

"And so, on behalf of Equestria and Appaloosa, on this, one of our greatest holidays, I hereby sign this Treaty of Perpetual Friendship with the denizens of the South Desert Buffalo Herd!"

There was a great clamor of stamping and clapping hooves as Princess Celestia magically floated her ink quill over to the official document. The hundred or so residents of Appaloosa hooped and hollered while the buffalo stomped at the ground, all celebrating this historic moment. It took Chief Thunderhooves a few moments to get a good purchase on the quill, but he eventually added his mark to the treaty as well.

It really was odd how a small, out-of-the-way frontier town like Appaloosa received the attention of ponykind's supreme ruler. Things had calmed down greatly since the apple orchard business was settled months ago, but a new crisis had threatened to upend all that had been done in the name of peace. As one prospector pony discovered, the wastelands around the town were indeed good for something after all and it had sent shock waves throughout the kingdom.

Gold always did seem to turn up in the oddest of places.

Ponies from all corners of Equestria had turned up to pick and chisel away at the mountains for the precious mineral, dredge the pristine rivers, and press further and further into buffalo land. The Chief had appealed to the ponies of Appaloosa for help and Brayburn had sent a letter to his cousin's friends in Ponyville. Twilight had written a letter to Celestia and the rest was history from there on out. Preparations had been made and court advisers called to regulate the gold rush and keep a lid on the shanty towns now popping up everywhere around Appaloosa. The current Friendship Treaty was the result of many weeks of hard negotiation and survey.

Applejack tossed her hat into the air when the treaty was held up for all to see. "How's that fer hard work, Brayburn? Appaloosa gets the first claims to everything in this area! All these prospectors are gonna have to buy licenses, tools, and supplies in town." She caught her hat in the air and flipped it back on top of her head. That particular clause had been nearly impossible to wring out of the Princess.

"But she gets first price on the actual gold for minting," Strongheart noted. The young buffalo had been one of the chief negotiators for her herd. She was standing in the crowd, a little ways away from her brethren, and didn't look so happy - more confused than anything. "There are only so many places for you ponies to mine now and she is taking such a large portion of your output at a meager price."

"Ain't no trouble," Applejack responded, shaking her head. "We're happy to help the kingdom. No matter what, Appaloosa will be gettin' a boost."

Strongheart accepted this with a hesitant nod. "I was surprised how quickly our amendments were accepted. Truly, Princess Celestia is a wise chief," she said, changing the subject. "All of our concerns were condensed down into a single line and our entire territory was protected. I honestly wasn't expecting it."

"Well, Princess Celestia is the fairest judge in all of Equestria," Twilight Sparkle gushed. She had wandered over from the stage that she had shared with

her princess.

All of the attendees had been invited to the massive dinner planned after the treaty, but Twilight Sparkle's group had to leave early as the last train out was leaving early. No pony could stay the night as they had businesses and families to get back to. There were goodbyes from all around as friends made from among Appaloosa's population saw them off at the station.

Applejack, though, kept back. When asked, she said that Big Macintosh could handle the farm for one day. "I have family here too," she said when asked about her reasons for staying. "I can't desert family when there's still some cleaning up to do." Thus, the orange filly was one of the ponies to see the group off as their train rumbled out of the town.

The party was just beginning to die down when Applejack trotted back into the midst of it. Stalls and wagons had been pulled up in a grand ring in the middle of town where buffalo and ponies mingled and ate together. There were large wooden tables in the middle that some of the smaller buffalo took advantage of, but most milled around at the edge of the pavilion, eating to their heart's content. Of course, the main course for the large bovines had been apples and apple food accessories, which they voraciously consumed.

"Nice to see that ya'll know how to enjoy good eatin'," Applejack said as she rejoined Strongheart. The small buffalo had a few candied apples sitting in front of her on a table that she was nibbling on.

She pushed away the plate with an abashed look when Applejack hopped onto the seat opposite of her. "I didn't get a chance to say this before, and I don't think anyone else has either: thank you for all you've done for us, Applejack."

The cowpony scratched her neck. "Ah wouldn't say that, sugar cube. This whole shindig was a joint effort - right ponies, right conditions, and the right day." She blinked at the end of her statement and chuckled. "Ha, the right day! I never even thought about that!"

Strongheart laughed politely with the pony even though she didn't quite understand what the joke was. "Your princess mentioned that as well. Does today have a special meaning?"

Applejack didn't answer. Instead, she leaned over in her chair to look at the stage that had been erected for Celestia. The monarch was still chatting quietly with Chief Thunderhooves, but her sharp eyes sought out several ponies in the crowd.

All the ponies began to quietly make their way over to the wagons with plates and leftovers ready to be put away. Applejack grabbed her own plate, as well as Strongheart's empty ones. "I can get that," she said, but the filly just shook her head and trotted over to the edge of the wagons.

"You never did say what day it was," the small buffalo reminded.

"It's April Fool's Day," Applejack called back, prancing into safety outside of the town square as the tell-tale flare of powerful magic brightened the sky...

