

## **A Midnight Legend Press Production**

### **Pipsqueak the Valiant**

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Pipsqueak lingered in the playground of Ponyville Elementary School; it was his first day attending school since moving from Trottingham, and he hadn't met any other fillies or colts since Nightmare Night just a few weeks before. Having only attended Palomino's Academy for Young Colts, he was a bit skeptical about making new friends. Still, Pipsqueak had to at least try: he had promised his parents that he would before they were deployed with the Royal Guard on a peace mission, leaving him with his grandparents.

Glancing around the yard, he saw three colts and two fillies playing... or what looked to him like playing. The biggest colt of the three used his mouth to pick up the smallest by the tail and swung him a few feet into the grass while he used his forelegs to shove the skinniest colt to the ground. That certainly didn't look like any game Pipsqueak had ever played back home. The two fillies present chanted something Pipsqueak couldn't discern.

Trotting up to the group, Pipsqueak caught the attention of one of the fillies: a gray earth pony with light-blue rimmed glasses. She nudged the pink filly sporting a tiara next to her and gestured to Pipsqueak. Stepping between Pipsqueak and the colts, the tiara-clad filly proceeded to speak. "So, like, you must be the new colt Ms. Cheerilee told us about. I'm Diamond Tiara and this is Silver Spoon—"

Silver Spoon interjected "And if you don't want to end up like Snips and Snails over there," she gestured to the smaller colts with a hoof, "I suggest that you give up your lunch bits right now and keep quiet about all of this."

Pipsqueak glanced at the colts being slammed into the yard and looked back towards the fillies demanding his lunch money. "Is that what's going on here? I have a mind to tell the teacher about this."

Diamond Tiara stepped up aggressively and got right in Pipsqueak's face. "You won't say anything, or else Pebbles there is going to use you to dust the yard." She nodded her head towards the massive colt currently swinging the stubbier of the two victims in a circle.

In that moment, Pipsqueak unwittingly and verbally signed his own death warrant. "Who would be afraid of anypony named Pebbles?"

Raising an eyebrow, Silver Spoon turned her head and addressed the tan-coated workhorse behind her, "Oh *Pebbles*, this foal over here called your mother an old ugly mule."

The tan workpony threw the stubby colt to the side and fixed his eyes coldly on Pipsqueak while he advanced. The difference in size quickly became evident: Pebbles stood a whole head taller than the pint-sized colt.

Pipsqueak swallowed hard and avoided making direct eye contact as the large colt stepped closer, transforming from a mere pony to a monstrous ogre in Pipsqueak's mind.

"What did you say about my mother?" the ogre snarled, *his hulking shadow consuming Pipsqueak in darkness.*

"I... uh... I mean..."

The ogre reared up and shoved Pipsqueak, knocking him to the ground.

*Pipsqueak winced as he picked himself up, ignoring the pain running through his body. He searched the ground for something, anything to protect himself with. His tenacity was aware when he found the mighty blade, Equescalibur. Pipsqueak bit down on the pommel, its golden blade shimmering in the sunlight. "I-I'm not afraid of you, because I am Pipsqueak the Valiant!" Pipsqueak threw himself under one of the ogre's wild hoof swings, ducking under it and sliding between his legs. "Face my blade, monster!" he yelled from behind, as he swung his golden sword at the monster's knees.*

The beast grimaced in pain as he turned around to face Pipsqueak again. With a roar, he swung again at Pipsqueak again, *giving him no time to react.*

*Pipsqueak tried to block the blow with his blade, but the ogre's strength snapped Equescalibur clean in half, but it did manage to protect Pipsqueak. Left with no other weapons, Pipsqueak wound his hoof back as far as he could before driving it at the monster's body. His hoof connected, only to find that the beast's flesh was harder than solid rock. Pipsqueak yelped in pain as he withdrew, rubbing his sore hoof and clenching his teeth. He looked up, the ogre's face twisted in a cruel smile as he stepped closer to him.*

"Give up, you little colt," the evil gorgon, Diamond Tiara, scowled. "Pebbles is going to mop the floor with you anyway," she hissed.

