

Karamel

Day 2

By The Unnamed Pawn

Big Mac didn't manage to get very much work done that day. For some reason he was tired. It felt almost like he'd been running all night rather than sleeping.

Applejack noticed almost immediately and insisted that he take the day off. "Ah' don't know what's wrong, but yer not helpin' anypony by working while you're this tired," she said after he had collapsed under one of the trees. "How 'bout you and Caramel take the day off this once?"

"Me and Caramel?"

"Yeah you two haven't been on a date in a while right? As long as yer useless here you might as well be doin' somethin'."

Big Mac didn't accept the offer right away, but Applejack can be an incredibly persuasive pony when she sets her mind to it. Caramel on the other hand, was much easier to convince. Applejack hardly had to say more than, "Day off," before he was ready to go. He even made the leap to a date with Big Mac before Applejack said anything.

"Since we've both got the day off anyway, we should go to Sugarcube Corner," he said the second he got the news.

"Eeyup," Big Mac had responded.

They were on their way to the sweet shop before Caramel noticed anything was wrong. "Are you okay Big Mac?" he asked. "You look tired."

"Ah' just had a rough night Caramel. 'S nothin' you need to worry 'bout."

"That reminds me. How was the new bar? Did you meet any new friends?"

"Eeyup." Caramel grinned at the word. "Ah' met somepony name Bon Bon, somepony named Blueberrie, and somepony named Breezy."

"I don't think I know a Blueberrie, but I've met Bon Bon and Breezy before. You are talking about Mr. Breezy right?"

"Ah' think he said that's what some ponies call him." The pair stopped as they reached the door to Sugarcube Corner. Big Mac held the door open for Caramel before heading in himself. They stopped at the counter and Caramel smiled to the proprietor.

“Two slices of carrot cake please Mrs. Cake. Do you want anything else Big Mac?” Big Mac shook his head tiredly. “Also I think some coffee would probably be good. How much is that?”

“This one’s on the house.” Mrs. Cake smiled at Caramel and turned to his tired date. “I’m sure Pinkie will want to thank you for being so nice to her sister last night.”

Big Mac thought back to the events of the previous night. Blueberrie had mentioned his sister’s friend quite a few times come to think of it. “Tweren’t nothin’,” he said.

“Go ahead and take a seat you two. Pinkie will be out in a minute with your cake.” The couple thanked the baker and headed to a table near the windows. Big Mac caught himself rubbing his eyes and stopped, instead opting to shoot his colt a smile. “No need to worry him just cause yer tired,” he thought.

“That must’ve been one hay of a rough night huh?” The colt across the stable frowned at him.

“S just a bad dream Caramel. Nothing to get yerself worried over.”

“It’s just that...I’ve never seen you this tired before. Even after harvests you’re usually more energetic.”

Big Mac tried to think of another way to reassure Caramel, but as luck would have it he didn’t have to. Before he could say anything a pair of cake slices and a pair of coffee cups fell from the ceiling and landed on their table. They were followed shortly by a pink pony landing next to their table. “Hey you two,” she shouted.

“Hello Pinkie,” Caramel let out an exasperated sigh. Big Mac just nodded to acknowledge her arrival.

“Blueberrie told me she made a new friend yesterday,” she said putting her arm around Big Mac, “I’m so glad you stopped by today, so I could thank you before tonight.”

“Tonight?” Caramel asked.

“Yeah. Blueberrie invited me to hang out with her and her new friends at that new bar with this super special new drink that I’ve just got to try. Are you coming too Caramel? Apparently you’ve just got to try this thing.” Big Mac wasn’t entirely sure how’d she’d managed it, but the entire time she was speaking he was sure that Pinkie never took a breath.

“I won’t be there tonight Pinkie,” the caramel coated colt responded, “I’ve got an appointment at the Carousel Boutique, and I don’t think Big Mac will be there either.”

“Hold on Caramel, Ah’ promised Ah’d show up.”

“But your exhausted. You need some rest. “

“Don’t matter. Ah’m a pony of my word. “

“But-“

“No more arguing,” Pinkie said as she stuffed the ponies’ free cake right into their mouths. “Now eat your cake and be happy. I’m sorry I won’t see you tonight Caramel.” After that she simply skipped off.

Caramel washed down his cake with the coffee on the table before Big Mac had even processed what had happened and said, “Alright. If you insist on going please leave early okay. You obviously need to rest.”

Big Mac managed to swallow the rest of his cake and responded with an “Eeyup.” Just as he planned, it drew a big smile from the colt across from him.

This time Big Mac was the one to arrive late to the bar. When he arrived around seven he was greeted by his new friends all sitting at the booth they had been sitting at last night. A new addition was there as well. Pinkie Pie was vibrating next to her sister. Big Mac saw the expensive drink in front of her and immediately understood why.

