

Applejack took in more of her surroundings as an awkward silence hung between the two earth ponies, Pinkemina giving her a harsh glare as the farmer tried to avoid her eyes. It was as Mrs. Cake had said; the room was not very decorated beyond basic furniture. A bed, a table, some clothing hung up in her closet, some chairs, and the previously seen desk and vanity. There was a door at the opposite side of the room that led to a small balcony on the roof of the building. The room itself was tidy; nothing rested on the table, the only sign of disturbance were the sheets of her bed, which looked to be kicked to its base. The walls, while dim from the lack of light, were noticeably tan. There was also a grey stone fireplace that seemed out of place not only on the second floor, but by Pinkie Pie's standards. *She must not have had much choice in decoration, but it's a pretty nice place to live...*

Even two minutes later, neither pony had spoken when Applejack's vision finally found the pink mare once again. It was still that same intense glare that threatened to see into the farmer's very soul. The Applejack had trouble thinking, unable to look away from the baker's face. *She's not acting like Pinkie Pie, what's going on here? She's kind of... creepy.* She kept her eyes focused on the pony before her, but the look was so strong that she felt like she had to back down, as if she was being pushed back.

Pinkemina broke the silence, which to Applejack, seemed to literally shatter like a vase hitting the floor. "So what do you think of my mane?" She asked. Her expression had changed from that penetrating glare to the faintest of smiles. Though it took a few seconds for Applejack to even realize she had been spoken to, the change in atmosphere was enough to lift an almost physical weight off of Applejack's shoulders.

*It... looks cute? Is that the word ah want, really? Somethin' about it is just cleaner, more formal, more... dignified.* "It suits ya." Applejack gave a half smile. "Normally yer mane's a big mess, but ah really like it like that, all straight and such."

Pinkemina chuckled despite herself. "It is really messy normally, isn't it? All poofy and stuff..."

"Is that how it always is? Ah've never really seen yer hair done any other way..." Applejack was genuinely curious, to a degree. She and Rainbow Dash were the only two ponies of the group that didn't like fashion, while Pinkie Pie was not adverse to such "girly nonsense" like hair or clothes, even if she never talked about it much and didn't busy herself with it. The farmer knew that she needed idle conversation so she could steer it towards Pinkie's problems, instead of just asking out right.

Pinkemina shook her head. "When I lived on the farm - my family's rock farm - my hair was always like this. Neat. Cut short. Straight and simple. My parents never said it, but I know they wouldn't have wanted it any other way." Pinkemina looked as if she was recalling painful memories. "But... somehow... it all changed that moment I learned how to smile. What happiness and joy was. When I saw that Sonic Rainboom and got my cutie mark, everything changed."

Applejack nodded. She knew exactly what Pinkie Pie was talking about; the day each of them earned their cutie marks had been incredibly important to all of them, and they all owed it to Rainbow Dash. By performing a Sonic Rainboom, the cyan pegasus had set off events or thoughts in all five of

them that led to each of the other five in their group earning their cutie marks either right then, or within a day of that Rainboom. Of course, none of them had known that. As far as the six ponies had known, they all just earned their cutie marks by discovering who they were, as per the regular ritual, but when they all had been at an impromptu gathering at Sugar Cube Corner several months ago, and heard how Rainbow Dash got her cutie mark as she explained it to the trio of fillies that made up the Cutie Mark Crusaders, it made perfect sense. They had all seen the same beautiful rainbow and felt that same powerful explosion. Since that day on, a certain kinship between the six of them had formed, leading to be stronger friendships between all of them.

Pinkemina continued again, brining Applejack out of her thoughts and memories. “Since then, my hair’s always been really messy unless I straighten it like I did this morning. And even then, it musses itself up overnight anyway.”

“So why’d ya decide to fix it today?” Asked Applejack.

Pinkemina turned away before answering. “I thought I... would want to look nice before you came over, is all. I mean, you’re the only pony who has really wanted to talk to me... in a while. I tried talking with Twilight last night, after the party, even checking out a book, but she... kind of blew me off.”

