

Chapter 20.5: A Mare Worth Fighting For

"I'd NEVER felt joy like that before! It just felt so good I wanted to keep smiling forever!"

I stretched out on Homage's bed as she gave me a massage. Either she had learned a lot from our visit to the spa, or she'd had practice. Either way, it was wonderful! If I was a cat, I would have been purring.

I felt her press against me as she leaned close to whisper in my ear. "I know you're under doctor's orders to relax and not exert yourself. You listen about as well as most of his patients."

I nodded, not wanting to really talk about that. Or really about anything. What she was doing with her hooves was divine. She was pressing them in circles against the back of my legs at the base of my rump. Not as skilled as the professional spa ponies, maybe. But unspeakably more delightful because it was Homage doing it.

"So I won't apologize for helping you break them further." I had no idea what she was... oh HELLO! I gasped as I felt her tongue someplace I had only imagined it before. Pleasure burst through my whole body.

And she was just getting started. This was definitely going to qualify as *strenuous activity*.

After the second pass of her tongue, I became vibrant. I was grinning like a fool. *This is really happening. We're really going to do this!*

Then another thought struck me at the third lick. *Oh Goddesses, we're really doing this. What if I'm lousy? What if she hates me forever? What if she gets on the radio in the morning and tells all of the Wasteland that the Stable Dweller is the worst lay ever?*

My ecstatic joy replaced with panic, I started shaking all over. When I felt her tongue stop touching, I fought the urge to scream for her to continue, terrified that the spell would break and she'd realize she could be with a much taller and more attractive mare.

"Littlepip, you okay?" her voice was filled with concern. Probably worried that I was suffering some kind of withdrawal symptom or post traumatic stress from one of the many times I had nearly died lately.

"I'm fine," I lied. Just this once.

"Am I... going too fast for you?"

"No!" I cried, my voice straining not to crack. That wasn't a lie. She could have pounced me when I first laid eyes on her and I'd say she was still too slow.

"Good," she said with a laugh. "Because I had *no* intention of stopping."

Then she was back to work. Her tongue was hot as it circled me back there. Do tongues naturally get that hot when near another pony's private parts, or was I just hot there and she just providing pressure? I stopped wondering much of anything when it slipped inside.

I cried out. I'm pretty sure I wasn't speaking any known language. Somehow the entire universe had collapsed between my haunches and the only thing left was that hot slippery bit of mare boldly going where no mare had gone before.

Somewhere, a part of me was mortified. Whenever I had been turned on in the past, I had been thinking about or looking at some pony that I didn't have a chance with. My natural instinct had always been to put my back to a wall, but now there was nowhere to hide. She was seeing exactly what I felt, she was *inside* me. It was too much. My hooves were digging at the bed spread, I wanted to run. I knew that any moment she'd realize this was all a huge misunderstanding, she'd throw me out, and I'd have to try to make up some pony so I could finish on my own.

Finish? The pressure was building already. Oh Goddesses, no. Sweet Celestia and Luna. *I've already been blown up recently, have some mercy!* It turned out they were busy. I exploded. My body went into spasms and I burst out crying.

"Whoa," Homage pulled her head back licking, well, *me* off her lips. "And here I was worried that I'd gotten rusty. Am I just that good or are you that sensitive?" I could hear the amusement in her voice.

"I'm sorry," I wanted to slink out the room before she started laughing at poor Pip who couldn't last for more than a minute.

I felt her lips on my neck. "Why are you sorry?" her voice was soft. Her mane brushed against me and, I swear, I almost popped again. "It's been a while for me too."

"It's been my whole life." *Oh shit, I did not just say that!* I threw both forelegs over my mouth, trying to shove the words back in.

I braced for harsh, mocking laughter. Instead I felt teeth at my ear. "Your first time, and like this?" Was she *moaning*? "I can't say I'm not jealous."

