

Fixing up Miss Smartypants, Part 4

by [Arkensaw Pinkerton](#)

A brief prelude from the author

It's all gone a bit complicated, hasn't it? Since this is written and released episodically and the plotline is tangling rather magnificently, I thought I'd give you and I both a really quick reminder of how all our little ponies are connected. This lovely summary comes to you from the delightful Harwick, whom I am certain is a pony of good character and outstandingly minty breath. It's worth noting that Harwick has, at the time of writing this summary, only read the previous three chapters; there are no hints or spoilers below, just the well-formed opinions of a reader.

Big Macintosh

Likes: Twilight Sparkle.

Rarity thinks he and Fluttershy are a couple. Applejack refuses to accept that they're not. Most other ponies are, by this point, aware that he and Fluttershy aren't courting.

Thinks: Rarity likes Twilight Sparkle and is setting up a blind date with her. Also that Twilight Sparkle must like her back, as she had a love letter to Rarity in her saddlebag.

Twilight Sparkle

Likes: Probably Big Mac, though she wasn't considering it while she thought he was with Fluttershy.

Knows: Rainbow Dash likes Rarity. Fluttershy like Applejack.

Thinks: Sweetie Belle has a crush on Rainbow Dash.

Rarity

Likes: Apparently Rainbow Dash.

Thinks: Applejack likes Twilight (and is setting up a blind date for the two.)

Rainbow Dash

Likes: Rarity

Thinks: Rarity likes Twilight Sparkle, and is setting up date with her.

Also thinks Sweetie Belle wrote the love letter to her. [She's correct, but Sweetie Belle intended for the letter to be interpreted as from Rarity].

Applejack

Likes: No pony explicitly specified.

Thinks: Big Mac and Fluttershy were perfect for each other. Fluttershy was wrong to turn down her brother. Twilight Sparkle was interfering somehow (possibly seducing Fluttershy with smutty books?) As a result, she's furious with both Fluttershy and Twilight Sparkle.

Spike

Likes: Rarity (duh.)

Thinks: Rarity likes Twilight and is setting up a date with her (and supports this because he loves them both.)

The Cutie Mark Crusaders. featuring Dinky Doo

Like: The idea of being matchmakers.

Know: Rarity likes Rainbow Dash.

Think: Applejack wanted to fix the doll up because she's sweet on Twilight Sparkle.

Decide: To pelt Twilight Sparkle with apples (making her think about and be open to a member of the Apple family) and write love letters for Dash and Rarity to fix the two up, giving them to Ditzy to deliver.

Are Currently: apologetically explaining to Fluttershy exactly what they've been up to.

Ditzy Doo

Likes: No pony specified, but close to Big Mac.

Thinks: The love letters given her by the CMCs were written by them, and therefore Sweetie Belle has a childhood crush on Rainbow Dash.

Delivered: The love letter to Rainbow Dash, explaining that Sweetie Belle was its author.

Lost: The love letter to Rarity in Twilight Sparkle's library, where it ends up in Twilight's saddlebag and eventually in Big Mac's book, where he finds it.

Fluttershy

Likes: Mares only. Applejack specifically.

Thinks: Well, she's about to be told what's going on, but from the CMCs' perspective.

Are we all up to speed? Belts buckled, helmets fastened and strapped in tight? Then proceed below the page break for the story proper! Here we go!

"Sweetie Belle, I am going to kill you!"

Rainbow Dash crumpled up the letter in her hooves and stamped around her cloud in frustration. As if it wasn't bad enough finding out Rarity was interested in Twilight, now Sweetie Belle and her annoying little friends had played this stupid prank on her. No, thought Rainbow, this isn't a prank, this is just being mean. This is playing around with a pony's feelings! As though it would be stupid or funny or ridiculous for Rarity to like her. Pulling the letter open again, Rainbow read it one more time, her anger mounting.