“So what took you so long big guy?” Breezy asked as the red stallion took a seat on the outside of the booth.

“Ah’m sorry. Ah’m just kinda tired today.”

“You sure look it,” Bon Bon said, “I wonder if they have coffee here. Waitress!” A pink pegasus with a curly carnation colored mane approached the table. She was wearing a yellow dress and apron. “Could we please get some coffee over here for the big guy?”

“Of course miss.” The pony nodded and headed to the bar. The coffee was boiling in a pot in the back, so the strange bartender simply gave her a cup and a couple of sugar packets before sending her back. “Here you go sir,” she said putting the cup in front of Big Mac. After that she walked back to the bar and sat down on one of the stools.

“Where was she last night?” Big Mac asked.

“Apparently her boss sent her home before we got here because it was so dead yesterday,”

Blueberrie said, “She’s here today because of how busy it was last night.”

“You like what you see Blueberrie?” Bon Bon prodded the filly playfully.

“She just works here Bon Bon. She probably doesn’t even swing that way.”

“Oh you can’t worry about something like that. If you like her you should ask.”

Pinkie tried to say something encouraging, but it was almost unintelligible through the vibrations. “I-I-I-I th-th-i-i-i-n-n-k-k y-y-y-ou-ou-ou sh-sh-ould-d-d g-g-g-o-o-o fo-rrrr it-t-t-t-t-t.”

Blueberrie blushed. “Maybe some other night okay.”

Big Mac gulped down his coffee as the other ponies talked. It made him feel a little better, but not anymore than the coffee earlier had. “You should probably leave early tonight Big Mac,” Breezy said.

“You guys mind if Ah’ just wander for a bit. Ah’m afraid I might fall asleep if Ah’ just sit here.”

“Go right ahead Mac,” Bon Bon smiled, “Just be sure to come back once you’ve gotten a spring back in your step.”

Big Mac nodded politely and stood up. He decided to check out the bar a bit more than he had last night. He walked to the gramophone player and noticed a small table next to it. He couldn’t see it from where he had been sitting at the booth, but it must’ve been there last night too. Across the top was the word “Labyrinth” printed in block letters. It was a little wooden maze with six metal balls inside of it and a metal rod on the top of it.

A pony approached him from behind and said, “That’s the labyrinth game the boss made.” He turned to see that the waitress pony was now standing next to him. “It’s really hard, but fun. You should try it sometime. That pink pony at your booth got the best time apparently.” She pointed to a timer just under the games title. It was stuck at 30 seconds.

Big Mac just stared at the toy for a moment. “Maybe some other time.” He turned his attention to the gramophone player he had originally come to examine. There was an extensive selection of records next to it, but he didn’t feel like examining them right now. Instead he decided to just check the record that was playing. “PON3’s greatest jams,” he read the title on the case out loud. It was a signed copy. “Come to think of it, this music is a lot more upbeat than last night,” he thought.

There wasn’t much else to look at in the bar, so he decided to head back to the booth with his friends. When he turned around he saw that a new pony had arrived and was sitting at the counter. “Huh, must’ve missed the bell,” he thought. He recognized the pony at the bar as one

of his sister's friends. Rainbow Dash was her name as far as he could remember. He shrugged; maybe he could help out Blueberrie a little by talking with her.

He pulled up a stool next to her and said, "Hello."

A bright grin lit up her face, but it left the moment she actually looked at him. It was replaced by a smug look. "Hey you're Applejack's bro right? Sorry, but I'm not interested." She turned back to her drink. Big Mac recognized it as the same one that Pinkie and Bon Bon were drinking.

"Ah'm not interested either," he said, "Ya' do know what kind of bar this is right?"

Rainbow Dash looked back at him without turning her head.. "Of course I know that. How could I not know that? That's why I thought that it was weird that you hit on me."

"Ah' just said hello."

Rainbow Dash was about to say something, but stopped mid-word and seemed to be trying to remember their conversation. "Oh right," she said, "So you weren't hitting on me then?"

"Nope. Were you expectin' somepony to hit on you?"

The multicolored pony shook her head. "Of course not. What do you think I'm just sitting here waiting for somepony to start hitting on me? Do I look like I'm desperately lonely or something?"

"Ah'm sorry miss. Ah' didn't mean anything by it. Can we start over?"

Rainbow Dash's smug smile left her and she stared down at her drink once more. "I'm sorry. Can you just leave me alone?"

"Okay fine. Ah' don't want to impose." Big Mac left his stool calmly and headed back to the booth. He was disappointed that he didn't even get a chance to mention Blueberrie to the filly, but he figured he'd get another chance later.

