

Allegrezza: Concerto Due

CoffeeGrunt

Octavia would never dare admit it to another pony, but that morning wasn't the first morning she'd awoken in the painful vice grip of a hangover. It wasn't the first time her taste for whiskey had gotten the better of her, nor the first time that her thirst for it had become...excessive, should she say?

It was, however, the first time it had landed her in bed with another mare.

She blearily opened her eyes, the open curtains allowed Celestia's sun to invade her retinas in full force, making her clamp them shut again. Then, she clamped a pair of hooves to her head, and took up the foetal position. The irritatingly familiar sensation that made every noise seem like an out-of-tune violin being played in her skull returned. She summoned the energy from her massively depleted reserves to stretch her limbs, which relieved her aches slightly.

Octavia stepped once more unto the breach, opening her eyes to find a fortunately placed cloud was blocking the sun, allowing her eyes to roam freely around the room. She rapidly ascertained that she wasn't at home, and slowly turned her head to the white mare sprawled in the bed next to her, electric blue-streaked mane scattered over her pillow. She nudged back the covers, revealing the other mare fully. Octavia almost felt like she was identifying a body.

Octavia sunk her face into her hooves. "*Oh Celestia, what the hay did they serve in that bar?*" She decided that the best move would be out of the door, *post haste*. Sadly, at that point, perhaps sensing the horrified mare's indignation, Vinyl woke up, blearily rolling over to see the look of complete shock on Octavia's face. She tried a weak smile, well aware of what the situation looked like. Octavia's eyes simply tracked the other mare as she sat up, rubbed her ruby-red eyes with her forehooves then planted her trademark shades back over her eyes. A slight shake of the head, and her mane fell into place. Octavia practically retched as the DJ went straight to the kitchen to prepare her breakfast.

"Wait! Aren't you even going to *shower* first?!"

Vinyl stopped in her tracks, swivelling round to face Octavia. "Whoa! This is my home, filly! I do as I please...and I'm pretty hungry. Ain't got work 'til six anyways. Besides, you'll probably need the shower more than I do, given how much you were drinking."

Octavia tried to suppress her stomach. That she had...been with a mare was bad enough. But one so...unhygienic, not even attempting to hide her uncouth core. She felt her self-esteem plummet, before realising that, of course, it wasn't her fault.

"Wait a minute! I'm not just hopping in your shower at your whim! You say I was tipsy, right?" Vinyl chuckled as she levitated various utensils to provide a pair of filled cereal bowls, with a side plate staked with toast.

"More than tipsy, I suppose a posh pony like yourself would say... 'gazeboed,' or maybe just lampshaded?" She floated the bowl over to Octavia, filled to the brim with milk, and crunchy, chocolate cereal.

"Foals' cereal? For the goddesses' sake, you could at least pretend to be mature!"

"Hey! I read the box, it's fortified with vitamins! Healthy lifestyle and all that!"

Octavia planted a hoof on her face. "First you take me home, then you take advantage of me, now you feed me third-gra-."

"Whoa! Back up the cart filly!" Vinyl began to crack up, tears curling down her face. "I 'took advantage' of you?"

"Well here I am, slightly...tipsy filly, in *your* bed!"

Vinyl paused between mouthfuls of her cheerileeos. "Assuming of course we actually...did anything? Even if I was that way with mares, you were kinda...out of it, filly. I'm no expert, but you normally need to be awake."

"I am no drunkard! And would you please stop calling me 'filly?'"

"Okay..."

"Thank you!"

"...Filly." Vinyl shot Octavia a sly grin, then chomped down another mouthful of cereal, enjoying the indignation on the cellist's face.

"Very witty, now if you'll please, I'd like my cello case so I can leave."

"No problem. It's over there. Besides, it's a bit big for a cello, doncha think? More like a double bass than a cello. A...bassello?"

Octavia put on her most convincing deadpan, laced with exasperation. "Your knowledge of instruments amazes me. It's a custom-made piece. Anyway, I'm going home, where the facilities are a bit more...classy." She cast a furtive glance around the apartment, noting the floor had an extra layer of clothes and other debris. She couldn't see what colour the actual carpet itself was.