Dearest Rainbow Dash,

You are very pretty. I really like your mane. It has seven colours in it and I would like to design you a new dress using all the colours. Then you can wear the dress and we can go out to dinner together at one of those snooty places I keep taking my sister and afterwards I will watch you do tricks. It will be a date so we can also smooch. I think smooching you would be really good and not weird at all. Please come and visit me later so we can start being marefriends.

When you talk to me about this please do not mention the letter because I am embarrassed about writing it and will get angry if you mention it.

Rarity
xxxxxx

"Agh!" Rainbow shouted. It was almost too much to bear! It was exactly the sort of letter she'd been hoping to receive from Rarity for months! Not that she'd been hoping for letters, that is. But, Rainbow thought, this is the sort of letter that leads to the things I'd been hoping for! It even mentions smooches right there on the bucking page! And the whole thing was some ridiculous, mean-spirited prank!

"Alright! That's it! Somepony's gonna get it!" Rainbow's raw fury propelled her off the cloud, practiced wingbeats propelling her towards the town proper at breakneck speed. While she was powering through the sky, Rainbow tried to go over exactly what she was going to say to Sweetie Belle, but couldn't quite hold the words together.

Rainbow realised that the reason she was so angry- furious, in fact- was because she'd let it get to this ridiculous point. She knew exactly why she'd not told Rarity she was interested, and it was because she knew it was a lost cause. The mare had never shown the slightest interest in her since the Best Young Fliers competition, which that painted, powdered unicorn had completely ruined.

I should be able to think back to the competition as a triumph, thought Rainbow. My second ever Sonic Rainboom! A tiara thingy from the Princess herself! Meeting the Wonderbolts! Streamers and cheering and all my friends, new and old, congratulating me! So what do I remember? That stone in my gut when I saw she was in trouble. How her hooves felt in mine, even if it was only for a few seconds. That breathless apology that I brushed off. That moment, diving for her,

reaching for her, pushing as hard as I could to grab her, when I saw her stop panicking. She stopped being afraid because she knew I was coming for her. She knew I wouldn't fail her. She trusted me to get it right, to save her life. That's what I remember.

"Urgh, why did I have to play it so cool?" Rainbow shouted at herself as she covered the last few hundred yards. She'd waited for Rarity to make the first move, show the first sign of affection, like Rainbow was certain she would. But the unicorn never had. Now the moment had passed, Rainbow thought as she landed in front of Carousel Boutique. Now her little sister's sending me hurtful jokey prank notes! Now Rarity's forgotten about the whole thing and moved on and started mooning over Twilight bucking Sparkle! Aaaa!

Rainbow slammed her front hoof into the front door four times loudly and shouted.

"Rarity! Are you in? We gotta talk!" Rainbow bellowed. First things first, she thought, we need to have a talk about somepony keeping a tighter leash on her little sister.

Rainbow heard an excited squeal and caught a glimpse of Rarity's mud-caked face peeking out of her bedroom window.

"Oooh, you're earlier than I expected! Give me just a few moments to get everything ready," Rarity said in a slightly husky voice before disappearing back inside. Rainbow blinked a couple of times in confusion. Rarity had been expecting her? A thought started gnawing at the back of her brain- had Rarity had known about this all along? Was she in on the joke? If she was, decided Rainbow, then she would- she'd have to- she didn't know what. But it was going to involve tearing a strip off that prissy little princess. After a few seconds she hammered on the door again.

"Rarity, open the door!" She shouted, letting some more of her anger seep into her voice. It felt good to finally be shouting at somepony about this. "I need to have a few words with ya! Let me in!"

"Just a minute!" came Rarity's sing-song reply from inside the boutique. Rainbow listened up against the door for a second, hearing what sounded like furniture being moved. Was she redecorating or something? Rainbow took a step back to see that Rarity had closed the curtains as well. Thoroughly confused, Rainbow took a step back and raised her voice again.

"Rarity, open the door right now or-"

"One more second, darling, I'm aaaalmost ready!"

Rainbow furrowed her brows. Almost ready for what? What in the hay was going on in there? She pawed at the ground for a moment, setting up a charge.

"I don't care! I'm coming in right-" Rainbow was interrupted by Rarity clearing her throat extremely loudly, and the furious pegasus heard the door unlock.

