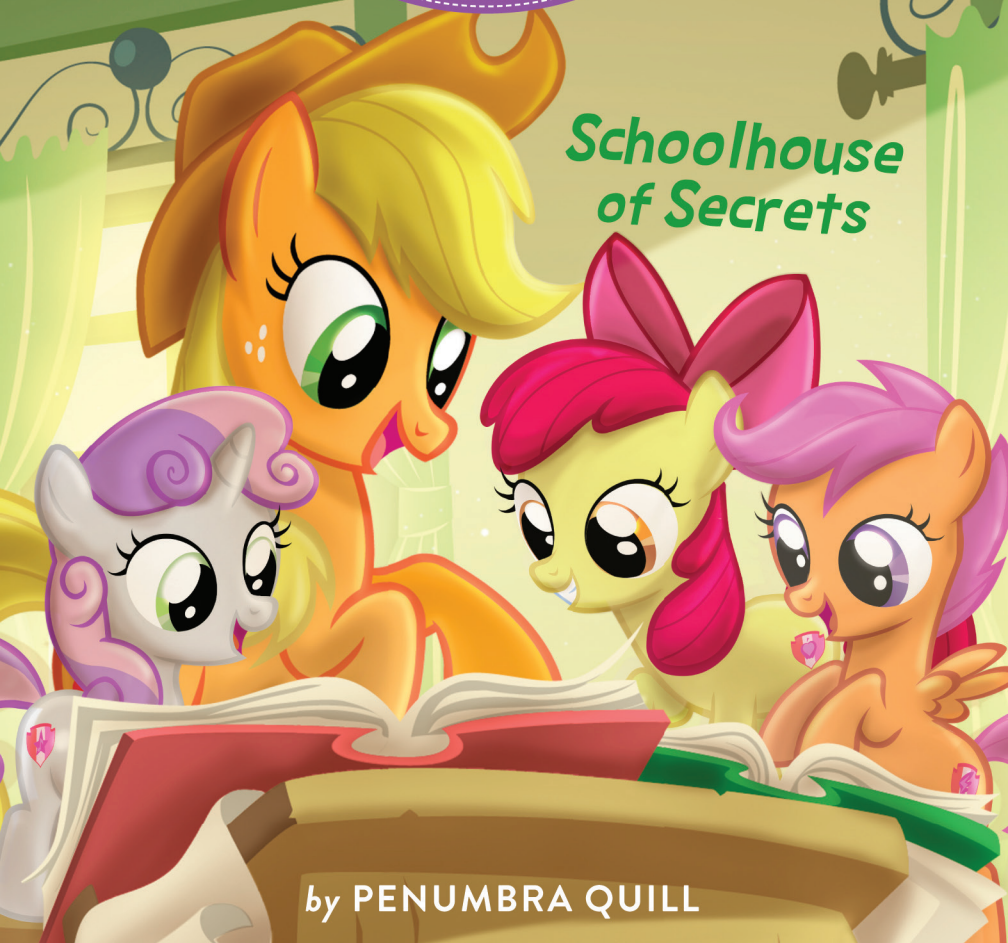


EXCLUSIVE SNEAK PEEK!



*Schoolhouse  
of Secrets*



by PENUMBRA QUILL



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## *Schoolhouse of Secrets*

by Penumbra Quill



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# PROLOGUE

The Pony stared out the window at the quaint cottages spread out below. Ponyville was small. Much smaller than from where The Pony had traveled. The large and tacky castle nearby was clearly a later addition and, in The Pony's opinion, stuck out like a sore hoof. But then, the princesses of Equestria were never known for being subtle.

However, it was the endless forest beginning at the very edge of town that truly held The Pony's attention. This was why The Pony had uprooted everything to move to this backcountry village. The Everfree Forest contained secrets yet to be discovered. Ancient secrets. Dangerous

secrets. Secrets that would make the pony who uncovered them very powerful. And now, here The Pony was, living just a few short steps away.

It was time to get started.

# CHAPTER ONE

It was another typically perfect morning in Ponyville. The sun shone brightly as ponies, Unicorns, and Pegasi bustled about. They opened their shops, ran early-morning errands, and generally got their days started. Some of the younger members of Ponyville rushed through town toward the Schoolhouse. Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo trotted alongside one another, just like they did every morning. Apple Bloom usually talked nonstop the entire way to school, but not today. Scootaloo smacked her with a wing.

