

Chapter 7

The storm clouds over Ponyville Lake grew larger and larger with every pass by Applejack from the water's surface. She'd been collecting water vapor for a while now, unsure just how big she'd need this storm to be. According to the Mayor it had to be a doozy of a downpour, so she figured it should at least cover most of the town. Applejack was careful not to let the cloud get too large though; it may have been lighter than air but it would still have been a heck of a chore to move something so big all on her own.

Applejack began to shove the first part of her storm toward the town, looking back for her rogue-captive. The small, rumbling storm-cloud from Ever-Free was tied up to a tree branch near the lake. She nodded, sure that her knot-work would hold the varmint-cumulus in place till she returned.

"What in Celestia's name happened here?!"

Rainbow Dash panted heavily, trying desperately to catch her breath. Though it didn't surprise her, she still couldn't believe what had befallen her apple stand. Small clusters of apples littered the market place as Scootaloo and Applebloom were butting heads again, an argument passing back and forth between them. The stand sat completely empty with part of its siding gone. Small tools laid strewn about the ground next to the stand. Nearby laid the remains of Applejack's apple cart turned over with two of its wheels missing. Rainbow closed her eyes, trying hard to stay calm and collected through her mounting rage. Applebloom noticed Rainbow first, quickly darting over to her. Her sudden movement caused Scootaloo to fall face-first into the dirt.

"It wasn't ma'h fault this time. Ah swear!" Applebloom beseeched, afraid of the sour expression on Rainbow's face.

"HAY!" Scootaloo squeaked in protest, "It wasn't just my fault! You were the one suggesting we try to fix the wagon with parts from the stand." Rainbow attempted to say something but was swiftly silenced by Applebloom's interruption.

"Ah thought this time it wouldn't be as hard as tryin' ta fix a table. All we needed was a few planks."

"Yeah, except the wagon wheels need thicker wood and not the thin stuff the stall is made from."

"Well *maybe* if ya hadn't done that stunt in the first place the wheels wouldn'ta broke!"

“Well *maybe* if you didn’t start up again with your sneaky apple-adding nonsense we wouldn’t have needed to try and bring back customer attention.”

“**QUIET!**” Rainbow boomed loudly over the two fillies, each of them fell silent from the scream. Rainbow looked thoroughly annoyed, locks of her mane falling out of place as she took in deep breaths. “Ok...Before I completely lose it...You two are going to help me...we’re going to just collect all this mess up...and pretend this never happened...ok?” Rainbow spoke very matter-of-factly, staring down the two children. Both Applebloom and Scootaloo nodded without a word. “Good. Hopefully, we can get this all done before...”

Just then, shadows began to envelope the market place as a large cover of clouds blocked up the sun. Rainbow turned around, her agitation fading as she spotted an orange figure pushing the clouds from behind. The few ponies that had remained in the market began to gallop inside their homes, closing their windows and barring their doors. Rainbow spun round again to the foals, anger replaced with anxiety. “Ok, forget what I just said. New Plan: You two get all this junk off the ground and into the cart. We push all of it under cover and high-tail it before the storm!” Scootaloo and Applebloom both nodded, relieved they seemed to be off the hook.

Rainbow wasted no time, with every passing minute she could see Applejack pushing more clouds into her storm and flying back to the lake to collect more. The clouds were beginning to shift from white to grey. Thankfully, Rainbow had managed to push the store stand away from the market and under an awning of one of the nearby homes. While Applebloom and Scootaloo collected the discarded fruits and tools, Rainbow was inspecting the cart. With two wheels completely missing from it, she had no idea how she would move it.

“Maybe if all three of us push it?” Scootaloo suggested as she placed her collected items on the ground. All three ponies braced their shoulders to the cart and began to push.

Applejack was hovering over Ponyville, lasso in mouth as she pulled along the rogue cloud from Ever Free. She had paused to admire her work, she had collected so many clouds she almost had the entire town blanketed. She looked at her captive; it seemed to have given up any hope of escape at this point, content to just sit there silently.

“Alrigh’, ah’m gonna start now...Don’t you go nowhere, ok?” Applejack commanded the little cloud as she let go of her lasso. The cloud didn’t move, so she began to descend. Applejack landed softly on top of her storm, making sure not to push too hard lest she break through it. The cumulus groaned; it was just as ready to go as she was. Applejack took a moment to look through a small hole nearby she had left, a kind of make-shift window so she could monitor what was happening below. She looked over the town, her eye eventually stopping on the market. It was nearly impossible to miss Rainbow Dash’s multi-colored mane no matter how far

away she was. It looked like she was struggling to move something heavy down below.

