

# Karamel

## Day 4

By The Unnamed Pawn

“What’re you doin’ here?” Big Mac asked the stallion in his bed.

Karamel chuckled. “You weren’t complaining last night,” he said as he rolled himself out of the bed, “In fact, you seemed pretty excited when I climbed in here.”

“Climbed in?” Big Mac pulled himself out from under the covers and met the stallion on the other side of the bed.

“Yeah through the window remember.” The unicorn gestured to the window he had left through the previous morning. “It wasn’t easy I’ll have you know. I hope you appreciate my efforts to keep your silly little secret.”

Big Mac couldn’t remember the colt climbing in. He was pretty sure he had gone straight to sleep last night. “What secret are ya’ talkin’ ‘bout,” he asked.

The colt sighed. “This is getting really annoying. I’m talking about the whole ‘secret colt-cuddler’ thing of course. Did you forget our talk last night or something?”

Big Mac thought back to the pair’s conversation at the bar. “S that’ what you were talkin’ ‘bout when ya’ brought up that closet?”

The stallion chuckled again as he headed toward the window. “So that’s why you were confused,” he said with a smile. “Anyway I’ve got to get going, and I’m sure you don’t want me to stay for much longer.”

“Wait.” Big Mac grabbed Karamel as he put his hind legs out the window. “Ah’ need to talk to ya’ about what happened last night.”

The stallion rolled his eyes and said, “I’m sure you’ll be able to sort it out, but if you need me I’ll be at the bar tonight.” With that he hopped out of the window the rest of the way and landed, surprisingly gracefully, on the ground outside. He waved up to the stallion in the window and said “Seeya later big guy,” before trotting off.

After the colt left Big Mac decided he definitely wasn’t going to get back to sleep, so he decided to get the day started early. He went out to wash his hair and go help his sister with cooking breakfast.

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Big Mac looked around the farm all day for Caramel, but was unable to find him. He needed to talk to the colt about what had happened the past two nights. When he finished with his small workload of gathering apple seeds, he headed to the barn for lunch. Applejack and Granny Smith were both at the table, but Caramel was nowhere to be found.

“Hey AJ, do you know where Caramel is?” he asked.

“He’s on vacation. He’ll be gone for the next couple a’ days.”

Big Mac sighed. He didn’t want to have to wait to talk to Caramel, but he didn’t have much of a choice. He took a seat and grabbed his plate. “Do ya’ know where he’s goin’?”

“Why would Ah’ know where he’s goin’,” Applejack said hastily. “Ah’m not his keeper. Why are ya’ askin’ me?”

Big Mac was thrown by his sister’s strange reaction and decided not to continue pressing. Instead he decided to just quietly eat his lunch. For the most part the apple family was silent during the meal; which struck Big Mac as a little strange.

It only got stranger at dinner when Applebloom was thrown into the mix. Even the previous night, after Big Mac and Applejacks fight, she had been talkative. Tonight it wasn’t until Big Mac stood up to leave for the bar that she said anything. “Hey Big Mac,” she said.

“What is it Applebloom?”

“Yer comin’ back right?”

Big Mac raised an eyebrow in confusion. He had been coming home kind of late recently. Maybe he was worrying Applebloom. “Eeyup,” he said, “Ah’ll try to be back early tonight okay.”

Applebloom smiled. “Okay. Ah’ll be here when ya’ get home then.”

Big Mac nodded and bid his family goodbye as he headed to his hangout.

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He ran into Breezy and Bon Bon on the way to the bar this time. “We were going to pick you up earlier,” Breezy said after the meet up, “But Bon Bon’s wife refused to let her leave the house.”

Bon Bon pushed the door open to the bar and smiled. “She’s just worried that’s all. Apparently I had a pretty bad nightmare last night. I was thrashing around in my sleep and everything.”

The trio took a seat at their booth as usual. Blueberrie hadn't arrived yet, but the waitress approached the table anyway. "What are you guys drinking tonight?"

"The usual for me," Bon Bon said with a glare toward Breezy, "And give Big Mac your second most expensive drink. One for Blueberrie too."

Breezy sighed. "Water for me."

The pink pony laughed and walked off. "I'll have those for you in a minute," she shouted over her shoulder.

"So how was your night Big Mac?" Breezy asked, "Anymore nightmares?"

"Eeyup," The stallion sighed. "Still can't remember what it was 'bout though."

Breezy seemed to be deep in thought. "Now that I think of it, I think I remember seeing you in my dream Big Mac."