"Well it's not like it's my first, I've had a lot of time alone and--" I had to shove a hoof *in* my mouth this time. *Sweet sky-fucking Celestia, was there anything else I could say to embarrass myself?* A very indignant voice shrieked in my head. *Maybe I want to tell her about how I wet the bed as a filly?*

"I meant with another pony." She was sucking on the end of my ear. As it turns out, that feels better than just about anything except what she was doing between my legs with her hooves. "Just one thing. You're not *done*, right?"

Oh Goddesses, was she kidding? Just listening to her voice and that feeling on my ear was enough to... *Oh, here we go again.* Another shock of ecstasy burst through my entire body. She pressed her body against mine and seemed to ride my spasms and bit down on my ear. Hard.

"Well, that answers that," she said after my body had quieted. I felt a telekinetic field wrap around me and flip me on my back. "That's good, because I have so much more to do," I had never see anypony look at me like that before. I blinked and she had disappeared between my legs. Her lips were as able as her tongue, but the hint of teeth made it that much more-

"So I have a question," she said quickly after her lips had brought about the destruction of any thought in

my head.

"Now?" I managed to squeak.

Looking up at me, she pressed her chin firmly against my ever dampening crotch. "No time like the present. And I want to know more about you. Understandable, given the situation. Right?"

I was struggling to remember some the more sophisticated words, like "what" when she nipped at my inner thigh. "Ask!"

"That Velvet is *quite* the looker."

You've got to be fucking kidding.

"When you first left the Stable, I'd heard it was to look for her. So is there anything there?" She followed by pressing the tip of her nose into me.

"That's- **AH!** That's- *It's **REALLY** hard to focus when you're doing that!*"

"Do you want me to stop?" Her mouth was right over me, her breath puffing into me. "Do you need to figure out how to answer the question?" She opened her mouth and let that wonderful, amazing tongue dangle, idly tracing my slit.

"It's just, this is a bit of an ambush," I said as quick as I could before having to bite into my wrist to keep from screaming.

She finally sat up, allowing me to relax. Then she brought up the tip of her forehoof. "Let me back up, regardless of what you say, we're *still* doing this." To bring home the point, she pressed harder. "From the way she practically threw me at you and what you've already told me, I know there's at least nothing *actively* going on. But you don't go chasing across half the Wasteland for just anypony."

"I had a major crush on her all my life." No point in trying to play it cool. "But she was just a face, a voice on the radio. Something to fill my fantasies with." I hadn't really put my thoughts in order since she'd shot me, but this all rang true, even if it was all coming out under *duress*. "I really didn't know her until I met her out here in the Wastes."

"Oh?" She laid her head on my belly.

"The fantasy was nothing like the real thing." I sighed, I'd miss those fantasies. They were my oldest companions. "She's... special. But she's *not* the mare I rushed out to rescue. That mare was just pretend, a voice on the radio." Saying that hurt. It was like a goodbye to a part of myself.

She just looked at me for a long time. Then she cocked an eyebrow, "A voice on the radio, huh?"

I groaned. "Oh, don't even start. I thought you were a stallion."

She had gone back to kissing, "Well, you know better now."

"And while we're talking about stallions, Calamity's just a friend too! And I met SteelHooves just before you!" I really didn't want to have think about either of them between orgasms.

She looked up at me with a pout. "Oh, sweetie, I know you only have eyes for mares. Every account I got about you made mention of you eyeing up some filly or another."

I didn't have long to be embarrassed before her tongue sent another damn wave through me. After crying in tongues I briefly wondered if it counts as one if I come twice in a row.

"I am *loving* playing with you."

I noticed.

"One more question and I'll let you be."

"Fine," I managed to say after remembering my name.

She hopped, pressing her knees into my chest and putting her forehooves under her chin. "So what's a mare like you see in a mare like me?"

She was actually going to let me think about this one, of course.

"If you're getting tired and need something to eat, help yourself." She floated a fruit bowl over to the bedside table.

