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MY LITTLE PONY IV
"Leap of Faith"
Episode 421
Written by: Josh Haber

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TEASER

1) EXT. SWIMMING HOLE – DAY

The MANE SIX and the APPLE FAMILY enjoy a pleasant afternoon at the swimming hole. APPLE BLOOM tries to get GRANNY SMITH to join in. Granny tells her that she'd love to, but she can't go near the water anymore. Apple Bloom asks why not and Granny reveals that in her hay day, she was a daring high dive performer.

As Granny revels in her past glory we see old, sepia-toned, MOVIE FOOTAGE of Granny in old-timey swimwear climbing to the top of a ridiculously high, scaffold-type diving tower. Young Granny reaches the top and looks down at a wooden barrel of water far, far below and laughs in the face of death. In perfect old-timey form, she points her arms out and bounds off the board. As she falls through the air, our old movie strip "breaks," taking us back to the swimming hole where everyone sits around rapt by Granny's story.

Applejack wonders if Granny might be exaggerating just a bit and Granny maintains that is how she remembers it. Of course her memory isn't what it used to be. Besides, the point is that now she is too frail to even dip her toe in the water because she might have a slip and fall. Pinkie Pie climbs out on a low tree branch over the water and wonders aloud why that's bad. Slipping and falling into the water is tons of fun, which she proceeds to demonstrate. CUT TO... credits.

ACT ONE

2) EXT. FIELD – DAY

As the Apple Family heads back to Sweet Apple Acres from the swimming hole, Granny grows nostalgic for the old days. She admits her career as a high diver was dangerous and not really well conceived, but she misses being young and spry and having that kind of confidence. Applejack is just glad she never hurt herself and even more glad that she's too old now to do anything crazy like that ever again.

As they walk, they notice more and more ponies joining them along the road. Apple Bloom wonders where everypony is going. It isn't long before the crowd funnels off the road and heads toward a GIANT TENT set up in a field. Curious, the Apples follow.

3) INT. TENT – SAME

They enter the tent to find rows and rows of ponies swaying to piano and organ MUSIC. On stage a ROBED CHOIR rocks back and forth, singing low while everypony finds a seat. Applejack thinks they should leave. Big Mac agrees with

a healthy, “Yep,” but Granny and Apple Bloom are already pushing their way up to the front to get seats. Big Mac and Applejack follow.

As the crowd settles in, the music ramps up and the choir’s song gets more intense. Suddenly, two VOICES come from off stage and in a sing-song, minister-testifying-style banter they thank everypony for coming. They tell the crowd that the time they spend today will not be spent in vain. In fact, by the end, it’ll prove to be the most valuable time they’ve ever spent.

As the choir really gets going, clapping in time to the music, THE WORLD FAMOUS FLIM FLAM BROTHERS enter from either side of the stage. They’ve ditched their barbershop quartet attire in favor of flashy, minister-style suits, but despite their new appearance and GOSPEL INSPIRED MUSICAL NUMBER, the Apple Family is immediately suspicious.

Applejack stands and testifies (in song) to everypony in the tent that whatever it is Brother Flim and Brother Flam are selling, it’s a scam. The Brothers claim they’ve mended their ways and aren’t, actually, selling anything. In fact, their Amazing Curative Elixing Apple Tonic is available for only a small donation.

As the song continues, Brother Flim and Brother Flam lay out a lengthy list of all the ailments their Tonic can cure—everything from arthritis to vertigo. It can make you short. It can make you tall. It can make you old. It can make you young, etc. And though Applejack, Big Mac and Apple Bloom refute every one of the Brothers’ claims, it’s clear that Granny is becoming more and more intrigued by the product.

Finally, by way of proof, the Brothers ask if anypony in the congregation has an ailment. Granny almost volunteers, but stops when she sees the reaction of her family. Several other ponies, swept up in the music, do step forward, but the Brothers call out to one particularly infirm pony (SILVER SHILL) who limps his way to the stage and tries the Tonic. As the Brothers’ song reaches it’s climax, Shill is miraculously cured. His health restored, he breaks out in an energetic dance.

In a clever piece of choreography, Shill dances out of sight where one of the brothers pays him—clarifying (for the TV audience only) that this really is a scam. But to everyone in the crowd, Apples included, it appears the Brothers’ Tonic is the genuine article.

Despite this apparent proof, Applejack remains unconvinced and sings a solo about how important honesty is. As Shill exits the tent, he hears her words and despite his role in the Brothers’ con (or maybe because of it), we see that they have an affect him. But as the song comes to a close everyone else is sold—including Granny who, to the shock of her family members, lays down her bits for a bottle of Tonic.

END ACT ONE**ACT TWO****4) INT. SWEET APPLE ACRES – FARM – LATER**

Back at the farm the bottle of tonic sits in the middle of the table while the Apples debate the Flim Flam Brothers' motivations behind their new product and their new, extremely convincing Tent Revival sales pitch. Apple Bloom can't get over how persuasive their presentation is, even though she knows it's a scam. "It has to be. Right, Applejack?"

