

PONYVILLE CONFIDENTIAL

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to a long overhead shot of Ponyville during the day. Zoom in slowly on the schoolhouse as its bell rings, then cut to a close-up of the building. The zoom continues to the sound of cheering and yells from inside, and the door bursts open to release a stampede of students. Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle trudge glumly out after them and stop on the porch.)

Sweetie: *(disgustedly, as Scootaloo collapses onto her belly)* Can you believe Featherweight got his cutie mark? Featherweight! Before us!

(Cheers from o.s.; cut to a knot of foals clustered around a spindly-legged off-white pegasus colt with two-tone brown mane, a missing front tooth, and brown eyes. This is Featherweight, and a closer shot reveals his new mark to be a single white feather, which he proudly shows off.)

Snips: Great cutie mark, Featherweight!

Snails: *(laughing)* Looking good! *(Scootaloo and Sweetie sigh heavily.)*

Sweetie: I give up. *(Apple Bloom peeks out, carrying a rolled-up newspaper.)*

Bloom: I've got it!

(One cheerful bound carries her over the pair so that she lands facing them.)

Bloom: *(tossing paper onto porch)* The answer to all our problems!

(Back to the others on the end of this; the paper unrolls, and the camera cuts to a close-up of the front page and zooms in on the masthead. Prominently displayed are a photo of two foals who seem dissatisfied with their lunches and a line graph trending sharply downward.)

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* The Foal Free Press? *(Cut to frame all three.)* How's the school paper gonna get us our cutie marks?

(Bloom takes a breath to start explaining, but Granny Smith's voice cuts in first.)

Granny: *(from o.s.)* Move your caboose!

Bloom: Uh-oh. That's Granny Smith. Gotta run! *(She gallops away; zoom in on the other two.)*

Scootaloo: *(flicking at paper)* Maybe there's something to this newspaper idea. *(She picks it up in her teeth.)*

Sweetie: I guess it's worth a shot.

(“Iris in” to a close-up of it on a floor. Sweetie leans down and rips a page away with her teeth; in a longer shot, she and Scootaloo are wadding up the newsprint for packing material and filling a box. They are in the Carousel Boutique, and a slow zoom out frames Rarity alongside; she levitates a vase into the box, and the two fillies close the flaps. The nearby door is magically opened and the parcel floated out, and Scootaloo and Sweetie glance toward their rumps only to find unmarked hide. Both young faces fall at the lack of results.)

(Quick pan to Scootaloo as she gets her teeth onto one page and rips a strip loose, while Sweetie holds the paper. They are outside now, and a longer shot puts them underneath a bird's nest whose occupant takes the strip and adds it in. Quite a few other bits of paper protrude here and there, suggesting that they have been at it for some time. Grin, check their haunches, no good.)

(Quick pan to a pair of hats, folded from the pages and sitting on their heads, then zoom out. They are piloting a boat made from the rest of the paper down a stream as Pinkie Pie watches from shore. A red pennant flies from the stern. The two lift their haunches into view to check for the sudden appearance of any sort of nautical cutie mark but are sorely disappointed—and then the boat sinks right along with their spirits.)

(“Iris out” to a close-up of Bloom reading the paper inside the Crusaders' clubhouse. The focus is on her, but shifts to the door behind her as it bursts open to admit the other two—covered in mud and paper strips.)

Sweetie: Apple Bloom! Your newspaper idea was nothing but a big bust!

(Cut to just behind her on the end of this; Bloom turns to face her. The camera shifts back to the two filthy fillies on the start of the next line.)

Scootaloo: We tried everything from *papier-mâché* to making birds' nests and nothing worked!

(Their comrade promptly bursts out laughing, which does very little to improve their sour mood.)

Sweetie: What's so funny? *(They cross to Bloom.)*

Bloom: *(tapping Sweetie's forehead with paper)* What I meant was, we should write for the paper!

(She gestures to a poster on the wall: a grinning filly wearing a gray fedora with a press card tucked in the band, a camera slung around her neck, and saddlebags that contain a notepad.)

Bloom: We can get our cutie marks as journalists!

(Realizing that they have completely missed the obvious, Scootaloo and Sweetie groan wearily)

and keel over in a shower of muddy paper strips. Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the schoolhouse during the day. Cheers from the students are heard.)

Cheerilee: *(from inside)* Okay, class, see you tomorrow!

(Close-up of the door on the end of this; it swings open and various class members head out.)

Cheerilee: Oh, for those of you who want to join the newspaper staff, stay here— *(tapping desk)* —because we’re meeting right now!

(The Crusaders and some others are still at their desks; cut to them. Scootaloo and Sweetie are now clean again after their varied mishaps in the prologue.)

Bloom: *(to Scootaloo)* Cutie marks in journalism!

Scootaloo: Such a good idea.

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* Welcome, everypony. *(Back to her.)* Now as you know, our editor-in-chief graduated last year.

Sweetie: *(from o.s., raising a hoof)* Oh, oh! *(Cut to her.)* Oh, oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* Yes?

Sweetie: What’s an editor-in-chief? *(Cheerilee again.)*

Cheerilee: Good question, Sweetie Belle! I like those reporter’s instincts. *(Sweetie smiles hugely; cut to frame the whole room and pan slowly.)* The *Foal Free Press* is a student-run paper. I’m only involved as an advisor.

(Cut to a slow pan across the desks. Up front is Shady Daze, a light blue-gray earth pony colt with a two-tone dark blue mane, held back by a green eyeshade visor, and bright blue eyes. The pan frames Featherweight, Truffle Shuffle, and Ruby Pinch—unicorn filly, pink coat, two-tone darker pink mane, medium green eyes.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* So the editor-in-chief is the pony in charge, from choosing the stories to making sure it gets to press on time. *(Bloom and Scootaloo trade a smile; back to her.)* Now as I said... *(gesturing toward door)* ...we have a new editor this year.

(Cut to it on the end of this; it is closed, but a silhouette with a familiar piece of headwear appears in the glass window. When the door swings open, there stands Diamond Tiara in all her snobby glory.)

Foals: Diamond Tiara?!?

Diamond: *(walking in)* Hmph!