"The door's open! Do come in." Rainbow heard Rarity trill from inside the boutique. Striding forwards with a huff, she threw the door wide, ready to give Rarity a piece of her mind, and was momentarily stunned by what she saw.

The room was dark, lit only by three candles on a small table and some stray tendrils of sunlight that escaped the hastily drawn curtains. Next to the candles there was a small metal bucket containing a bottle Dash was unfamiliar with, and two long, tall glasses. More immediately arresting than this was the unfamiliar and enormous red chaise lounge behind the table, quite out of place in the middle of Rarity's main workspace; and what had rendered Rainbow Dash speechless was Rarity, relaxing in a diaphanous rose-coloured robe that clung to her, half concealing and half accentuating her body beneath it.

For a moment, Rainbow found her mouth far too dry to say anything at all and Rarity took full advantage.

"Rainbow, do come and sit with me. I know there are things you want to say, things we need to talk about, but I thought they might go a bit smoother if we both have a little drink while we chat. We've ever so much to discuss, don't you think?" Rarity fluttered her eyelashes at Rainbow and something inside Rainbow Dash snapped.

"You think this is funny? You think this is some sort of joke? I should have known you were planning something like this! I always appreciate a good prank, Rarity, but this is playing around with really personal stuff! It's just mean!" Rainbow punctuated her sentence by throwing her crumpled note at Rarity, who caught it with a faintly perplexed look on her face.

"What is this?" She asked, unfolding the note and reading it with a growing expression of horror on her face. Rainbow launched into another attack before Rarity could say anything else.

"It's the worst prank ever is what it is! You and your little sister were conspiring against me! I get it, Rarity and Rainbow, how bucking hilarious is that? We don't have anything in common. We don't spend any time together. You barely know me and I have literally no idea why I like you! You're stuck-up and you ignore everypony and you think you're too good for me! So yeah, maybe this is a great wake-up call, Rarity. I won't try to be your friend again."

Rainbow turned to stride out, her anger spent, when Rarity called to her quietly. Rainbow was ready to ignore anything, but when she heard the catch in Rarity's voice she found herself turning to hear her out. The normally pristine unicorn was practically quivering with the effort of keeping herself together, fat tears rolling over her cheeks as she struggled to keep her voice level.

“Thank you for your candour. It’s better that I know where I stand. Here!” She said, her voice starting to crack as she levitated a letter from the table to Rainbow and then started using her magic to push the pegasus and the note both out of the door.

“This is the note I got!” She half-sobbed, slamming the door in Rainbow’s face as soon as she was clear of the frame. Rainbow opened the note and read it as she stamped away, slowly coming to a stop in the park as she got to the final few lines.

Rarity!

I am the best at flying but it is not enough even though I am totally awesome and cool! I want a marefriend as well. I thought about it a lot and I think you are the best choice for a marefriend! You are the prettiest and I like you a lot. I will come over later and we can start dating and things!

Please do not mention the letter when I arrive because I am way too cool for letters and I am ashamed of my hoofwriting.

Rainbow Dash!

Rainbow screwed up her eyes in frustration. They’d sent Rarity a letter too? Rainbow Dash scanned the letter again. She had to grudgingly admit that Sweetie Belle and her friends had managed to forge her writing style and hoofwriting almost perfectly. If Rarity had gotten the letter without an explanation, then she had probably thought it was genuine. So why had she gone along with the whole thing? If she wasn’t in on the joke, what reason could she possibly have for the wine and the candles and the skimpy-

Rainbow’s anguished yell could be heard across the town.

In a few seconds, she was swooping back to the door of the boutique, grimacing at the extremely loud sobbing coming from inside. Tentatively, she knocked on the door with one hoof.

“Rarity? I’m-”

“GO AWAY! Leave me alone! I want to be alone!” Rarity screamed from the upstairs bedroom. Cringing, Rainbow backed away from the door and, ears down, walked back towards the park. What was she going to do? Her heart was fluttering around in her chest, conflicting feelings pulling her in every direction. Rarity did like her! But then she’d sort of screamed at Rarity until she’d gotten upset and locked herself away. What she needed was a way to get Rarity to listen to her. Maybe if she got Fluttershy’s help?