Applejack raised an eyebrow. *Twilight didn’t mention that...* “What did she say?”

“She said she was busy figuring out what is going on with all this elements of harmony stuff. So I just... found the book, and left her to it. We wouldn’t want silly, random Pinkie Pie to get in the way, would we?”

“Ya talked to anypony else lately?” Applejack asked, ignoring the rhetorical question and becoming more concerned for the pink mare by the minute.

She nodded. “After you left, I tried talking with everypony. Rainbow Dash said she needed to talk to Fluttershy, Rarity had an order to fill... I guess no pony wants to talk to me. I’m ‘too annoying.’”

“Ya know that isn’t true Pinkie Pie.” Applejack walked forward and put a hoof on Pinkie’s shoulder. The pink mare didn’t acknowledge it. “We’ve just been busy lately. There’s lotsa stuff goin’ on. Ya musta had fun at the party last night, right?”

“Well yeah!” She said, some of her energy returning to her voice. “There was so much good food and everypony looked so happy and the show was amazing! It was the most fun I’ve had in days!”

“Yeah, so cheer up Pinkie! Ya know we’ll have time for you when we have time. We can’t always just see you whenever we want—”

“You can, apparently!” Pinkemina said, a pointing an accusatory hoof at the farmer, making her take a few steps back. “You’re the only one! You’ve always been one of the only ones to listen...”

“What about Dash, Pinkie? Ya two’ve been great friends, especially since that one time Gilda showed up.” Applejack decided she had to be firm. Being quiet and hesitant wouldn’t help the already quiet-and-hesitant Pinkie Pie she was trying to bring out of some sudden depression. “Dash wouldn’t ignore ya, or anythin’ like that; she’s been having lots of problems lately, so has Fluttershy. Ya know they’ve been through a lot.”

“What about Twilight and Rarity?” Pinkemina asked. “Twilight wasn’t busy until all this stealing-the-elements stuff started going on. Rarity doesn’t have any excuse that she’s told me.”

“Ah can’t speak for them, but they must have had good reasons.” Applejack sighed. “Ya know we wouldn’t avoid ya, Pinkie Pie. Don’t you remember your Birthday last year? We only wanna look out for your best interests!”

She glared at Applejack. “Right. The day even *you* lied to me.”

“It was for a surprise party, Pinkie Pie!”

“That doesn’t matter!” She yelled. “You still lied to me! That was the first time I’ve even seen you lie before. I didn’t think it was possible.”

Applejack kept her tone firm. “That was just a little white lie, Pinkie. Ah’d never lie to hurt ya. None of us would.”

Pinkemina sighed to herself, a smile creeping onto her lips. Applejack raised an eyebrow in response, but the baker’s apprentice didn’t seem to care. “I guess it really doesn’t matter...” she got down from her chair, and opened a drawer in her vanity. “Oh Applejack. Look at me...” she took something out of the drawer; Applejack saw a glimmer of a necklace she had just pulled out, wrapped around her hoof. “Arguing with you... when I can just show you the cause of my troubles.” She turned to face the farmer. Her foreboding glare had returned. “When I can show you what I’ve been through.”

Applejack stood still as Pinkemina approached her, knocking off her hat. She yelped in surprise as the pink pony placed the necklace around her neck. Pinkemina backed off a few steps to let Applejack examine the jewel. The chain looked golden, and the singular jewel that made up the necklace was small, white, and shaped just like the balloons that were Pinkie’s cutie mark, the outline in gold as well. “What the hay is this?”

“Something I got in the mail a week ago. It looked like my cutie mark and was addressed to me, so I took it. I wore it for a few days.” She laughed. It didn’t comfort Applejack in the slightest. “At first, I thought it was a gift. I get those sometimes- you know, for the parties I throw for everypony- but you know, I don’t think anypony ever noticed me wearing it. Here.” Pinkemina lead Applejack to her bed, making the farmer sit down on it.