I realized how ravenously hungry I was, I took an apple from the bowl and devoured it. Licking my lips clean, I looked down at her, patiently waiting on my chest. I rolled my eyes up in mock contemplation for several seconds. "Is 'I was really really horny' a good enough answer?"

She burst out laughing, it was a wonderful sound. "What, none of the pretty Raider mares give you a second look?"

"Well, there were more than a few that showed an interest in *penetrating* me, but I was holding out for a gal who'd buy me dinner first." I munched on another apple to drive home my point. "Actually, I always really respected DJ Pon3. Somepony out here dedicated to helping everypony they possibly can? It was a constant reminder that not everypony had become Raiders in the Wastes."

Homage kissed my chest and smiled up at me, "I'd think you'd just need to look in the mirror for that."

It turns out, I could still blush. "Yeah, but you were helping everypony without..." I paused, a memory surfacing; I felt blood on my horn and saw a mare on the ground whispering that she didn't want to die. I swallowed a bit of apple in my mouth. "You don't kill anypony. You just help. That meant a lot to me." I saw the understanding on her face. I quickly moved on before she could ask if I wanted to talk about it. I didn't. "Of course, when I found out you were actually a gorgeous mare with a rump that just wouldn't quit, I was head-over-heels. I mean who wouldn't be?"

I felt her slide off my chest, and I took another hearty bite from my third apple. That's when I felt her lips wrap around my clit. It was about a minute before I realized I couldn't breathe and not in the

"ohmygoshohmygoshohmygosh" way but in a "there's a large piece of apple in my windpipe" way. After a few sputters and coughs, she took notice of my peril and, I guess she didn't want to be known as "the mare who killed the Stable Dweller with oral sex" because she sprang into action to help me cough up the lethal snack.

"Warn me before you do that," I hoarsely shouted after the offending chunk of apple fell to the bed.

"I'm sorry," she said giving me a nuzzle on the cheek. "But you called me your hero and then said I had a pretty butt. I couldn't resist." She floated a carrot from the nearby bowl and into her mouth, but rather than eat it, she held it out for me. I reached forward and bit into it, thinking she'd let go, instead she held fast and gave me a flirty look. She waited patiently as I chewed the carrot down until I reached her lips, only then did she swallow what was left in her mouth and I'm pretty sure she only did that to free up her tongue.

After a few minutes of that, I leaned back on the bed and patted my stomach with a contented sigh. "Man, those really hit the spot. So much more flavor than Stable food."

Homage cozied up next to me, pressing her face against my neck. "Do you miss it? The Stables, I mean."

The question caught me by surprise. Not so much because of the question itself, it was a perfectly reasonable thing to ask, but because the answer was, "No."

"Really?" She sounded shocked.

"I mean, I miss not being shot all the time," I added quickly. "And I miss having a comfy place to sleep consistently. But, I never really felt alive in there. It was like we were just waiting to die. I don't think ponies were meant to be cooped up all their lives." She made a noise in understanding and ran a hoof down my side. I kissed the top of her head, smelling her mane. "Also, I've met some really nice ponies since I got out."

"You know," a smile played across my lips as I spoke, "I think that fruit has given me my second wind. You want to continue where you left off?"

She rolled off me and pulled her back legs under her to sit on her haunches. She looked at me like I was foal who made a social faux pas. "Um, Pip, I just watched you have five orgasms, and I don't know what they taught you in the Stables," she leaned back and spread her back legs, "but in the bedroom, you gotta share."

Part of me was embarrassed that I hadn't done anything for her tonight, but that wasn't the part of me that was staring in stunned paralysis at her crotch. Outside of health class, I had never seen another mare like this. It was fascinating. It was exciting. It was giving me another orgasm. *For Goddesses' sake she wasn't even touching me!*

She just watched me shudder and gasp for a minute. "You weren't kidding about the 'being really horny' thing, were you?"

"A few days ago I caught myself ogling a one-eyed griffon," I said after catching my breath.

"Well, at least I know you're open minded," she said with a smirk. She reclined there staring at me, "Hey Pip, are you gonna, you know, *do* something soon?"