Rainbow nodded to herself. Fluttershy was her oldest friend, and was really close to Rarity. If she swallowed her pride for a second and explained what was going on to Fluttershy, she

should be able to at least calm down Rarity enough so that they could talk. Her mind made up, Rainbow extended her wings and started off towards Fluttershy's cottage. Biting her lip, she just hoped she'd be able to undo the damage.

"That's great work there, Mac! Dizzy, remember you can close your eyes if it helps you focus. Face the window with me again and let's have a nice loud 'A', stretching for a full ten seconds. And go!"

Doctor John "Whooves" Smith took the opportunity of the long note to assess his pupils. As the only therapist in Ponyville, he'd taken on some strange requests over the years, but the treatment of stammers had been as new to him as it had been to Big Macintosh a year ago. Since then, they'd been working on strengthening his voice and reducing his stammer and they'd made some rather marvellous progress together. Looking at his much larger patient- and friend- he couldn't help but feel a little proud. Looking at his other student, however, brought forth a rather different rush of emotions.

Ditzy was currently enunciating the vowel sounds rather well, with her eyes closed. That was the problem, though; whenever she noticed that either he or Big Macintosh were looking in her direction, her stutter would come back with an unholy vengeance, and she'd blush her way into silence. He'd never met a pony who seemed so uncomfortable around him. She'd stated quite clearly that the lessons were something she valued, but he didn't see how they were really any help. Her stammer was every bit as bad as it had been when she'd joined the therapy eight months ago, encouraged by Big Macintosh.

He had tried everything he could to make her more comfortable- he'd even admitted to his old nickname of 'Whooves' in an attempt to foster a closer, more comfortable relationship, and she'd allowed that her daughter had said 'Ditzy' as 'Dizzy' for quite a long time until she'd got the pronunciation down. It was, she'd joked with one eye on the floor and a quiet grin, the only thing her friend Carrot Top called her now. But that hadn't worked- in fact, sharing that personal information had seemed to drive a greater wedge of quiet, tense embarrassment between them.

At Big Mac's suggestion, they'd all spent some evenings- marvellous, long evenings- simply spending time around each other in quiet. They'd read or write or walk through the town in an effort to help Ditzy open up and stop being so nervous around him. As far as Whooves could tell, this had just made things worse, in both directions- she seemed to find him as intimidating as ever, barely able to say a sentence to him, and he'd found himself thinking about her a lot of the time. Almost always, in fact. To the point where he found himself conflicted about whether he should really be treating her at all; there was a conflict of interest here, an emotional attachment that he didn't want to examine too closely. If he did, he thought to himself, he'd probably see straight away that he was far too fascinated with the athletic grey pegasus to treat her properly. He'd have to stop their sessions. And then he wouldn't see her any more.

A strand of Ditzzy's hair fell across her eye, and without thinking, Whooves reached out a hoof to put it back behind her ear. Suddenly catching himself, he slammed his hoof to the ground, blanching at what he'd almost done.

As if on cue, Ditzzy opened her eyes for the last couple of seconds and glanced over to see Whooves looking at her. Her voice, clear and strong for the last few seconds, dwindled away into a squeak, and she looked away. As usual, Whooves tried everything he could to pretend he didn't see her blush, and when he spoke he could tell his voice was too loud.

"That was great, you two!" Whooves glanced at an ornate golden hourglass, a device he'd had since before he could remember. It marked their session as barely a quarter complete. "I think now is a good time for us all to practice what we've learnt with a little bit of 'public speaking'. Ditzzy, how about you go first?"