The brown colt was surprised by a jab to the ribs from the mare next to him. "No dreaming about Big Mac," Bon Bon joked, "He's taken remember?"

"It wasn't that kind of dream Bon Bon," he said playfully smacking the filly's hand away.

Blueberrie entered the bar just as the waitress approached the table with the drinks. "Hey babe," she said as the blue pony took her seat.

"I told you before Heart Throb. Please call me Blueberrie."

"And I told you we need nicknames if we're going to date." The pink pegasus handed out the drinks. "Blue is way too masculine for you, so until you think of something better, you're babe."

Blueberrie couldn't seem to help smiling. "Fine." She looked down at the drink in front of her. "So what's this?"

Big Mac took a look at his drink as well. It was a red bubbling concoction in what looked like a miniature cauldron. "That's our second most expensive drink," Heart Throb said, "I'm not entirely sure what it is. The boss heard about it from some zebra."

Breezy smiled. "I just might get my money's worth tonight. Go on you two take a drink."

Blueberrie looked nervously at Big Mac and he shrugged. "Bottom's up," he said as he dipped his face into the cauldron and took a drink. It was actually quite good. It had a sweet yet salty taste and a bit of a spicy kick to it.

Big Mac lifted his head from the cauldron and Blueberrie, after seeing that he probably wasn't about to be sick, took a drink herself. "Wow that's good," she said noticeably surprised. "What is this?"

"Hey Boss," the waitress shouted, "What's in that cauldron thing."

"Don't ask," the bartender yelled back.

"I don't think you guys want to know." She laughed lightly and took a seat on the end of the booth.

"Don't you have ponies to serve miss...Heart was it?" Breezy asked.

"Not really. You guys are the only ponies who come here and don't spend all night at the counter. Beside's I want to stay with babe here." She grinned at the now blushing earth pony to her right.

"So you're just going to hang out with us all night?"

"Unless somepony else comes in or one of you leaves, yes."

"Oh yeah that reminds me. Bon Bon get out, I need to go talk to that colt at the counter."

Bon Bon moved to let the colt out. "You go with him Big Mac," she said, "I want a full report on everything that happens."

"Why don't ya' just go yerself," Big Mac asked.

Bon Bon took her seat again. "I need to stay here and chat with Blueberrie and Heart Throb. Beside's it's going to be filly chat. You wouldn't be interested."

Big Mac nodded as Blueberrie let him out. "Alright. Ah'll be back in a few minutes than."

He followed the brown stallion to the counter where the colt from the previous night was now staring in horror at a new drink. It was the one Big Mac had just tried in fact. "Ya' can drink it," he said as he took a seat, "'S nothin' like the pink one."

"Thanks but I think I'll just pass." He glanced up at the pair that had just taken their seats. "Oh Mac it's you. Nice to see you again pal. Is this your colt?"

"I'm actually just a friend," Breezy said. He pulled the tape recorder out of his vest and passed it to the reporter. "I noticed you left this here last night, so I thought I'd bring it back to you."

Film Reel examined the recorder for a moment and placed it in his hat. "Thanks. I was looking all over for this."

"So how's your night been going?"

"Meh. I still have nothing for this stupid review. The bartender won't even talk to me." Film Reel shook his hoof at the unicorn in sunglasses.

"I told you already. I don't talk to reporters. You're lucky I let you in here."

"Apparently he's got some big problem with the paparazzi. I'm guessing it has something to do with his old place in Manehattan, but I've got nothing to go on."

"Ah'm sorry Ah' can't help."

"It's not your problem Mac. Thanks though."

"Maybe I could help," Breezy chimed in.

The reporter smiled at the colt next to Big Mac. "Okay bud, I'm gonna be frank and nip this in the bud. Not interested."

Breezy smiled nervously and said, "Well that's a little harsh don't you think?"

"Look I'm thankful for the offer and all, but seriously, you're a fan salespony. Your cutie marks a fan for pony's sake. I'm pretty sure it wouldn't work out."

Breezy sighed and dejectedly walked off. "I'll see you back at the booth Big Mac," he said as he moved away.

"That was a bit hash," Big Mac said.

"What do you think I should've led him on? I'm not that sort of pony Mac."

"Ya' could've tried bein' gentle."

"I'm not the gentle sort Mac. I'm a reporter." The colt pounded his hoof against the table. He then glanced up at the clock. "Speaking of which I need to get going. Like it or not I've got to get writing this review." He hopped off of his bench and headed toward the exit. "Seeya in the papers Mac."