When he got back to the booth he saw that Blueberrie was attempting to drag her unconscious sister out of it. "What in tarnation happened here?" he asked.

"I think Pinkie drank a few too many of these things," Bon Bon said pointing to her drink, "It's just a sugar coma. Don't worry about it."

Blueberries sister smashed onto the ground. Blueberrie stared at the unconscious filly for a moment and said, "I didn't think Pinkie could have too much sugar. How much is in those things?"

“Too much to be drinking five of them that’s for sure,” Breezy said as he climbed out of the booth. “I’ll help you get her home Blueberrie. She looks pretty heavy.”

“Thanks Breezy,” the blue filly said as she and the colt heaved her sister onto their backs. “We’ll see you guys tomorrow okay.”

Bon Bon and Big Mac waved the three ponies on as they exited the bar. Rainbow Dash followed them shortly.

“Well if Breezy’s going I should probably get home too.” Bon Bon left some bits on the table and exited the booth. “You want to walk home with me Mac?”

Big Mac Shook his head and took a seat in the booth. “Ah’ think Ah’ll stay here a little longer.” For some reason, he really dreaded the idea of going home right now. Mostly because it would involve him going back to sleep.

“Well okay sweetie. Just don’t stay up too late. You really do look like you could use some sleep.” Bon Bon waved him goodbye and left the bar.

Big Mac sat alone in silence for a while. With only the company of the waitress who refilled his mug. After she left the only pony left in the bar beside him was the bartender. He checked the clock. It was nine, time for him to head home.

He made to leave just as a pony approached the table. “Oh I’m sorry are you leaving?” He glanced up at the voices owner. It was a yellow unicorn stallion with a stylishly gelled caramel mane and an eye shaped cutie mark. “I was hoping I could chat with you.”

Big Mac thought about leaving, but he really didn’t want to go to sleep. Something about it scared him for some reason he couldn’t quite understand. Maybe he could put it off a bit longer if he kept this colt company. “Ah’ was just adjustin’.”

The pony chuckled and took a seat. “That’s a cute accent. Reminds me of home.”

“Come to think of it, Ah’ don’t think Ah’ve seen you around Ponyville before.”

“I actually just came to town yesterday. I’m a world traveler.”

“World traveler?”

“Yeah. I travel all over Equestria.” The pony extended his arms for emphasis. “I wander around seeing everything I can see and mapping it out when I can. Apart from that I just do odd jobs to keep myself from starving.” The colt chuckled again.

The bartender approached the table. "Would you like anything to drink sir?"

"An appletini please."

The bartender nodded and turned to Big Mac. "More coffee for you sir?"

"Eeyup." This elicited another chuckle from the unicorn.

"That's absolutely adorable. What's your name big guy?"

"Big Macintosh."

"You're kidding right? Oh that name is just so perfect for you." The stallion clapped his hoofs together and let loose another chuckle. Big Mac had to admit that it was kind of cute. "My names Karamel by the way."

"Caramel?"

"No no you're saying it wrong. It's Kerr-a-mell not Kar-a-mul."

"Umm okay. Ah'm sorry it just sounds like the name of another pony Ah' know."

The bartender arrived with their drinks and Karamel quickly downed his appletini before Big Mac could even get his lips around his mug. "Another here please. So, Big Mac," the colt grinned slyly, "do you live around here?"

Even Big Mac could recognize the implication of this question. Not to mention the grin. "Ah'm sorry, but Ah' think I should get goin'." He made to stand, but the colt grabbed his hoof and pulled him back.

"I'm sorry. I'm being too forward aren't I. C'mon at least stay and finish your coffee." Big Mac looked down at the cup. It did seem like a waste. He had barely drunk any of it.

The rest of the night went by without Big Mac talking at all. Karamel just described the various places he'd been while they drank. After he finished his last cup of coffee Big Mac took a look up at the clock. It was almost ten now. He'd been out way too late. "Ah've really got to get going now," he said as he threw a few bits on the table. "Ah' think that'll cover the drinks."

Even after the coffee he was too tired to remember the walk home, or even be sure that he made it to bed. The only thing he was sure of was where he was now that he was asleep. He looked around and was sure it was the same sweet shop as last night.

“Hey newbie,” the ewe with the glasses waved to him. She was playing cards with the ram from last night. “We’ve got a few other new arrivals tonight. You should chat with them before moving on. Some of them are pretty freaked out.”

“Shouldn’t you be running now?”

“Maybe later. First I’ve got to finish this game.” She flipped a card up from the deck. “That’s war.”

“We’re playing go fish,” the ram complained.

“I’m still declaring war.”