"Like, totally," the silver snake-like hairs on the gorgon hissed in agreement.

"I won't!" Pipsqueak *yelled* as he was lifted into the air by the ogre. "My father always told me that a true knight never backs down so long as somepony is in danger!" *He continued to kick and buck, trying to throw himself free, and kicked the ogre square on the nose.*

*The ogre howled in pain, dropping Pipsqueak as he rubbed his snout.*

*"A true knight fights for justice!" Pipsqueak cried out as he turned to give the ogre one last buck in the knee.*

*"And just what is the meaning of this?" a hallowed voice from the heavens rang out.*

*"A goddess!?" Pipsqueak's eyes grew wide as a majestic pony descended from the heavens, covered in an aura of holy light. "Pebbles, are you hurt?"*

*"This little colt was hurting Pebbles," the vile gorgon cried to the goddess, feigning any empathy she had for the ogre. "You have to do something!"*

*"Pebbles, is this true?" the goddess asked the ogre.*

*The ogre nodded while rubbing his nose, hiding a vicious sneer, behind his hooves.*

*"W-what?" Pipsqueak babbled, confused. "W-wait a minute! This is a misunderstanding"*

*"Then I hereby sentence you to a thousand years in the salt mines," decreed the goddess.*

*"What?"*

*"I said detention, after school, for the whole week. Now, Pebbles, go to the infirmary and get cleaned up before class."*

*Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon both stood behind Cheerilee and stuck their tongues out at Pipsqueak.*

*Snips and Snails eyed the ground nervously. They knew that if they spoke up, Pebbles would make them pay dearly after school.*

*"As for the rest of you, class starts in ten minutes," Cheerilee announced before leading Pebbles into the schoolhouse.*

*Snips and Snails ran up to Pipsqueak after their teacher left the vicinity, both wearing awestruck expressions.*

*"That was awesome!" Snips exclaimed.*

*"Yeah, the way that you handled that stick was sweeeet!" Snails drawled.*

“And then, even when he broke it, you were all, ‘A true knight fights for justice’ and bucked him right in the snout!” Snips attempted to emulate the move only to wind up muzzle-planting in the dirt.

Getting up, Snips introduced himself. “I’m Snips, and this is Snails. We’ve never seen you around here before, but you’re all right with us,” he said, extending a hoof in friendship.

Pipsqueak accepted the hoof with his own. “I’m Pipsqueak, and I just moved here from Trottingham.”

“What happened to you guys?” called a new voice from behind. As Pipsqueak turned to respond to the source of the sound, he found himself face to face with the most breathtaking filly he’d ever laid eyes on: a white unicorn with a pink and purple mane and eyes like emeralds stood before him. He wasn’t aware of it, but his mouth hung open as he imagined her face plastered on a pink sparkly background, batting her eyelashes.

“Uhh... hello, anypony home? Are you okay?” the white filly inquired nervously.

Pipsqueak suddenly snapped back to reality, stammering. “I-I, uh, Pi-Pipsqueak, I’m fine a-and y-you?”

The tense atmosphere was broken by voices emanating from a yellow earth-pony filly with a red mane wearing a bow, and an orange pegasus filly with a purple mane riding a scooter. “C’mon, Sweetie Belle, or we’re gonna be late fer class,” urged the yellow filly.

“Yeah, if I’m late again, Ms. Cheerilee is gonna make me stay after school and clean, or worse, tell my parents!” the orange filly exclaimed while hurrying up the schoolhouse steps, dragging the scooter carelessly behind her as it bumped along the stairs.

“It’s not like it’d be anythin’ new fer you,” Apple Bloom teased.

“Oh yeah? I’m the fastest filly in class.”

“And yer still late, Scoots.”

Sweetie Belle turned her attention back to the daydreaming Pipsqueak. “So, I guess I’ll see you inside then?”

Pipsqueak shook his head and regained his composure. “Yeah, definitely!” *That was a little too enthusiastic*, he berated himself.

