

FLUTTER BRUTTER

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to a house in a Cloudsdale neighborhood during the day. The lawn, street, and roof are constructed from clouds, and more of them fill a flower box at the front window and grow as bushes at the building corners, but everything else about the structure is solid enough. Rainbows curl through the lawn as fences on either side. Zoom in slowly, then cut to the kitchen inside on the start of the next line. The speaker is a pale yellow pegasus mare with red mane/tail in a neatly curled style and red-violet eyes behind large square glasses. She wears a pearl necklace in a slightly darker shade than her coat, as well as matching small flower-shaped earrings, and she speaks in a soft, gentle voice akin to Fluttershy's. Next to her, a light green pegasus stallion enters: very pale gray mane/tail/mustache, the first combed into a small pile atop his head; blue-green eyes; blue sweater over a white shirt. The next words mark these two as Fluttershy's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Shy; her cutie mark is hidden completely by her folded wings, while his leave only the edge of a small white cloud exposed.)

Mrs. Shy: We're so happy you could come have lunch with your father and me, Fluttershy.

(Longer shot: their daughter and Rainbow Dash sit in chairs across the table from them. Each seat has a little tuft of cloud for a cushion.)

Fluttershy: I'm so glad you asked.

Rainbow: And it was super-awesome of you to invite me too. *(Mr. Shy circles and sets down a plate of food in his teeth.)* Things have been so busy with the Wonderbolts lately, it's great to get a chance to relax someplace quiet.

Mr. Shy: That's exactly what I intend to do now that I've retired. In fact, I converted the back house to showcase my cloud collection.

(His voice is as quiet as Mrs. Shy's, and his approach with the plate fully exposes his cutie mark as a trio of white clouds. As he speaks, he points toward the window and the camera cuts to it, picking out a small round outbuilding whose door is open. Through this and the windows, shelves containing jarred bits of cloud in various shapes and forms can be seen; a flowerbed grows close to the base of the wall. The camera then cuts back to him and Fluttershy.)

Mr. Shy: I have my clouds, your mum has her flowers, you've got your animals, and your brother...

(He lets the sentence die in a bit of clearly unpleasant thought; after a mildly tense second or two, Mrs. Shy carries on with it.)

Mrs. Shy: Zephyr Breeze has his... *(Muffled sigh.)* ...interests. *(Chuckle.)*

Rainbow: I'll say! Remember when he was convinced square clouds were gonna be the next big thing? *(Hearty snicker.)*

Mrs. Shy: He's matured a lot since then. *(Mr. Shy circles back to her.)*

Mr. Shy: *(as they join hooves)* Actually, it's funny you bring Zephyr up.

(Tentative grins from both elders bring a puzzled frown to their daughter's face. It shifts into a look of muted horror.)

Fluttershy: Oh, no! Not again!

Mrs. Shy: It's just for a little while, dear, 'til he gets back on his hooves. *(Fluttershy puts a hoof to her face in disgust.)*

Rainbow: Wait. You don't mean—

(The front door bursts open to admit the fourth family member. Zephyr Breeze is a tall, long-legged pegasus stallion whose coat is a bit darker than Mr. Shy's. His mane and tail are pale blond, the former tied into a messy topknot, the eyes are vivid violet, and an artfully cultivated case of five o'clock shadow decorates his face. A carryall bag hangs across his back, mostly covering his cutie mark, and he announces himself in a loud, gratingly boisterous voice.)

Zephyr: Guess who's home! *(Laugh.)* That's right, big sis, it's your one and only favorite little brother, *moi*.

(Said big sister can only manage a grimacing little moan and sink behind her chair as Rainbow's expression sours and the parents' grins become noticeably strained. Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of a Jell-O mold on the kitchen table. Zephyr's bag slams down, splattering most of it, and the camera zooms out to frame Fluttershy eyeing the wreck with great consternation. He zipz over to her.)

Zephyr: Hi, Flutter-Butter! *(hugging her)* How's the bestest big sister ever? *(No immediate response.)* Hey! Where's the love? How about a little excitement to see your baby brother?

(His mark is fully revealed in this sequence: a feather and a gust of wind. Now he shifts into a hearty noogie that leaves the pink mane thoroughly disheveled; once he steps off, she pulls it back into some sort of order.)

Fluttershy: I'm just surprised. When you left, you said mane therapy was your calling.

(Cut to the other side of the table during this line; now Zephyr has pulled both parents in for a hug, one foreleg for each. His eyes pop at the mention of this vocation and he loosens his grip. Part of Mrs. Shy's cutie mark can now be seen as a couple of flowers.)

Zephyr: Oh, it is, sis, it is. You would not believe how much stress ponies hold in their manes! *(Circle back to her; he lifts a length of hers.)* Everything gets limp and unmanageable. *(pacing behind, piling her mane into a topknot)* No offense, but brushing alone won't solve the problem.

(The pink mass of hair falls loose into an unruly curtain that hides her face.)

Fluttershy: *(dryly, pushing it back into place)* What went wrong?

Zephyr: Nothing went wrong *per se*.

(Cut to her. As he continues, he knocks a full plate away from in front of her and slides an open book across to take its place. The pages flip to stop on a group of photos: close-up shots of individual ponies' faces, their manes done in an assortment of styles.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s., disdainfully)* It's just, the powers that be were so locked into their required styles, and you know me.

(He reaches into view to flip the book shut, revealing a silhouette of a mare's head on the cover; cut to him.)

Zephyr: I've got my own style, and I think they were a little threatened.

(Rooting around in his bag, he sets a plastic pony head in front of Mr. and Mrs. Shy. Clearly intended for practice in mane styling, the artificial tresses rooted into the scalp have been worked into a haphazard mishmash of colors and styles that no sane pony would even think of using all at once. They recoil a bit as one garishly colored strand falls off, but Mrs. Shy gamely tries to work up a supportive smile.)