“Oh ho, havin’ a lil trouble Rainbow?” Applejack nickered as she spoke to herself, “Weather Mare Applejack predicts a one hundred percent chance a rain with a slight mix of ‘Ah’ Told Ya So’s’ and humble pie.” With that, Applejack reared her back legs and slammed them into a patch of clouds, sending a bolt of lightning through the sky with ear deafening thunder close behind. Applejack wore a sly grin as the lump of color below jumped from the shock. She did not notice the orange and yellow figures she had also scared nearby. Applejack raised herself up on her back legs, spreading her wings open with glee as she prepared to run. “YEEE-HAW!”

The rain poured in sheets, wind and thunder bellowed through the town as Applejack galloped across her clouds. A flash of lightning pierced the air, “**KRACKA-BOOM!**”

Rainbow Dash didn’t jump this time, after the first strike she expected to hear many more. The same could not be said of Applebloom and Scootaloo. With every strike the little fillies grew more and more terrified, Rainbow felt awful they had to endure this. The trio had managed to push the cart near an outcropped roof but just couldn’t seem to get it to budge the final feet to safety. It was simply too heavy and the storm was getting worse. All three of them were now completely drenched by the rain, Scootaloo started to shiver from the chill. Rainbow felt more guilt wrench her stomach at the sight, she couldn’t expect them to continue like this.

“This storm is going to get bad, you pip-squeaks shouldn’t be out in it. Run to Sugar Cube Corner and hunker down with Pinkie Pie.” Rainbow ordered the two as she began formulating a plan to move the cart on her own.

“We can’t just leave ya’ here.” Applebloom protested.

“Y-y-yea. We won’t l-l-l-leave you.” Scootaloo stuttered through the chill.

“You two will only be putting yourselves in danger staying here. I can handle this on my own, it’s ok, really. Now go!” Rainbow shouted against the new gust of wind as rain sprayed her face. Her mane and coat were drenched to the bone and the wind amplified the cold from the water. Though the foals looked like they would protest again, another crack of lightning convinced them to run.

Relieved, Rainbow turned back to her last problem, the apple cart. The wind was at her back now, a sudden gust had nearly blew her hat clean off. Then, Rainbow got an idea. It was a long-shot, but that never stopped Rainbow Dash before. She began to back up, eyeing the cart in preparation. Rain continued to pour as more thunder exploded over head. She looked behind her back, waiting.

“C’mon...”

Rainbow’s ears perked as a shrill whistle began to rise. She turned to face the cart and exploded toward it at full gallop. As she closed the distance, Rainbow Dash leapt into the air just as the next gust of wind hit her. Propelled forward by the wind, Rainbow braced her shoulder as she tackled the side of the cart. She winced in pain as the cart lurched forward just enough to make it under cover. Now that the cart was safe, it was time for Rainbow to find some cover for

herself. Just as she turned to break for Sugar Cube Corner, the rain began to lighten and the wind died down. Rainbow raised a brow curiously; the storm wasn't due to stop yet. She looked up at the sky in search of Applejack.

Applejack had risen above her storm and was busy admiring her work. The thrill of galloping across the clouds was still fresh in her mind and driving her forward. Flying high over the town, Applejack made her way back to her captured cloud from Ever Free Forest. The rogue puff hadn't moved from where she had left it, but it thundered passively as Applejack approached. The cloud knew its time had finally arrived. Applejack grabbed the end of the lasso holding the murky nimbus, leading it toward her storm.

"What is that she's pulling?" Rainbow asked herself, narrowing her eyes as she spotted her orange friend pass by a hole in the cover. Dash couldn't see clear enough, she needed to get higher. She glanced around, spotting some crates stacked near a cottage. Rainbow galloped over and clambered up the crates, jumping onto the low-lying roof of the house. She stopped as she reached the peak of the roof, trying hard to see what Applejack was pulling alongside her. It looked like a small cloud, only it was much darker than any cloud made by pegasus hooves.

A foreboding thought struck Dash. If Applejack was doing what she thought she was about to do, this could end badly.

Applejack nickered to herself; this plan was great. She had fulfilled all her obligations and now planned to go even further. She stopped just above the billowing storm, her captive cloud towed behind her. The rogue cloud was beginning to rumble again, as if to say it was ready.