“What’s goin’ on Pinkie?” Pinkemina pressed her hoof against the necklace just as Applejack finished. A light flickered from it, and Applejack fell against the covers of the bed with a peaceful snore.

Pinkemina decided to wait thirty seconds. After all, she had done the math. She knew what that necklace was capable of, and knew that anything longer than that might drastically hurt her friend. She just wished to give Applejack a taste.

*You didn't need to wear this all the time...*

*But you did. And that's what caused all this. You didn't know what was happening. It isn't your fault.*

*What does it matter whose fault it is? That... sickening piece of jewelry taught you things. You've seen the future. Seen what your friends do.*

*Those aren't real, though! Those visions are fake!*

*Who says? Those visions seem to capture a few adventures pretty well... if they're fake, they know your friends better than you do still...*

*That isn't true! They wouldn't leave me...*

*So what are they doing now?*

Thirty seconds. She quickly awoke Applejack by shaking the farmer from her slumber. It was a magical sleep, but it was easy to bring somepony out of it.

Applejack woke up with a start, bringing herself upright instantly. Her face was full of panic, and when her eyes found the baker, she brought desperate hooves around her. “Pinkie! How long did ya leave me in there!?”

“Just thirty seconds Applejack.”

“Thirty... no... Pinkie, that was a whole day! Ah kept waitin’ to get out, and it just kept goin’... blazes, it’ll take some time to forget that...”

“What did you see, Applejack?”

The farmer closed her eyes, as if recalling a distant memory. “Ah saw... I’m not really sure. A funeral for ya was part of it.”

Pinkemina was unperturbed. “Yeah. What after that?”

“Everypony talkin’ afterwards. Twilight, Dash, Rarity... all of us. It was clear that nopony seemed to care that you were gone, ‘cept me. Ah kept bringin’ it up, and everypony even laughed.” She shook her head slowly. “These... they can’t be visions of the future. Ah don’t believe it.”

“Yet, Applejack, what else can they be?”

“What... what do ya mean what else can they be?! They could be fake! They could be anything but the truth!”

“I’ve seen more in these visions than you could believe Applejack!” Pinkemina yelled. “Every night, even after I accidentally pressed it and figured out it was giving me those... visions, I would still see them. I see everypony’s future... all of you having your fun, being friends without me. I’m just some ghost in the night sky, watching as you all go on with your lives...”

Applejack could feel some anger boiling up from the naivety of her friend, but she tried to keep it down as she spoke. “Ah hate to argue this Pinkie... but what does any of this matter? They’re just dumb, made-up visions of all o’ us. Just because ya see a funeral for yerself and nopony cares, doesn’t mean we really would. Yer our best friend, Pinkie!”

“I knew you wouldn’t believe me. I didn’t believe them at first either... until I did a little research.” She slipped her head under her bed, and brought out a book. It was fairly large; the baker’s apprentice had trouble lifting it to the bed, and when it landed, Applejack was almost thrown off. She lowered herself from the bed anyway, and watched as Pinkemina went through the pages. Applejack hadn’t seen the title, but she saw the section header that Pinkemina stopped at: “Physiology of the modern Pony.”

“Some of those visions... they show me the future. Show me a future in a few hundred years. Long past when we would be alive.”

The farmer raised an eyebrow. “All right...”

She flipped a page, then another, then brought a hoof to the text she read aloud to the farmer. “The life-span of a Unicorn Pony, Pegasus Pony, or Earth Pony is decided by... blah blah blah... here we go. There’s a section here, and I’m going to read some of it. Listen closely.

