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MY LITTLE PONY 5

Changing of the Guard

5##

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TEASER**SC. 1 - INT. APPLE'S FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM**

APPLEJACK, BIG MAC, APPLE BLOOM and GRANNY SMITH all share a big family meal together while listening to Applejack bring a rousing retelling of her latest Mane 6 adventure to a dramatic conclusion. Apple Bloom in particular hangs on every word; she's especially impressed by the ceremonious awarding of medals by the grateful royalty of that remote part of Equestria that Applejack helped to save. Apple Bloom's ready to hear another as soon as Applejack's finished, but Applejack demurs. After all, she's held center stage the entire meal, so maybe it's time somepony else had a turn. Granny Smith jumps in with an "exciting" tale to tell (Apple Bloom groans). Granny Smith spins a yarn about something super-mundane (spinning yarn?). The only thing that enables Apple Bloom to endure the boredom is the thought that Applejack will reveal another of her exploits as soon as Granny's done. But Applejack again deflects the spotlight when Granny finishes; she wants Big Mac to have the turn for once. She asks Big Mac if he has a story he'd like to tell, and won't take "Nope" for an answer. By asking a series of interested Yes/No questions about Big Mac's recent work around the farm, Applejack's able to tease a semblance of a story regarding Big Mac's recent efforts to repair the cider press. Unfortunately, by the time they finish Apple Bloom has dozed off in her chair. Applejack assumes Apple Bloom must be tired because it's past her bedtime. Granny Smith: "But... we're eating lunch." Applejack: "Oh. Right."

END TEASER**MAIN TITLES****ACT 1****SC. 2 - INT. APPLE'S FARMHOUSE – LATER**

With Big Mac and Apple Bloom no longer present, Applejack helps Granny Smith with the dishes. Applejack expresses concern to Granny Smith that Apple Bloom doesn't appreciate Big Mac the way Applejack herself did when she was Apple Bloom's age. Granny Smith assures Applejack it's only natural for a young'n like Apple Bloom to be more excited about kingdom-saving adventures than the fixing of an old cider press. But Applejack says that's just it, she's afraid she's casting a shadow over her big brother and she doesn't mean to... and as a consequence Big Mac must feel a bit underappreciated.

Granny Smith wonders if Applejack's asked Big Mac whether that's how he feels. Applejack admits that she hasn't, but she knows what Big Mac would say if she did ask him: "Nope". But that's only because he knows how badly we need him around the farm, and he doesn't want anypony else to feel badly about him being stuck here doing the same old stuff day after day after day. Applejack: "We gotta give him a chance to get out there and spread his wings!" Granny Smith: "Silly, he doesn't have wings." Applejack's getting exasperated. Applejack says we gotta let him know he doesn't have to work so hard around here, that it's a big wide world and he's free to do anything he likes, and we'll support him. Granny Smith: "I suppose. But can it wait till after the cider press is fixed?" Applejack slumps.

SC. 3 – EXT. PONYVILLE – LATER

Applejack visits with RARITY, wondering when the Ponytones (of which Big Mac is a member) will come off their hiatus and perform again. Unfortunately, turns out it won't be for a while. Rarity's apologetic: after all, not having the opportunity to see her perform has been hard on everypony... but Applejack assures her it's not that at all: it's

about Big Mac. She's afraid she's made him feel bad with all her high-flying adventure stories, and feels responsible for helping Big Mac get back out of his comfort zone so he has some tales to tell, too.

Meanwhile, SPIKE is in the midst of conducting an "open call" for castle guards. It's not going well. Some ponies who are trying out focus on impressing Spike with their "combat" skills, even though the combat skills in question aren't terribly impressive. What's more, the job doesn't really call for that anyway. Spike's looking for guards to just stand there looking impressive to lend a regal aura to Twilight's Castle (a la Buckingham Palace guards). Those ponies who audition who do grasp this concept unfortunately "just stand there" by slouching, fidgeting, humming, etc. It's no use. Spike's about to give up.