"Ok lil feller, this is it. Don't ya' disappoint me now." Applejack said as she took a firm grip on her lasso. She began to spin the rope in her mouth, the end holding the cloud began to swirl in the air. Faster and faster the cloud spun till it was just a blur of grey spinning over Applejack's head.

"APPLEJACK! STOP!" a tiny voice yelled desperately over the noise of the storm, but Applejack couldn't hear it. She let go of the rope, sending the Ever Free storm cloud barreling into her own creation. The storm cloud groused and thundered as the Ever Free storm mixed with it, dissolving into the storm like an ice cube in water. The entire mass began to turn a dark black, lightning started crackling between its folds.

"YEE HAW! Now that's how ya' make a storm!" Applejack praised herself, gliding down to stand on her upgraded weather. No sooner had she touched the clouds did Applejack find herself aloft again as horrible electric shocks coursed through her hooves.

"Ahyyeow! Mercy that smarts...What in sam hill is goin' on here?" Applejack yelped out in surprise. Applejack's storm was beginning to grow, its billows pulsing more and more as wind and lightning shot forth. Below, the rain had started again all on its own. Buckets of water came

down in sheets, causing large puddles to start forming. At this rate, the town could have very well started to flood.

Rainbow Dash leapt from her roof top, landing expertly on the ground with little trouble. She grabbed a small rock from the ground in her teeth, and sized up her shot. She had to hit the mark just right. Tossing the rock in the air, she turned around and bucked, sending her projectile rocketing right at its target.

Applejack shook her head, looking down at the ground in search of the source of the ringing in her right-ear. Something hard had struck her, and she spotted the culprit with ease. Rainbow Dash was down below, yelling something incoherent. Applejack rolled her eyes and glided down to her through a patch in the clouds. The hole sealed itself behind her without her noticing. Through the down pour Applejack found it difficult to maintain her flight pattern. Her wings, coat and mane were quickly drenched as she sloshed into the muddy street. No sooner had she landed did Rainbow Dash gallop up to her, striking her hard with her shoulder.

“OW! What the—“

“Do you have any idea what you just did?!” Rainbow scolded over the thunder.

“Hay! Don’t you go hittin’ me. Ah’ just made a storm ten times more effective than you’ve ever made.” Applejack glared back at her chromatic-colored friend.

“What you did is create a monster! You never never **never** mix Pony clouds with wild weather. The effects are disastrous!” Rainbow’s voice shifted from anger to that of anxiousness.

“Ah’ll admit, this seems a bit more than ah’ intended it, but ah’ can handle it!” Applejack said as she lifted a hoof out of the mud with a raised brow. A small stream was starting to trickle through town.

“No, you won’t be able to handle it. This is too big now, and you’re not skilled enough. We need to take serious cover till this blows over.” Rainbow said with growing panic. Just then, a thunder clap struck so loud it nearly shook the ground. Rain came in torrents on the two ponies, the sheets of water almost making it hard to see. Both Rainbow Dash and Applejack had ducked under their hooves from the thunder; it had caught them completely by surprise.

Applejack tried to counter argue as she and Rainbow ducked under cover with the broken apple cart, “Ok, this ain’t that big a deal. Ah’ll just break it apart like ah’ did before.”

“That’s not going to work. This storm is far too large for one pony now. We’d need at least a dozen pegasai to take this bad boy out. You’ve really messed up Applejack.” Rainbow scolded as another boom of thunder rocked their hiding place.

“Well it’s not like ah’ve been getting any help Rainbow! You left me to figure all this weather stuff out almost entirely on ma’h own. Ya’ wouldn’t even give me basic instructions on how ta’ fly. Ah’ had to go get help from Fluttershy, an’ ah’ was lucky ah’ even managed to get off the ground at all.” Applejack recounted her whole day, pouring over every detail. Rainbow was surprised at how sorrowful the entire account sounded. “Everythin’ ah’ did today was just one long ordeal after the next. But you know what? Ah’ loved ever moment of it. You pegasai just don’t know how wonderful a gift ya’ll have, being able to just go wherever ya’ please. For

somepony like me, who's always been stuck on the ground, it's the happiest ah've ever felt before..." Applejack trailed off, her head sagging low. A tear dripped from her eye and mixed with the rain on her face. Despite the chill of the wind, Rainbow felt warm empathy for her once-earth-pony friend.