The three ponies arranged themselves around a little makeshift podium at one end of Whooves' extensive treatment space. His house was terrifically cramped to make room for it, but he didn't mind- it was more important that he had the space to treat his patients properly, as far as he was concerned. Ditzzy took her place behind the podium and Big Mac and Whooves sat on a pair of big plump cushions in front of her. The point of this exercise was to say what had happened during their day, and try to get used to the sort of trappings likely to make them nervous- as well as speaking without interruption for an extensive period of time. Ditzzy cleared her throat, closed her eyes and took a deep breath, and then opened them and began, looking out at them both with her good eye.

"T-t-t-" she shook her head, annoyed at herself, and started again. "T-today I w-woke at h-h-h-... at half p-past s-seven. After b-breakfast..."

Whooves tried to listen, but he found himself quite unable. One of the minor perks of the 'public speaking' exercise was that he had a genuine opportunity to look at Ditzzy without having to feel embarrassed or try to hide it. She was astonishing to him- when he'd found out about her Reverse Diving training, he'd looked at her in a whole new way, and realised just how much strength, how much toughness there was underneath her soft hair. She had such graceful movements in her shoulders, such tightness in the muscles of her legs and back. She was the sort of pony, Whooves mused to himself, that it would be a genuine pleasure to hold, just to appreciate properly the aesthetics of the pegasus form. The mental image that he'd formed had very little to do with aesthetics and everything to do with wondering how soft her lips were, however, and he was rudely jerked out of a very pleasant daydream when Big Mac interrupted, quite uncharacteristically.

"Wait, Ditzzy, would y'be so kind as to go over that last p-part again?" The big red stallion asked, a concerned expression on his broad face.

“Sh-sure.” Ditzzy said, taking a breath and concentrating again. “Appleb-bloom and her friends g-gave me letters t-to d-deliver to R-Rarity and Rainbow D-Dash. I think th-they were l-love notes.” Big Mac stood up, all pretence to the exercise forgotten.

“D-Ditzzy, is there any way y’mighta lost track of those letters? Maybe at the library?”

Ditzzy looked taken aback for a second. “Y-yeah, I crashed there. H-how did you-”

“Aw, ponyfeathers!” Big Mac said to himself, with his eyes closed. Whooves could see him thinking for a second, putting things together, before the stallion set his jaw. He’d seemed to come to a decision.

“Miz Sparkle might not be interested in her after all!” He said in a whisper, mostly to himself. “Ditzzy, Doc, I have t’go speak with Rarity. Sorry to duck out early b-but this is important t’m.”

Whooves was a little taken aback. He knew Twilight Sparkle from the library, but wasn’t Rarity a model or something? How did Big Mac even know these ponies? The farmpony was taciturn whenever they went out for a drink, especially when it came to his love life. This sort of grand gesture seemed a little strange from him. Whooves was about to ask what exactly was going on, but before he could put together a reasonable question, Big Macintosh had barrelled out of the door.

“Do you know what that was all about?” Whooves asked Ditzzy, as they watched Big Mac canter towards the centre of town.

“N-Not exactly, but he mentioned T-Twilight Sparkle. He’s had a bit of a thing for her r-recently,” Ditzzy said, looking at the big pony turn a corner towards the fountain.

Whooves was stunned. That sentence had so few moments of stammering in it, and Ditzzy had let her speech flow around the few errors there had been. Whooves reluctantly smiled to himself as he realised why- Ditzzy was clearly more comfortable when her mind was elsewhere. It was him that was the problem. He really couldn’t help.

“Dizzy, I think this is a good opportunity for us to have a bit of an important conversation,” Whooves said, indicating the cushions in front of the podium. As he spoke, he could see Ditzzy blushing furiously, staring at her hooves as she went to sit down as though she was afraid she’d trip over them. Whooves walked over as well, sitting and trying to hold Ditzzy’s gaze- she seemed to keep wanting to look at anything in the room except him.

“It’s about these sessions, Dizzy,” he started gently, not noticing the slight furrowing of Ditzzy’s brow. “You see, Big Macintosh has already reached an excellent standard of speech. He doesn’t really need them any more. And as far as you’re concerned- I’m not really certain there’s any way I can help you with your speech in a therapeutic context. What I’m saying, Dizzy, is that I

think it's in everypony's best interests if these sessions end and we terminate our therapist-client relationship. You understand that-"

"I understand p-perfectly." The grey mailmare had one eye fixed on him and a distinctly unamused expression on her face, and Whooves had the terrible feeling that once again he'd managed to stick his hoof in his mouth. Before he could say anything, Ditzzy stood and started shouting at him.