“In recent years, another possible factor related to the lifespan of ponies has been revealed in several studies: the amount of magic in a pony determines part of their lifespan; it is one reason that Unicorns and Pegasi have had longer life spans than Earth Ponies, as duly noted time and time again through-out the centuries. The Unicorn’s magic that lets them manipulate things with their will and Pegasus magic that lets them harness and control the elements, all have a significant impact on life span; to a lesser degree, the magical connection that Earth Ponies have to the environment also improve their lifespan, though it is still significant. All of these things have a positive effect on the lifespan of a pony. Magic is also by far the strongest factor in determining lifespan: without it, scientists estimate that a pony

may only live for close to 20-30 years. Yet, the current average life span as of PoLB (Post-Luna Banishment) 998 for the regular Unicorn or Pegasus pony is almost 80 years of age, regardless of gender, and 70 for that of the regular Earth Pony.”

Pinkemina closed the book swiftly. She turned an uncharacteristically soft look to Applejack before she spoke. “Applejack, tell me something.

“How long do you think you, I, and all of our friends will live?”

Applejack cringed. She knew being an Earth Pony meant she would be among the earliest of her friends to pass on... but it was an inevitability she learned to deal with even as a teenager. Ponies were as they were, and she couldn't hope to change it, but that didn't mean she liked being reminded of it. Rainbow Dash was her best friend after all, and even as a foal, she had been friends with non-Earth Ponies. She swallowed before answering, “Ah'd guess with what the averages say. You and ah... maybe around 70ish. The rest of us... 80s. Especially Twilight. But what does this have to do with anything?”

“You don't get it, do you? Of course not.” She sighed. “Let me piece it together for you. Let's say that jewel isn't really giving me visions of the future. Here's what it could be doing: it came with visions inside of it so that anything could be played out for me to see, or it takes my memories and runs with what I know of my friends, and generates visions.”

Applejack sighed. She didn't want to sit there and discuss a stupid jewel, but she decided to go along with the pink mare anyway. “Okay, so sayin' this is true, and assumin' that ah know anythin' about magic in the first place, that latter idea sounds a lot easier and safer. That way, the pony wouldn't have to know the ponies she's targettin', and it looks best to the pony wearin' it.”

“Right. The visions would only be based on what I know, right?”

“Right... I don't get what you're hinting at, Pinkie Pie. What does this have to do with that lifespan stuff?”

“If I'm being shown visions of the future as I know it, why would it show me visions of things a hundred years in the future? We won't be alive that long.”

“Yeah. So it's fake.”

She kicked at the ground in obvious frustration. “Some of those visions were *several* hundred years later. Maybe more. If I don't think we'll live that long, why would it show us that?”

“Ya tell me, miss know-it-all.” *Wow, never thought ah'd call anypony but Twilight that...*

“I looked it up earlier. Just in the past few hours, Applejack, before you got here. Each of us embodies an Element of Harmony... which is ‘the strongest magic known to Ponydom.’ What do you

think having that in your body does... for your magic levels?"

Applejack's eyes went wide. "It could mean... we live for a really long time." She swallowed. *Is she right though? Hundreds and hundreds of years? Ah'd out-live... everypony ah ever knew. Mah entire family... Ah better get to Twilight on this later.*

"I've seen so many hours of visions in that stupid thing, Applejack. It knows our friends well. Too well. It isn't just pre-constructed visions, and they aren't based on what I know since I just pieced together that we'll live for centuries, this morning. It's giving *real visions*, Applejack. Visions of... me dying... and absolutely nopony but you caring!"

"Oh, landsakes Pinkie Pie, you ain't gonna die!" Applejack huffed in annoyance. "It's just a dumb vision. They were all dumb visions. Even... even if somethin' happened, why would ah be the only pony to care, Pinkie Pie? Ah wouldn't be, we'd all care. Heck, that just proves that it ain't real anyway."

Pinkemina looked to the farmer, her face not a glare of anger, but a faraway look of sorrow. "Fine. I believe you Applejack. I believe you, because if I don't, and I wouldn't know what to believe." She looked to a clock in her room. Applejack followed her gaze. It was just past noon. "Applejack... can you promise me something?"

"Of course, sugarcube."

"Don't... don't ever forget me." Her voice was weak, almost regretful.

"What the hay does that mean?"