Mrs. Shy: O-Oh, this is...lovely, dear.

(Rainbow is a bit more forthcoming with her assessment, making a gagging sound and miming the action of shoving a hoof down her throat. Zephyr leans over to her next and shifts to a tone that is far more smarmy than debonair.)

Zephyr: *(laughing knowingly)* Well! If it isn't "Rainbow's the Best Flyer That Ever Was" Dash.

Rainbow: *(very snarky)* Oh, *this* oughta be good.

Zephyr: *(pulling up a chair very close)* Sorry, I-I shouldn't tease you. *(sitting)* I know the whole "super-awesome flyer" bit's just to impress me.

(That gets a shocked little neigh out of her.)

Zephyr: Still, thanks for showing up for my homecoming. *(patting her hoof)* It's—it's sweet.

(He backs off, totally missing the strangled little sound of combined disbelief and revulsion that escapes her lips, and moves for a look around the rest of the kitchen.)

Zephyr: I kinda thought there'd be more ponies here. I mean, what about your party planner friend, um...Sprinkle Pie! She coulda turned this into a real house par-tay, am I right? I mean, this place could use it.

(Cut to Fluttershy, whose irked glare and one lowered eyebrow broadcast her general opinion of her sibling's interruption.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Draaa-aaab! *(Pan to Mr. and Mrs. Shy.)*

Mrs. Shy: *(chuckling weakly, stammering)* I-I...

Mr. Shy: We *have* been meaning to redecorate.

(Across the way, the unfocused son has already taped up a few photos of himself on the pantry doors.)

Zephyr: *(chuckling disdainfully, crossing kitchen)* Dad, please. When I get all my stuff back in here, you won't even remember what this boring old place looked like.

(After a brief stop in the doorway to the living room and a flick of his eyes across the space, he ambles around the frame and out of sight. In short order, he returns pushing an armchair with his head.)

Fluttershy: *(under her breath, annoyed)* Um, Mom, Dad, can I talk to you for a second?

(The elders trade a concerned look. Cut to just outside the kitchen entrance as they emerge.)

Mrs. Shy: What is it, honey? *(Fluttershy follows them, using her normal voice.)*

Fluttershy: I'm not so sure letting Zephyr move back home is a good idea. I know you both want to help, but don't you remember last time?

Mrs. Shy: Zephyr's just trying to find his place, dear.

Fluttershy: *(sighing)* I know. It just seems like his place always ends up being *your* place. And then he...sort of...makes you do everything for him.

Mr. Shy: Well, we may not be as bold as you, Fluttershy, but don't you worry. We know how to stand up for ourselves.

(He and his wife beam at each other, but Fluttershy's face gets her profound degree of skepticism across without a word. Cut to a close-up of Rainbow, lounging in an armchair and trying to concentrate on the Daring Do book she holds. A sliver of Zephyr's flank and wing can be seen at an uncomfortably close distance just to one side.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* And they were all like—

(Zoom out. They are in the living room, and he sits on the chair's arm with one front hoof draped nonchalantly over its back.)

Zephyr: —“We love your free spirit, Zeph, and it would be wrong to cage that. Go follow your dreams!”

(The dangling foreleg works its way down behind her head; without missing a beat, she shoves him hard enough to dump him onto the floor. The unshaven face shifts from popeyed surprise to a come-hither smile as the rest of the family walks in.)

Rainbow: *(dryly)* Zeph was just telling me all about the ins and outs of mane therapy school.

Zephyr: It's all so political. *(standing up, pacing)* I just could not take it! *(Cut to Fluttershy and the parents.)*

Fluttershy: *(pointedly)* Well, maybe if you stuck with it for more than a few weeks? *(That eyebrow comes down again.)*

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Sorry, sis. *(Back to him, now standing by the fireplace.)* But when something's not the right fit, this pony's gotta fly.

(He slides a framed black-and-white photo of himself onto the mantelpiece, pushing some small animal sculptures to one end. One of them falls and breaks, but he takes no notice of Fluttershy's and Rainbow's joint dissatisfaction.)

Zephyr: Anyway, good talk, Rainbows. I am so touched you came to see me, really. I hate to deprive you of my presence, but this Breeze needs his Z's.

Rainbow: You know it's the middle of the day, right? *(He pauses on his way up the stairs.)*

Zephyr: I know. *(dramatically)* Siesta!

(Zoom out to frame the other four looking on from the general area of Rainbow's chair.)

Zephyr: I'm just going to assume you made up my room the way I like it, right, Mom?

(Up he goes, but he pokes his head back into view an instant later.)

Zephyr: Oh! I almost forgot. All my stuff is out front. Want to grab that for me, Pops? *(Laugh.)* Thanks.

(Gone again. Rainbow is first to give voice to the lack of good vibes with an irritated sigh.)

Rainbow: Same old Zeph.

(Between the pink mane and blue-green eyes, the brows on the yellow face lower a notch. Dissolve to an overhead shot of a Ponyville street; these two fly into view side by side, neither in good spirits and Rainbow no longer carrying her book.)

Rainbow: I know you weren't expecting to see your brother, but you've been kinda quiet—even for you.

Fluttershy: I'm sorry, but I am just so... *(Grunt.)* ...so...*peev*ed right now!

(Rainbow's eyes pop at this pronunciation, and Fluttershy claps her own front hooves over her mouth with a stunned gasp. Down below, a mare quickly covers the ears of the nearest filly and glares up at her, prompting her to hitch in a panicked little breath.)

Fluttershy: Oh! Excuse my language.

(They fly over Applejack and a hopping Pinkie Pie, both of whom stop and turn in their direction.)

