



Red Delicious

By Buddy Goodboy

Part One

With Applejack out savin' Equestria all the time, ah guess ah just wanted everypony t'pay attention t'me fer once. So I started eating...

An', boy, lemme tell you, Ah started gettin' attention. Amazin', how much yer body c'n say without you havin' to speak. An' mine said, Lookit me!

Mine said, Ah'm big, Ah'm strong, an' Ah'll have what Ah darn well please for lunch, please 'n thanks, an' Ah ain't afraid ta be stared at fer once. Ah work hard, an' when Ah'm off, Ah'll treat mahself. Ah will eat like a horse because Ah am a horse! An' Ah worked fer this body, so I ain't gonna be afraid ta show off any inch of it.

Not that Ah can help showin' it off. Ah was bigger'n any two ponies ya c'd name anyway, an' Ah'm closer ta four nowadays. Lotta inches to show off, in every direction.

Other ponies've noticed, and sometimes they wanna use me ta show them off.

Sugarcube Corner has a lil sign in tha window, "Big Mac Eats Here." Lil drawin'a me, nose down in an apple pie, fat rear up in tha air, wagglin' all happy-like.

Good fer business, they said. Free advertising, Ah said, but then Mrs. Cake sent me a case'a apple fritters, an' said there was more where that came from. An' Ah said okay!

An' then Ah went ta the Hay Burger down tha street, bellied up ta tha counter, an' said, How'd ya like ta tell everypony Ah eat here?...

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Ah've always been a big fella, but once Ah started eatin' in earnest, Ah bin findin' that everythin's just a lil too small. Doors, frinstance.

Picture if ya will, a dutiful big brother droppin' off a fergotten schoolbook fer his sister. Fergettin' himself that the schoolhouse door weren't exactly friendly ta his expanded stature.

Strong as that big brother is, he struts in easy as ya please, whistlin' a tune, barely noticin' the wood frame against his hide. He's felt that often enough lately, he doesn't even notice anymore.

Until suddenly, he feels a pinch 'round his flanks, an' he looks back.

A big, thick roll, red an' shiny an' curvy as any apple, bulging out toward him over the doorframe.

An' on the other side'a the door, he hasn't even gotten his widest part through. He pushes with his strong hind legs, but he only gets more'a his fat self stuffed and stuck inside.

He sighs and tries ta toss his sister's book toward her desk, and he waits.

An' then picture colts 'n fillies comin' back from recess ta find two big green apples waiting fer their teacher... An' fer a push.

Ah tell ya, if my cheeks weren't already red...

But it ain't all bad. Fer the first time, Ah got mares 'n stallions both brushin' up against me. 'Course, it's partly on account'a how much space Ah take up, but...

That don't account fer the looks on their faces. There's a lil surprise at first, but then as I shoulder past 'em, an' I press against 'em, an' they sink just a lil into the surface...

Ah see a lotta relaxed ponies.

Ah never used ta see that. Ah like that.

Ah like ta think that's it because fer the first time, Ah'm not just big.

Ah'm plush.

Every inch'a me's soft hide and strong muscle, with enough paddin' in between ta make even the pickiest pony comfy. An' everypony wants ta feel comfy.

You do too, don'tcha?

Part Two

It was the slow season, an' we were waitin' fer the apples to ripen before the harvest. We had months ta go before Ah had to do real grunt work, so Ah was enjoying mahself by harvestin' the other fruits of mah labor.

Ah'd spent months stuffin' mahself every chance Ah got. Ah was still the strongest stallion around, but Ah grew mah lead on "biggest stallion" by a wide margin.

Every place in town that served even snacks had a sign in the window, "Big Mac Eats Here." Ah let 'em keep up the signs as long as they kept me in munchies. Apparently business was good enough that they widened the doors fer me.

Mrs. Cake told me the mornin' Ah spent stuck in her door gave her the best afternoon rush she'd ever seen. Ponies were sayin', if the bakery's good enough that Ah'd git mahself stuck, snack while Ah waited to be slid out, and still leave with enough to fritters gorge mahself, they had ta have somethin'. Mrs. Cake told me Ah'd have to do it again sometime, and popped a double-frosted cupcake into mah mouth.

But mah sister AJ had a bee in her bonnet 'bout it, and called a family meetin'. Ah was, as was gettin' to be usual, the center'a attention. When yer as wide as any three ponies standin' shoulder ta shoulder, an' yer belly hangs down past yer knees, that happens. An' that was what AJ wanted ta talk about.

She planted a hoof right on mah belly and sank it in deep, pokin' me fer emphasis.

“If *anypony's* gonna use *this* ta sell food, it'll be the Apple family!”

And so Ah was sent out to make a tour'a Equestria—just durin' the slow season, mind, an' Ah'd still have mah usual chores when Ah got back—ta advertise our apples, our baked goodies, an' our cider.

Well, if there's anything Ah c'n do these days, it's draw attention. So Ah just had to go 'round an' show ponies how good everythin' tasted, an' take orders fer when the apple harvest came in.