Oh. Right. I rolled over to my belly bringing myself at eye level with her lap. I thought about all the things she had done with tongue and lips. I rolled my own tongue around in my mouth. It felt sluggish and clumsy. "Hey, um, do you have a book or something I could read with a few tips or hints or..." She closed her legs. I swear, I'd never been closer to heartbreak.

She took a deep breath and let it out in a quick sigh. "It's alright, next time I'll give you a full tutorial." She got off the bed; I wanted to cry. Then she started rummaging under the bed. "Until then, I just happen to have something we can do that'll work for both of us." She came back into view floating a narrow rectangular box. She popped the lid off. The inside was lined with tissue paper. "It's a bit of pre-war technology I found in my more traveled days. It's a device designed to allow two ponies to share their pleasure." Her horn lit up, and I saw the tissue being pushed aside. "Don't worry, it's been very thoroughly tested for safety." She floated the object out of the box with a look of pride on her face.

"It's two dicks stuck together end on end," I observed flatly.

"Isn't it though," she had the same look on her face that I'd seen Calamity wear after cleaning his guns. She finally pulled her eyes from it and looked to me, I had apparently failed to hide my horror. "Don't worry, it's not real." She gave it a poke and it wobbled in the air; I was suddenly nauseous.

"Homage," I said, staring at the floating phallus. "Remember when I said I like *mares*? That's... um... really really not a mare."

"It's just a *toy* Pip," she said patiently. She gave me a sideways look. "Do you mean that you've never seen anything like this before? Even back in the Stable?" I shook my head. "So what did you do for stress relief?"

"I got to know my hooves pretty well," I mumbled.

Homage opened her mouth looking like she had more to argue, but then just let it close. She let out a single laugh and said, "Oh well, don't worry about it."

I couldn't help but feel a little rotten. She had looked so happy at the chance to use her toy with another pony, and she'd already done so much for... and *to* me. I reached out a hoof to stop her from putting the box top back on. "Wait, you're right. I mean, it's just a toy and... I think I can be okay with it if it's you." I realized as I said it, that I meant it. We hadn't known each other long, but she already meant a lot to me and I was willing to try and make her happy.

She smiled warmly and kissed me on the nose. "I so have you wrapped around my hoof." She giggled and started rummaging in the bedside table drawer. "I think this a new record for me when it comes to relationships. You can basically orgasm on command and damn if you don't make the best faces when you do. Now I just need to teach you how to return the favor and you'll be perfect."

I knew from that instant that she would forever wear the dress here. I had officially become the passive one in the relationship, and I really wasn't sure I was... Wait, *relationship*? This was a relationship. *I*,

Littlepip, short for Pipsqueak, had an honest to Goddesses relationship. I was grinning like it was my birthday and Homage had just popped out of the cake. I had a relationship. She could shove whatever she wanted in me because *I had a relationship!*

After I came back down off my cloud, I noticed she was looking at me intensely and had in fact been talking the whole time. "I *said* I'm going to need to use this," she floated a tube in front of me. "It'll be cold, but since you've never used anything like this before, this is *going* to hurt some."

Psh. I've been shot, stabbed, smacked around, and nearly cooked by a dragon. I was ready for anything. I rolled over to my belly and raised my hips. I looked back and gave her a wink. She just shook her head and applied an extra coat of some kind of jelly on one of the... ends.

She got behind me and put her hooves on both sides of my haunches and adjusted my stance. She assumed an identical stance and her "toy" floated between us.

"You ready?" she called out.

I grinned smugly and called out, "You bet your hot ass I am." Then it touched me.

"EE, that's *really* cold!" I shrieked, my voice far too high. "Oh." It was pushing against me; I clenched and it stopped.

"Pip, if you don't want to do this," Homage began.

"No, no, I said I'd try this with you," I said quickly, trying not to shudder at the feel of the slimy, cold, and rubbery thing pressing between my legs.

"Then you're going to have to *relax*. Trust me."