“Come on, Pipsqueak, race you inside!” exclaimed Snips.

"You won't beat me, eh!" Snails called from behind.

"Wait up, you guys!" Pipsqueak called.

Upon entering the classroom, the three colts were met with the scrutiny of their teacher. "Snips and Snails, don't worry: I already took the liberty of marking you late."

"Gee, thanks Ms. Cheerilee!" Snails shouted enthusiastically, which warranted an irritated nudge from Snips.

"As for you Pipsqueak, tardiness I might have been able to understand, but picking a fight? I know adjusting to a new school is tough for a colt your age, but please at least try. You can start by introducing yourself to the class." Cheerilee gestured to the front of the room.

Pipsqueak shuffled to the front of the class and gazed around at the other students, who now focused their attention on him. His eyes darted nervously around the classroom, and feeling the pressure of so many ponies judging his every movement, he babbled, "Uh, how do you do, everypony?" He never did well in front of crowds. He stopped for a moment and closed his eyes while taking a deep breath. *How would a hero handle this?* He asked himself.

*When he opened his eyes, the classroom he once stood in was gone, replaced by a large meeting hall. He stood behind a podium, and before him was the entire council of Equestria. Representatives from across the land had come to hear his introduction as the newly appointed head of the royal army, and in the center stood her royal majesty, Princess Sweetie Belle.*

*"Well, say something," the gorgon representative, Diamond Tiara, spat.*

*"Y-Yes, of course," Pipsqueak replied with a small stutter. "I am Pipsqueak, head knight of Her Royal Majesty and son of Chivalrous Coat and Crown Jewel. I have fought in over a hundred battles, traded blows with the finest of swords-ponies, and am a master of the Equebert Style sword technique."*

*"Sweeeet," ambassador Snails from the Mollusk Dynasty replied.*

*"That sounds awesome," chancellor Snips from the Kingdom of Cutland agreed.*

*"Uh, Pipsqueak?" Goddess Cheerilee gazed down upon Pipsqueak with some concern.*

*"You'll never find a braver pony in all of Equestria than I, or my name isn't Pipsqueak."*

*"This colt is beginning to sound familiar," Valkyrie Apple Bloom chuckled. "Remind you of*

*anypony, Scoots?"*

*"Yeah, but he's not as awesome," Valkyrie Scootaloo replied.*

*"Really, who?" Princess Sweetie Belle asked her guards, who just rolled their eyes and laughed.*

*"That's... very gallant of you, Pipsqueak," the goddess Cheerilee replied. "You can take your seat now."*

Pipsqueak's eyes shot open. "Y-yeah, my seat..."

As he made his way down the aisles he could sense perplexed gazes boring into him. He overheard some whispering such as: "weirdo", "nerd", and "loser". Fitting in was going to be harder than he thought.

He took an empty seat between Snips and Scootaloo and zoned out during the lesson, until he was nudged from behind. Turning to see who interrupted his nap, he saw a note being pushed into his face by Silver Spoon gesturing to Diamond Tiara one seat ahead of him. When Pipsqueak refused to pass the note, she kicked his seat. "Stop it," he whispered.

"Then, like, pass it on, dweeb," Silver Spoon hissed.

"No, I will not." Pipsqueak faced forward and crossed his forelegs almost immediately.

"Suit yourself." She began kicking his seat with greater strength and rapidity. It only took thirty seconds of her antics before he finally gave in.

"Fine," he hissed, turning to snatch the note off her desk. As he turned around, he was met by Cheerilee's disappointed gaze.

"Passing notes?" The schoolmare snatched the note from his grasp and prepared to read it aloud. Her narrowed eyes shot open in surprise as she opened it. "It's blank."

Diamond Tiara was quick to fire off a retort to that statement, "Like four other things in this classroom." Almost immediately, she and Silver Spoon burst into laughter. Pipsqueak looked confused, glancing at Scootaloo, Sweetie Belle, and Apple Bloom; their glares could melt ice.