So that's how Ah wound up visitin' Appleloosa. Ah got told, they got apples, but they ain't got Sweet Apple Acres apples, so go show 'em what they're missin'.

There's one thing Ah c'n always count on, soon as Ah git off the Express, an' that's mah cousin, Braeburn.

“Hey, there, cousin!”

He's always a yellow stampede, grinnin' like anythin', an' he's always a'comin' right for me.

“Welcome to Aaaaappleloosa!”

An' usually he wanted ta push me 'round town an' show me the sights, but this time, he plowed inta me... and bounced. Ah'm not so easily pushed no more.

He picked himself up and brushed off his hat. Placin' it back on his head, he looked like he really saw me fer the first time, because his mouth was hangin' open an' he wasn't talkin'. “Cousin, you, uh...”

“Eeyup?” Ah let mahself go? Cousin, Ah pushed mahself.

“You look... healthy.”

“Eeyup.”

Ah pulled him in fer a big hug, an' let him snug right inta me. He was surprised at first, but relaxed onto me soon enough. Eventually, Ah put him down an' we talked shop.

“Ah got yer letter, Cousin, an' Ah think yer really onta somethin'. Ponyville's great, but branchin' out is gonna be great fer business. But Ah don't think Ah unnerstand—why'd you wanna try Appleloosa first? They got apples here. Plenny of 'em.”

“Eeyup.”

An' if even Appleloosa orders from Sweet Apple Acres, everypony'll know we must really be somethin'.

We wound up settin' up a stage in the middle a' town an' puttin' a table in front a' a big curtain. The table had pies, loads of 'em. They came in boxes from different bakeries in town, with the labels spun 'round so you could see 'em from the crowd.

There was a crowd, a' course. Braeburn can get anyone to go anywhere, when he uses his head.

“Ah wanna thank all you ponies fer joinin' me on this beeee-yootiful Appleloosa day! An' Ah wanna introduce y'all to a friend a' mine, my cousin, Big McIntosh!”

He pulled the curtain open. Ah rumbled out an' let everyone git a good, long look at me. Blubbery, bright red hide, with two stretched an' gleamin' green apples wobblin' and screamin' fer attention. The crowd hushed.

Braeburn brandished a pie before the crowd.

“Behold! It's a pie, it's apple, an' it's from the best bakery in town!”

He put it on the table in front a' me. Ah sniffed it, nibbled the crust a lil, an' turned mah nose up.

“What's the matter, cousin? Ain't you hungry?”

“Eeyup.”

“Well, don'tcha want this here apple pie?”

“Nnnope.”

He pulled over another one.

“What about this here? It's a local legend! Some cinnamon, some sugar, an' it's deeeelish with a scoop a' ice cream!”

“Nnnope.”

We went through a pie from every bakery in town together. The crowd wondered why Ah turned down every last one. Mah stomach was growlin' up a storm, and the crowd jumped at every rumble.

Finally, Braeburn pulled out a pie Ah brought with me. Golden-brown, flaky, an' with just a tad a' sugar frosted 'round the edges.

“Well, cousin, all we got left is this here.”

Ah stuffed mah face into the pie and gobbled it down quick as lightnin'. Ah licked mah lips, an' said:

“Ah'm Big Mac, an' Ah eat at Sweet Apple Acres.”

“That's right, everypony! Big Mac eats at Sweet Apple Acres! You ain't seen any apples like these! We got fritters! Pies! Candied apples! Cider!”

We ran outta samples, and then outta order forms.

That night, Braeburn 'n' Ah stayed up enjoyin' mah stash a' leftovers an' a keg a' cider.

Ah nosed the end a' his mug up into the air, and he gulped down the cider. He was startin' ta slur an' wobble on his feet.

“Cousin—hic!—don' they needja back at tha farm?”

“Eeyup.”

“But yer doin' great bizness out here! Yoo cain't quit now! Bizness is still—”

“Growin'?”

He looked at mah belly. After we did our sales pitch a couple times, Ah decided there weren't no point lettin' all them other bakeries' pies go to waste. My gut was stuffed solid, and brushed against my fetlocks. Ah tasted apples every time Ah took a breath. Tomorrow'd be a different story—mah belly'd be empty, and mah chest an' flanks an' rear'd be even fuller. Ah smiled at the thought, an' mah smile had to push back fat cheeks.

“Course it's growin'. Finish yer cider.”

He knocked back the last of his mug. He belched, and blushed, pulling his hat down in embarrassment.

“Well, cousin, ya can't tell ponies 'Big Mac Eats at Sweet Apple Acres' if'n no pony knows who Big Mac is! Ah'm sayin'—urp!—ponies gotta see ya, if ya want 'em ta keep buyin'. How're yoo gonna keep it up?”

Ah slid another mug'a cider over to Braeburn, an' pushed an apple pie at him.

“Franchisin'.”

His eyes slid in and outta focus. He looked down at the pie, and up at me, and then around to aaaaall'a me.

“Ooooooh.”

Last Ah heard from Braeburn, he'd gone up another vest size.