Cheerilee: *(walking out)* I'll leave you alone now to discuss everypony's assignments. *(Diamond sits at the front desk.)* Have fun!

(Exit Cheerilee, pulling the door to. The moment the latch clicks, Diamond ditches her fake smile and leans over the desk.)

Diamond: All right, listen up!

(Jumping onto it, she bucks the wall, causing the projection screen hung over the blackboard to unroll and display a smirking photo of herself.)

Diamond: The *Foal Free Press* is a joke.

Foals: Huh?

Diamond: No pony at this school takes it seriously.

(Cut to Truffle, who has donned a fez and a pair of reading glasses to peruse a copy.)

Diamond: *(from o.s.)* Well, I, the editor-in-chief in charge, am gonna deliver us to new-found glory!

(Back to her on the second half of this line. Total silence from the rest of the would-be staffers for a long moment. Truffle breaks it, having ditched his fez and specs.)

Truffle: Yaaay! *(Cut to Diamond, a notebook now lying open before her.)*

Diamond: First things first. Where's the staff photographer?

(Cut to Featherweight, now with a camera slung around his neck, he smiles and waves timidly.)

Diamond: *(from o.s.)* Get out there and document *everything*. *(Scared, he darts for the door.)* I'll decide what's important.

(Cut to her, by the door, on the end of this; she slams it shut.)

Diamond: The rest of you, I want hard-hitting news and interesting think pieces!

(Cut to the bewildered group during this line, then back to her; she sits at the desk again.)

Diamond: No more namby-pamby stories like last year's editor.

Ruby: But Namby-Pamby was a great editor!

Diamond: *(closing her notebook)* Well, there's a new regime now, and I want juicy stories. The juicier, the better! *(pointing to door)* Now get out there and report!

(Another buck rolls the screen up before she heads for the exit.)

Scootaloo: Let's get outta here, girls. Maybe we can try packing boxes again.

Sweetie: But this could be our last chance to earn our cutie marks. If we really are supposed to be journalists, isn't it worth a little grief?

Scootaloo: I guess you're right. We can take a little bit of Diamond Tiara for a lifetime of cutie marks.

Sweetie: *(with gusto)* Come on! Let's go get those marks!

(“Iris in” to the exterior of the Carousel Boutique. During the next line, cut to Rarity at the sewing machine in her upper-story workspace/living area, pencil in teeth and pincushion on a strap around one foreleg. Sweetie pops up behind her, gray fedora on head, holding a notepad and biting down on her own pencil.)

Sweetie: *(voice over)* My first story's gonna be an exclusive interview.

(Her tap at the pad is met with a mad dash across the room. Cut to the ground-floor showroom, where Rarity has set up a pony mannequin on the three-mirror platform and dressed it in a hat and gown that both sport plenty of peacock feathers. Sweetie is down here in a blink and plunks her haunches on a stool, waving to get a little attention; big sister smiles and fires up her horn to tuck a feather into the fedora's ribbon, knocking the press card loose. Sweetie grimaces at the accessory change, but Rarity is in her element now and quickly levitates the entire outfit onto the aspiring reporter, who blushes mightily.)

(Pan quickly to a close-up of the paper-filled nest from the prologue, now occupied by three birds rather than one.)

Scootaloo: *(voice over)* I saw a brand-new nest of baby birds the other day. I bet our readers would eat up a sweet story like that.

(On the line, zoom out to frame her perched nearby on a branch—hat, press card, notepad, pencil. She writes a bit, but drops the pad, then the pencil, then herself; a splat of mud drifts up as her hat slowly floats down after her and settles back on her head. Down comes the birds' laughter, due in no small part to the fact that her frantically beating wings have done no good in keeping her aloft or lifting her out of the puddle. She too blushes.)

(Pan quickly to Bloom at home in the Sweet Apple Acres barn, wearing a hat and press card of her own. She and Granny sit sidon a couch, looking at a photo album; the elderly pony laughs over the memories, but Bloom seems a trifle impatient.)

Bloom: *(voice over)* Granny Smith has all sorts of great stories.

(She gets her cheeks pinched, then pulls out a book with a map of Equestria on its cover as Granny puts the album away.)

Bloom: *(voice over)* I reckon I'll do a piece on the history of Ponyville.

(Her tome is knocked away in favor of another album, which proves to contain a picture of baby Bloom wearing diapers on rump and head. A different one shows her getting a bath; yet another has a picture of Applejack's dog Winona yanking her diaper down on its cover. Bloom's jaw drops almost to her knees, and she blushes while pulling her hat down to cover her face.)

(“Iris out” to the exterior of the schoolhouse, zooming in slowly, then dissolve to a close-up of an open basement window just above ground level. The zoom continues to the sound of typing, and the view dissolves to an overhead shot of the basement and zooms in toward Diamond at one end. She sits in a high-backed chair behind a desk and has put the photo of herself on the wall. A layout table stands in one corner, Shady squirts ink into a printing press, and Ruby and Truffle are busy at the typewriters. The floor and machinery are liberally besmirched with pigment, as are Shady and the apron he wears.)

(Here come the Crusaders, properly cleaned/groomed and with hats and saddlebags back in place. They stop in front of Diamond's desk.)

Diamond: I hope you've got something, because everything so far is unusable. *(A stack of pages is tossed up to her; she reads.)* “Baby Birds Born”? “Rarity's Hot New Hat”? *(Cut to the trio; she continues o.s.)* “Ponyville: The Early Years”?

(Back to the editor-in-chief, who shoves the pages away with a cry of revulsion and jumps over the desk to back them across the room.)

Diamond: I don't know what you call this, but it sure isn't news!

Sweetie: *(nervously)* We just thought— *(They run into the wall.)*

Diamond: Get something else on my desk by the end of the day, and it better be juicy!

(Cut to the schoolhouse lawn. A storm-cellar door next to the basement window bursts open and the three writers are flung bodily out onto the grass without any of their gear. The crash landing leaves all three badly dazed; their hats and notepads are thrown out after them.)

Scotaloo: Now what? Do you know what I had to do to get that story? *(Bloom stands up; Featherweight zips in and takes a few pictures farther back.)*

Bloom: Oh, you don't even want to know what I had to sit through.