"Hey Applejack, I think I understand." Rainbow said, lifting up Applejack's head with a hoof and a smile. Applejack looked deep into Rainbow Dash's rosy eyes as she spoke to her. "Ever since we changed places I've been feeling like something was missing, more so than just my wings. Like some kind of emptiness inside. It feels like being trapped, confined. I really don't like it. I honestly feel like I've done harder work today than I've ever done before. You Earth ponies really have a rough time of it, everything seems so much harder when you can't fly...but it also feels more rewarding as well. Anyway, I just...I'm sorry..." Now it was Rainbow's turn to trail off, Applejack's sadness faded with the apology.

As the reconciled ponies huddled under cover, a new sound began to pierce the patter of the rain and thunder. At first it sounded like just more wind, but it soon grew louder and more menacing. Rainbow picked up on the noise first, jumping to her hooves with a start.

"Oh no oh no oh no...Please don't be that..." Rainbow started scanning the skies in panic. The storm that had grown so large was now starting to condense, all rain had nearly ceased and the moaning wind grew louder and louder.

"What's goin' on Rainbow? Is the storm stoppin'?" Applejack asked, also rising to her hooves. Her mane and tail were being thrown about wildly in the wind. Rainbow had to hold onto her hat or it would have blown clear off her head.

"No...Not at all. It's about to get much worse. We need to get out of here!"

Before Rainbow and Applejack could even move, a large funnel began to descend from the storm. Clouds swirled from the ever rising wind as the cone shape touched the ground. Both ponies screamed, but neither could even hear themselves over the intense rumbling of the tornado now plowing a path through Ponyville market. The funnel was massive, easily taking up the space of an entire building. It picked up abandoned carts with ease, hurling them off into the distance. The twister set itself upon a smaller home near the square, ripping wood and straw from its roof. It was sheer luck the pair of ponies that had been hiding in the home had quickly exited after seeing this new threat. Wooden planks went flying as the storm chewed its way through the walls.

"APPLEJACK!" Rainbow yelled, breaking Applejack out of her befuddled daze. "WE NEED TO RUN! THIS IS TOO MUCH!"

Applejack shook her head; she couldn't believe this was happening. To make matters worse, it was all because of her. The weight of that thought bore down on her heart as she watched the final remains of the home torn asunder by her monstrosity. Rainbow kept yelling something, but Applejack couldn't hear her, or rather, she just wasn't listening anymore. A fire

lit inside her as she narrowed her eyes at the rampaging storm. This was her mess, and she had to be the one to clean it up.

"Rainbow, how do ah' undo this?" Applejack asked bluntly. Rainbow halted her rambling, shocked at the question.

"You can't. It's just not possible at this poi--"

"RAINBOW" Applejack cut her off, rage filled her eyes as her wings flared open, **"How...Do ah'...Stop it?"**

Rainbow had never seen Applejack like this. She shrunk back, looking at the storm for a moment then back to her friend. "First, you'll have to lead it out of town...and I really don't know how you plan to do that...But, after that you need to enter the funnel and fly against the way it spins. If you can undo the current inside the whole thing will dissipate. But I'm telling you, you can't do it alone! It's suicide!"

"This is ma'h creation...it's only right ah' be the one ta' take it out. Go on and git outta here Rainbow, ah' don't want you to get hurt." Applejack said as she started to flap her wings. Rainbow watched as her friend flew off, trying to think of something she could do to help. She decided if nothing else she'd try as best she could to warn the other ponies in their houses to evacuate as best they could.

The tornado had finished off the small home and was now content to drift through the market place, flinging random objects at buildings. Applejack had to beat her wings hard to propel herself through the wind the twister was making, but she wouldn't let up. She didn't know exactly what she was going to do, but she knew she had to do something soon. The tornado began to set itself upon another home, only this one still had ponies inside it. Applejack's stomach twisted at this realization, but now she had a plan. Granted, it was a long shot, and probably wouldn't work, but it was all she had. Just as the tornado was beginning to chew out the home's roof, Applejack let forth a loud whistle.

"Why don't ya' pick on somepony with a little more grit!?" Applejack mocked the cyclone. To her great surprise, the taunt seemed to slow the storm down, almost like it had actually heard her. Still, it continued to devour its new target. Applejack whinnied in anger, thrusting out her fore-hooves and diving head-first for the tornado's interior. The twister suddenly lurched sideways, like it knew the attack was coming. Applejack missed her entry, pulling herself up and around to face the storm once more. The cyclone had pulled itself away from the home and was heading right for Applejack!