"I understand just bucking fine! Why in the hay would you want to spend any more bucking time than you have to with Derpy Hooves, huh? I thought y-y-" as her anger abated and her stammer crept back into her voice, Ditzzy snorted and turned to leave, unwilling to say more. Whooves found his voice after a moment, managing to say something just before she took flight.

"Wait! Dizzy, I didn't mean-"

"You d-don't get to call me that! That's a p-personal n-n-nickname!" She spat over her shoulder at him, glaring at him through a yellow eye before bounding into the sky.

Whooves rubbed his forehead with a hoof for a second, talking to himself.

"Well done, old chap. You handled that just blasted marvellously." Whooves thought for a second, and decided to track down Big Macintosh. He needed somepony to get Ditzzy to give him a chance to explain a few things, starting with the fact that a doctor is not allowed to date his clients. Trying to remember where Rarity lived, he trotted off in the direction Big Mac had gone. He couldn't be that difficult to track down, Whooves thought to himself.

Applejack lay back on her bed, trying to think of something to do besides sulk. The pigs were fed, the trees were pruned, Big Mac and Applebloom had managed to fix the broken beam in the barn three days ago and Granny Smith had kicked her out of the kitchen after she'd oversugared three separate apple pies. The fact of the matter was that she was grumpy, hurt and angry at a whole bunch of ponies including herself.

Applejack tried to pick the matter apart, but every time she did she found herself so furious at some aspect of the situation that she couldn't do it. For example, she couldn't be angry at Big Macintosh for not getting together with Fluttershy. Heck, she couldn't even be angry at Fluttershy for not liking Big Mac. Clearly, the pegasus had a very different taste in ponies, as evidenced by Twilight Sparkle, who was just there with her forelegs wrapped around Fluttershy like she owned her or some darn thing and how was that- Applejack caught herself getting angry again. At a time like this she liked nothing better than to lose herself in some work and let her mind think things through in the background while she let her hooves concentrate on something useful. But the farm wasn't living up to its side of the bargain; there wasn't anything

genuinely useful to do, and Applejack despised busywork.

Applejack sat up and frowned at herself in the mirror. She was being foolish, she decided, and she knew it. So Fluttershy'd rather spend her time at the library than at the farm! That was no big deal. The farm was hard work, and it wasn't for everypony.

Applejack fell back on her bed. It wasn't for everypony- that was the point! It fitted Fluttershy so well. The girl had such a way with the animals. She was good with the rest of the work, as well- she'd sometimes freeze up when she was scared, but there was steel on her bones, Applejack knew. Fluttershy would never fail to come through for her. For any of her friends.

So why didn't it feel that way now? It felt like Fluttershy had taken a step away, like Applejack had somehow become less important to her shy friend. But that didn't make any sense! Applejack had always wanted Fluttershy to have somepony special in her life. Yes, she'd wanted that pony to be Big Mac. But that didn't mean that Fluttershy being with some other pony should feel like such a betrayal, did it?

Maybe, Applejack admitted to herself, Big Mac didn't really count. If Fluttershy picked Applejack's big brother, then there wasn't any conflict. Applejack didn't have to feel overlooked because Fluttershy would still have picked everything that Applejack valued. The fact of the matter was that Fluttershy was important to her. Maybe even- wait, what was that?

Applejack walked over to her door and opened it, listening again. Her Granny's voice rang out through the house, clearly for the second time.

"Applejack! I said your little marefriend is here! Now are you coming down or not?"

"Ah'm not going anywhere! An' Ah don't have a marefriend!" Applejack bellowed down the stairs.