(A couple of grunting cries from the o.s. Snips shakes them back to the moment, and Sweetie trots off for a closer look.)

Snips: *(from o.s.)* Oh, get it off me, Snails! *(The latter's shadow is seen on the wall.)*

Snails: *(from o.s., grunting)* You get it off me, Snips!

(Cut to Sweetie's perspective, approaching the corner; Snails comes partially into view around it. Another cry from Snips.)

Snips: *(from o.s.)* Stop it! You are making it worse!

(Back to her, registering sudden surprise, then cut to the two colts. A large wad of chewed bubble gum has them glued tail to tail; they pull against it as Snips slaps at it with a foreleg. This only deposits some of the gunk on that hoof.)

Snips: *(disgustedly)* Aw, great!

Snails: I'll get it.

(He bucks Snips in the rump, driving him away only to snap right back; the attempt puts gum on Snails' rear hooves as well. The two wind up glued back to back, and Snips cries out.)

Snails: Get it off! *(Cut to Sweetie; he continues o.s.)* GET IT OFF!!

Sweetie: *(giggling, beckoning)* Hey, Featherweight!

(Cut to Featherweight, who is snapping shots of a squirrel sitting in a tree's hollow trunk.)

Sweetie: *(from o.s.)* Come here! *(Giggle; he gallops over. Cut to both.)* Take a few pictures of this, then meet me during lunch.

(She ducks away and he puts his camera to work. Now she rejoins Bloom and Scootaloo, who have their hats on.)

Sweetie: Girls, I have our story!

(Snap to black, against which a new issue spins into view. The front page displays a full-color photo of the two unfortunate, annoyed colts, a large-font headline in red, and a "headshot"-style picture of the writer: a filly-head silhouette with a red question mark overlaid on it.)

Filly 1: *(voice over, reading)* "Snips and Snails and Bubble Gum Fails."

(Cut to the speaker, reading the paper on a bench outside the schoolhouse. Another filly stands nearby; both are getting a good rise out of this account.)

Filly 1: "And that's when the biggest jokester in school really stuck his hoof in it—literally!"

(Pan across the lawn; others are reading. Laughter all around.)

Colt: The *Foal Free Press* is usually just boring news and stuff!

Filly 2: So funny!

(The camera reaches Snips and Snails, both stamping inked hoofprints onto the copies held by a line of their classmates. The bare patches in their coats tell of the way in which that gum was finally removed.)

Snips: Our mothers always told us we'd end up in the paper someday.

Snails: Yeah! *(Both hold up their shaved rumps.)* And look! *(Close-up of these; they continue*

o.s.) We finally got the gum out!

(His laugh is followed by a flash of white, which clears to show the hairless hindquarters frozen in place. This shot lowered out of frame—the photo on the front page of a new issue—and behind it, the view wipes to the newspaper office. The camera points at the now-hatless Crusaders from across Diamond’s desk.)

Diamond: *(from o.s.)* Your column is a sensation!

(They smile; cut to frame this end of the room, with the printing press cranking out fresh copies.)

Diamond: I don’t want you doing news anymore. I want more columns like this. *(Another round of smiles; she looks out at the full playground.)* Columns about ponies and their private lives, the things they do when they think they’re alone. *(She jumps down into her chair.)* You three are my new gossip columnists!

(Back to them on the end of this; the smiles widen a notch or twelve and all six eyes positively shine with triumph.)

Diamond: And I love the way you signed it!

(Close-up of the “mystery” headshot.)

Diamond: *(from o.s., pointing)* “Gabby Gums”? *(sighing happily)* That was a stroke of genius! *(Cut to the Crusaders.)*

Sweetie: We couldn’t fit all of our names, so we decided to create one for all three of us.

Diamond: *(pounding desk)* Well, I want more Gabby Gums! Nice work, girls. *(She turns to the wall.)*

Scotaloo: But we sure seem to have a gift for gossip.

Sweetie: If we can write a few more of these Gabby Gums columns, we’ll earn our cutie marks for sure!

Crusaders: *(jumping up)* Woo-hoo!

(Extreme close-up of their three extended hooves slapping together for a high five, then cut to them at a picnic table on the schoolhouse lawn. Notepads and crumpled pages litter the surface, and a Thermos and steaming mug sit among the jumble. Their expressions and posture, and Scotaloo’s idle toying with a pencil, testify to the frustration that has set in across the board.)

Sweetie: Scotaloo... *(Close-up of her, panning to Scotaloo.)* ...do you have anything?

Scotaloo: Nope. *(Pan back to Sweetie.)*

Sweetie: Apple Bloom? *(To Bloom.)*

Bloom: *(sighing, flicking her pad’s blank pages)* Sorry.

(Snips and Snails wave from beyond Scotaloo’s end of the table, having stuck themselves together tail to tail with a fresh wad of gum.)

Scotaloo: Let's face it. Nothing very juicy happens at this school.

(The two boneheads try to pull apart but end up mired back to back, exactly as before.)

Sweetie: We're doomed.

(Three faces fall and six ears droop. Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Carousel Boutique. Zoom in slowly and cut to Rarity in the showroom; she levitates a stack of folded fabrics ahead of herself and crosses the floor. She trips and falls in close-up, the materials tumbling down in a heap, and a longer shot reveals the obstacle as one of Sweetie's saddlebags when she shifts her legs. Close-up of this.)

Rarity: *(from o.s., floating it up)* Ohhh... *(Cut to her.)* ...Sweetie Belle! Was she raised in a barn or something?

(The flap opens, revealing a rolled-up Foal Free Press; she gasps and smirks upon noticing it, then starts to ponder the matter.)

Rarity: Ooh...you really shouldn't be snooping, Rarity. *(She motions the bag away.)* Oh, but it's so much fun, Rarity.

(Tackling it out of the air; she comes up with the paper floating open before her eyes.)

Rarity: Hello...what's this? *(laughing)* "Gum on Their Bum!" *(Pan toward the stairs.)* Too rich! *(Sweetie comes down, irritated.)*

Sweetie: Can you *please* keep it down with all the laughter? I'm trying to—

(Her eyes pop when she sees big sister reading merrily away.)