In the background, Granny complains about them keeping the tonic from her. So what if it's a scam? She paid for it and she wants to drink it. What's the harm? She reaches for the bottle, but Big Mac keeps it away with a "Nope." Applejack explains that they don't even know what's in it. For all they know it could make them sick instead of well, to which Big Mac responds, "Yep," and puts the tonic up on a high shelf. "Aw.. Fiddlesticks!" Granny exclaims and storms off.

Applejack worries about other ponies, like Granny, who will get taken in and swindled out of their bits. She resolves to find proof the tonic is a fake and put a stop to whatever con the Flim Flam Brothers are running.

5) EXT. TENT – NIGHT

Applejack and Apple Bloom leave Big Mac to look after Granny and head back to Film and Flam's tent to search for evidence that the tonic is a sham. They arrive right around the time in the Brothers' pitch when they heal someone from the audience. Just at that moment Shill exits the tent. Apple Bloom points out that he was the same pony who was "healed" earlier.

Shill spots them and ducks round the side of the tent with Applejack and Apple Bloom in hot pursuit. Shill tries to escape, but eventually the Apples corner him. Applejack makes an appeal on behalf of honest ponies everywhere for him to come clean and admit that the tonic is a fraud and the Brothers are scamming good ponies out of their hard earned bits. But before Shill can answer, the revival lets out and Shill slips away in the crowd.

More determined than ever, Applejack hunts through the crowd looking for Shill, and finds him, along with Flim and Flam. The Brothers teasingly ask if Granny Smith has already gone through her supply of tonic. If she has, they're happy to supply more. They even offer a discount. Apple Bloom insists that they let Shill speak to the validity of the Brothers' claims and Flim and Flam are more than happy to do so. While Flim waves some money behind his back at him, Shill swears that the tonic cured him.

Applejack says that's all well and good, but they'll need more than one pony to testify to the virtue of their claims. Unfortunately, by this point the word has spread and several other ponies pipe up, all claiming a variety of perceived cures from rickets to the vapors. Flim and Flam ask Applejack why, since their tonic obviously seems to be helping so many ponies, is it so important for her to prove that it's a fake?

6) EXT. RIVER – THE NEXT DAY

Applejack and Apple Bloom tell Big Mac about the previous night's escapades. The Brothers' words have really stuck with Applejack and now she doubts her motivations. She wonders if maybe she should just live and let live. Even if Flim and Flam bilk a few grandponies out of a couple of bits, if it makes them feel better, what's the harm? Maybe Granny is right.

Just then Granny floats by in the river, swimming the backstroke like an Olympian. The rest of the Apple Family goes into panic mode and try to "save" her. Big Mac tosses a rope, but misses. Applejack tries to buck a tree branch into the water but Granny just floats by it. They try to form a pony chain into the water, but Granny insists that she doesn't need saving. She gets out of the water on her own, and we see she's wearing her old-time swimwear. She tells them she's never felt better since she climbed up on a stool and got to that Flim Flam Tonic in the kitchen.

Applejack tries to tell Granny that her newfound vigor is just a matter of confidence. It's all in her head and she needs to be careful not to overextend herself. Granny's response is a resounding "Fiddlesticks!" In fact, she is so impressed with the powers of the Brothers' Tonic, she plans on reviving her old high-diving act.

Worried for Granny's safety and concerned that the same misguided confidence could put other ponies in danger, Applejack tells Big Mac to do whatever he has to keep Granny off of any diving boards while she redoubles her efforts to drive Flim and Flam out of town.

7) INT. BARN – MOMENTS LATER

While Applejack rummages through the barn, Apple Bloom asks her what she's going to do. Flim and Flam already have an impressive following and if the word keeps spreading it's just going to be harder and harder to prove they're a fake. Applejack tells her she doesn't have any intention of proving the tonic's a fake—not at first, anyway. "Then how are you gonna get them to leave?" Applejack explains that there's only one thing Flim and Flam really respond to—competition. She's going to fight fire with fire. Apple Bloom asks what she means and Applejack steps out wearing gospel choir robes. "The Apple Family is getting

into the Tonic business.” They’ll create their own cure-all and convince everypony that their product is the best. Once they’ve beaten Flim and Flam at their own game, Applejack will reveal the scam for what it is.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

8) EXT. TENT – SAME

Flim and Flam stand on either side of the tent opening, welcoming a new crop of ponies inside where the choir is onstage singing. They greet and shake hands, paying special attention to any ponies who’ve come with issues they obviously hope the tonic will cure (bad hair, hang nails, etc.).

Suddenly, from up the road comes the sound of PIANO MUSIC. While Flim and Flam watch, Big Mac pulls a trailer right up beside the tent. He undoes a latch and pulls down the side of the trailer to reveal Apple Bloom (in a choir robe) playing on the piano a REPRISE of Flim and Flam’s gospel song from act one.