Pinkie: *(singsong, dropping to haunches, waving)* Rainbow Dash! Fluttershy! It's me, Pinkie Pie! *(shrilly)* YOUR FRIEND!

(Seeing her buddy a little downcast at having been so easily ignored, Applejack wedges a front hoof in her teeth and uncorks a loud whistle. Rainbow comes to a quick stop, but Fluttershy—now a few yards back—fails to hit the brakes in time and rams into her from behind. The two come in for a landing; Pinkie is now up to all fours again.)

Fluttershy: Oh, um, sorry about that.

Rainbow: We just had lunch with Fluttershy's parents, and you'll never guess who showed up. *(Fluttershy cringes.)*

Pinkie: Ooooh!

(A bit of fishing around in her mane produces a wallet, which she opens to let a long string of photos in plastic sleeves fold out. Cut to the first one she names, then tilt down to each other one in turn; each is pointed out with a bright pink hoof.)

Pinkie: *(from o.s., with growing excitement)* Mayor Mare? Cranky Doodle Donkey? Cheese Sandwich? *(Longer shot; she shoves the photos into Rainbow's face.)* Ms. Harshwhinny?!?

(The blue flyer brings the impromptu exhibition to an end by pushing the wallet down and o.s. with a little smile.)

Rainbow: Zephyr Breeze.

Pinkie: *(calmly)* Ohhhh, that makes more sense.

Applejack: And from the look on your face, I'm guessin' it's for another one of his "extended stays"? *(Fluttershy slaps a hoof over her own face.)*

Rainbow: *(aside, to Applejack)* She's a bit peeved.

(The same mare and filly from a moment ago have chosen just this instant to pass in the background. This time, both of them shoot the speaker a dirty look at the mare pushes the filly ahead and out of view.)

Fluttershy: Zephyr's my brother and I love him, but he's never learned to do anything for himself. And I don't know why my parents keep letting him trot all over them!

Applejack: Well, if your parents won't stand up for themselves, maybe *you* need to stand up for them.

Fluttershy: You know, you're right.

(She lifts off. Dissolve to an overhead shot of her parents' lawn as she wings into view to touch down at the house's front door, then cut to a profile close-up. She does the breathing exercise Twilight Sparkle has sometimes used to calm herself down—inhale with one front hoof to chest, then exhale while pushing it away from herself—and gathers her courage to knock at the door. Before hoof can meet wood, though, there is a loud crash from o.s. Cut to just behind one front corner as she pokes her head around it for a look, then zoom in as her features rearrange themselves into an expression of utter horror and she sucks in a sharp gasp. A cut to her perspective discloses the source of the commotion as the outbuilding or back house, whose flowerbed has been well and truly trashed with empty/broken jars from Mr. Shy's cloud collection, to the dismay of Mrs. Shy. Her husband, meanwhile, has an empty jar in his grip and is flapping overhead, trying without success to re-capture one of the clouds. Other contained specimens rest near Mrs. Shy as she pulls a jar out of the flowers, and Zephyr tosses another one out an open window from inside in close-up. Lightning cracks across the screen from wherever it lands o.s.)

[Animation goof: Mrs. Shy's wings are missing in this shot, but the omission does expose a third flower in her cutie mark that had been previously hidden by them.]

Fluttershy: *(from o.s., exasperated)* Zephyr Breeze! *(He looks out.)*

Zephyr: Oh, hey, sis! *(Move to the door, meeting her level gaze.)* Come to see me work my magic and turn this place from drab to fab, huh? *(turning inside)* Well, watch and learn. *(Another jar is tossed out, breaking.)*

Fluttershy: Can't you see what you're doing?

Zephyr: Yeah. *(pushing several others out the door)* I'm getting rid of this old stuff so I can turn the back house into my art studio. I decided I'm gonna be a sculptor! *(Mrs. Shy straightens up, holding an uprooted plant.)*

Fluttershy: I'm talking about Mom's flowers.

Zephyr: She's gonna move them so I can have my mediation patio here. She loves replanting stuff— *(sweetly)* —don't you, Mom?

(The bespectacled mare manages a weak grin even as the bloom falls off the plant she holds. Now Fluttershy kneels down among the litter of cracked and discarded jars.)

Fluttershy: *(picking one up)* And Dad's been collecting his favorite bits of cloud from the factory since before you were born.

(Extreme close-up of a runaway wisp as Mr. Shy catches it in a jar, using the wall to pin it down, and slides a base in to secure it. Zoom out to frame all of him.)

Mr. Shy: The very best from every production run since my first day on the job.

(He proceeds to bobble and drop the container, which shatters on impact with the ground, and sighs sadly as the cloud floats away.)

Mr. Shy: But why hold onto the past, really?

Fluttershy: *(to Zephyr)* You can't just fly in and change everything Mom and Dad have built here. *(Mr. Shy descends to the others.)*

Zephyr: But this is the only place big enough for my studio-slash-meditation garden. *(Pause.)* Ooh! Unless I do it in the living room.

(Zoom out quickly through a window and stop in this particular space, then cut back to Mr. and Mrs. Shy—more than a bit distraught by this suggestion. On the start of the next line, zoom out to frame Fluttershy addressing them from the fore.)

Fluttershy: I know speaking up for yourself can be hard— *(Behind her, Zephyr stops on his way into the house.)*—believe me. But Zephyr will never stand on his own if he can lean on you.

Zephyr: Don't be so dramatic, sis! *(sliding to their parents, pulling them closer)* Mom and Dad just want to let me be me, right? I can do plenty on my own.

Fluttershy: I agree— *(sternly)* —which is why you should move out.

(The grinding halt that her words trigger under the blond topknot brings up only a choked little grunt.)