Sweetie: Hey! *(Rarity yelps and rolls the paper, magicking it in and closing the flap.)*

Rarity: I...I was just—

Sweetie: Are you snooping through my saddlebag?

(Close-up of Rarity's nervous grin on the end of this. She shifts the bag behind herself, easing it from side to side to keep Sweetie from getting a clear view every time she tries to peek around. After a few round of this, the little unicorn slaps the big one's horn, breaking the telekinesis and allowing her to snatch the bag in her teeth. Rarity ends up on her haunches and rubbing her horn. This break in the action ends when Sweetie drops the gear.)

Sweetie: *(indignantly)* How dare you!

Rarity: *(smiling, floating paper up)* Oh, but this Gabby Gums column is so funny! *(She crosses the floor, reading.)*

Sweetie: You actually like the school paper?

Rarity: It's so much juicier than anything in the boring old *Ponyville Express*. *(glancing back, with a small gasp)* Could I borrow this to show my friends?

Sweetie: Your friends would want to read the *Foal Free Press*?

Rarity: Oh, they'd just love Gabby Gums! *(Sweetie beams; zoom in. Rarity continues o.s.)* Who is she, anyway? *(Cut to frame both.)* I've never heard of her before. Is she a new—

(She goes back to reading as she says this last and does not notice Sweetie's hasty exit until the sound of the slamming door cuts her off. Cut to the exterior of the schoolhouse; Sweetie gallops up and skids to a walk before Bloom and Scootaloo.)

Sweetie: *(pacing)* We gave up too quickly, girls. Forget trying to squeeze stories out of this school. *(Long overhead shot.)* We need to expand!

(On this last word, the camera zooms out to frame all of Ponyville; the view then cuts back to the lawn. Featherweight walks around, taking pictures.)

Bloom: We could find all kinds of kinds of great gossip out there in Ponyville!

Sweetie: We'll need to tell Featherweight to start working overtime.

(During this line, cut to his latest subject, a ladybug on a fence that gets snapped.)

Scootaloo: *(as Crusaders head off)* Sweetie Belle, you're a genius!

(Dissolve to a busy stretch of marketplace stalls. All is quiet until a horrendous wailing rips the air to pieces; the shaking of the joke/novelty shop at the end of the street suggests the epicenter. Cut to the source—the Cake twins, both screaming up a storm in the jewelry shop as their parents hold them. Mr. Cake has Pound, while Mrs. Cake holds Pumpkin, and Mr. Cake's haggard, stubble-faced appearance testifies to a rough stretch of parenting. So rough, in fact, that the babies' tantrum has somehow managed to shake a building they are not even in.)

(A flash of white washes over the scene and turns it into a full-color photo on the Foal Free Press front page. During the next line, zoom out as the paper is lowered to show Diamond at her desk, savoring this latest scoop.)

Diamond: *(reading)* "Pound and Pumpkin Cake trip to the store ends in tears." *(The Crusaders stand before her; the printing press churns along.)* Gabby Gums comes through again! *(Truffle hurries in.)*

Truffle: *(out of breath)* The Ponyville newsstand wants to carry the *Foal Free Press*! Ponies keep coming by and asking for it!

Diamond: Send 'em twenty copies! *(Close-up of him; she continues o.s.)* And if they run out of those, we'll send 'em twenty more!

(He gallops out; she comes around to pace in front of the Crusaders. Zoom out slowly.)

Diamond: You three are doing a great job for this paper. *(She stops at the door.)* Keep those columns coming! *(Exit.)*

Scotaloo: This is great!

(Close-up of a three-way high five, then “iris in” to Sweetie at a desk. The pencil in her teeth jots notes on a page as Bloom looks on and Scotaloo dictates for a moment; soon the yellow filly smiles, whisks the story away, and plunks it into an IN box. Ruby and Truffle do their thing, as does Shady with a wipe of the brow, and Truffle gets a strap around the fresh copies and hauls them away. A moment later they are dropped onto a patch of grass, where eager readers snap them up in their teeth. “Iris out” to several avid readers—all full-grown mares, for the record—on an idle stretch of road; during the next line, pan to frame the spa.)

Rarity: *(voice over, sighing happily)* Oh, this is the life, isn't it, girls?

(Cut to the hot-tub room inside. She, Twilight Sparkle, Applejack, and Spike are relaxing on the lounge chairs in various ways. Twilight reads the Foal Free Press, a crimp secured on the pink streak in her tail; Applejack lies on her belly, a blanket draped over her; Spike has cucumber slices on his eyes; and Rarity—in her favorite robe, with a towel around her mane—is reading a copy of her own as Lotus looks after her. Fluttershy and Pinkie are in the tub, with manes wrapped in towels. Applejack does not wear her hat.)

Rarity: The best hooficure I've ever had! *(Cut to Applejack, who gets a vigorous massage.)*

Applejack: *(voice vibrating)* Yooouuu sssaid it. *(Sigh; pan to Spike.)*

Spike: Ahhhh...I don't know if I've ever been so relaxed.

Rainbow Dash: *(from o.s.)* You guys!

(He sits bolt upright with a yell, the slices popping off his eyes and landing on hers as she gallops in, paper in teeth. This is set down on the floor.)

Rainbow: The new Gabby Gums just came out! “The Great and Powerful Trixie's Secrets Revealed!”

Rarity: We already read that one, Rainbow Dash. Come on, relax, have a hooficure. *(flopping down o.s., waving legs)* It feels amazing.

(During this line, the speed demon pulls one slice off her face with her tongue and gulps it.)

Rainbow: Did you forget who you're talking to? *(Cut to a squinting Spike, then back as she continues.)* The day I get a hooficure is the day I turn in my daredevil license. *(Close-up of the paper on the floor; she continues o.s.)* Besides, I haven't read this Gabby Gums yet.

(She leans into view on the end of this and nips it up in her teeth; next, Spike reaches in to grab the cucumber slice still on her eye.)

Spike: *(from o.s.)* Well, do it quietly, will you?

(He opens her mouth and reaches in. Cut to him, having already replaced the first and slapping the other one—intact despite being swallowed—back on.)