The orange pegasus gasped for breath, it had taken all her strength to keep herself from being pulled in by the tornado pursuing her. She tried her best to fly over the streets, using them like a channel to guide the storm away from houses. The cyclone was still dealing some damage to the homes closest to it, but it wasn't so much that the home couldn't be repaired. Finally she exited the town, hovering just on its outskirts. The twister rumbled near the edge of

town, as if deciding whether or not to continue.

“Hay! Is that all ya’ got? Ah’ve had fans that blow more wind than you!” Applejack taunted, sticking her tongue out. The twister heaved forward, lightning crackling from its clouds as it took chase once more. “Whoa nelly, that did it...”

Both Applejack and the storm had completely left the town. They ended up in the plains that spanned between Ponyville and Sweet Apple Acres. Rainbow Dash had now abandoned her evacuation duties and was galloping toward the storm. She stopped at the edge of town, watching Applejack stare down her creation.

Applejack took the first move, throwing out her fore-hooves and dive bombing the cyclone. It responded with lightning, trying to strike Applejack mid-dive. The bolt nearly hit, forcing Applejack to bank left and away, she used the momentum to curve around and punch herself directly into the storm’s center. Inside, the wind was surprisingly weaker. Grey clouds swirled the cone, the entire thing leading up to a massive hole in the cloud cover. Applejack could even see sunlight through the top. Without hesitation she started flying against the current of the storm. With every circling pass, small cuts started to appear in its sides.

The cyclone began to sway and bow, the lacerations caused by Applejack’s furious offense making it unstable. Rainbow watched as the storm seemed to be coming unraveled.

“Wow, I can’t believe it...she’s actually doing it!” Rainbow spoke aloud, getting closer to the action. The twister began to drift again, moving in the direction of Sweet Apple Acres. Rainbow gasped as the storm tore a picket-fence apart on its path; large chunks of the fencing began swirling in the twister. Inside, Applejack was forced to slow her circling in order to avoid the broken fence pieces. One large plank struck her on the shoulder, making her stagger. She lost control, the wind inside beginning to blow her back in the direction of the spin. Another pair of planks came around for a second shot. One missed, but the other struck Applejack right in the face. The pain from the strike caused her head to spin. A gust of wind flung her from the cyclone, the hard ground rising fast to meet her. **THUD!**

Rainbow Dash galloped over to the clobbered orange mass on the ground. Applejack had landed face-first in the dirt and appeared completely unconscious. Rainbow quickly grabbed Applejack’s head with both fore-hooves, shaking her and trying to wake her up.

“C’mon Applejack! You can do this, I know you can! Please, you have to wake up!” Rainbow begged as she watched the Tornado setting itself upon the orchard. One of the many apple trees had been ripped out of the ground and into the storm’s maw. Rainbow tried to rouse her friend one last time, “I know you can do this Applejack...” Nothing, she was out cold. Rainbow shook her head, lowering Applejack softly back into the dirt. All she could do now was try to warn the rest of her family.

Thankfully, the storm seemed to only care about destroying the orchard and wasn’t seeking out the farm yet. Rainbow Dash ran as fast as she could to the Apple Family barn. She spotted Big Macintosh standing in its threshold, mouth agape.

“Mac!” Rainbow yelled out to the red earth pony, “You have to get everypony underground now! This is going to get worse and no pony can stop it!” Macintosh said nothing, he merely nodded at Rainbow Dash, ducking into the barn and emerging again with Granny Smith in tow.

“Eeek! It’s a Twista’! A Twista’!” Granny screamed, nearly tumbling off Macintosh’s back as he struggled to pull the door to the apple cellar open. Both he and Granny safely climbed inside. Macintosh popped his head back out once Granny was safely situated.

“Aren’t ya’ takin’ cover too?” he called out to Rainbow. She shook her head.

“No, I dunno what I’m gonna do, but I have to see this through to the end.” Rainbow yelled back. Macintosh nodded, grabbing the handle to the cellar in his teeth and slamming the door shut. Rainbow winced as she turned, maybe she should have taken that offer after all. Multiple apple trees had been pulled from the ground like weeds in a garden by the tornado’s force. As the cyclone collected them, Rainbow marveled. The trees all dangled around the outer clouds like a macabre necklace, slowly swirling and crumbling in the cyclone’s grasp. The storm had begun to turn again, this time moving in the direction of the farm yard.