Applejack wanders over and asks what's going on. Spike explains that representatives from Maretania are about to pay an official royal visit and Twilight's young kingdom should probably make the effort to make a good impression on their neighbor. The catch is Maretania tends to be super persnickety about everything looking official and royal. Princess Twilight, not so much. ANGLE ON PRINCESS TWILIGHT walking over to check on how the Royal Guard auditions are going. Applejack: "You just ate a burger, didn't you?" Twilight's surprised: "How did you know?" Applejack indicates the ketchup drippings. Twilight blushes... and then uses magic to clean herself up (while popping a little of that ketchup into her mouth for one last little taste... yum.) Anyway, Twilight wants to make a good impression on Maretania and has resolved to finally whip up her very first Regiment of the Royal Guard for the occasion. When Applejack suggests they consider Big Mac for the job, everypony agrees he'd be perfect. Spike: "Send him on over to try out." Applejack: "Uh... it might not be quite that simple."

SC. 4 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - A LITTLE LATER

With Big Mac back to work and absorbed in fixing the broken cider press, Applejack, Twilight and Spike hang back to clarify their course of action. Applejack has explained to Twilight that Big Mac's responsibilities keep him so tethered to the farm that he usually won't try anything that might keep him away for extended periods. So the idea is for Twilight to "recruit" him to the Royal Guard.

Twilight agrees - after all, she *does* think Big Mac would do a great job - and approaches Big Mac. Big Mac's awfully surprised to see Princess Twilight on the farm, and even more surprised to discover she's there to see him! When Big Mac realizes he's being called into duty by the Princess herself, he feels obliged to say "Yup." But what about the cider press? Applejack: "Oh for goodness sakes, I'll take care of it."

SC. 5 – EXT. TWILIGHT'S CASTLE – DAY

Big Mac's all suited up and standing with the other three guards who have been selected for duty, looking very impressive. Spike gives instructions about just standing there, not speaking to anypony, not reacting when ponies wave their hooves in front of their faces, etc. But then Spike looks over and sees that Big Mac left his post. Turns out he spotted a Royal Chariot with a wobbly wheel and felt compelled to go over and set it right. But Spike reminds Big Mac that he's a Royal Guard now, he's supposed to just stand there, remember? Big Mac returns to his post, but the squeaky wobbly wheel is driving him crazy. CUT TO:

SC. 6 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - SAME TIME

While Applejack tries to fix the cider press, Apple Bloom wanders over, saying that now that Applejack's back in town she'd love it if they went out and did something fun together. Applejack says she knows what would be fun: as soon as she's done fixing this cider press they should go to see Big Mac on his new job! Applejack talks the job up, and gets Apple Bloom all excited about it. In fact, Apple Bloom can't wait to hear all about Big Mac's cool job at dinner tonight! CUT TO:

SC. 7 – EXT. TWILIGHT’S CASTLE – DAY

Big Mac stands at his post, but keeps glancing over at wobbly wheel, feeling compelled to walk over to fix it, then stops himself: “Nope.” More squeaking. Again: “Nope.” More squeaking. Again: “Nope.” Then, the Guard Next to Him: “Hey blabbermouth. Zip it.” Big Mac does.

END ACT 1**ACT 2****SC. 8 - INT. APPLES’ FARMHOUSE – EVENING**

Applejack is with Granny Smith and Apple Bloom getting the table set for dinner when Big Mac arrives home still wearing his Royal Guard gear and gets a hero’s welcome. He’s offered the best seat at the table and asked for stories about his first day... and Applejack’s happy to see even Apple Bloom’s on the edge of her seat to get the details. Applejack keeps teeing up Big Mac with leading questions about his grand new job, but Big Mac isn’t really playing along. “Wasn’t it exciting?” “Nope.” “Something must’ve happened that you want to tell us about, right?” “Nope.” Big Mac’s very matter-of-fact about it all. Then Apple Bloom chimes in: “Hey guess what. We have a pretty cool story.” Applejack tries to cut Apple Bloom off, but Apple Bloom doesn’t take the hint. Apple Bloom: “We fixed the cider press.” Apple Bloom goes on about how Applejack figured it out. Applejack’s mortified that Apple Bloom is unwittingly causing her to one-up her brother again. Apple Bloom (oblivious): “Isn’t that terrific?” Big Mac: “Yup.” He keeps right on eating.