Spike: *(sighing impatiently)* Some of us are trying to unwind. *(Lotus puts another crimp in Twilight's tail.)*

Twilight: I like Gabby Gums too, but don't you think she can be a little mean? *(Applejack reads as well.)*

Applejack: She's not mean, Twilight, she's a hoot.

(The unicorn finds herself staring straight at a picture of Princess Celestia—caught in the act of gorging herself on cake.)

Twilight: *(reading)* "Celestia Just Like Us"? *(looking across)* Gabby Gums doesn't value anypony's privacy. *(Cut to Rarity on the end of this, getting a hoof filed.)*

Rarity: Oh, lighten up, Twilight. *(Lotus moves off.)* It's nothing but harmless gossip. *(Zoom out; Pinkie pops up from the tub.)*

Pinkie: Yeah, Twilight. I mean, listen to this one. *(whipping out a paper with a splash, reading)* "Mayor Not Naturally Gray."

(She holds it up in front of herself, framing a photo of Mayor Mare and the gray dye she is applying to cover her mane's natural color. Said color happens to be bright pink.)

Pinkie: *(giddily)* "The Mayor in a mane-dyeing scandal"? *(lowering it)* Who wouldn't want to read that?

(Twilight now has all four legs stretched over one side of her chair and slotted into a support board for her own bit of maintenance.)

Twilight: I just can't help feeling sorry for the ponies featured in her columns. *(Lotus applies some polish.)* It's gotta be a little embarrassing.

Rainbow: Are you kidding? Do you know how awesome it is to get your name in the paper?

Rarity: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow... *(Cut to her, getting another hoof filed.)* ...why don't you join me in one of these delicious hooficures?

(Twilight rolls her eyes good-humoredly and smiles toward Rainbow.)

Rainbow: It's that good, huh? *(Twilight nods; Rainbow steps off; Featherweight peeks in.)* Well, maybe just one little hoof.

(The focus shifts to the small pegasus before the camera cuts to an empty lounge chair next to Rarity. Rainbow flops down on her back and stretches out; every time Lotus tries to get a file near a rear hoof, she twitches one or both of them out of the way. A cut to the head end reveals that the pony who pulled off two Sonic Rainbooms is chewing her lower lip and shaking all over

as if the file were a red-hot branding iron. Before its tip can make contact, she jumps up off the chair with a yell and hovers above it.)

Rainbow: Forget it. I don't like ponies touching my hooves. *(She flies off to the dropped paper.)*
Man. I'd love it if Gabby Gums did a story on me.

Spike: She did one on me. *(All six instantly gather around her.)*

Ponies: WHAT?!?

(Their sudden attention scares the cucumbers off his eyes and a cry from his mouth. Cut to the exterior of the schoolhouse and zoom in slowly.)

Bloom: *(from inside)* Exclusive!

(Close-up of a sheet with some text and a photo of Spike taped on—doing his best ladies'-dragon impression: fez, velvet bathrobe, pipe emitting bubbles.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* "Local Dragon Tells All." *(Zoom out; the Crusaders stand before Diamond's desk. The sheet falls onto it.)* "Spike opens up about Canterlot, naps, and his favorite jams."

Scotaloo: It's our best column yet!

(Side view of them and Diamond, in her chair.)

Diamond: *(jumping on desk)* More like your worst column yet! *(Cut to them; she continues o.s., grabbing the page,)* Gabby Gums didn't become the biggest thing in Ponyville with namby-pamby stories like this!

(She throws it in their faces on the end of this and stalks out, the door closing to black out the screen. Snap immediately to the wincing trio.)

Bloom: *(sighing sadly)* Yeah, she's right. This column is a little softer than our usual gossip.

Sweetie: Were you guys feeling guilty about all the gossip too? Like maybe we could be hurting other ponies' feelings?

Bloom: Yeah. I didn't want to say anything because everypony loves Gabby Gums so much, but... *(all looking at page)* ...I was sorta hopin' we could start writin' more stories like this one.

Scotaloo: Me too.

(Sweetie picks it up in her mouth, drops it into a trash can, and addresses the others resolutely.)

Sweetie: If we're gonna get our cutie marks, we've got to give the ponies what they want.

(Each raises a reluctant hoof; extreme close-up of the three.)

Crusaders: *(from o.s., tapping them together)* Awww...

(Definitely the least enthusiastic high-five they have ever exchanged. Cut to a newspaper

spinning up against a black screen; its front-page photo shows Applejack snoozing under a tree.)

Applejack: (voice over; reading) “Applejack Asleep on the Job!”

(During this line, the paper is pulled away to expose the shop floor of Sugarcube Corner. She trots angrily across, her hat back on; all but Rainbow are sitting around behind her, and Pinkie and Rarity have copies. All five have shed their various spa trappings.)

Applejack: Can y’all believe this? (pointing down) And this one! (Close-up of a copy; she flips a page and reads o.s.) “Big Macintosh: What’s He Hidin’?”

(The fresh page shows a picture of the red stallion with Twilight’s old Smarty Pants doll on his grip—a holdover from “Lesson Zero.” Back to Applejack.)

Applejack: Who the hay does this Gabby Gums think she is?

Twilight: (levitating another one) Listen to this one.

(The move brings up a photo of herself pontificating over a book in the library. Zoom in on it during the following.)

Twilight: (reading) “Twilight Sparkle: I Was a Canterlot Snob.” (Back to her.) “A well-placed, scaly source close to the prissy pony says Twilight Sparkle thinks Ponyville is nothing but muddy roads and low-class rubes.” (She rounds on...) Spike!

(Standing by the front door, he is so surprised by her outburst that he yells and belches fire over the paper in his hands. Nothing is left but a charred ball.)

Twilight: How could you say such a thing?

Spike: Well, I-I didn’t! (grabbing a piece, reading) Gabby Gums made that up! I never said anything like that!

Rarity: Everypony, please! She’s just a harmless schoolpony engaged in a little idle gossip. (Zoom in; she and Pinkie read.) You’re really making too big a deal out of this. (Twilight crosses to her.)

Twilight: But it’s all lies! (warming up horn) Gabby Gums prints whatever she wants. (Close-up of a paper falling on the table; she continues o.s.) She doesn’t care whose reputation she destroys!