"Exactly what it means. Don't think too hard on it." She motioned to the door. "Just come back here again tomorrow at the same time, okay? I'm tired of this. Of you." Pinkie had returned to her angry self from a sympathetic side before Applejack could take advantage of it.

"Hmph. Fine." Applejack walked to the door, and as she opened it, she glanced back at the pink pony. She was sitting on her haunches, her legs dangling over the side of the bed. She was looking up towards the ceiling. Applejack couldn't read her face.

"Pinkie," Applejack said with some concern, "You sure you're okay?"

"I never said I was okay, Applejack. We can talk more tomorrow. I have some thinking to do right now, is all."

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Applejack didn't even make it down the stairs when Mrs. Cake quickly asked how she was doing.

“Is everything all right, darling? We heard some yelling up there...”

“Everythin’s fine, Mrs. Cake. Pinkie’s just a bit emotional is all.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re both okay.” She sighed with relief. “She does get like this sometimes, though. Always worrisome.”

“Whaddya mean, ‘like this?’”

“Her hair straight, doesn’t talk with anypony, ornery, that sort of thing. It happens when she gets depressed or gets some sad news. I remember when it happened almost a year ago today, actually.”

Applejack couldn’t recall anything specific from this time last year, and pressed on it. “What happened?”

“Pinkie didn’t tell us why, but she locked herself up in her room for three entire days. We could hear sobbing, but she kept it to herself. On the fourth day, she burst out, all peppy as she usually does, and tells us really nonchalantly that one of her sisters had been in an accident and died.”

“What!?” Applejack’s jaw almost hit the floor. “She didn’t tell any of us! Ah don’t even remember when she was gone for three days straight... golly, that’s beyond awful.”

Mrs. Cake shook her head, still obviously worried. “She must run herself ragged or something, keeping that all to herself. Even if all you’re doing is listening, just be there for her, okay? She loves us like her parents, but how often does a child tell their parents things like this?”

“You can depend on me, Mrs. Cake. Ah swear, ah won’t let her down.”

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High noon. At least, that’s what her cousin Braeburn would call it. Exactly 12:00, when the sun was at its highest point, and also it’s warmest. It was humid too; even through her fur, the damp air clung to her skin, leaving her no comfort as she forced her mind to concentrate on the warm sunlight instead on the humidity. The sky was cloudless, and she suspected Rainbow Dash was the cause. *Ah hope she’s sorted everythin’ out with Fluttershy. After ah get some lunch, ah’ll go check up on her.* Applejack headed to the closest diner, getting a quick sandwich and glass of apple juice to satisfy what hunger she had, no matter how meager.

*Pinkie Pie... what are ya doin’ to yourself? Why can’t ya just talk to us? We’re all yer friends... no. Ah’ll trust ya. Ya wanted to talk, and we did. Even if all it did was leave me more confused... ah can tell it helped ya a little. Ah just gotta keep playin’ counselor and everythin’ will turn out fine.*

Applejack thought back on Pinkie Pie’s implications during her meal. The idea of living so much



longer than everypony around her made her shiver. *Livin' and continuin' on with everypony you know... dyin', except for all six of us. Ah can't imagine that. Maybe ah'll run it by Twilight sometime... ah just hope it isn't true.*

Her sandwich wasn't very appetizing.

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The trek to Rainbow Dash's cloud home was quick and easy. Even in the hot and humid air, her own hat blocked enough of the sun to keep her vision clear. Only several minutes after finishing her sandwich and leaving, she came upon the cyan mare's floating house in the sky.

She was surprised to find that Rainbow Dash wasn't napping. She was hovering around her house, seemingly inspecting parts of it with a hardened gaze. She would be flying slow circles around her house, stop, puff a few clouds or rip some out, and then continue the slow circle around it.

"Rainbow!" Applejack called out. "Can ya spare a few minutes to talk?"