Okay, I trusted her. I relaxed. I let out a loud breath. She pushed it in. This was the second time I had invented a new language that night. She pushed it slowly, in between what could be generously described as a hurricane of profanity, I choked on how much it hurt and how *good* it felt. This thing had been designed to touch every sensitive spot at once and whoever designed it was really damn good at their job. It came to a rest deep inside and I felt the orgasm rip through me as it rotated. I looked back and saw that Homage had twisted on to her back with it already well inside her. *And there was another two-in-one. Should I be counting these?*

"What the fu-," I panted. "What are you doing?"

She squirmed, sending another lightning bolt through me. "I *really* want to watch you; it's easier like this," she moaned. "Now hold still, I'm about to turn it on."

"What do you mean turn it o-" There was clicking sound. "OoOoOoOoOoH sweet Celestia horn fucking Luna in the ass!" *It vibrates; how novel.*

I fleshed out my two new languages with a shiny series of swears, all having to do with the female organs. I think sometime less than a thousand years passed, but I really wasn't the best to judge since I was dead for at least part of the time. The only thing I can say for sure was that we were going to need to change the sheets and pillowcases and that she made the silliest and most gorgeous face when she came. She

looked like she was sneezing, laughing, and had a pinched nerve in her neck all the same time. Needless to say, I came with her.

She turned it off, and I would have collapsed if it wasn't still holding us together. She carefully slid it out of me and then herself. She gave it an affectionate kiss, on my end I noted with some small perverted pride, and then set it back in its box. She stuck her tongue out at me and asked, "So what did you think of my toy?"

I tentatively touched my aching nethers. "It does its job," I grunted.

She nodded and gave a whistle, "I noticed."

I rolled onto my back, trying to move my legs as little as possible. "But to be perfectly honest, I liked it more when it was just you and me. That felt more like I was just masturbating while you watched. It was just... too artificial."

She put the lid back on the box and slid it under the bed. "Fair enough," she sighed. "Thank you for letting me *really* try it out, and I promise I won't bring it out on you again." She crawled over and kissed me on the cheek. "Except on my birthday."

I sighed and floated a peach from the bowl and munched on it quietly for a few minutes. Eating helped calm me down and brought me back from exhaustion. A thought hit me as I recovered.

"So, time for *your* interview Ms. Pon3," I said, trying to sound cool with arguable success.

"Turnabout is fair play," she said rubbing her face against my neck.

"So what's a well respected DJ's assistant doing with a toaster repair gal like me?" I asked, half laughing at her joke.

She didn't laugh. She sat up and turned to face me. All expression had fled from her face. "Do you really want to know?"

"Well, yeah, I asked didn't I." I was getting nervous; maybe I *didn't* want to know if this was the effect asking had.

"It's because you're a hero." She said it without any trace of mockery.

I'd have blushed if my face wasn't still flush from our multi-orgasmic good time. "Not this again."

"Let me finish," she snapped. "You asked and now you have to listen to the answer, no matter how bad it hurts."

I was getting scared.

"I've seen all kinds of things as DJ Pon3 and even before that when I was out in the Wastes. I'd seen horrors, as I'm sure you've seen."

I only nodded, thinking of skinned and splayed open corpses used as decoration and the image of Calamity shooting that young foal Raider from the other day popped in my head.

“But I’ve seen and heard about heroes too.” She sounded wistful as she continued. “Ponies who set out to help others and fight against anything that threatened their fellow pony. I loved them. I lived to see and hear about them. They gave me just a little hope that maybe we weren’t damned after all. That there might be a light at the end of this fucking tunnel we buried ourselves in.”

I was about to speak my agreement when she went on.

“And then I’d see their heads on spikes outside a Raider camp.” She looked at me hard. “You’re a hero Littlepip, and that means you’re going to die very soon because you’re a blight on the Wasteland. They’ll kill you because ‘what’s right’ doesn’t fit in this world any more, and *I’m* going to have to report it after.”