Just as the reporter left the bar, a pony with a rainbow colored mane in a trench coat and black

glasses entered. Once she sat down at the counter, Rainbow Dash removed her glasses and smiled at the bartender. "Cherry juice please." She then turned to the stallion next to her. "Hey Applejack's brother."

"What's with the getup?"

"I was worried that crazy paparazzi pony might recognize me."

Big Mac didn't bother pointing out how ineffective the disguise was. "Glad to see ya' came back. Hopin' to do a bit better tonight?"

"Not really, just hanging out. I was actually hoping to run into you."

"Why?"

"I just needed somepony to talk to you know, and I can't talk to my usual pals."

"Why not?"

"I have my reasons okay. I just need to know if you can keep a secret."

"Ah' can if it needs ta' be kept."

"I just don't want you telling your sister okay."

Big Mac nodded. "Ah' promise Ah' won't tell Applejack."

Rainbow Dash smiled and took a drink. "Good. Could I get you something as long as your helping me out?"

"Ah'm fine."

"Okay then," Rainbow Dash took a deep breath, "You see there's this pony I like." The colorful pony punctuated her sentence with a drink and another deep breath. "But you see I'm pretty sure she's not a filly fooler." Another drink. "It wasn't bad before, but now I can't even be around her without getting all flustered." The pegasus finished her glass and turned to Big Mac. "What do you think I should do?"

"Have ya' tried talkin' to her 'bout it?"

Rainbow dash looked back down at the counter. "But then she'd know. This isn't just some random pony Big Macintosh; she's a really close friend."

Big Mac put a friendly hoof on the pony's shoulder. "If she's a friend, it won't matter."

Rainbow Dash sighed. "Maybe you're right...I'll talk to her tomorrow." She stood up and left a bit on the counter. "Thanks Applejack's brother." She smiled and winked at the stallion before exiting the bar.

Big Mac took a look at the clock. It was now eight. He had to get leaving soon. He stood up and approached the booth to bid his friends goodbye. When he approached, the faces of all three mares were positively glowing with the size of their smiles. Even Breezy had a smile on his face, which struck Big Mac as odd considering the recent rejection. "What're ya'll so happy about?" he asked.

"Oh umm..." Bon Bon rubbed her chin for a moment, "Oh, Heart Throb here just told us this great story. You really have to hear it."

The smile softened a bit on the pink pegasus as Big Mac turned in her direction. "Okay, but make it quick. Ah' need to head out soon."

"Hold on. Let me remember what it was about." The pegasus seemed to be racking her brain for the information. It was good to see that he wasn't the only pony with poor memory lately. "Oh I've got it. I heard from this reporter that was in here earlier about some pony in Manehattan named Card Sharp. Apparently he's in a coma."

The entire booth just stared at her quietly. Bon Bon seemed to have a look akin to disgust on her face.

"Wait that's not the good part," Heart Throb continued nervously, "You see, Card Sharp was a regular at the bosses old bar. And he wasn't the first pony this happened to either. Like two of bosses other regulars fell into comas too all in the last couple weeks. That's why he had to move the bar to Ponyville."

The booth once again was silent.

"There's this weird rumor going around Manehattan that its some curse targeting colt cuddlers and filly foolers. Isn't that interesting?"

The rest of the booth was still quiet, but their smiles had managed to come back. "Ah' don't get why ya'll are so happy 'bout this," Big Mac said.

"Well it's some awesome new gossip," Bon Bon said, "Plus, I can't wait to see Lyra's face when I tell her about this."

Big Mac took a quick glance around the table. The entire group remained silently smiling at him.

“Ah’ guess Ah’ just don’t get it,” he said. He began walking to the door and waved his friends goodbye. “Ah’ll see ya’ll tomorrow.” He glanced briefly at the booth where he and Karamel had been sitting the previous night. He would have to talk to the unicorn tomorrow.

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Big Mac arrived home early as he had hoped and was greeted by a tackle and hug from his youngest sibling. “Big Macintosh,” she shouted as she hopped and up and down beside him,” I was so worried.”

Applejack smiled and approached the pair. “Applebloom here was convinced that you weren’t comin’ home.”

Big Mac smiled down to his now blushing sister. “Why were ya’ worried ‘bout that Applebloom. Ah’ve come home every night so far.”

The foal shuffled her hooves and looked down at the floor. “S just...Silver Spoon said-“

Suddenly Applebloom was cut off by an orange hoof in her mouth. “We already talked ‘bout this Applebloom,” Applejack said as she removed the hoof,” ‘S nothing ya’ need to get worrying Big Macintosh about. Now get upstairs to bed.” She pushed the little filly toward the staircase.