"Are y'sure? I mean Fluttershy! She's around here 'most every day an' I know she ain't seein' Big Macintosh, because she and I have had ourselves a conversation about it. Now she's helping me with the pies, since you ain't bein' any darn use with 'em, so she'll be waitin' for you when y'get down here." Granny's voice didn't leave much room for argument, but Applejack tried anyway.

"Well what if Ah ain't comin' down? Ah don't wanna talk to anypony!" Applejack shouted, but the fight had gone from her voice.

"Y'gotta come down some time, sweetheart. Now I ain't gonna hold it against you that yer wantin' to have a little bit of a sulk, so you just come on down here when you're ready." Granny Smith shouted back up through the house.

There wasn't much arguing with that, Applejack regretfully admitted to herself. She was sulking a little bit. Not that she was likely to admit that to Fluttershy any time soon. She'd wait a reasonable amount of time and then she'd come downstairs with her dignity intact.

Two and a half minutes later, Applejack started creeping down the stairs, hearing Granny Smith and Fluttershy talking as they worked on the pies. Without a unicorn around, it really was a two-pony job; Applejack could imagine that Fluttershy was handling the slightly heavier work of getting the filling into the shaped crusts, while Granny Smith made the lattice lids that she was so famous for.

"So, y'ain't seein' Big Macintosh. Now, why is that? he's a strapping young pony and smart to boot, not that smart ever mattered after lights out. He was awful fond of you, too."

"It's not that he's not a very nice pony. I like talking to him and I think he'll make somepony a great husband some day. I'm just not- he's not really- I mean he's a stallion. If I were interested in stallions then he would be just perfect, but I'm not. I'm sorry."

"Now, you don't have to be sorry for who you tilt at, y'silly filly! Heck, back in the day Applejack's grandfather had a bushel of competition from a very nice Carrot mare, Baby Bell, her name was. She was a pretty little thing and I don't mind admitting I was very sweet on her. So don't you go tryin' to be sorry for who you ain't interested in, because I'm a lot more interested in who you are."

Applejack hadn't meant to be sneaking down the stairs, but she found herself stepping extremely quietly, unwilling to interrupt the conversation. Fluttershy wasn't even interested in stallions? Well, that was a new bronco at the rodeo and no mistake. It meant she hadn't rejected Big Mac because he was no good, she'd rejected him because he was, well, a him! It took a second for Applejack to realise that Fluttershy hadn't actually responded to Granny Smith's last little ramble- by the time she had, Granny Smith seemed to have realised the same thing.

"Well? I'm talking about Applejack, girl. She's a good filly, got a decent head on her shoulders and you seem quite keen on her. Are y'interested in the girl or not?"

Applejack's heart lodged in her throat for a second, sending another confusing tumble of thoughts through her head. Why did she care so much about this? Why did it matter if Fluttershy was attracted to her? Why was that thought making her blush as red as an apple ripe for the bucking?

"I don't think it's so much about whether I'm sweet on Applejack, Granny. I think it's more about whether Applejack is- hello Applejack! I didn't see you there for a second."

Fluttershy fixed Applejack with a faintly manic glare as she saw the farmpony at the bottom of the stairs. Granny Smith turned from her stool and fixed Applejack with the same look as when she'd been four and Granny Smith had caught her in the pantry with a sticky spoon and four empty jars of apple jam.

"Well, look who decided she's gonna come out of her room at just this specific point in our conversation," Granny Smith said witheringly. "I suppose now's as good a time as any for m'nap. Fluttershy, be a dear and make sure all those pies get in at the same time. I'll be awake by the time they're done so don't let worrying about them get in the way of whatever plans y'might have for the rest of the day, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, Granny Smith," Applejack and Fluttershy chorused as the elder pony left the room. Applejack would swear that she'd winked at Fluttershy as she left.

That left Applejack and Fluttershy on their own in the kitchen, and it didn't take more than a couple of seconds for Applejack's pride to kick in.

"Last time Ah saw you Ah told you you weren't welcome at the farm no more, Fluttershy. Why'd you decide that didn't count for you?" Applejack said, teeth gritted, braced against a response.