In the darkness of Applejack’s mind, all she could hear were screams: Screams of the ponies whose homes had been destroyed by her abomination, screams of families and loved ones in danger of being swallowed by her mistake. In her dream, she saw only dark grey claws. The wicked things reached down toward Ponyville, smashing and raking the world clean and leaving nothing but splintered wood in their wake. Then everything faded to black once more. As she drifted on the edge of this memory, thin tendrils of void and shadow beckoned her; offering her a way out, a way to forget her shame, to forget all...

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaapppppppllleeeeeeeeeeejaaaaacccccckkkkkk...”

The voice was small, almost unnoticeable. For just a moment Applejack turned away from her sorrow and looked for its source. A shadowed claw settled on her shoulder, encouraging her to forget ever hearing it...

“Please Applejack, wake up!”

There it was again, only, it seemed to be getting stronger. The voice seemed familiar somehow, had she known this pony before? She couldn’t remember. She took a step forward, tugging the shadowed claw off her as she strained to listen.

“C’mon Applejack, No pony else can do this but you! I know it!”

Now she was certain she knew that voice. It sounded so familiar, so friendly. She wanted to gallop off to meet this pony. From out of the shadows three more claws grasped at her legs and neck, trying to pull her away while whispering sweet-nothings about how everything would be better if she just gave up.

But Applejack didn’t listen. She planted her hooves firmly, yelling out to the darkness: “No! Ah’ ain’t budgin’! Somepony out there still believes in me, and I owe it ta’ them ta’ be there!” With this the void-shrouded creature screeched and pulled on the orange pony as hard

as it could. Applejack didn't move an inch. She raised her back legs, righteous light beginning to engulf her hooves as she thrust her legs out for a buck. The force of her kick blasted away the shadows, engulfing her world in warm light.

Applejack stirred violently, gasping for air as her senses flooded back to her. She quickly realized she was lying flat on the ground. Was that all a dream...or something worse? She chose not to dwell on it, rising to her hooves and brushing off some dirt with a flick of her tail. It took her a moment, but realization shocked her back to attention. Here she was, sitting in the dirt while that monster of a storm was still out there. Applejack winced as she heard the sickening crack of wood being splintered behind her. She turned, reopening her eyes to the horror Sweet Apple Acres had become.

The twister had cut a devastating swath through the orchard, uprooting every tree it could on its way to the barn. As new trees entered, old ones were split and snapped like twigs, their remains being thrown out to fall behind the cyclone. Applejack felt her heart sink so low it might as well have been in her hooves. Now she was responsible for the homes and for destroying part of her family's livelihood. She closed her eyes as they filled with tears; her body was shaking from shame and anguish. Everything had gone so wrong, if only she hadn't been so brash.

"Brash...Dash..." Applejack spoke softly to herself as her thoughts shifted to Rainbow Dash. If Dash was in her place, what would she be doing? Would she be sitting here sobbing in the dirt while this storm ravaged the country side?

"Heck no!" Applejack shouted, "She'd do whatever it takes ta' stop that storm!"

With that last thought, Applejack burst from the ground and rocketed into the sky. She climbed higher and higher, the grim scene of the tornado grew smaller below. She intended to dive-bomb it, it was the only plan she could think of. The twister had grown significantly since she had last tried to undo it, so she needed a lot of speed this time. Higher, higher and higher, the scene below looked almost like a gruesome diorama now. Applejack stopped for just a moment, lining up her shot. She thought of Rainbow Dash, her family, and all the other ponies she had uprooted today just like that cyclone was uprooting her trees. It was time to make things right again. Applejack let her wings fold closed, tilting herself face-first for her strike.

The orange pegasus descended, picking up speed fast. Applejack's eyes began to water as the wind rushed over her yellow mane. She had to go faster. She threw open her wings once more and started beating them. Faster, she had to get even more speed. She thought of how Rainbow Dash does her dive-bombs and thrust out both fore-hooves. Applejack's wings were beginning to ache but she pressed them even harder, she had to go faster or she'd never gain enough momentum to undo the tornado.

Below, the twister had just finished the remaining trees between it and the barn yard. Rainbow Dash shuddered as the grim, black cyclone loomed over the farm. Trees, leaves, apples, and wood all swirled and cracked within the horrible face of the storm. The sound was

intense, like a train wreck was happening right in front of her. The twister plowed forward, uplifting and smashing the chicken coops to pieces. Rainbow knew it was coming right for her, and she had no idea what she could do, but she stayed planted right where she was and tilted her hat forward. If this thing wanted the barn, it'd have to go through her first. It was then Rainbow noticed, just off in the distance, a streak of orange and yellow light heading right for the storm. Her heart leapt at the sight, Applejack was back!