"All right everypony, it's lunch time. Feel free to buy something from the lunch cart outside or play, but make sure to be back in forty-five minutes." Cheerilee left the classroom, leaving the foals to their own devices. The teachers at Palamino's never would have left the students alone, but Ponyville Elementary was a small town school with small town standards,

Pipsqueak surmised. Thinking nothing more of the situation, Pipsqueak left to purchase something from the cart outside.

"That wasn't funny, Diamond Tiara," Apple Bloom scowled at the spoiled filly.

"Well I suppose that level of humor is completely above the comprehension of a *blank flank*," Diamond Tiara sneered.

"Say that again," Scootaloo edged closer to Diamond Tiara in her seat.

"Gladly: ahem, ba-lank fuh-lank. Need to hear it a third ti—*waugh!*"

Scootaloo tackled Diamond out of her desk, and Apple Bloom threw herself at Silver Spoon, who ducked the lunge and galloped into the hallway shouting, "Ms. Cheerilee!"

Moments later, after Apple Bloom pulled a fuming Scootaloo off of Diamond Tiara, Cheerilee trotted into the room with Silver Spoon and pointed a hoof at Apple Bloom and Scootaloo. "You two, my office, now."

As her friends were led away, Sweetie Belle found herself staring into the conniving faces of Silver Spoon and Diamond Tiara. Silver Spoon initiated the verbal assault. "Feel like joining your friends, Blank Flank?"

Sweetie Belle turned a shade of crimson, pulled a sandwich out of her bag, and proceeded to chew with much frustration, as tears began to well up in her eyes. "I wonder if her special talent is crying?" mocked Diamond Tiara.

Pipsqueak re-entered the room, holding his lunch tray in his muzzle. He noticed Sweetie Belle's harassers and decided to take action. He had never conversed with any fillies his age, and he certainly didn't know about the customs of the opposite sex, but he had to do something to stop them. It would take more courage than dealing with the bully to resolve this conflict.

*I need to be brave.* Steeling his nerves, he took a deep breath and trotted over.

*The classroom slowly rusted away, becoming a dark and grimy dungeon before his eyes. As he advanced, he clutched the holy shield, Neigis, close to himself.*

*"Is the little filly going to cry?" the evil gorgon Diamond Tiara taunted Princess Sweetie Belle.*

*"Yeah, like, are you going to cry?" the gorgon's silver coils of hair echoed.*

*"Halt, evil fiend!" Pipsqueak called to the monster. "You will not hurt the fair filly."*

*"Fair what now?" the evil gorgon echoed, annoyed and confused with the knight.*

*"Careful, princess. Just looking upon her can turn you to stone," Pipsqueak warned Sweetie Belle.*

*"R-really!?" Princess Sweetie Belle was taken aback in horror of such a curse.*

*"You little dweeb," the gorgon hissed at Pipsqueak, the silver coils in her head growing agitated as well. "And what are you going to do, huh? You're already in trouble with Ms. Cheerilee."*

*"The holy goddess has forbidden me to fight, but I still have Neigis!" Pipsqueak held his shield before the evil Gorgon, the power of which had already begun to stupefy her as she gazed into it. "Come with me, Princess Sweetie Belle." Pipsqueak took Sweetie Belle's hoof and led her out of dungeon and into the city of Play-Yardia.*

*"Where are we going?" the Princess asked Pipsqueak.*

*"Somewhere safe, where the evil gorgon can't hurt you," Pipsqueak told her as he maneuvered his way through the Jungle of Gymnasia.*

At long last the two had settled by a bush, with Diamond Tiara nowhere in sight. Pipsqueak finally took a moment to catch his breath and thank his shield for a job well done. "You're safe, princess."

"Gee, that was fun!" Sweetie Belle replied.

"Fun?" Pipsqueak could still feel his heart racing from facing such a foul creature.

"Yeah, we should play again, but recess is over now."

"R-recess." Pipsqueak looked down at his now empty lunch tray, and back at Sweetie Belle. "Right."