(A magic page turn brings up a profile shot of Fluttershy, with several red arrows pointing at her tail—which appears to be rather longer than normal. Zoom in on this.)

Twilight: (from o.s., reading) “Fluttershy Has Tail Extensions!”

(Back to her, Rarity, and Fluttershy on the end of this. The pegasus is so mortified that she silently sinks from view behind a ledge. The camera then cuts to the paper and zooms in as Twilight magically flips another page; this time, the photo subject is Pinkie, standing in a full

punchbowl with a lampshade on her head. A party is in full swing, but a horrified Lily is trying to flee the scene.)

Twilight: *(from o.s., reading)* “Pinkie Pie Is an Out-of-Control Party Animal!”

Pinkie: *(from o.s., yanking paper away)* What?!?

(Cut to her, eyeing a copy on the floor; she stands up on her hind legs.)

Pinkie: *(sobbing)* It’s true! *(huddling down, crying waterfalls)* I do have a problem! *(Twilight floats a paper up; Applejack and Fluttershy eye it with her.)*

Twilight: *(very snarky)* Oh, look. According to this one, the Cakes are breaking up! *(Mr. and Mrs. Cake zip in; she holds a tray of cupcakes. He is clean-shaven.)*

Mrs. Cake: We are?

(A loud crash from o.s. is followed by a pan to the door, which has just been knocked off the hinges by Rainbow and the huge mound of papers she is carrying.)

Rainbow: *(slightly muffled, thumping down on floor)* Well, my life is officially over! *(She pops her head out.)* Gabby Gums has made it to Cloudsdale!

(Tilt down to a close-up of the paper in her hooves; it bears a picture of her during Lotus’ attempted hoof-filing in the spa. However, she is smiling, suggesting that Featherweight either doctored it or snapped at just the right moment to capture that expression.)

Twilight: *(from o.s., reading)* “Rainbow Dash: Speed Demon or Super Softie?” *(Cut to frame both.)*

Rainbow: I grabbed as many copies as I could... *(sliding down the pile)* ...but it was too late! *(distraught)* I’m a laughingstock! *(She drops o.s.)*

Twilight: *(over her shoulder)* See, Rarity? Your so-called harmless gossip can be very hurtful!

(Cut to the still-unconvinced white unicorn during this line.)

Rarity: Honestly, you ponies have no sense of humor. *(eyeing a flattering photo of herself)* So she tweaks a few ponies every now and then. *(Page turn.)* Maybe they deser—

(She shifts into a pop-eyed gasp upon noticing the picture: herself, sprawled out on her favorite fainting couch and in full meltdown mode. The background goes red.)

Rarity: *I’ll destroy her!* *(Normal background; she reads closely as all but Rainbow gather.)* “The Drama Queen Diaries.” She’s reprinted my diary! How could Gabby Gums possibly get access to my private diary?

Twilight: We’ve got to put a stop to this once and for all! *(to Rarity)* Sweetie Belle’s on the newspaper staff. Maybe she knows who Gabby Gums is.

(Rarity gasps, covering her mouth, and shoots Twilight an offended glare; a moment later she is

on her way toward an intact door.)

Rarity: My sister would *never* associate with someone as beastly as Gabby Gums! (*Cut to the others, Rainbow now out of the pile; she continues o.s.*) I resent you even suggesting such a thing, Twilight! (*Back to her.*) Why, she's the most innocent, most lovely—

(Cut to the interior of a closed bag, which she opens. A locked diary sits on top of a stack of books, and the background is that of the Carousel Boutique's showroom. Her beatific smile gives way to a glower of pure rage.)

Rarity: —*most evil pony in Equestria!*

(Cut to her on the end of this, she has looked in Sweetie's saddlebags, and she stamps a hoof. Zoom in slowly.)

Rarity: (*levitating diary*) How could my own sister steal my private diary? How could my own sister be... (*Zoom in to a close-up; small voice.*) ...Gabby Gums?

(Snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the Carousel Boutique. Tilt up to the upper story and cut to the closed door of Rarity's workspace/living area. A shadow falls over the panels and a white leg swings up to kick the door open, revealing Sweetie with her notepad on the floor inside.)

Rarity: (*pointing*) *Et tu*, Gabby Gums? (*Cut to Sweetie; she snaps upright with a gasp.*)

Sweetie: You know? How'd you find out?

(The diary and a paper are magically shoved toward her; on the start of the next line, cut to frame both sisters.)

Rarity: The gilded pages of your betrayal!

Sweetie: Oh, yeah.

Rarity: (*walking past her with items*) How could you do this to me? You stole my secret diary and published it for all the world to read! Gossip can be a very hurtful thing! It is an invasion of privacy— (*levitating Sweetie's open bag*) —just like when I snooped through your saddlebag. (*Close-up of the chastened little sister; she continues o.s.*) You didn't like that much, did you?

Sweetie: No. (*Bag drops.*)

Rarity: (*walking past her*) What is important is that you understand how your column makes the ponies that you're writing about feel! (*Cut to just outside the open door.*)

Sweetie: I do understand, and we've all been feeling guilty. But we just want our cutie marks so badly. (*Inside again; zoom in slowly.*)

Rarity: (*resting a hoof on Sweetie's shoulder*) Do you really think that writing nasty things and

making everypony feel horrible is your destiny?

Sweetie: Well, when you put it that way...

(Cut to an extreme close-up of a rancorous editor-in-chief.)

Diamond: No! *(Longer shot; she leans over her desk toward the Crusaders.)* I won't let you quit! *(She swivels away.)*

Sweetie: But the gossip we've been printing is hurting everypony's feelings!

Diamond: *Feelings?!* *(She swivels back to them.)* I don't care about feelings! *(picking up a paper)* Gabby Gums is my bread and butter, and I'm not gonna let you goody-two-horseshoes take that away from me! *(Swivel away.)*

Sweetie: We're sorry, Diamond Tiara, but we've made our decision.

Scootaloo: *(stepping forward)* Yeah. You can't force us to keep gossiping.