Zephyr: *(hamming it up)* Oh. Well...I mean...I-I totally would. But... *(pulling Mrs. Shy even closer)* ...I don't think that's what Mom and Dad want. *(to them, hurt tone)* It's not, is it?

(Here comes a heavy-caliber pout, which leaves both parents at a loss for words.)

Mrs. Shy: Uhhhh...

Mr. Shy: *(as both back off from Zephyr)* You know we love you, son, but your sister has a point.

(Another mental two-by-four upside the head, followed by two very watery eyes.)

Zephyr: *(voice breaking)* Sure. I mean, I really just came back here to keep you guys company, but...whatever's best for the family. *(plodding toward front door)* I just...I just gotta grab a few essentials.

(He stops to scoop up a squirrel lawn gnome from the walk.)

Mrs. Shy: And...you definitely have somewhere else to go?

(Fluttershy puts out a hoof to keep her back; now Zephyr has picked up a second gnome, this one styled as a rabbit.)

Zephyr: *(laughing shakily, stacking both together)* Of course! There's plenty of ponies who'd love for a little Breeze to blow their way.

(As he retreats into the house, the other three family members trade worried glances, with tears welling up behind Mrs. Shy's square lenses. Dissolve to the exterior of Fluttershy's cottage, zooming in slowly; on the start of the next line, cut to the kitchen table inside. Her rabbit Angel is perched on it, waiting for a carrot on a plate that she brings over; Rainbow has pulled up a chair of her own.)

Rainbow: So where's Zeph gonna go now? *(Fluttershy sets the plate down.)*

Fluttershy: I'm not sure. *(Close-up.)* Oh, I hope I did the right thing.

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Are you kidding? *(Cut to her.)* One hundred percent!

Zephyr: *(from o.s., singsong)* Hey, siii-iiis!

(The red-violet eyes go wide at that voice. Zoom out to put an equally gobsmacked Fluttershy in the fore, then cut to behind her. The top half of the nearest door is open, and the no-count little brother sticks his head in, throws the bottom half open, and strides in. His carryall is slung up over one shoulder.)

Zephyr: Your new roomie's here!

Rainbow: *(to Fluttershy)* Okay, maybe like seventy percent.

(A fed-up frown rivets itself onto the yellow face before the view snaps to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to one of the side windows of Fluttershy's cottage, seen from outside. Zoom in slowly.)

Fluttershy: *(from inside, firmly)* Um, Zephyr! *(Close-up of her.)* When Mom and Dad told you to find someplace else to live, I don't think they meant here.

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Well—

(Cut to frame all three ponies and Angel at/on the kitchen table; Zephyr lets his bag drop to the floor.)

Zephyr: —it's not their house, so by definition— *(fishing in it)* —it's someplace else.

(The white fuzzball stops his chompers from sinking into the carrot Fluttershy gave him when Zephyr sets his filched rabbit lawn gnome on the table. Angel gives it a nasty look, and the one Rainbow sends out from her chair is no better. This does not stop the slacker stallion from sidling up to her.)

Zephyr: Am I right, Rainbows? *(He throws a foreleg across her shoulders.)* Stop ogling me and help settle this.

(The gesture causes her whole face to freeze in an expression of gape-mouthed horror; with one eye caught in mid-twitch. He does her the courtesy of easing her jaw shut, then crosses the room as she manages a truly disgusted sigh.)

Rainbow: You know what? I totally forgot that I promised to help Pinkie Pie...sprinkle...something.

(Long shot of the cottage exterior as she rockets skyward from it in a Technicolor blur—getting out while the getting is good—then cut back to the kitchen. Zephyr spoons up a carrot from a pot on the stove as Fluttershy glowers at him.)

Fluttershy: You said you had plenty of places to go!

Zephyr: *(noncommittally, twirling a hoof)* Eh...eh...

Fluttershy: *(sighing, hoof to face)* Fine. You can stay here— *(He is across the room in a blink.)*

Zephyr: *(hugging/lifting her)* You're the best! We're gonna have so much fun.

Fluttershy: —on one condition. *(Cut to just behind her shoulder.)*

Zephyr: Totally. Anything. *(Zoom in to an extreme close-up.)*

Fluttershy: *(now o.s., jabbing a hoof against his nose)* You have to get a job.

(His face falls as she removes the appendage, and he sets her back down so that they end up sitting on their haunches to face each other.)

Zephyr: *(laughing)* Cracking the whip, huh? *(standing, mussing her mane)* You always were kinda bossy.

Fluttershy: *(menacingly, clearing her field of vision)* Zephyr Breeze! *(She stands, her mane restoring itself.)*

Zephyr: Kidding! Get a job. Absolutely.

(He walks out of the kitchen, turns past the doorway to pass out of view, and—just as at the homestead—promptly returns pushing a piece of furniture with his head. In this case, he has appropriated Fluttershy's couch, prompting the owner to aim a hacked-off look over her shoulder at the goof-off.)

(Dissolve to a stretch of peaceful sky and tilt down to the sound of a rooster's crowing. It is now sunrise of the next day, and the camera stops on an overhead shot of a Ponyville street. Fluttershy walks resolutely down the block, leading a slumped, cavernously yawning Zephyr past a foal on a morning paper route.)

Zephyr: Where are we going so early? *(close-up; smoothing topknot)* You have no idea how bad morning sun is for your mane!

Fluttershy: *(smirking)* Remember how we talked about you getting a job?

Zephyr: It was just yesterday, and it's totally on my to-do list— *(stopping/chuckling; she continues on)* —but you can't expect me to find something befitting my awesomeness overnight.

(Big sister stops at the front door of the Carousel Boutique.)

Fluttershy: I thought you might say that.

(Her knock brings Rarity out almost before she can put her hoof back down on the step; Zephyr just boggles at the unicorn's alacrity.)