I got up and backed out of bed. I had thought about dying before, knew it was something that could happen so easily to me out here. But to be told it was a fucking certainty...

She wasn’t done. “Or you’ll give up. I’ve seen that too. Heroes who helped folks only for them to be slaughtered by some other threat or worse, for those they saved to go to do atrocities themselves in the name of survival. They just hang up their guns and go find some shit-hole to drink themselves to death in.”

I fell back on my haunches.

“You’re a good pony, Littlepip. An honest to fucking goodness hero. And I wanted to know you, to hold you, to love you before you’re gone too.”

Something broke inside me. No. Not something. My heart. My heart broke. I’d searched and fought and killed and nearly died in the name of what I believed to be “right”. I’d found somepony who did the same, and she just told me that none of it would actually matter in the end.

I saw the Wasteland, not as a place, but as a giant razor clawed beast devouring ponies by the dozens. I saw myself attack it valiantly only to be smashed without it even looking. I saw a line of “me”s, each one attacking and dying without ever even slowing the monster’s grizzly feast.

I saw New Appleoosa burning, the townsponies all dead or being lead away in chains along with all the slaves I had fought so hard to free. I saw the Talon mercs laughing as they threw Monterey Jack’s foals down from the sky. I saw Gawd with her small army attacking a convoy for supplies and leaving no survivors.

I saw myself coming upon Silver Bell, so broken that she didn’t even have herself left anymore, in front of the graves of her family. She ran up to me and pressed against my chest, crying and asking me to tell her it would be okay. I saw myself bring out Little Macintosh and press it against her head. I said it would be okay, and then I pulled the trigger.

I wanted to scream, but I knew I’d just throw up if I opened my mouth. I fell, my forelegs unable to hold me up anymore.

I needed something. Anything to believe in. I tried to think of Celestia and Luna, but they were just shadows in my mind now.

I thought of Silver Bell again, but I thought of what had really happened. I saw Velvet bring her to Ditzzy Doo. Ditzzy Doo. My mind locked on to her.

I tried to imagine Ditzzy before the war. I couldn't keep a straight idea of what color her coat was, but I knew from the errant strands still clinging to her that her mane was straw colored. In my mind she was beautiful back then; she had to be. She was flying by, and everypony smiled up at her. With a vague imaginary voice that sounded like a fading echo, she apologized for not having any deliveries for them today.

Ditzzy turned and looked out at Cloudsdale in the distance. It exploded. I saw the fire overtake her, and I saw her burning, and she leapt out to try to protect the nearest pony, but they were gone. I saw her fall to the ground as what she was now, a ghoul. I saw her wake up in the newly formed Wasteland. She walked, just looking in shock at the carcass of her world.

Then she'd have heard a noise. A foal crying. She'd have run to it. The foal would be too hurt to walk, but would have screamed and tried to run when it saw her. Ditzzy smiled reassuringly, only making them scream worse. Then she'd have rolled her eyes independently of each other and the foal would have stopped crying, in confusion if nothing else. Ditzzy would have thrown the foal on her back, picked a direction, and would have walked.

On the way, more crying, more screaming, all of them foals. She stopped to gather every single one. She finally came to a collection of huts. The ponies there shot Ditzzy on sight. The foals gathered around her and screamed that she helped them, that she was a good pony. The ponies mended her wounds and took the foals in. Ditzzy hears screams off in the distance and she leaves.

I see her much later. A Slaver's hoof is on her neck, across the room another Slaver is looming over a filly. Ditzzy screams, "Don't hurt her, she's just a foal. Please, I'll do anything, just don't hurt her! You don't *want* to do this!"

The Slaver by the filly yells at the one on Ditzzy's neck, "Shut that zombie bitch up! She's killing my hard-on."

The Slaver on Ditzzy's neck, a unicorn, takes up a knife from a nearby table. "Oh, I'll shut her up."