SC. 9 - EXT. TWILIGHT’S CASTLE - NEXT DAY

Big Mac’s back on duty, and Spike struts back and forth in front of him and the three other guards like a drill sergeant. “Today, Maretania makes their first official visit to Princess Twilight and your job, your solemn duty as her Royal Guard, is to stand there and... do nothing. Gentleponies, this may be the most important, the most significant, the most vital nothing you have done in your entire lives.” etc. Big Mac’s attention, however, is drawn to that darn squeaky chariot wheel he noticed earlier. Noticing that Big Mac’s attention has strayed, Spike tries to get in Big Mac’s face... but, noting he’s too small, zips off, returns with a crate, stands on it, and gets in Big Mac’s face. “Am I boring you, Castle Guard?” “Nope.” “Did you hear me, Castle Guard?” “Yup.” Meanwhile, in the background, Applejack can be seen running up the castle steps and disappearing inside.

SC. 10 - INT. TWILIGHT’S CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Applejack happens in on Twilight, while Rarity helps her get all gussied up in some extravagantly royal outfit. Twilight wonders if this is maybe a little over the top, but Rarity assures Twilight that where Maretania is concerned, there is no such thing as over-the-top. (Which makes it one of Rarity’s favorite places ever.) A distressed Applejack enters and asks for Twilight’s attention, though Twilight cautions that the delegation from Maretania will be arriving shortly so it’ll have to be quick. Applejack’s wondering if maybe there’s some way to make Big Mac’s job more interesting... can’t they him something more special he can do? Applejack emphasizes Big Mac’s many great skills, citing all the things about Big Mac she admires. It’s a fairly long list, and Applejack places special emphasis on the fact that Big Mac takes special pride in finding ways to be useful. Princess Twilight acknowledges that perhaps he’s being underutilized, and agrees to speak with Spike to see what they can come up with for him.

SC. 11 - EXT. TWILIGHT'S CASTLE – LATER

It's time for the Princess Twilight's delegation to embark on a trek for the ceremonial meeting with the Maretania delegation. Spike addresses the Royal Guards, and describes with precision the special role of the herald, who will sound the trumpet when the two delegations meet, and this role has been assigned to Big Mac. Spike emphasizes how important it is that everything go off without a hitch. The three chariots set off with the Guards marching alongside. Big Mac can't help but notice the chariot with the squeaky wheel is among them, and the wheel's starting to wobble...

SC. 12 - EXT. EQUESTRIA – LATER

Applejack and Apple Bloom arrive excited and breathless at a ledge overlooking the official meeting spot, but nopony is there yet. Applejack's pretty sure this is the place Twilight mentioned where Big Mac's about to have his "big moment" and frets that maybe they missed the whole thing already. But then Apple Bloom points: "Look!" In the distance the Maretania delegation approaches, and it's an extravagant (and pompous) delegation indeed. From the opposite direction, Twilight's delegation is also now visible and headed their way.

Meanwhile, the fact that the chariot wheel's an issue has finally become obvious to everypony. Big Mac's still staring at it and breaking a sweat. Twilight wants to fix it with her magic, but Rarity says "Shoulders back, head up. Eyes forward at all times." Twilight: "But I'll just turn around for a sec to zap it." Rarity: "IT'S TOO LATE!" Finally Big Mac can't take it anymore: it just hit a patch of mud and looks like it's about to fall off! Spike: "He's breaking ranks!" Stopping the one chariot while the other two press on, Big Mac tries to repair the wheel as fast as he can. Meanwhile, the first two chariots arrive to meet the very-unimpressed Maretania delegation, where they have a herald poised to blow a trumpet... and await Twilight's delegation to prep their herald to stand alongside and do the same. Then Spike realizes in horror: Big Mac still has their trumpet!

Big Mac makes his repair with incredible speed, but he's covered with mud now. And in his haste to catch up with the others, he gets more and more mud-spattered. Finally, he arrives to blow his trumpet. Alas, the trumpet's full of mud... or so we discover when mud comes flying out of it and generously splatters everypony in both delegations. And as if all that weren't bad enough, Big Mac happens to glance at the ledge overhead and sees Applejack and Apple Bloom also witnessed this mess.

END ACT 2**ACT 3****SC. 13 - EXT. EQUESTRIA - MOMENTS LATER**

The mud-spattered delegation from Maretania is, to put it mildly, unimpressed: "What kind of ship are you running here?" They turn their chariots and leave in a huff. Then, after a long awkward silence, Rarity: "Well that went well." Twilight goes out of her way to make sure Big Mac doesn't feel bad about what happened, she knows he was only doing his best to help. And, frankly, she's happy to not have to try and impress those snooty Maretanians anymore anyway. Applejack and Apple Bloom arrive on the scene and invite Big Mac to return home with them. Applejack knows he doesn't like this stand-around-and-do-nothing job and it turns out she made a bigger mess of the cider press than ever and why doesn't he just come home. Apple Bloom adds: "We all miss you anyway."