Fluttershy: So I did it for you.

Zephyr: What?!?

(Wipe to a workroom inside. A couple of undressed pony mannequins stand off to one side, and three rolls of white fabric hang from horizontal racks. A length of each has been unrolled to trail across the floor; here, three bowls of dye have been set up on a dropcloth to keep the carpet clean. Rarity stands alongside the assembly, as do the flasks from which the dyes were poured.)

Rarity: *(pointing to rolls, then bowls)* These fabrics all need to be dyed those colors. Do you think you can handle that? *(Cut to Fluttershy and Zephyr, also in here.)*

Zephyr: *(mumbling, scratching back of neck)* Um...I don't know...

(The next cut frames Rarity just inside the door of this room, which proves to be her upper-story workroom and living space.)

Rarity: *(as Fluttershy crosses to her)* You get started while Fluttershy and I head to the store for more supplies. *(exiting)* Ta-ta!

Fluttershy: Good luck!

(A snap of teeth on knob, and she has yanked the door shut to leave one very apprehensive pegasus alone with the equipment. He stands rooted to the spot as Rarity's cat Opalescence wanders over, dips a paw into one bowl, and shakes the liquid off to leave a vivid spatter across some of the cloth. The performance touches off a calculating grin on the stubble-marked green face. From here, dissolve to the exterior of the Carousel Boutique, seen from a short distance away as Fluttershy and Rarity approach. The yellow mare has a shopping bag balanced on her back; the white one floats a second along in her magical grip.)

Fluttershy: Thanks for giving my brother a job. I just hope he's up to the task.

Rarity: *(laughing)* Oh, darling, dyeing fabric is the simplest thing.

(Cut to just inside the closed door of the upper-story room, which opens under her control to admit the pair.)

Rarity: You just dip cloth in a bo—

(She trails off into a stricken gasp matched by Fluttershy's own as the bags hit the ground. Cut to their perspective, panning slowly across. The entire workspace is a shambles: mannequins festooned with swatches of garishly colored cloth and dye splotches, one with a crude face drawn on; the three fabric rolls and the dropcloth liberally splattered; a fourth roll partly unfurled across the carpet; trails of varicolored hoof prints leading here and there; a few attempts at tie-dyeing hung up on a spare rack to dry. From here, cut back to Fluttershy and Rarity, who can only gape at Rarity's four-poster bed—and Zephyr draped across it, humming idly as he lies on his belly to do a bit of reading. It takes him a second to pick up on their return.)

Zephyr: *(hopping off)* Rarity! You're back!

Fluttershy: *(levelly, softly)* What did you do?

Zephyr: Since you talk to animals all the time, I just figured it runs in the family, so why not outsource this stuff, you know?

(A crazed screech rips the air, courtesy of one or more of the small animals that promptly rampage through the area—bird, rabbit, squirrel, all trailing pigment-soaked scraps. The two ground-based critters leave streaks of dye on the carpet in their wake.)

Zephyr: *(nudging Fluttershy)* Turns out the animal communication thing isn't genetic.

Rarity: *(indignantly, facing him down)* Zephyr, I asked *you* to do this job, not to pawn it off on innocent woodland creatures! *(He quails a bit.)*

Zephyr: Okay. *(pushing her back gently)* I guess you have some feelings about this, but you should know it's basically your cat's fault for walking by and giving me the idea.

(On the end of this line, cut to the feline in question—her normally immaculate white coat now heavily gunked up with dye and her tail sporting rainbow stripes. She licks at a paw as he leans down to her.)

Zephyr: But I'm actually kinda into this look. *(She snarls and swipes at him; he quickly backs up to Rarity.)* So I guess what I'm saying is... *(holding up dye-stained cloth)* ...you're welcome.

(She launches into a sputtering fit that lasts for some moments before any coherent words make their way out.)

Rarity: *(knocking cloth to floor)* Zephyr, this is just unacceptable!

Zephyr: *(affronted)* Wow. I guess I know when my efforts aren't appreciated.

(Out he goes, with Rarity voicing a hearty groan and magically slamming the door shut behind him. Fluttershy can only offer a timid little blush and giggle for subjecting her friend to his incompetence. Wipe to an extreme close-up of the top of one of the green stained-glass windows within the Castle of Friendship and tilt down toward ground level. The camera motion brings Zephyr into view, staring awestruck up along its height.)

Zephyr: Whoa! Those are *tall*!

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* I'm glad you noticed—

(Longer shot. They are in the throne room, along with Fluttershy and Spike.)

Twilight: —because they're your new job.

Zephyr: Wha—? *(to Fluttershy)* You said you were taking me to tea with the Princess!

Fluttershy: Actually, I said *I* was going to tea with the Princess. *You're* going to work.

(She and the Princess head for the door, but stop short as he hurries across to them.)

Zephyr: Sis, come on!

Twilight: Don't worry, Zephyr. It'll be easy. *(Long shot of all four. The central map table is bare.)* I just need a pegasus pony to fly up and wipe each window down from top to bottom. *(Close-up.)*

Spike: And I'm here to make sure you do it right.

(Here comes an ingratiating grin from the green stallion. Dissolve to the closed throne room doors, seen from inside; Twilight's magic opens them so she and Fluttershy can step in, and the camera zooms in to a close-up as the yellow and light violet faces break into expressions of great joy. A cut to the room itself picks out a full contingent of clean windows and Zephyr relaxing on one throne, seen from behind and leisurely strumming at a ukulele.)

Twilight: *(walking into view with Fluttershy)* Wow, Zephyr! *(Cut to the table; he is in her seat.)* This looks amazing!

Zephyr: Well, you know, like you said, it was easy. *(Fluttershy shifts from elation to puzzlement.)*

Fluttershy: Where's Spike?