"Five-star livin' here. Besides, I doubt you could do much better anyway." Vinyl was still burrowing through her cereal.

Octavia halted on her way out the door. More often than not she simply brushed off challenges, acutely aware of her superiority over most competitors. *This* mare, however, she felt needed to be shown just how much better she was, especially without that confounded horn to multitask with.

"I'll have you know, I am quite the chef...in fact, wherever are my manners? I haven't even asked your name."

Vinyl didn't even wait for her cereal to be swallowed, simply deciding to let her words work around it. "Vinyl Scratch, at your service, m'lady Octavia." She gave a fake bow, then went back to her cereal.

"How...eloquent. I assume you know me from the-."

"Musician's weekly." Vinyl floated Octavia's special issue over to her. "Not bad, being front cover

and all, I'll give you that. Still, not really the place for a chef, eh?"

Octavia felt her cheeks begin to heat with her temper. "I'm a mare of many talents, Ms Scratch. I can turn my hooves to any task. In fact, I'll be more than happy to show you. Assuming of course you can escape your strenuous work."

"I have Thursday off. Whenever you want."

Octavia smiled. "Okay, Thursday. Seven PM, *exactly* please. I'll prepare a dinner for us, the *proper* way. I'll leave my card on the side here, and do, at the *very* least, shower beforehoof."

"If it pleases my host; call it a thanks for me taking you in, and giving you a bed for the night."

Vinyl smiled as she closed the door behind Octavia, giggling through her cheerileeos as she heard the irritated mutters and groans echoing down the hallway.

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Octavia juggled the various utensils and pans simmering away in her kitchen. It was even beginning to dawn on her that an *entire* three-course meal may be a bit more than was necessary to prove the point. But Octavia had made her bed, and was willing to lay in it...as long as it was otherwise empty, that is.

The daisies simmered in the baine-marie, while she lightly fried some cowslips in olive oil. The lettuce was being steamed nicely, she felt she could quite happily declare this dinner a success. It was difficult to fail in creating a salad at least, but she had prepared a delicious basil and parsley dressing for it. A recipe from her favourite cookbook, *Olive-Oil: The Naked Chef*.

A staccato series of knocks came from the door. Octavia's less than esteemed guest had arrived. She had just enough time to ensure the cutlery was correctly arranged as she trotted to the door. She flung it open, and found the light of the hallway reflected straight into her eyes. Covering them with a hoof, she saw her guest in all her inconspicuous glory.

"What are you *wearing*?!"

Vinyl stroked a hoof down her new suit, enjoying the small bumps and indents. "It's just a little number I used to use for DJ-ing. I thought you said this was a fancy dinner?"

"Yes, fancy indeed!" Octavia could barely stifle a giggle as she saw the awkward mare shifting from hoof to hoof. "So...why did you appear in a tin-foil suit?"

Vinyl's cheeks flared up like little volcanoes. "Hey! It's not tin-foil, it's sequins! Sequins over spandex, this was classy a few years back." In truth, she simply had no other outfits to wear. Not that she'd let Octavia know that.

"Then clearly your understanding of class is *extremely* lacking." Octavia waved Vinyl in, still wheezing under the force of her laughing. "But please, stay away from the light. I like being able to look at you without my eyes smarting."

"Is that a compliment, filly?" Vinyl raised an eyebrow, stopping next to Octavia.

“Oh hardly, Ms Scratch. If you’ll please, to the dining room. First on the left.”

Vinyl was certain of it, Octavia was testing her. She sat at the table, salad dish on the plate before her, and no less than seven knives and forks on either side. She remembered that each one was for a different kind of dish, but they were all *identical*. Whenever she looked up, she saw the smug little tilt of Octavia’s lips, her trademark subtle-yet-sly smile. In the end Vinyl bit the bullet, and picked the smallest knife and fork, then dug in. Everything fancy was small and dainty, right?

She heard Octavia’s laughter before she’d even raised the first daisy to her mouth.