To their surprise, Big Mac says "Nope." But it occurs to Apple Bloom that Big Mac probably feels obliged to stay and do his duty for Princess Twilight. After all, she did recruit him so he can't just walk out on her, right? Aw, sweet little Apple Bloom. Applejack explains that Twilight only recruited her because Applejack asked her to. She

knew Big Mac would never try something leave the farm for new horizons unless he got a big push like that. Oops... Applejack has said too much. But, by the look on Big Mac's face, it's clearly too late. Humiliated, Big Mac removes his Royal Guard gear and walks away. Applejack feels horrible. Doesn't Big Mac want to hear her explanation? "Nope.

SC. 14 - INT. APPLE'S FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

The table is set for dinner and Applejack and Apple Bloom are at the table. But no Big Mac. Big Mac's visible through the window, sitting on a hilltop watching the sunset. Applejack's already been up there to apologize again without success. Maybe Granny Smith's having better luck, but Granny Smith enters reporting that she too has failed to sway Big Mac.

Applejack explains why she did all this in the first place, which prompts Apple Bloom to pipe up and share all the things she already admires about Big Mac and, lo and behold, it's almost the exact same list that Applejack shared with Twilight earlier! Right then it dawns on Applejack what a fool she's been: Apple Bloom really DOES admire Big Mac the way she herself always did, and really DOES see Big Mac's special qualities. Despite the best of intentions, Applejack put her family through this whole thing for nothing. Then as if all that weren't bad enough - there's another explosion. They look outside and see the cider press spewing cider worse than ever.

SC. 15 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - CIDER PRESS – CONTINUOUS

While Applejack, Apple Bloom and Granny Smith rush out to contain the situation... they glance at the hilltop fully expecting Big Mac to be running downhill to help. But he still sits up there with his back turned watching the sun go down. That's not like Big Mac at all! What's going on?? Applejack runs up the hill to find out.

SC. 16 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - HILLTOP - MOMENTS LATER

While Granny Smith and Apple Bloom struggle in the background, Applejack asks Big Mac if he knows the cider press broke again. He does. Isn't he going to come help? He doesn't say. Then it dawns on Applejack why he hasn't budged: he thinks that this is just another manufactured "we need Big Mac" situation. Only once Applejack finally manages to convince him that's not the case does Big Mac finally amble downhill.

SC. 17 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - CIDER PRESS - MOMENTS LATER

The others step back to let Big Mac do his thing. Big Mac quickly stops the spewing and then hunkers down to fix the press rather than go have dinner with the family. Granny Smith, seeing Apple Bloom's hungry, takes Apple Bloom inside. Meanwhile, Applejack tries repeatedly to get Big Mac's attention, but Big Mac keeps his focus on the repair job while giving her the cold shoulder and being unnecessarily noisy to drown her out. But Applejack's relentless in making the point that she just wanted him to feel important. When Applejack turns to make her way back inside, Big Mac stops working and speaks up: "Wait. Now I have something to say."

To Applejack's surprise it turns out Big Mac has plenty to say... and he fully intends to speak his peace. With simple, straightforward and poetic elegance, he conveys that he knows his place in the world. And it's good enough for him. And he's sad that it's not good enough for her. With a heartfelt response of her own, Applejack insists that it is good enough for her. When she concludes with one last plea for Big Mac to come in for dinner, Big Mac hesitates... then relents.

SC. 18 - INT. APPLE FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Applejack and Big Mac enter. Turns out Apple Bloom and Granny Smith waited for them, so they all start eating together, but the atmosphere is muted, quiet, tentative. Then Applejack speaks up brightly: She says she wants to tell a story. Despite the uncertain reaction, Applejack proceeds. Turns out it's a story about Big Mac. And it's a good one. In moments, she has the others - including Apple Bloom - in a thrall just like she did when speaking about herself at the very beginning of the episode. When Big Mac smiles, chiming in with a "Yep," we know all is mended.

SC. 19 - EXT. SWEET APPLE ACRES - MOMENTS LATER

PULL BACK as the sun sets to the sweet sound of storytelling and laughter coming from inside.

END.