"I decided because I had news you should know. I was talking to Applebloom earlier and she's had, um, a very busy day. She and her friends have been trying to matchmake ponies, and I think they might have caused Rainbow Dash and Rarity some problems. They also think you're interested in Twilight so they've been trying to get her interested in you, but I think they've got the wrong end of the stick because I know Big Macintosh is interested in her. And you should know I'm not seeing Twilight. She really was just getting back some books I'd taken out. She's a good friend but we're not dating." Fluttershy said, smiling at Applejack as she tried to absorb all the new information.

"Okay sugarcube, one thing at a time," said Applejack, pinching her brow. "You're not courtin' Twilight?"

"No. Not at all. She's not the pony I- I don't have romantic feelings towards her." Fluttershy stumbled over her words a little, hiding behind her mane as she did so. Applejack felt a weight lifted from her chest that she hadn't known was there.

"Good," Applejack said, relaxing into the conversation a little. "That's good. Ah mean, it's a good start. Now, Applebloom thinks Ah've got a thing for Twilight?"

"Well, she did until I told her that she'd probably gotten mistaken. Her only proof was that old doll of Twilight's, and I know that Big Macintosh had been hiding that, not you. I told her."

"Alright then. What was that about Rainbow Dash?"

“Oh, they’ve been a little bit naughty. They faked love letters to Rarity and Rainbow Dash, each from the other, and I think it might have caused problems because- well-” Fluttershy started stalling over the end of her sentence, biting her lip and clearly trying to think her way around something.

“Spit it out, sugarcube. Why’s it a particular problem?” Applejack asked, but with a sinking stomach remembered a particular confession of Rainbow’s, eked out after the pushy pegasus had lost a bet over which of them could buck the most apples in an hour. Rainbow was her best friend in the world, and while Applejack could understand that she had a bit of a crush on Rarity, it didn’t seem like the sort of thing that would work out. This sort of well-intended ‘help’ could cause her far more harm than good.

“I can’t say. I promised! Rarity made me Pinkie Pie swear! Just please, trust me it won’t be good if it goes wrong. I was hoping you could maybe come into town with me and sort everything out. I’ve already sent your little sister and her friends to Sugarcube Corner to get some help.” Fluttershy looked at Applejack as though there was a possibility that she’d say no, and in that moment Applejack realised she’d never be able to turn down the pale yellow pegasus with the pink mane who’d wormed her way into her life so firmly.

Applejack didn’t know exactly how it’d happened, but she knew she loved Fluttershy. She didn’t know exactly what that meant any more- it was different, now she knew she’d never see Big Mac and Fluttershy together, like she’d always imagined. There was a heat to Fluttershy’s presence, an intensity in her eyes that hadn’t been there before. Heck, maybe it had always been there and Applejack was finally looking properly. Either way, this was something new and a little exciting. A little scary too, but that had never counted for much with Applejack.

“Ah’ll come in with you. Those two’re stubborn enough they won’t be able to deal with anything on their own. And Fluttershy?”

“Yes?” Fluttershy said quietly, as they headed for the door.

“You’re welcome around the farm again. More’n welcome. Ah meant it when Ah said you were family.”

Fluttershy’s smile was almost entirely in her eyes, but Applejack felt like she’d seen her friend come alive for the first time that day. She couldn’t help but smile in return as she set off down the dirt path towards the town, Fluttershy gliding up beside her.

“Come on, now. We got work to do!” Applejack started running for the joy of it, turning her head to see that Fluttershy was doing her best to keep up with her, a wildness in her eyes as they both sped towards Ponyville.

Author's extraneous notes!

Pow! Who says I only update once a month, eh? We're powering on hard and checking our messages, now. And Pinkie Pie's so close to the narrative that I can practically smell cotton candy. As always, feedback is appreciated- If you feel like dropping me a note, leave a comment on Equestria Daily or just email me with the link at the top.

Probably two more parts to go until we're done, three if I get distracted on the way. But we're over the hump!

Arkensaw

[<----- Part Three!](#)
[Part Five! ----->](#)