(Extreme close-up of Diamond on the end of this; her scowl shifts into a calculating smile, and she holds up a file folder over her shoulder.)

Diamond: When you see these...

(Long pause; the focus shifts from her to them as their jaws drop a few inches.)

Diamond: ...you may not want to quit after all.

(The folder is thrown across, spilling out three full-color pictures when it hits the floor at the trio's feet. They suck in a disbelieving gasp; cut to a close-up of one that shows Sweetie having been pressed into modeling duty. A flash of white changes the view to the little unicorn, who blushes furiously.)

Diamond: *(from o.s.)* I told Featherweight to document everything.

(During this line, the view cuts to a snapshot of Scootaloo in the mud puddle underneath the birds' nest and flashes to the blushing real McCoy. The next cut brings up a photo of the page in Granny's album with the picture of the double-diapered baby Bloom; another flash, and it is the yellow filly's turn to go red in the face. Cut to Featherweight, who has stuck his camera into the office through the open window and takes another shot.)

Diamond: *(walking toward Crusaders)* And that's exactly what he did. *(She sweeps up the photos; Scootaloo gasps.)*

Scootaloo: *(grabbing for them)* Gimme those! *(Diamond pulls them back.)*

Diamond: Sorry, girls. Property of the Foal Free Press.

(Three faces fall in unison; cut to the boss, climbing into her chair, on the start of the next line.)

Diamond: And if Gabby Gums really does go into retirement... *(with mocking pity)* ...I'll need something to fill that empty column space.

(Nasty grin. The realization that she is blackmailing them hits home now, touching off reactions of shock and anger.)

Diamond: Now get out there and bring me more Gabby Gums!

(Snap to black.)

(Fade in to a patch of blue sky and tilt down to the Crusaders walking through the meadows outside Ponyville.)

Sweetie: We'll find a way out of this, girls.

Scotaloo: *(looking upward; others do likewise)* Maybe Rainbow Dash'll have a story for us!

(Cut to a small cloud floating overhead; the pegasus is lounging around on it.)

Scotaloo: *(from o.s.)* She's always good for some gossip. *(Close-up of Rainbow.)*

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow Dash! *(Zoom out slightly to frame the Crusaders; she looks down.)*
Hey, Rainbow Dash!

Rainbow: *(nastily)* Well, if it isn't Gabby Gums.

Sweetie: *(sadly)* You heard too, huh?

Rainbow: Are you kidding? Everypony in town knows it's you three.

Scotaloo: *(smiling sheepishly)* Don't suppose you'd let us write a column on you, huh?

(The vexed weather pony responds by bringing a large gray cloud down over their heads and bucking it to set off a drenching shower. She flies off as the three soaked fillies trade miserable looks. Wipe to the exterior of Fluttershy's cottage as they head slowly for the front door; now dried off. Once they reach the step, they find a considerable quantity of water dribbling out from under the door and hear the yellow pegasus' sobs through it. Cut to just inside; the door swings open and the camera tilts down to frame the head of Fluttershy's rabbit Angel.)

Sweetie: Oh, hi, Angel.

(Cut to their perspective of the living room during the next line. Angel gives them the most hateful glare his black eyes can conjure up, while his owner cries waterfalls that make Pinkie's earlier jag look like a leaky faucet. Her tears have converted most of the floor into a swamp.)

Sweetie: Is Fluttershy home?

(He gives it a moment to let the group fully understand not only the idiocy of the question, but also their sheer brazenness in asking it after smearing her reputation as they did. The moment ends when he slams the door hard. Wipe to the three trudging along a Ponyville street, then cut to just behind them. Dead ahead is the library—but before they can reach the front door, they run face first into an invisible barrier and tumble backwards. It flares up briefly when hit. Bloom is the first to stand up; she taps the wall, causing it to manifest fully as the others get up. The

camera is now on the inside, pointing out at them.)

Scootaloo: *(slightly muffled)* Hey! What gives?

(Inside the library, Spike opens a window and looks out at them.)

Spike: Aha! *(Outside the field; he is muffled.)* Twilight thought you might try to show your faces around here...

(Long shot of the building. The field is spherical, its lower portion cut off where it meets the ground; the entire assembly looks something like a life-size snow globe.)

Spike: *(muffled)* ...so she put up a force field! *(Window slam; they slink away.)*

(Wipe to a close-up of an extremely cross Applejack and Big Macintosh in the Sweet Apple Acres orchards.)

Bloom: *(from o.s.)* Oh, come on, Applejack! *(Longer shot; the Crusaders are out here.)* You're not mad at us too, are you?

Applejack: Yup.

Bloom: You're not even gonna talk to us?

Applejack: Nope. *(She turns away.)*

Macintosh: You should be ashamed of yourself, humiliatin' your sister and me like that. *(moving to stare them down point-blank)* We don't want to talk to any of y'all right now, so take your little gossip column— *(Cut to the Crusaders; he points and continues o.s.)* —and your embarrassin' photographs and just GO AWAY!

(They do so, floored not just by the severity of this tongue-lashing, but also the fact that they have probably just heard him say more words in one stretch than any other moment in his life or theirs. Dissolve to a nearly empty street; as they walk forlornly along it, the only passing mare—Berry Punch—gives them the stink-eye and others close up their houses. Doors and shutters are slammed, shades pulled down, welcome mats yanked in—and three heads droop toward the ground.)

(Dissolve to the exterior of their clubhouse and zoom in slowly. It is now later in the day.)

Sweetie: *(from inside)* We've ruined all of our friendships— *(Inside, she paces before Bloom and Scootaloo.)* —and we still don't have our cutie marks!

Bloom: This is the worst day ever!

Scootaloo: *(standing up)* Oh, yeah? Wait 'til tomorrow. *(flapping her wings briefly)* Our most embarrassing moments are about to be published for everypony to laugh at.

Bloom: So what do we do? *(Cut to Sweetie; she hunkers down.)*

Sweetie: I don't know. *(standing up)* But we're not leaving this clubhouse until we think of something!

(Zoom in on her and the window that drawn her attention. Cut to a stretch of orchard land, then dissolve to the exterior of the schoolhouse at dawn of the following day. Once the sun has risen a bit more, cut to Diamond at the level of the open office window.)