“Night Big Mac,” the foal said on her way up.

Big Mac turned to his other sister. “So what was that all about? Have Ah’ been out too late the past couple nights or somethin’?”

Applejack shook her head. “S nothin’ like that Big Mac. She’s just upset ‘bout somethin’ she heard at school today. Don’t worry yerself ‘bout it.” Applejack turned and headed to the stairs. “Well we should probably get ta’ bed. Seeya in the mornin’ Big Macintosh.”

“Night Applejack.” Big Mac waited for his sister to climb the stairs and enter her room before heading upstairs himself. He then stopped briefly by his other sister’s room. He pried open the door ever so slightly and said,”G’night Applebloom.”

“Big Macintosh,” Applebloom rolled over in her bed,” Please don’t leave.”

Big Mac entered the room. “Ah’ll sleep here for tonight if ya’ want.”

“That’s not what Ah’ meant.” The foal rolled away from him and covered herself in her sheets. “Ah’ can sleep by myself. Ah’ don’t need my big brother with me.”

Big Mac smiled. “Alright, but just remember Ah’m right across the hall if ya’ need me.” When the



pile of blankets on the bed didn't respond, Big Mac closed his sister's door and headed to bed.

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Big Mac found himself once again amongst sheep. This time it looked like they were in a classroom. It was distinctly less bizarre than the last two stops had been. It was just a classroom, complete with desks and a chalkboard. The only thing odd about it was how incredibly messy it was. The desks were in disarray with the various sheep from the prior nights scattered around them.

"Hey again newbie," the purple glasses wearing sheep waved to him as usual. She was a bit more happy than she had been the previous night, or maybe she was just pretending. Big Mac couldn't tell. "Looks like everyone made it last night."

Big Mac took a look around the classroom. Every sheep from the last night was indeed there; along with one more new ewe. "I think they could use some more pep talking if you don't mind," his guide said.

"Why don't you help out?" he asked.

"I'm not much for cheering sheep up. Trust me I've tried. Besides I've got solitaire to play." She pulled a deck of cards out of her fur and placed it on the nearest desk.

Big Mac just shook his head dismissively and decided to move on to the other sheep. The first one he ran into tonight was the sheep with the green hat sitting at a nearby desk. "Oh, hey," the ram said unenthusiastically.

"Hey. So how're you doin' tonight?"

The ram sighed. "Not so good man. I'm just tired of running you know."

"Eeyup, but we gotta keep going."

"Do we though? I mean this is a dream after all. Is falling in a dream really that bad?"

"Ah' don't want ta' find out."

"I guess you're right. Still it's just so tiring. Night after night." The ram sighed once more.

"Thanks for stopping to talk. Go cheer some other sheep up now. I think I'm good."

"Are ya' sure?"

"Yeah. This is as cheery as I'm gonna get for tonight I think."

Big Mac nodded and moved on to the next sheep. He approached the rainbow colored sheep at another nearby desk. "Hello," he greeted the ewe.

"Hey. Nice to see you're still here," the ewe said.

"How're you holdin' up?"

"As good as ever." The ewe pumped her arm. "This maze doesn't stand a chance against me."

"Ya' look like yer doin' better than yesterday."

The ewe calmed down and laid back in her seat. "So you noticed huh? Yeah I guess I am feeling better. Thanks to some guy I talked to."

"So are ya' ready to take on this maze?"

"You bet. Don't you fall behind either."

"Good luck." Big Mac waved goodbye to the colorful ewe and went to check on the ewe with the odd hair.

The sheep was busy sorting through the contents of one of the desk. Big Mac took a peek inside. It was typical school fair. "Hey strawman," she said drawing his attention back to her.

"What'cha doin'?"

"Just thinking." The ewe closed the desk and looked at Big Mac, although her head didn't turn. "Hey strawman, mind if I ask you a question?"

"Go ahead."

"Well to start do you have a filly-er I mean a ewefriend?"

"Actually Ah' have a coltfriend."

The ewe briefly turned to him with a confused look on her face "Huh?" After a moment though she simply shrugged and turned away again. "Okay I guess that explains a couple of things. Anyway back to my question. What would you do if your colt cheated on you?"

Big Mac paused and looked down at the ground ashamed. "Ah don't know, but Ah' think I'd just have to talk to him ya' know."

“What if you’d already talked to them? What if they’d explained everything already? Would you forgive them?”

Big Mac looked back up at the ewe. “It depends, but Ah’ think Ah’ would.”

“But would it really be that easy? Could you just forgive them right away? I mean you could say you did, but is that the same thing?”