I see Ditzzy on the floor, gore pooling around her mouth. The two Slavers on the other side of the room, laughing, their backs to her. She pulls herself up, two of her legs are broken. She picks up a piece of piping in her mouth.

I see her taking the filly she rescued to New Appleoosa. She's helping Ditzzy to write. I see Ditzzy pouring over a large blank book, she titles it "The Wasteland Survival Guide."

I see Ditzzy making a delivery that takes her past Ponyville, she hears the screams of a filly.

I see her now, as I saw her then, a lifetime ago. She's beaten, she's caged, she's sure she'll die as soon as her captors decide how. She's wrapped around a foal, trying to help them stop crying. I free her, I

thought she was a monster. I see her again, unarmed, about to be killed because there was another filly in pain.

I'm back in the present, and I can't stop crying. I'm sobbing so hard my entire body hurts. Homage touches my back, and I stand up instantly. I suck back enough snot so that I can talk, and I choke out as loud as I can, "You're wrong."

I'm still shaking, but I refuse to stop. "I've seen some fucking horrors too! I've seen things so ugly that it made me wonder if that fucking war only gave us half of what we deserved for having such shit inside us. But that's wrong!" I wipe my eyes so I can see. "I've seen goodness too; I've seen a town that dealt with Slavers for their livelihood give their lives to save the ponies they partially helped enslave. I've seen a band of Raiders turn a prison into the beginnings of a trading post, a whole new town." My throat tightened, but I couldn't stop now. "I've seen a pony who watched her entire fucking world die; she's suffered *every fucking thing* either of us can imagine, and the only thing she cares about is helping."

I stamped the ground. "I will not listen as you or anypony tells me that goodness is a blight. GOODNESS IS NOT A FUCKING BLIGHT!" I screamed as loud as my throat would allow. "I've seen things, and I know *in my heart* that we're not beyond hope. We can be good. We *want* to be good! It's just that in a world so badly broken, darkness has been allowed to run free for so long that they've convinced everypony that that's the way it is now. Ponies just need to be shown that they don't have to be scared all the time, and they'll fight against the darkness again, and one day foals will *laugh* at the idea that there were once monsters in the shadows."

I stood my ground and looked at Homage; she was frozen. "You say that they'll either kill me or I'll give up. Well they're going to have to fucking kill me, because their world is a *lie* and I will *not* give up. Ever!" I breathed heavily and the tears dried up in me. Homage just stared at me as though she'd never seen me before.

I didn't know what I expected her to do, but I certainly didn't expect her to kiss me and lead me back to the bed. "I believe you," was all she said.

I blinked my burning eyes. "Come again?"

"I intend to as soon as you get over here," she said with a half smile. I just looked at her. "I believe you. I was wrong. I thought I'd seen heroes before. I thought I'd seen *everything* before." Tears streamed down her face, she ignored them. "But I'd never seen *you* before. I believe you, Littlepip. I believe *in* you. Things *can* change, and when they do, it'll be because you reminded us all that darkness is just a passing thing and that our true nature is *good*."

I guess I wasn't out of tears after all.

"Now get your adorable ass over here. I'm going to give you that tutorial I promised."

I climbed back into bed with her. With her mouth on me and mine on her, she taught me. She went slowly so that I didn't get too excited. After some rigorous testing, I turned out to be, well, passable anyway.

Homage lay sleeping beside me. I knew I should have joined her long ago, but I just laid there and ate

the last apple from the bowl as I watched her sleep.

I felt something I'd only heard about in rumors and stories burning in my chest. Love, they always called it. I loved her. She had shown me that even a pony who thought they had seen it all could still have hope. And when there was love and hope, evil would never stand a chance. I made a mental note to give Ditzzy a big squishy hug sometime for reminding me of that.

I laughed at my own cheesy thoughts. "Goddesses, I am so gay."

Bonus Perk: Way of the Fruit - You understand the way of the fruit. You enjoy strange and wonderful benefits whenever you eat... *fruit*. When you do it, you get a temporary +1 bonus to your strength. Being eaten ain't so bad either.