Spike: *(from o.s., distant)* Up here!

(All three pairs of eyes flick toward the ceiling, one pair registering a healthy dose of panic at having been bowled out. Cut to a close-up of the baby dragon, squeegee in hand and hanging by a rope looped around his midsection; he spins to face the room, a bucket in his free hand.)

Twilight: You were supposed to supervise, not do all the work!

Spike: *I was* supervising, and then Zephyr asked me about different cleaning techniques and which one was best, and if I could...

(The nature of the slugabed's con game finally makes itself apparent to him.)

Spike: *(angrily)* Hey! I did all the work!

(Cut to Twilight and Fluttershy, glaring daggers in Zephyr's direction.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Don't let him fool you. *(Cut to him, backing out the doors without his ukulele.)* Old Spike is quite the taskmaster.

(Having gained the hallway, he peels out and leaves his big sister to deal with the gimlet-eyed looks coming her way from the edifice's two residents and offer up a sheepish blush and grin. Wipe to the siblings moving through one street's hustle and bustle, Fluttershy in a visibly sour mood. It is now later in the day.)

Zephyr: Oh, come on, sis! I had to ask Spike to make sure I was doing it right. *(She whirls to jab a hoof into his chest.)*

Fluttershy: You didn't do it at all!

(Pivoting away from him, she takes a deep breath with one front hoof raised and continues in a much calmer voice as she sets it back on the ground.)

Fluttershy: Well, I guarantee there won't be any fooling around on the next job.

Zephyr: *(puzzled)* Next job?

(Right on cue, Rainbow swoops down overhead and past them. He gets the daylights scared out of him, but she stands tranquilly in place even as her mane/tail are blown wildly about for a moment and leaves swirl across the ground.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* That's right, Zeph! *(Cut to frame her, hovering and dipping closer to point at him.)* You're coming with me!

Zephyr: *(smoothly)* You don't have to come up with some excuse to hang out with me, Rainbows. Let's just go for a fly and see where the day takes us. *(She snarls to herself and touches down.)*

Rainbow: We're going to Wonderbolts headquarters. *(advancing slowly on him, poking his chest, pacing away)* And I am gonna give you a job so simple and straightforward, not even you can weasel your way out of it!

(After moving out of view, she flies quickly in to stare him down point-blank.)

Rainbow: And the second you try, I'm gonna zap you with a storm cloud! Got it?

Zephyr: Oh, I got it. *(foreleg around shoulders, pulling her close)* I can already feel the electricity between us.

(Fluttershy is left with no words to describe the sleazy Lothario tactics, but she somehow works up a humoring smile for the incensed Rainbow. Dissolve to an extreme close-up of a wadded-up

piece of paper, which she nips away with her teeth, and cut to a longer shot. She is back in her cottage's living room, and the paper goes into a nearby trash can. It is one of several that litter a blanket spread over her couch—no bonus points for guessing who put it there; ditto for the self-aggrandizing photos on the wall and end table. The rest of the junk is swept into the can with a wing, and she sets the disorganized throw pillows back where they belong on the couch. As she catches a fold of the blanket in her mouth and pulls the whole thing straight, the sound of the door opening cuts in.)

Zephyr: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow Dash is crazy!

(Cut to just behind the yellow pegasus; the door is open across from her, and Zephyr stands in it with scuff marks all over his body. His mane/tail are charred, smoking, and standing straight out as if he had just stuck a fork in a light socket—clearly Rainbow made good on her threat.)

Zephyr: Okay, she expects me to do stuff right when she asks me to do it! *(stomping)* It's insane!

Fluttershy: *(bitterly)* So you just quit, again?

Zephyr: *(flopping onto couch)* "Escaped" is more like it. *(pulling blanket over himself)* Besides, what was I supposed to do?

Fluttershy: Keep trying? Finish something for once? Maybe that way you'd actually find something you like to do!

Zephyr: That all sounds fine for *your* friends, but it's just not me.

Fluttershy: Then I'm sorry, Zephyr, but I don't think you can live here.

(Teeth lock on the blanket and fling it away; instantly Zephyr starts to shiver, but he stops upon realizing that she is not buying the act one bit.)

Zephyr: *(climbing off couch)* Fine. I'll just go live in the woods like my fore-ponies before me.

(The carryall is grabbed up; a photo comes off the wall; the lawn gnome is snatched away, angering Angel, who had been offering it a bowl of salad. He licks his chops at the prospect of more for himself, but Zephyr takes the food as well, leaving him to fall flat on his face as he leans in to eat. Cut to the exterior of the cottage as he strides away over the stream that runs through the property; Fluttershy watches him from the front door.)

Zephyr: Guess the only Breeze this Zephyr can count on is his own!

(Cut to a close-up of Fluttershy, who hangs her head sadly at this latest round of family dysfunction. Zoom in slowly and snap to black.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a patch of floor inside the cottage. Fluttershy leans into view, the handle of a dustpan in her mouth, and a broom sweeps into view toward it to add to its freight of

food scraps. A longer shot puts her in the kitchen with Rainbow, the latter wielding the broom as the former turns to dump the load into her trash can and set the pan on top.)

Rainbow: Aw, cheer up, Fluttershy. I know it was hard, but you did the right thing. You couldn't let Zephyr pull the same stuff on you that he's always pulled on your folks.

Fluttershy: (*uncertainly*) I guess so.

(A burst of urgent cheeping draws her attention off to one side; pan in that direction to stop on a bird perched in an open window. She turns toward it.)

Fluttershy: Oh, hello, Constance. (*It tweets into her ear; she reacts with surprise.*) Oh? (*More.*) Oh, dear.