“Spill it!” she ordered.

“What?” Apple Bloom asked.

“You’re really quiet this morning,”

Sweetie Belle explained. “You not talking? That’s weird.”

“It’s nothin’!” Apple Bloom said casually. Snips and Snails rushed past them toward the Schoolhouse.

“Mornin’, Crusaders!” Snips called. “Hey, Apple Bloom! Sweetie Belle! Tell your sisters they are *awesome!*”

“We *will!*” Sweetie Belle called back. Apple Bloom sighed. Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle glanced at each other.

“Sister stuff,” Scootaloo said. Sweetie Belle nodded in agreement. Scootaloo turned to Apple Bloom. “Okay, what’s up?”

Apple Bloom stopped walking and turned toward her best friends. “What are we doin’ with our lives?” she asked. Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo stared at her.



“Right now we’re going to school,” Sweetie Belle responded.

“What do you *think* we should be doing?” Scootaloo asked.

Pip hurried past them, awkwardly dragging a schoolbag that was much too big for him. “Cheerio, ponies! Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle, tell your sisters top-notch job!”

Apple Bloom gritted her teeth.

“This is about Applejack, Rarity, and that Manticore, isn’t it?” Sweetie Belle asked. Apple Bloom nodded. A few days ago, Rarity and Applejack were returning from a friendship mission for Princess Twilight Sparkle when the Friendship Express was attacked by a crazed Manticore. *Of course*, the two of them rushed to the rescue, saved a bunch of ponies, figured out what the misunderstanding was, befriended the

creature, and saved the day. It was all *anypony* in Ponyville could talk about.

“What? You wish they *didn’t* defeat the Manticore?” Sweetie Belle asked.

“Of course not,” Apple Bloom said defensively.

“Are you afraid Applejack is gonna like the Manticore more than you? Invite him to live in your room?” Scootaloo asked, grinning.

“*No!*” Apple Bloom said, laughing.

“*Oooh*. I bet the Manticore can buck *so many* more apples than you!” Sweetie Belle giggled. “If I were you I’d be really worried!”

“I’m not worried!” Apple Bloom exclaimed. “I’m just wonderin’ what’s next for the Cutie Mark Crusaders.”

“What do you mean?” Scootaloo asked.

“Well, it just seems like there’s gotta be something more out there for us to do.”

It was the first time Apple Bloom had expressed her concern out loud.

“We’ve been helping other ponies figure out *their* cutie marks,” Sweetie Belle answered. “After all, we’ve had plenty of experience with that!”

“I know, and don’t get me wrong. I love that *our* cutie marks are all about helpin’ *other* ponies with their cutie marks.” The Crusaders examined their cutie marks. Each of them had a matching shield with a different symbol inside. Apple Bloom had a heart inside an apple, Sweetie Belle had a music note inside a star, and Scootaloo had a lightning bolt inside a wing. They were the only ponies they knew in Equestria to have cutie marks that

matched this way. “But don’t y’all wish it was a bit more . . . exciting sometimes?”

“*Exciting* sounds like another word for *dangerous*,” Sweetie Belle admitted.

“You know I’m always up for an adventure,” Scootaloo said. “But think about it. We didn’t get our cutie marks until *after* we stopped looking for them, right? Maybe some big adventure will pop up when we least expect it to!” Apple Bloom considered that as Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon came trotting up behind them.

“Morning, Crusaders!” Diamond Tiara called in her singsongy voice. “Did you hear—”

“*Yes!*” Apple Bloom yelled. “*We know all about my sister and Rarity and the Manticore!*” Everypony stared at Apple Bloom, who blushed brightly.

“Sorry ’bout that,” she muttered.

“What I was *about* to say before I was *interrupted*,” continued Diamond Tiara, “was, ‘Did you hear about the family that moved into that old house up on Horseshoe Hill?’ There’s a *new filly* starting school today and nopony knows *anything* about her except *me!*”

## CHAPTER TWO

“My mother heard that her whole family moved here from Trotsylvania,” Diamond Tiara explained as they approached the Schoolhouse. She hadn’t stopped talking about this new family since she had joined the Crusaders on their walk. “My father says they must be pretty well-off to have bought that house. It’s *huge!*”

“I wonder why they moved here,” Apple Bloom said. It had been a while since anypony new had come to Ponyville.

“Hey! Maybe we should give the new student a nice, warm welcome!” Sweetie Belle suggested. “Show her how nice it is here in Ponyville?”