Big Mac decided that talking more with the ewe would probably be pointless and decided to look at the ‘new arrivals’ that she had mentioned. Seated around the shop were two more sheep. One of them seemed to be wearing a green hat that struck him as familiar for some reason. The other had a much more colorful coat than was typical of a sheep.

The colorful ewe was closer so he decided to approach her first. “Hello,” he said.

The sheep looked to him and waved. “Hey nice to meet ya. Do you know what’s going on here?”

“Nope.”

“I guess I shouldn’t be surprised. Oh well it’s no problem. I can beat a silly little maze. I’ll solve this thing in ten seconds flat just you watch.”

“Ah’ wish you luck.” Big Mac nodded and moved on to speak to the other sheep.

The sheep in question was a ram who greeted Big Mac as he approached. “Nice to see somebody willing to talk to me. The sheep over there are too embroiled in their card game, and that rainbow sheep is too focused on pumping herself up to even notice me.”

“Sorry, but Ah’m not much for conversation. Ah’ just wanted to see how all of you were doin’ before Ah’ got movin’.”

“That’s very considerate of you, but I’m actually doing just fine. Sure I’m weirded out, but dreams are weird.”

“Remember, just ‘cuz it’s a dream doesn’t mean you can go easy on yerself. Be sure not to fall alright.”

“Thanks, but I wasn’t planning on falling. I don’t know why but I can tell that it wouldn’t end well,

even if this is just a dream.” The sheep paused for a second and rubbed his chin. “Come to think of it, isn’t it a bit weird that I know this is a dream?”

“It don’t matter,” Big Mac said, “Just as long as you know to be safe.”

“I guess you’re right. Still it’s weird.”

Big Mac nodded. “Well if you’ll excuse me, Ah’ve got some runnin’ to do.”

“Good luck.”

Big Mac waved the ram goodbye and headed into the stable. The stable, as the sheep with the purple glasses had called it, was really nothing more than three wooden walls and a floor. It looked like it was meant for two ponies, but one of the sides was completely boarded off.

When Mac entered the stable he noticed a small grate seemed to connect the two sides. He tried to peer into the next side, but was thrown when a strange voice came from it. “Sit down please,” it said, “Trust me. You won’t want to be standing in the next few seconds.”

“Who are you?” Big Mac asked as he planted his hindquarters on the floor.

“That doesn’t matter. What does matter is what’s coming up next for you.”

“And what’s that?”

“You’ll see. Let’s just say, it going to be a doozy.” The voice laughed eerily. “You might want to hold onto something.”

“Why’s th-“before Big Mac could finish his thought the stable launched itself into the air at a high speed. Surprisingly despite a rough landing at the entrance to the next maze, the cheap looking wooden thing managed to hold itself together. Big Mac was a little dazed, but uninjured. He exited the stable slowly and it crumbled behind him. This dream was getting crazier by the minute.

He looked around briefly and tried to get his bearings. After finding the mazes entrance he stepped inside and got ready to gallop. However, just as he crouched down he felt the ground start to shake beneath him. He looked behind him hoping to see the cause, and there, right behind him, was a set of gigantic caramel colored hooves. He looked up hoping to see their owner, but was disappointed to find them completely shrouded by shadow. The only thing he could see was a set of cake smeared teeth locked in what appeared to be a smile.

“Caramel?” As he spoke the name the set of massive chompers swooped down on him and forced him to leap out of the way. “S just a dream Macintosh. You’ve got to get runnin’.”

And Big Macintosh did get running. As fast as he could he dashed through the maze. The gigantic pony behind him moved slowly, so he was able to keep ahead of it for the most part. He narrowly avoided a few chomps, but eventually he managed to work his way the end of the maze.

The door in front of him was the same as the one before, but for some reason it seemed to be jammed, and the gigantic set of teeth behind him was gaining. After some time spent fiddling with the door he decided he would have to buck it down. He turned his back to the door and saw that the smile was floating directly in front of him. He was momentarily paralyzed for some reason. For the first time in a long while, he was frightened.

Only when the teeth spread and prepared to crush him did he manage to get his senses back. Just in time he bucked open the door and a bright light poured out. The beastly giant screamed with a voice that reminded him uncomfortably of his coltfriend and seemed to dissolve in front of him. Big Mac didn't stay to watch though and instead opted to get out of the maze as quickly as possible. He turned around and charged straight through the door to freedom.

Big Mac woke once again in a cold sweat. This time AJ was nowhere near though. He found himself breathing heavily until a reassuring hoof landed on his shoulder and calmed him down. "Thanks Caramel," he said.

"I told you before big guy," Big Mac was shocked to hear a voice that sounded altogether wrong, and yet familiar," It's pronounced Kerr-a-mell."