Diamond: That's it!

(Longer shot; she stands atop a stack of papers on her desk chair, and Shady looks quizzically up at her.)

Diamond: Gabby Gums is out of time.

(Cut to him; the folder of blackmail fodder is thrust out for him.)

Diamond: *(from o.s.)* Run these instead. *(He gets them in his mouth.)* I want this paper on every street corner in Ponyville!

(Cut to her on the end of this, she and her chair roll back behind the desk and she bangs a hoof on it. The stack of papers is gone.)

Shady: *(saluting)* Yes, ma'am!

(Just as he is about to start cranking, the sound of the door being flung open cuts him off. Cut to the Crusaders on their way in.)

Sweetie: STOP THE PRESSES!!

Shady: Uh, they haven't started yet. *(Cut to Diamond, then to the trio on the next line.)*

Scotaloo: *(holding up notepad)* We have a Gabby Gums column!

(She lays it on the desk as the boss lets off an exasperated sigh.)

Diamond: You're lucky I'm nice. *(Shady slings it to Ruby and Truffle; pan across.)* This better not happen again... *(now o.s.)* ...or else!

(He gets the machinery in gear, turning out copy after copy; as one flies off the end, the background behind it changes to the schoolhouse lawn. A picture of the Crusaders is above the fold on the front page, and this one is being held up by a foal as another reads farther back. The paper is carried out of view, exposing other students on the swings and grass; all are plowing into the story with relish. Pan from here to the building; Diamond opens the door and steps out with a satisfied sigh.)

Diamond: Well done, Diamond Tiara. You've averted yet another crisis with your amazing diplomatic skills.

(Having reached the playground, she stops to look over a filly's shoulder. Smugness shifts to disbelief in no time flat; she gasps softly and the camera cuts to a slow zoom on the front page.)

Diamond: *(from o.s., reading)* “An Open Letter to Ponyville, by Gabby Gums”?

(Back to her; she yanks the paper away for herself and shoves the filly aside.)

Diamond: What is this? *(lowering it)* Ooh, they’re not gonna get away with this! I’ll publish those photos tomorrow! They messed with the wrong pony!

(Dissolve slowly to a long overhead shot of Ponyville, then cut to a doorstep as a paper is thrown onto it. Mayor Mare peeks out, her latest pink-to-gray dye job half-done.)

Sweetie: *(voice over, dictating)* “To the citizens of Ponyville: For some time now, you’ve been reading this column to get the latest dirt and the hottest buzz.”

(Close-up of the Crusaders, trudging through rain with a paper held over their heads.)

Sweetie: *(voice over)* “But this will be my final piece.” *(Longer shot; Rainbow is stomping a cloud to rain on them.)* “We want to apologize for the pain and embarrassment we’ve caused.”

(The annoyed pegasus lays off and looks down at them, getting an eyeful of the front page.)

Bloom: *(voice over)* “You see, I’m actually *three* little fillies...” *(They peek out, one by one.)* “...Sweetie Belle, Apple Bloom, and Scootaloo.”

(Rainbow grins and moves the cloud aside with one swift kick. Cut to a close-up of Fluttershy’s closed front door, which swings open to reveal the despondent pony on her couch and a ticked-off Angel. He regards the paper thrust toward him with surprise.)

Scootaloo: *(voice over)* “As the popularity of our column grew...” *(Longer shot; the Crusaders are on the step.)* “...we got swept up in the hype.” *(He darts in; Fluttershy comes out with a smile and hugs them.)* “We knew that what we were doing didn’t feel quite right, but we ignored the guilt because everypony seemed to want to read what we were writing.”

(Dissolve to the library, whose force field is still shutting them out. A distrustful Spike opens the front door and looks out, whereupon Sweetie holds a copy out for him to see.)

Sweetie: *(voice over)* “From now on, we promise to respect everypony else’s privacy...” *(Twilight emerges, smiling, and drops the field.)* “...and we won’t engage in hurtful gossip anymore.”

(Dissolve to Applejack and Bloom standing face to face. The elder sister smiles tenderly down at the contrite younger, who smiles as well as they nuzzle cheek to cheek.)

Bloom: *(voice over)* “All we can do is ask for your forgiveness, Ponyville.”

(A longer shot frames Rarity and Sweetie making up as well, while Scootaloo carries papers in her mouth and tosses them onto the roadbed.)

Bloom: *(voice over)* “Signing off for the very last time, X-O-X-O, Gabby Gums.”

(Dissolve to just outside the schoolhouse’s basement window, zooming in slowly.)

Cheerilee: *(from inside, a bit wearily)* Well, staff...

(Dissolve to an overhead shot of the office. She now sits at the editor’s desk to address the crew; Diamond stands petulantly off to her side. Zoom in slowly.)

Cheerilee: ...I guess I gave a little too much authority to a first-time editor. *(Cut to Diamond during this; Cheerilee leans to her.)* I’m sorry, Diamond Tiara. I have to strip you of your title.

(One hard buck against the wall rolls up Diamond’s photo, prompting a furious growl from the filly; cut to the Crusaders as she clomps over to stand next to them.)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* And for the next editor of the *Foal Free Press*... *(Diamond blows them a raspberry; back to her.)* ...here’s your new editor-in-chief...

(Cut to the closed door on the end of this. A slim silhouette appears on the other side of the translucent glass panel, and it swings open to reveal...)

Cheerilee: *(from o.s.)* ...Featherweight!

(Cheers from the staff as he zips in and gives Shady a high five. Close-up of Diamond.)

Diamond: Ugh! Him? But what about me?

(Shady reaches into view, slapping his eyeshade onto her head and draping his ink-splotched apron over a foreleg.)

Shady: *(from o.s.)* Here you go!

(He leans into view, now wearing Featherweight’s camera around his neck.)

Shady: I’ve been promoted to staff photographer!

(Zoom out as he speaks to frame the press. He snaps a picture of her and hurries off; blinded by the glare, she slips in a puddle of ink and falls against the old machine. The black gunk spatters down over her as the press starts churning put papers and the Crusaders laugh it up. “Iris out” to black on Diamond’s pathetic pout.)