"Sure thing AJ! Just lemme fix this a little bit..." She stopped at the landing of her house, the circular area around the front entrance. She brought her two forehooves against it, smoothing it as she followed its circular edge. The landing was probably only a foot thick, and close to seven feet in diameter, which was enough cloud to support a pegasus easily. When she finished, she swooped down and landed in front of Applejack, a light smile on her face. "What's up?"

"What were ya doin' up there?" Applejack asked, purely curious. "Ah hardly ever see ya mess with your house like that."

"Oh. Just fixing up some parts of it after... some stuff happened. All this hot weather makes the clouds a little easier to break up, so I figured now would be a good time to, you know, spruce it up a bit."

"Not to say yer a Rarity now, but ya ain't normally one to, ya know, fuss over those kinda thin's. What's on your mind?"

"After last night? *Tons*, AJ. I..." Rainbow Dash looked up to the sky, as if recalling something. "I asked Fluttershy to leave last night. That kind of turned into me kicking her out."

"Kicking her out? Fluttershy?!" Applejack was appalled. *Sure, ah can see Fluttershy being insistent on staying... but Rainbow Dash forcing her out?*

"Yeah. It took me a few hours to get to where I could ask Fluttershy to leave, as she was still hanging out with me at my house. It... she looked hurt..."

"Ah... know this is a bad time to ask, but you're sure she doesn't love you?"

Rainbow Dash winced. “She said she doesn’t. She almost insists on it. She just wants to take care of me. Make sure I’m okay. Ever since we got back from the forest, she’s been scared for me, we both know that. It’s like... she thinks she needs to be depended on. If that makes any sense.”

Applejack brought a hoof to her chin in thought. “That’s kinda scary, and not all too surprisin’ either. Ya were the first... pony she ever really cared for, it was all animals before. Maybe she’s just that worried about you.”

“I don’t think that’s it, Applejack. She was almost possessed; you weren’t there for it. When I asked her to leave, she got... angry. She almost hit me. She yelled once. Then she came to her senses and left, crying. I... I was so stunned that I didn’t follow her.”

“You don’t think somepony...” Applejack brought a hoof to her head, moving it in circles to signify a pony gone crazy.

Rainbow Dash shook her head. “No. Do you remember the Gala?”

“When she yelled at all the animals? Ya think that happened again?”

“Probably. She got over it pretty fast though, but she felt bad after it then, and she probably feels kinda bad now...” the cyan mare turned her head towards town, looking anxious.

Applejack sighed. *Ah’ve been mediator all day, might as well be mediator again.* “Should I go talk to her?”

Rainbow Dash took a second to respond, lost in her thoughts. “What?” She turned to the farmer and blinked a few times. “Oh. Uh, probably. I would, but... I’m not sure she wants to see me, and I’m not sure I can see her without... you know.”

The farmer sighed again. “Right. I’ll hop to it.” She turned and started walking to town, before Rainbow Dash flew over and landed in front of her. “What now?”

“You okay, AJ? You seem out of it.”

“Just a bit tired,” Applejack replied with a yawn.

“A bit tired? You keep sighing, you’re walking at about half your normal pace and yawning and it’s like one pm. You sleep at all?”

“Why are you so concerned?”

Rainbow Dash turned away quickly. “I-I just am.”

Somehow, Rainbow Dash's stutter made Applejack remember the previous night. "Hey, that reminds me. Applebloom told me you asked her a weird question yesterday."

"O-oh yeah, I guess I did. Ehehe." Her chuckle was nervous.

"Why did you wanna know if ah'd ever been seein' anypony before?"

"Right. Uhhhhh..." Rainbow Dash gave an awkward smile to the farmer before sighing, resigned. "Guess I'll stop being subtle about it."

"So why did you wanna know?" Applejack asked again.

Rainbow Dash swallowed. "This is really awkward to say straight up, you know?"

"Out with it, Dash."

"Fine. I wanna know if you like mares or not." Rainbow Dash looked away, clearly embarrassed from having posing the question so openly. Still looking away, she continued, "So do you?"

