toward the front of the stage; in close-up, she keeps going for several more feet until the camera

zooms out to reveal that she has gone off the end of the runway. Only after she realizes this slip-up does she stop and allow gravity to yank her down to the floor. As she peels herself up off the tiles, she finds the audience laughing heartily at her unintended pratfall. Her next move is to haul herself partly over the runway's edge and address Tender with a smile.)

Bloom: *(whispering loudly)* You can't be any worse than I was!

(The colt fights a fierce internal battle between hooves and nerves, the former winning as one foreleg starts to tap. The other one joins in soon enough, and the hind legs get into the act. All four limbs pick up speed, merging into an orange blur that carries the now-grinning Tender across the stage. He shifts between two and four legs, causing the audience to shift from laughter to awed murmurs, and Bloom allows herself a smirking grin from her vantage point. Just as he did with the closed door while talking with her in the street, he races toward the scenery flat and up it, pushing off into a backflip. He slides to a stop on his hocks and heaves for breath in the sudden complete silence that has fallen over the joint; it is broken just as abruptly when the patrons go into a round of wild cheering.)

(Tender stands up, looking about himself with first disbelief and then gratitude, and spots Bloom hanging on at the edge. A flash of white from his haunch draws his gaze back, and the camera zooms in as it disappears to show a top hat sitting in a spotlight beam—one cutie mark, hot off the press. He jumps for joy and goes into an impromptu victory dance, adding an ecstatic whinny to top it off, and Bloom throws him a joyful grin in close-up. Zoom in slowly on her and dissolve to an extreme close-up of Tender's mark.)

Tender: *(from o.s.)* I can't believe it!

(Zoom out; he now stands outside the town hall and has ditched Sweetie's dreadful costume.)

Tender: It's just what I always imagined it would be! And if it weren't for all of you—

(Cut to the Crusaders, also out here and out of their respective outfits; Bloom wears her bow.)

Tender: *(from o.s.)* —I wouldn't even have it.

Scootaloo: No problem.

Sweetie: It's what we do. *(Bloom crosses to him.)*

Bloom: I only wish I'd realized what you needed right away, instead of mopin' around for no reason.

Tender: *(lifting her chin)* Well, either way, I hope you keep dancing.

(A couple of quick steps and a "take it" gesture, and she tries a few taps of her own.)

Bloom: You know, I just might. It sure is a lot of fun, and...I'm pretty confident I can only get better. *(He grins and nods; she turns to Scootaloo and Sweetie.)* I'm sorry I was so silly about us all doin' our own things. *(smiling)* If we hadn't, I might have never even tried dancing.

Tender: Or find out I needed help.

Sweetie: With each of us going out and trying things on our own, we'll be three times as likely to find ponies to help.

Scootaloo: And trying new stuff might even make us better at helping them, like how I used my bungee jumping to change the sets.

Sweetie: Or my crochet to make the costumes. *(Tender shows his mark off to a couple of passing mares.)*

Bloom: Well, one thing is for sure—the Cutie Mark Crusaders will never be the same.

(This pronouncement leaves the other two-thirds of the triumvirate visibly ill at ease until she pops up between them with a smile, throwing a foreleg around each set of shoulders.)

Bloom: We'll be better!

(Cut to a patch of sky, with one white, one yellow, and one orange foreleg reaching into view for a three-way high five.)

Crusaders: *(from o.s.)* Yeah!

(Fade to black.)

(The usual closing theme does not accompany the credits. In its place is the music that played as the background for Tender's dance routine. Energetic big band jazz on horns and percussion, fast 4, E minor; the final chord adds a harp flourish and holds on B major without resolving into the main key.)