Applejack's face was being blown back by the sheer speed she had picked up. The storm was coming into view, and yet she still didn't feel like it was enough. She pressed herself harder than ever, so much so that small contrails of vapor began to skid off the tips of her hooves. She only had one shot at this, it had to count. Vertigo started to seep in as the friction pressed against her trying to slow her down. Her eyes blurred, like grey fingers trying to pull her vision away. She thought for sure she was going to pass out, every fiber of her being was full of aches and pains she didn't even know existed. But she had to succeed, everypony was depending on her.

"C'mon Applejack..." A voice inside her mind pierced the veil, *"You can do it AJ, I know you can."*

She recognized that voice; it was Rainbow Dash, giving her praise like she never had before! It was all Applejack needed. With a surge of power the likes of which she had never felt before, Applejack strained...and pushed...her body stretched itself so far it felt like she was being pulled like taffy. She could feel a curtain of air and friction bend and bow, it tried desperately to contain her but to no avail...

KA-POW *wowo* *wowo* *wowo*

Everything around Rainbow Dash was bathed in light as a giant shock-wave of color exploded behind the storm. She had performed a Sonic Rainboom herself on two occasions, but she had never been on the receiving end of one. The dazzling display caused her jaw to drop as she plopped herself on the ground in awe. She was quickly reminded why it's called a, "RainBOOM," when the after-shock struck. Everything within the farmyard clattered and shook against the wave of force as it blasted though. Rainbow's mane and tail were blown back, making her look like she had just emerged from a wind tunnel. All the while a blazing rainbow had emerged from the explosion and rocketed directly at the cyclone.

Applejack couldn't believe what had happened, she hadn't even intended it, yet it just did. Her ears were ringing from the explosion she had caused. Her face felt like it would peel clear off if she went any faster than she was now. Questions and thoughts started buzzing in her mind, but they'd have to wait, she still had a job to do. With all her strength she shot herself at the twister that had so viciously ravaged her home. The storm tried to move, but it was just too

slow. Applejack blasted clear through, leaving two massive holes and a trail of rainbow color in her wake. The storm crumpled, unable to recover from the sheer power of the onslaught. Applejack turned around for another pass, finally catching a glimpse of the rainbow she was painting across the sky. She dived low, pulling up just before impact with the ground and spinning as she entered the base of the cyclone. The force of her wings, combined with the power of the Rainboom, spun a current so powerful it wiped the clouds clear off the face of Equestria.

Applejack shot directly up into the sky, rainbow still following in suit. She had done it; against all odds she had defeated the storm single-hoofedly. She relished in her victory, unaware of just how high she was climbing. Her revelry was soon broken by a sudden, unexpected burning in the pit of her stomach. The pain grew, spreading to her back and then up to her wings. Through the discomfort she turned, her joy quickly replaced with shock. Applejack's wings were glowing pale blue and shedding feathers at an alarming rate. The dull pain soon turned to stabbing as the last of her feathers fell away. Applejack's head reeled as the nubs on her back receded inward, leaving nothing but a simple Earth Pony once more. Before she could even collect herself, one last jab of pain shot right through her chest as a lightning bolt struck from her body down to earth. The barrage of pain was so intense she passed out. The residual momentum of her climb had ceased, and her rainbow had finally reached its end. She plummeted toward the ground.

Rainbow Dash had been busy cheering and watching the show. She clopped her hooves together as she bathed in the beauty of the rainbow Applejack had made. The sun was shining now and every single cloud had been wiped clean by the Rainboom. Rainbow stopped her cheer as Applejack arched upward, content to wait for her eventual landing. The rainbow trailed off, *"Boy...Applejack sure got some distance..."* Rainbow thought to herself. *"Is she coming down?"* Rainbow started to feel worried; Applejack knew how to stop properly right? She got to her hooves, scanning the skies for her friend. She spotted something orange drifting down, but it was far too small to be Applejack. Rainbow trotted over to the object.