Applejack's mouth twisted in thought. "Ah... well, ah ain't dated anypony, never really cared for it. Always workin' the farm." She finally shrugged. "Ah got no idea."

Rainbow Dash was dumbfounded. "What?"

"Just what ah said Dash. Ah don't got a clue. Never thought about it, and ah... ah only have what my parent's told me on the subject. They weren't... ya know, 'keen' on the idea that their kids might be... like that, but they said they weren't against what our heart wanted." Applejack raised an eyebrow at her cyan friend. "Ya askin' about me for some reason?"

"No, actually... I'm more worried about myself." She motioned for Applejack to follow her off the path. Walking maybe 10 or so yards over a hill, Rainbow Dash sat on her haunches, ready to talk. Applejack did the same, ready to listen. "Look... I can tell you anything, right?"

"We've already been over this Dash. 'Course ya can." Applejack couldn't stop from looking worried. *Ah just hope it ain't as big a deal as before...*

"Okay. Well, it has to do with... the fact that I... you know, fell in love with Fluttershy in the first place. I put a lot of thought into it after you and I apologized, and... I realized something that kind of scares me."

"What's on your mind?"

“I... I totally didn’t expect falling for Fluttershy. Ever. I was always so scared of falling for anypony because of... you know, Sky Swallower. Even after I... recovered from her death, I still had a set distance that I always had between other ponies and me. That’s why Gilda was my only friend before Ponyville. She had already been my friend, and we were so competitive and short tempered that we kept others out of our group pretty easily. But in Ponyville, and going on all these adventures with all of you...”

“Ya opened up again. Even ah can see where this is goin’.” Applejack nodded. “Even after Fluttershy said no, yer worried somethin’ might come up, *again*, between you and another friend.”

Rainbow Dash nodded. “Right. I’m just making sure... that I’m not setting myself up for heart break again. I don’t know if my body can take it.” She fell on her back, letting her hooves hit the soft grass of the hill as she sighed with relief. “Whew. It’s kind of weird to have to explain all that. It feels good though, getting it off my chest and stuff. I don’t normally put so much thought into that kinda stuff.”

“You don’t put much thought into anythin’ you do, Dash.” Applejack chided, chuckling to herself.

“Haha. You’re a real comedian, Applejack.” Rainbow Dash’s voice was dripping in sarcasm. “So, I can count on you to be a ‘maybe?’ That’s reassuring.”

“Ah’ll tell ya as soon as ah figure it out, sugarcube.”

“You’d just tell somepony that? That easily?”

“Why not? Ah am who ah am. Shouldn’t matter what gender ah like, right?”

Rainbow Dash looked up into the sky. Applejack tried her best to read her face. She thought it was a combination of relief, contemplation, and maybe even happiness. “Right. It shouldn’t matter...”

Applejack yawned again. *Why am ah so tired? Ah haven’t even been up that long... time for a nap.* She decided to gingerly walk over to the shade of a nearby tree, lying down on her back and pulling her hat over her face to block out glimpses of sunlight that the swaying leaves would let land on her face. She felt her motivation to walk into Ponyville sucked right out of her by her surroundings, an open field with short, vivid green grass, and a solitary tree.

“Hey.” Rainbow Dash walked over to her a few seconds later. “What are you doing?”

Applejack raised her hat a little and opened one eye, meeting the pegasus’s curious look. “Takin’ a nap. What’s it look like?”

“You never take naps.”

“Guess ah am now.”

Applejack closed her eyes, but never heard the sound of her friend’s hooves as she left. The farmer opened an eye and saw that Rainbow Dash had decided to lay down on her stomach, legs sprawled out in an attempt to sleep, only a few feet away.

She kept an eye on the cyan mare for almost a minute before the pegasus finally opened an eye and asked, “*What is it Applejack?*”

The farmer chuckled, closing her eye and pulling the hat back over her face. “Nothin’. Wake me up when ya wake up, Sugarcube.”