

A Night on the Town

By Hoff

>Deep in Generic City Ruin with a Horse Pun #44

“Come on, Knicky! Pick up the pace!”

Sighing, I cantered up the street as my unicorn friend hopped up and down excitedly ahead. It boggled my mind how somepony like her could contain such vibrant, joyous energy. By all rights, she ought to have passed out from exhaustion hours ago. “What’ve we got, Softy?” I asked gruffly. Softheart clued me to the ornate sign above the faded double doors, mostly faded and written in some weird language (A-moray what?). “It looks like a restaurant I saw in one of the pre-war brochures at Tenpony!” she whinnied excitedly, “Sounds pretty fancy! We should give it a look!” I eyed the ruined storefront, arching an eyebrow. It seemed like nopony’s gone inside for a while, and there didn’t seem to be any signs of danger. Why the hell not? “Okay,” I replied with a nod, “Looks like there might be something good in there, anyway.” “Yay!” Soft cheered, bouncing up and down, “Let’s go, let’s go!” And in she ran, giggling like a schoolfilly. I quietly facehoofed. I honestly didn’t know how she could be so cheery without huffing Dash almost 24/7. Slowly, I followed her into the old restaurant.

Despite years of neglect, the restaurant was relatively intact. Dusty tables and booths lined the floors and walls, some still occupied by blackened skeletons in tattered clothes. A big bar dominated one side of the restaurant, with plenty of bottles of spirits on the shelf. On a small stage, across the room from the bar, sat an old grand piano. It was still in good condition, but I wouldn’t trust its legs to carry my pack’s weight. “Soft?” I called, fumbling in the dimly lit room, “Softy, where are you?”

A door ahead flew open, and out trotted Soft in a simple dress. It was a plain blue with a short skirt and a white ribbon. She was positively beaming, wearing a grin like she’d just gotten her cutie mark. “Isn’t it great, Knick-Knack?” she whooped, “I found this upstairs!” I felt a small smile on my face. She did look pretty cute in that dress, and at least one of us won’t look “uncouth” when we head back to Tenpony Tower. “Did you find anything else up there?” I asked. “Sure did!” Soft brayed, floating over some caps and a pack of bobby pins. “Thanks, Soft. I’m gonna check out the bar. See if you can find anything in the kitchen.” Gleefully, she bounded to the kitchen door. “Okey-dokey, Knicky!” she neighed happily “I’ll be right back!”

As I methodically searched the tables and bar, my thoughts drifted to Soft. Ever since we met in Friendship City, we’ve been inseparable, traveling across the wasteland from town to town, seeing the sights and finding pre-war treasures...Well, okay, not exactly treasures. Even in the direst of situations, she always kept her chin up and her spirits high. I can’t even remember a time where she ever frowned. How could she be so damn happy?

I packed away some sets of silverware and a few bottles of wine (aged to perfection). Those snobs at Tenpony might appreciate some new fancy eating sticks...once they’ve been ritually cleansed with fire and Abraxo Cleaner, of course. But then...I noticed something glinting on a

table in the corner. Slowly trotting over, I found two skeletons huddled under the table...A mare's and a stallion's.

And on the table, a small silver ring, with a glittering diamond setting.

Gently, I lifted the ring to my eyes with my magic. It was incredible, the sort of jewelry that would be on the hooves or mane of a Tenpony mare. Items like these were worth ten times its weight in caps, and folks at Tenpony Tower would pay out the nose just for one piece. Grinning, I could almost hear the sound of caps pouring into my money pouch.

Then I looked back to the skeletons under the table. The two of them looked as if they died in each other's embrace. They were lovers, a starry-eyed couple who came here for one last night of fun before Armageddon. For a moment, I wondered what this place might have been before the bombs dropped...A place where friends, family, and even young couples came to live it up a bit, far away from the troubles of the world...

"Knicky! I found some food back here! It looks safe to eat!"

Quickly, I stowed the ring away. I think I knew what I'd do with it...

"What's on the menu, Soft?" I asked with a nicker. She brought out a bag of assorted fruits and veggies. "One of the old fridges was still working, somehow, and I found these in it. Most of the rest had gone bad, though." She wrinkled her nose slightly. "Wanna head upstairs? There might still be some cool stuff there!" I put a hoof on her shoulder, a small smile on my face. "How bout we take five for a bit? Get something to eat." Happily, Soft set down the bag on the nearest table. "Okay! All that scavenging made me hungry!" Some apples and carrots floated out of the bag in a shimmering pink cloud. "Oooh, these look good! Well, dig in!"

Soft munched away on an apple as I sat down next to her, idly chewing on a carrot. Fresh food like this is hard to come by in the wasteland, and only a few scattered settlements have the proper resources for farming. Consequently, meals like this were pretty rare. I stared at Soft, still wearing a mile-wide smile as she enjoyed her apples.

Funny. Did she always look this cute?

"What? Is there something on my face?" Soft asked, probing her tongue around her lips. I chuckled a bit. "You're adorable, Softy. You know that?" She blushed a bit as I scooted closer to her. "So...um...What're we gonna do after this?" she mumbled between bites. I took stock of what I'd already scrounged up. "We'll take this back to Tenpony, see if I can't haggle with the cooks there for a good deal on all this...Maybe have a little bit of fun afterward." Soft giggled a bit, munching on another apple. "Sounds neat! I wonder if they'll like my new dress." I just smiled at her. "It looks great on you, Softy."

I don't know what it was, but seeing her smile like that warmed my heart. She got up, bagging up the food again and slipping it into her pack. "We should go soon. It's getting late..."

KRAK-BOOM

The thunderclap cut her short and sent her scurrying under the nearest table. I ducked down to find her shivering vigorously. "Come on out, Soft. We'll stay here until the rain lets up." Slowly, she crawled out, taking my hoof. "Thanks, Knicky...I think there was a bedroom upstairs. C'mon, follow me!"

The room was almost bare, with a simple bed in the corner and a dresser with a few drawers pulled out (Soft's doing, most likely). "It isn't much, but it'll do for tonight." Soft said, yawning a bit. I sidled next to her, a look of concern on my face. "You okay, Soft?" I asked. She just smiled. "I'm fine, Knicky. I've got you here to keep me safe." My horn flared to life. It's now or never, I suppose.

"I've got something for you, Softy."

Her eyes lit up when the ring floated out of my pack, its diamond setting sparkling in my magic. I slowly lifted it to her head and slid it down her horn. "There, it looks great with your dress." I remarked. She was speechless, her face frozen in a grin from ear to ear. Wordlessly, I leaned in and gave her a kiss on the nose.

I've never seen a pony's face turn that shade of red before.

A few minutes later, we settled in and curled up on the bed. Soft cuddled up to me, quietly snoring. I ran a hoof gently through her mane, leaning in close to her ear.

"I love you, Softy."