(Her concerned look is met by a contemptuous grimace from Rainbow. Dissolve to a close-up of Zephyr's plastic mane-styling practice head—now further marked with a purple hoof print—somewhere in the Everfree Forest and zoom out slightly as he leans into view toward it. The coat scuffs have been augmented with random splatters of mud, and the mane/tail charring have given way to blond tangles with leaves caught in them. Completing the air of general dilapidation are an excess of facial stubble and two violet eyes that have shrunk to half-deranged points.)

Zephyr: See, Wigford?

(Longer shot: he has set up housekeeping in a small clearing, and the head stands on a pole driven into the ground. Around him are a ring of stones for a campfire site; his bowl of salad and a few mushrooms; a potted plant and stack of books; family photos taped up on a tree trunk; and a random agglomeration of sticks and fronds over a patch of leaves as a thoroughly substandard attempt at a lean-to. He has ditched the carryall.)

Zephyr: The Breeze needs nopony!

(Close-up of the salad/mushrooms and book stack.)

Zephyr: (*from o.s., pointing at them*) We've got food... (*The lean-to; ditto.*) ...shelter...

(Now he crosses to the cold fire ring; a dirty, battered cooking pot stands alongside.)

Zephyr: ...just need to put the old kettle on.

(Getting the handle in his teeth, he sets it atop the accumulated tinder in the ring, then straightens up with two rocks held in his front hooves. These are tapped lightly together and tossed down, where they utterly fail to touch off a blaze; he leans down over the ring with a petulant glare.)

Zephyr: Come on, sticky-sticky. Make with the sparks.

(His next brilliant idea is to clamp his teeth onto one end of a twig and bang the other against the pot a few times. This gets him nothing but a broken piece of wood and a capsized vessel that spills its contents into the ring. Letting the stub fall, he straightens up; now a self-portrait can be seen propped against a tree stump on this side of the campsite.)

Zephyr: Ugh! What's a pony gotta do to find a decent stick around here?

(He kicks the piece away, only for it to bounce up off the ring's stones and smack him in the nose. The mishap sends him into a sudden rage, and he begins to wreck the site piece by piece as the camera zooms out. Fluttershy and Rainbow are a few yards away, watching through a gap in the trees. Rainbow's next two lines are delivered in hushed tones.)

Rainbow: I know he needs to learn to do things for himself, but—

Fluttershy: *(sighing)* I can't let him live like this.

(With a final, feral yell, he bucks the main support pole of his lean-to, snapping it and causing the rest of it to collapse and bury him.)

Rainbow: Actually, I don't think he'd make it through the night.

(Fluttershy lets her head dip slightly in resigned acceptance of her brother's total ineptitude at looking after himself. Cut to an extreme close-up of the ruined lean-to; she steps up and prods a particular spot, and Zephyr's head breaks through with a gasp. After his eyes return to full focus, he takes in the sight of both mares now standing before him.)

Zephyr: *(trying to sound casual)* Fluttershy! Hey! I was just, um, cozying up in my sleeping bag. *(He pulls the scattered fronds farther over himself.)* Ready to call it an early night. Such an exhausting day, you know?

(The messy green head hits the bed of leaves and the violet eyes close in feigned sleep, but neither mare is even remotely convinced. Once he gives it up and cracks one eye open, Rainbow gestures toward a patch of sunny blue sky visible through the forest canopy.)

Rainbow: It's noon.

Zephyr: *(grinning weakly)* You know me. Siesta.

(A random branch topples over and clunks him squarely over the head, wiping out his artificial bonhomie and bringing him dangerously close to the verge of tears.)

Zephyr: Ugh. I can't do this. *(covering eyes)* I can't do anything. *(Fluttershy steps over and lifts the branch away.)*

Fluttershy: Zephyr, you're smart and talented. *(sitting on haunches)* You *could* do anything if you just tried.

Zephyr: And what if I give everything I have and still fail? Honestly, I think it's better not to try at all.

Rainbow: But then you won't ever do anything.

Zephyr: I don't expect you two to understand. I mean, when have you ever failed? You've literally helped save Equestria, like, a dozen times. (*Fluttershy stands up.*)

Fluttershy: And I was worried that I'd fail every time. Sometimes you have to do things, even though you might fail.

Zephyr: But failing is the worst! (*She leans down to him.*)

Fluttershy: And quitting doesn't feel much better, does it?

Zephyr: (*reluctantly*) No. (*She straightens up.*)

Fluttershy: So here's the deal. You can come back with me, but you have to do *exactly* what I say. No exceptions.

(The humbled free spirit looks to her, then to Rainbow, and finally resigns himself to it.)

Zephyr: I will literally do anything you ask me, if it means I don't have to stay here.

(A hopeful smile passes between the two mares. Dissolve to a hallway in the upper story of Fluttershy's cottage; she leads a freshly-cleaned Zephyr along the way as Rainbow brings up the rear.)

Fluttershy: (*to him*) Okay. You know what you have to do, right?

Zephyr: Beg for help, then quit when I get frustrated.

(He tacks on a goofy little grin, only to get a double-barreled look of purest venom from Fluttershy and Rainbow.)

Zephyr: (*laughing*) Just kidding! Total opposite of that. Got it.

(Cut to a close-up of a shut door, which swings open to expose all three in the hallway—the view has shifted to inside a room. One stallion on the verge of a panic attack musters the courage to enter at Fluttershy's gentle gesture.)

Rainbow: (*to her, skeptically*) You think he can do it?

Gentle acoustic guitar melody, leisurely 4 (D flat major)

Fluttershy: Everypony has times in their lives

When their hearts are filled with doubt

(Zephyr finds his practice head and an assortment of mane care products set up at a vanity mirror. The hoof print has been cleaned off its "face.")