Big Mac looked back down at the ground. He had really messed up. “Ah’ don’t know,” he said.

The ewe turned to him and smiled sweetly. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t expect you to have an answer should I? I’m sure you’ve got a lovely colt.”

“He really is great.” Big Mac sighed.

“I’m sorry for bugging you. Why don’t you go talk to someone else? That ram by the chalkboard looks like he could cheer you up.”

Big Mac headed solemnly over to the chalkboard to see the ram that the ewe had mentioned was none other than the enthusiastic ram from the previous night in a black hat. He was busy cheering up a new arrival when Big Mac approached.

The new arrival in question was a ewe and had a distinctly longer and straighter coat than the other sheep. The most distinguishing thing about her though was the tears covering her face. “I-I can’t do it,” she cried, “I’m no runner. I barely made it here before the floor collapsed.”

“Calm down you crazy sheep,” the ram next to her ordered. He turned to Big Mac and a relieved appearance took hold of him. “Hey you, you’re pretty good with this stuff right. Help me out here.”

Big Mac approached the ewe and put a reassuring hoof on her shoulder. “Hey,” he said, “You’re gonna be okay.”

The ewe looked up at him through tear-stained eyes. “No I’m not. I-I can’t keep running, and the sheep have told me it just gets worse. I’m going to be chased this time right.”

“That don’t matter. Ya’ made it here alright. You can outrun whatever this place throws at you.”

“B-but what if it’s too terrifying for me to run. This guy here was just telling me how scary it is.”

“I also told you it doesn’t matter,” the ram said as he put a hoof on the ewe’s other shoulder. “They’re scary, but nothing else. Apart from all the razzle dazzle they’re no worse than the falling floor.”

“But the falling floor almost caught me before.”

“Listen,” Big Mac said sternly, “You can do this. You’ve just got ta’ run alright. If ya’ made it here, ya’ can get past whatever’s next.”

The tearful ewe simply stared at Big Mac for a moment. It was almost as if she was shocked. However, a small smile slowly appeared on her face. “You know what, you remind me of my sister,” she said. After a deep breath she stood up. “And you’re right. Maybe I can do this.”

“That’s what I’ve been saying this whole time,” the ram said exasperated.

The ewe turned her smile at him. “Thank you both. I’ll keep running. Maybe I’ll even make it. No. I will make it.”

The ram in the black hat sighed. “Thanks guy. I wasn’t sure how much more I could do. This crazy sheep just wouldn’t calm down.”

“S no trouble.” Big Mac smiled at the pair. “Ah’ll see you two tomorrow. Ah’ve got to get goin’ now.”

“Good luck,” the sheep said in unison as he headed to the stable.

“Hello again,” Big Mac said into the grate as he entered.

“Am I going to have to tell you to sit every time?”

Big Mac took a seat as usual. “So could you explain what you were talkin’ ‘bout last night?”

“You mean that ‘evening the playing field’ line?”

“Eeyup.”

The voice let out another eerie laugh. “Well you see, I make these little sanctuaries for you poor foals trapped here.”

“Why?”

“Sorry mister inquisitive, but that’s all the time we have again. Proceed with speed and caution.”

Big Mac was no longer surprised by jarring feeling of the stable launching upward, nor was he shaken by the landing. He stepped out of the stable and immediately took off running. He was sure that something had appeared behind him, but this time he had no plans to stop and see

what it was.

However, when the gigantic blade nearly sliced him in half, he couldn't help himself. He paused for a moment to glance behind himself, and saw none other than his youngest sister, Applebloom, holding a tremendous scythe.

Big Mac dived out of the way of another swing from the scythe and started once more at a full gallop. The gigantic foal pursued him quickly and relentlessly through the maze; only pausing to swing the tremendous gardening tool. After a few close calls with the blade Big Mac managed to make it to the door.

He got into his usual position to buck down the door and stopped. He was caught by surprise when he got a good look at the face of his pursuer. His sister was crying as she approached. The tears in her eyes caused him to hesitate for just a moment. It was only when the foal turned her head in preparation for another swing that he felt he could move again.

Without thinking he bucked down the door behind him. The screams from the pony in front of him as it disintegrated were horrifically familiar. He actually found himself covering his ears as he backed into the doorway.

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Big Mac woke in a cold sweat as usual. The first thing he did was glance around the room looking for a certain unicorn. He released a relieved sigh when he found that the stallion was nowhere in sight.

However he did find an unexpected guest in his bed nonetheless. He smiled down at the yellow foal snoring under his covers and wrapped his arms around her in a brotherly embrace.