“That’s a *great* idea!” Scootaloo chimed

in. “And who better to welcome her than the Cutie Mark Crusaders! Right, Apple Bloom?”

Apple Bloom grinned. A Cutie Mark Crusaders welcoming committee might not be the same as saving a train full of ponies from a Manticore, but it would certainly make this new student’s day better!

“Sure,” she agreed. “Let’s go meet this new pony and show her what Ponyville has to offer!” The school bell rang and the ponies hurried toward the Schoolhouse.

“Okay, students! Hurry up!” Miss Cheerilee called from the doorway. “We’ve got a big day planned!”

Apple Bloom rushed up the stairs behind Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle. There was a buzz of activity as everypony bustled around the room, chatting and joking.

Apple Bloom scanned the room but didn't see anypony aside from the ones she already knew. The hustle and bustle of the room suddenly came to a complete stop. Apple Bloom looked around to see why the students were suddenly so quiet. They were all staring in the direction of the door to the Schoolhouse. Apple Bloom followed their gazes and saw the new student, standing quietly and observing them.

She was a lavender-coated Unicorn. Her bright-blue mane had white streaks in it, as did her tail. Her piercing violet eyes glared out at everypony staring back at her. On her flank was her cutie mark, a spell book under a bright moon with lightning and smoke surrounding it. Diamond Tiara leaned over to Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo.



“I know you all are the experts, but that cutie mark looks pretty ominous to me,” she whispered. Apple Bloom didn’t disagree, but she knew from experience that not every cutie mark meant what it seemed at first glance. You should never judge a book by its cover. Even if it has a creepy-looking cover.

Apple Bloom glanced at Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle, who seemed a little less excited about being the Ponyville Schoolhouse welcoming committee now that they had gotten a look at the new student. Apple Bloom cleared her throat to get their attention.

“Okay, y’all. Let’s say hey!” Apple Bloom trotted over to the new student, trusting her friends to follow. The new student gazed at Apple Bloom, who smiled back and held out her hoof.

“Hey there! Welcome to Ponyville. I’m Apple Bloom. These are my friends, Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle.”

“Hi,” the new pony said without smiling as she studied the Crusaders. Apple Bloom thought she saw the pony’s piercing eyes linger on their matching cutie marks.

“We call ourselves the Cutie Mark Crusaders,” Apple Bloom continued, “because . . . well, that’s a long story. But we wanted to welcome you to Ponyville!” Apple Bloom glanced at Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo, nodding at them to introduce themselves.

“Nice to meet you . . .” Scootaloo paused, waiting for the pony to introduce herself. “Um, do you have a name?”

“Lilymoon,” the Unicorn said coolly.

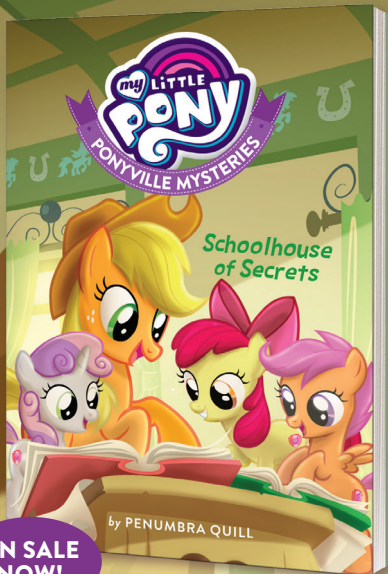
She brushed past the Crusaders and took a seat at a desk, completely ignoring everypony in the room.

“Well,” Sweetie Belle said, letting out a big breath. “She’s sure friendly.”



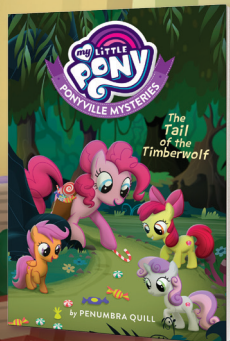
# Join the Cutie Mark Crusaders as they solve their first mystery!

At the Ponyville Schoolhouse, there's a new student! She's a young Unicorn named Lilymoon, and she's...well...different. She never smiles, her cutie mark is a spooky moon on top of a spell book, and she *clearly* seems to have no interest in making friends with any pony! One day, strange things start happening around the Schoolhouse, and Lilymoon is the prime pony suspect! Can the Cutie Mark Crusaders find out what Lilymoon wants before it's too late?



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