Zephyr: Frustration builds up inside

And it makes you want to shout

Mandolin, backing strings, bass, light percussion in (E flat major)

(Fluttershy and Rainbow step in and guide him toward the counter.)

Rainbow: But if you just take that first step
The next one will appear

(His book of mane style photos from Act One is set down and opened.)

Fluttershy, Rainbow: And you find you can walk, then run, then fly
(Both drift slowly out of view as Zephyr regards himself in the glass. Overhead shot of the room; they circle above him. Zoom out slowly.)

Guitar/mandolin out; flute, drums in with piano accents
Into the stratosphere

(Dissolve to a close-up of him; they land to either side and give him an encouraging nudge.)

Fluttershy, Rainbow: You've got to give it your best
So you can pass the test
Give it everything that you've got

(He begins to pick up implements from the counter.)

And we know you can win
You just have to begin

(Vertical panels slide in from above/below on either side of him, leaving the screen tiled with images of all three.)

Have to give it your very best shot

(Sweating bullets, Zephyr drops the comb in his teeth and pushes their two panels out of view.)

Mandolin, additional woodwinds in

Zephyr: There are times when you want to give up
(walking out) When you think that you can't go on
(He backs up hastily before their unexpected advance.)

Fluttershy, Rainbow: But if you fight through with all of your might
You will find that you can't go wrong

(Still sweating, he eyes the head's crazy-quilt style and takes up his comb in his mouth to try and bring a little sense to it.)

That you could do it all along

All instruments out except mandolin/strings

(Snap to black, against which a spotlight flicks on to pick out Fluttershy.)

Fluttershy: Everypony has times in their lives
When their hearts are filled with doubt
(Rainbow stands up in the fore, visible even without a spot.)

Rainbow: But if you just give it your all
You'll start to work it out

Bass/percussion in (F major)

(Close-up of Zephyr, who plies a pair of scissors with gusto; bits of fake hair fly back at him.)

Zephyr: And I know I can't give up too soon
Get myself in the zone

(The clippings pile up near his book of photos.)

And I find I can walk, then run

Trumpet in

Fluttershy, Rainbow, Zephyr: Then fly

Zephyr: And I can do it on my own

Woodwinds in

(He punctuates the end of this line with a little grunt of pride, after which two vertical panels slide in from opposite sides to fill the screen—Rainbow at left, Fluttershy right.)

Fluttershy, Rainbow: You can do it on your own

(These are pulled away to give a view of the mirror; the head is missing, but Zephyr pops into view and holds it up—with a mare's style that is a bit rough around the edges, but still shows an honest effort and a decent bit of potential on his part.)

Zephyr: I can do it on my own
(softer, leaning it gently against his forehead)
I can do it on my own

Song ends

Zephyr: I did it. I actually finished something! By myself!

Rainbow: And it looks exactly like it's supposed to.

Fluttershy: I knew you could do it, Zephyr.

Zephyr: *(grinning)* I didn't! *(gently)* But I do now. Thanks for believing in me, sis. *(They embrace.)*

Fluttershy: That's what big sisters are for.

Rainbow: So, uh, Zeph, now that you've accomplished this, what's next?

Zephyr: *(gleefully, rearing up briefly)* Anything I want! I mean, the sky's the limit, right?

(The two-mare cheering section gives him a hard look, which does wonders to tamp down his momentary flare of manic energy.)

Zephyr: But...you know, I've got some baby steps in mind.

(Grin. Dissolve to a close-up of Rainbow seated at the kitchen table in Mr. and Mrs. Shy's house, pushing away a plate flecked with food scraps.)

Rainbow: Thanks for dinner, Mr. and Mrs. Shy. *(Chuckle.)* It was great, as usual. *(Cut to them, sitting across from her with dirty plates of their own.)*

Mrs. Shy: Thank you, dear, for not giving up on Zephyr. After all these years of pining for him—*(taking Mr. Shy's hoof)*—it must be so satisfying to see him on the right track.

(The daredevil is so floored by her hint of any sort of attraction between them that she can only choke out a tiny noise of pure shock. Fluttershy is quick to lean in and take up the slack.)

Fluttershy: Have you heard from Zephyr? Is he doing well?

Mr. Shy: I tell you, he's a brand new pony, so full of drive and determination.

Rainbow: *(chuckling)* That's great.

(And here he comes, throwing the front door open and parading in. He has donned a dark gray mortarboard cap and graduation gown over a white dress shirt collar and red necktie, and a red stole hangs around his shoulders. The next line is delivered in his original boisterous manner.)

Zephyr: Guess who graduated from mane therapy training!

(The cap is pulled off and scaled across the kitchen to land on Rainbow's head at a very cockeyed angle; she laughs and flips it back from her eyes as Fluttershy grins.)

Rainbow: Awesome! *(Mr. and Mrs. Shy cross to him.)*

Mr. Shy: Congratulations, son. *(They embrace; Rainbow puts the cap back on Zephyr's head.)*

Mrs. Shy: *(touching his face)* You look so handsome!

Fluttershy: *(approaching)* I'm so proud of you, Zephyr.

Zephyr: It was only a matter of time before they recognized my true genius.

(A squint-eyed, sidewise look from the big sister prompts him to dial down the bravado.)

Zephyr: But actually doing the work probably helped. *(She grins.)* And I wouldn't have if it weren't for you. *(They hug.)*

Fluttershy: Oh, I just gave you some encouragement. You did this on your own.

Zephyr: And honestly, right now I feel like I can do anything. *(Pause.)* Except find a place. *(pulling both parents closer)* I can still crash here for a few days, right?

(These two are rather taken aback, but both Fluttershy and Rainbow react with good-natured "here we go again" smiles—the former adding an eye roll, the latter a little shake of her head. Fade to black.)