"An orange feather...?" Rainbow said aloud as the feather touched the ground. She prodded it with a hoof, realizing as she did so that many more were falling behind it. *"Oh my gosh! Applejack!?"* Rainbow yelled skyward, trying hard to spot her companion. She spotted a larger shape falling quickly to earth, that had to be her. Rainbow also noticed something else, something new. It was bright, moving really fast...and *heading right for her!*

Ker-ZAPitty crack crackle

Rainbow reared back as the blinding light struck her dead in the chest. The sudden pain that followed was indescribable, yet it only lasted a moment. Rainbow staggered at first, her vision filled with residual sparkles of the magic that surrounded her. It only took a moment for

her to remember her friend falling to her doom; Applejack-pancakes most likely the result if she failed to act. Instinctively Rainbow Dash leapt from the ground; and to her great surprise, she kept going! As the ground dropped away from her, Rainbow looked at her back, a pair of sky-blue wings flapped rhythmically on her sides as a contrail of color trailed behind her. Her heart soared, she was back!

With effortless ease Rainbow soared into the sky, the shape of her friend coming closer and closer. Applejack was still unconscious and crumpled in a fetal position. Rainbow dove under Applejack, catching her with both fore-legs. The initial change in weight caused Rainbow's altitude to sag, but she recovered. She turned and started gliding slowly back to the barn yard. Below she could see the carnage wrought by Applejack's storm. Trees, fences, fruit and small buildings had all been spread like confetti across Sweet Apple Acres. The whole mess looked like a scar cut across the land. Rainbow looked at her friend; she was going to be so upset when she woke up.

Applejack stirred; the rustling of leaves and the sound of song birds filled her ears. At first she only laid there, taking in deep breaths and blinking. Then, she shot up, memory coming back to her. To her surprise she was lying comfortably in bed, the covers tucked around her snugly with a wash cloth and basin on the bed stand. She felt her head ache, it was wrapped in bandages. One of her fore-hooves was dressed as well and a larger dressing was across her chest. She rose up; all her muscles screamed in misery, but she wanted to move. Trotting slowly down stairs she looked around her home, nopony was around. Outside she heard the wind pick up again then quietly die down. She limped over to the exit.

Outside, nearly every one of Applejack's friends and relatives were hard at work repairing the damage done to the Apple Family farm. Big Macintosh and Caramel were re-sodding the soil upturned by the storm, Fluttershy was busy corralling the chickens that flew the coup before impact. Pinkie Pie was helping mend a fence while Rarity monitored her work. Even Granny Smith was out and about, helping Applebloom, Scootaloo and Sweetie-Belle collect up the apples and hay that had been thrown throughout the yard. Everypony was there, except...

"Hey Applejack! You're awake!" Rainbow Dash called, hopping off the roof of the barn and gliding down to her friend. Applejack was nearly speechless.

"Rainbow...did you do all this?"

"Well, yea...it really wasn't that big a deal. Everypony was more than willing to help after what happened." Rainbow said nonchalantly. Applejack shook her head once, still dumbstruck.

"How long was I out 'fer?"

"Oh man...you've been out cold for a couple days. I'm not surprised either, you pulled

some serious moves out there!” Rainbow complimented, rearing up on her hind legs and punching the air with her fore-hooves excitedly. Applejack looked over to her orchard, feeling melancholy despite Dash’s praise. Hundreds of apple trees lay on their sides, most of them split in half. Just then, one of the trees became engulfed in a pale purple light as it magically levitated itself up and planted itself back firmly in the ground. Applejack didn’t have to think twice to know who that must have been. Sure enough, Twilight Sparkle came trotting merrily out of the orchard. She was busy levitating another tree before noticing Applejack staring at her. She waved excitedly, losing her concentration and dropping the tree with a **thunk**. Applejack laughed as she jumped in surprise.

“Ya even went and fetched Twilight?” Applejack asked.

“Aayup,” Rainbow replied, “I flew all the way to Canterlot to tell her, she insisted we leave immediately the second she found out.”

Applejack couldn’t stop smiling; she never would have guessed all these ponies would be so willing to help her after the disaster she caused. Some of the others had stopped their chores, gathering to wish Applejack swift recovery and their thanks for stopping the storm. In her excitement Applejack didn’t notice Rainbow suddenly slip something onto her head. She lifted a hoof to feel it; it was Rainbow’s crown she had won from the Cloudsdale Best Young Flyer’s competition. Rainbow had taken up Applejack’s hat again, tilting it forward with a smile.

“Three Cheers for Applejack everypony!” Rainbow called out to the group. The cheers and whoops that came after were loud and wonderful. Applejack bowed down graciously, feeling proud and blessed to have so many wonderful friends.