“Of course, eating salad with a dessert fork...nevermind, carry on. It appears to be working.” Octavia raised the dainty little flower into her own mouth, and bit into it, chewing, while still maintaining her challenging expression. Vinyl took up the challenge, and bit into her daisy. It was good, annoyingly good. Sweet, yet with a subtle hint of sour to keep the taste alive.

“It’s...not bad. Still, *you’ve* still gotta try dandelion pop-tarts. Tasty *and* fast!”

“Oh, this dinner was effortless too, for a cook of my pedigree.” She laughed, waving off the several hours of preparation that went into the meal. Octavia preferred the term, ‘dedicated,’ as opposed to the ‘obsessive’ label she had often been marked with. The starters passed in near-silence, the only sounds being the crunch of the crisp, juicy lettuce, and the sound of how smug Vinyl felt Octavia was being. She was cornered between enjoying the meal, and admitting to liking it to her.

Octavia collected the plates, and within seconds of disappearing into the kitchen, returned with a roast marrow carefully balanced on a tray between her teeth. The marrow was shrouded in a layer of tinfoil, roasting it to a sweet and juicy texture, and ensuring it didn’t lose the taste into the tray.

“Oh, look Vinyl!”

“What?” Vinyl’s tongue was bouncing off the floor with the sheer *smell* of the dish on the table. “You and the marrow brought matching jackets!” Octavia giggled as she peeled the tin foil off, folding it into a neat square, and placing it next to the tray. She didn’t know what she enjoyed more, the way Vinyl’s jaw slackened with each insult, her ruby-red eyes glazing over slightly, or the intoxicating smell from the marrow below her.

“Oh, come now, why the long face? The guest may cut the first slice.” She took her place, and watched as Vinyl carved a massive hunk from the vegetable, like a foal getting free reign of a cake.

“My, my. Somepony’s hungry.” Octavia cut herself a much more subdued portion. She’d never had much of an appetite, but imagined Vinyl would. She was most certainly correct. “It’s lucky I made such a big marrow, isn’t it?”

“Yeh...well, y’know. It’s not bad...I could use more. I guess.” It was getting increasingly difficult to

save face with Octavia, especially while she was stuffing it with her cooking. Vinyl never imagined she'd be tortured by good food, but life was funny like that.

"Feel free, Vinyl. But while you're pausing for breath, I'd like to hear about your... 'DJ-ing' career."

A small shower of reconstituted marrow burst from Vinyl's overladen mouth as she tried, and failed, to speak.

"Dear Celestia. Ughh, were you raised by mules? Please, at least try and eat *or* talk, not both!" Octavia hoped dearly that none of it had landed on her meal, or on herself for that matter. She sighed with relief when the DJ finally finished her mouthful with as much dignity as she could muster, (not that great an amount in her opinion.)

"Well, it's harder than you think. Because you gotta get the discs just right, and have to get the right tracks for the audience, to keep 'em going. Oh, and mixing between two tracks takes alot of practice." Vinyl buried another forkful of marrow deep into her gullet.

"I'm sure it does, although I can't imagine a cello would be any easier to master."

Having learned her lesson, and taken a smaller forkful this time around, Vinyl found it easier to swallow her food before speaking. "I dunno, but I played the xylophone in school. Instruments are all the same, right?" Vinyl tried to keep her face level as she saw the irritation surface on Octavia's.

"Well, hardly! Banging a stick on some bits of metal to make jangly noises like a confounded foal hardly takes any talent at all!"

"And rubbing a stick on some wires does too?"

"Oh you have no idea! It's especially difficult with hooves, you know."

Vinyl tapped her horn. "Nope. Can't say I do."

"Typical unicorns. It's easy to play an instrument with a horn, everypony's doing it! Try doing your next set with only your hooves, I *dare* you."

Vinyl took the moment to stop eating, a wicked glint in her eyes. "Okay, you're on, Octy."

"Please, for the love of *all* that is pony...never call me that again."

"Why's that...Octy?"

"I'm holding the marrow knife. Don't tempt me."