Granny stands behind the piano looking inside. She looks up suddenly. “My swim things aren’t in here. What? Where are we?” As Big Mac helps her down, Granny asks if they are trying to keep the tonic away from her again. Applejack (also in choir robes) steps to the front of the trailer and tells Granny she can have all the tonic she wants. Granny looks at her surprised. “I can?”

As everypony inside the tent comes back out to see what the commotion is, Applejack cautions that Granny might not want Flim and Flam’s tonic now that a superior product is on the market. This causes a murmur in the audience which Flim and Flam are quick to quell. No superior product exists, they claim. Flim and Flam’s Amazing Curative Elixing Apple Tonic is a one of a kind product and they challenge Applejack to prove them wrong.

Applejack tells them she plans to do just that and starts her GOSPEL REPRISE in earnest. While Apple Bloom plays the piano, Applejack sings to the crowd. She claims that, in fact, there are a lot of options in the elixir game, but ultimately it boils down to trust. She asks the crowd if they’d rather put their faith in two strange ponies in a tent, or trust a name they’ve relied on their whole lives. With that, she produces cases of her own curative. “Sweet Apple Acres, World Famous, All-Purpose, Medicinal, Magical Elixir.”

The crowd oohs and ahs and is soon singing along with Applejack as they start lining up to buy her elixir. Not to be outdone, Flim and Flam (and their choir) launch back into their sales pitch, attempting to win back their customers. As the Brothers make claim after claim, each more outlandish than the next, they are surprised at Applejack’s willingness to match each and every one. “I thought she

was the honest one.” “Me too.” Finally Applejack’s guarantees that her elixir lets earth ponies fly, makes poor ponies rich, allows you to read pony’s minds and lets you live forever become so ridiculous both Flim and Flam take a bottle to try.

Unfortunately, the Brothers immediately recognize Applejack’s Elixir as plain old cider. More unfortunate still, they are able to peel the Elixir label back to reveal a normal Sweet Apple Acres Cider label beneath. They both turn to Applejack and congratulate her on stepping up her game, but you can’t cheat a cheater. They give her the option to bow out gracefully. She can sell their product under her name and no one will ever have to know the truth.

Applejack refuses and Flim and Flam immediately expose her as a fraud. “Of course I’m a fraud. Magic tonics and elixirs aren’t real.” It was always her plan to expose the scam. That’s why she did all of this. As soon as she’d driven Flim and Flam out of town, she was going to reveal the truth to everypony who bought her elixir. But Flim and Flam point out that is an easy thing to say, now that she’s been found out. “But how do we know for sure that’s what you were going to do?”

Applejack tries to defend herself, but hears murmurings from the crowd, “Who do we trust? Applejack always tells the truth, but she lied, etc.” The Brothers continue, “You said so yourself, the most important thing is trust. How can anypony trust you now?” To which Applejack replies, “They can’t.” An epiphany rainbow appears and Applejack admits that she made the wrong choice and went down the wrong path. The only thing for her to do from here on out is try to win back everypony’s trust. She’ll do whatever it takes.

The Brothers’ wish her good luck and declare themselves the only actual honest game in town. But as the crowd starts to file back into the tent, Silver Shill steps forward and confesses that Flim and Flam are the biggest frauds of all. He admits to everypony how the Brothers paid him to pretend to be healed by their tonic, which is, in fact, just stale cider they couldn’t sell.

Shill goes on to say that even though Applejack went astray in her efforts to beat Flim and Flam, he can vouch for the fact that she did so with the best intentions. We FLASH BACK to Shill overhearing Applejack telling her family her plan to get Flim and Flam out of town. We return to the present where Silver Shill tells Applejack that he’s done being dishonest on behalf of the Flim Flam Brothers and gives Applejack one of the props he used to pretend he was infirmed (her key).

Several ponies in the crowd ask about all the things the tonic appeared to cure and Shill explains that trust really is a powerful thing. Sometimes it makes us think that something works even when it doesn’t or helps us to do something we didn’t think we could. Granny steps forward, “You mean, I went swimming all on my own?” Applejack tells Granny that she can probably continue to go swimming for years, as long as she isn’t still planning on going back to high diving. Granny

can't believe the Brothers' fake tonic let her even entertain the notion. She looks around for Flim and Flam, "Where are those two conponies?" But the crowd turns to find the brothers have beat a hasty retreat.

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As Applejack writes in the Journal of Friendship we hear her explain in VOICE OVER how hard it is to be honest when dealing with ponies that have no trouble lying. We see images of Flim and Flam heading off to the next town as her VO continues. But Applejack has also come to realize that if you tell enough lies, even with the best of intentions, there's a chance that no one will believe you when you finally tell the truth. Finally, Applejack admits she was surprised to find out just how powerful trust and belief really are.

CUT TO: Granny standing on what looks like a high dive. "I believe I can do it. I trust I can do it." She says to herself. Finally she jumps and we pull out to reveal her "high dive" is only a few inches off the ground.

FADE OUT.

END.