Returning to the classroom, Pipsqueak took his seat and reflected upon his adventures during recess, his mind still swimming with emotions from Sweetie Belle's compliment. He was dragged out of his daydream when Snips nudged him in the side while winking. "Way to go, filly-killer," he chuckled, causing Pipsqueak to blush.

"All right class, next we're going to continue our lessons on physics. Who remembers where we left off last week?"



Twist raised her hoof excitedly. "Oh, I know Mith Cheerilee, we were on the attraction forth between two objects!"

"Very good, Twist," Cheerilee replied.

The Cutie Mark Crusaders all groaned simultaneously, and Snips and Snails were too busy attempting to stifle laughter at something only they could have found humorous.

"So, does everypony remember the law of universal gravitation?" Cheerilee asked the class. Apple Bloom stared back at the board, completely lost, while Sweetie Belle's eyes completely glazed over. Scootaloo had long given up on understanding the finer details of how objects randomly crash into each other.

"Oh, I remember." Twist eagerly raised her hoof, prompting a look of disgust from Diamond Tiara.

"That's good, Twist, but let's see if we can get somepony else to answer." Cheerilee looked over the classroom. "I know, how about... Pipsqueak?" Cheerilee gestured for him to come to the board.

Pipsqueak felt his breathing shallow, and he began to shake nervously. "M-Me, Miss Cheerilee?" He had no idea what was going on in this class. *Physics? What kind of class teaches physics?*

"Why, yes, Pip; your instructors from your last school simply raved about you! I want to see the results of Trottingham's education system." Cheerilee smiled at him.

Pipsqueak swallowed nervously, then made his way to the chalkboard where Cheerilee was busy writing equations. Pipsqueak may have been the top of his class back in Trottingham, but Palomino's Academy had never taught him, or anypony else for that matter, physics. Still, he didn't want to embarrass himself in front of his classmates; It didn't help that he was already nervous being in front of a crowd of strangers.

"So, Pipsqueak, why don't you explain to the class the law of universal gravitation?"

Looking at the blackboard, Pipsqueak could only draw blanks. He could hear a few snickers coming from behind. If he had turned around, he would have seen they were mostly Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon, but he didn't.

Pipsqueak clenched his eyes and took a deep breath, drowning out the laughter around him. He exhaled and concentrated his thoughts. *Please, please, please let me get this right.*

*He opened his eyes, and before him stood the ancient scrolls of lost kingdoms. The very*

*secrets of the world were hidden in these texts, and a goddess was counting on him to decipher them.*

*"Pipsqueak, do you need help?" The goddess asked.*

*"Neigh, I understand this perfectly," Pipsqueak replied, the wand of truths clenched in his mouth, and his face turning red from the rush of blood.*

*"Um, Pipsqueak, are you feeling okay?" Cheerilee's words carried a concerned tone.*

*"I'm feeling fine," Pipsqueak replied as his eyes shifted through the ancient texts. Prophecies of the end of Equestria itself were hidden within the scrolls, and his honor as a knight was at stake to decipher them and relay it to the rest of the kingdom.*

*"Like, drawing a blank, blank flank?" the evil gorgon taunted him, its silver coils of snakes nodding in concurrence.*

*"I understand now," Pipsqueak triumphantly turned back to the rest of the class, his eyes filled with understanding.*

*"That's good, Pipsqueak," the goddess' voice filled his ears, "care to share it with the class?"*

*"Yes, the truth is that the moon is going to crash into Equestria!"*

*"No," the goddess told Pipsqueak.*

*"No?" Pipsqueak repeated.*

*"That's not entirely wrong." Cheerilee tried to give Pipsqueak's answer some credit. "Our planet and the moon do pull on each other because of the law of universal gravitation, but that doesn't explain it."*

*All at once, a chorus of laughter infringed on Pipsqueak. He had failed. Reality came back to him, somewhat distorted by choked-back tears.*

*"Now, now, class. It's not polite to laugh at another pony's mistake. Pipsqueak, go take your seat. Twist, why don't you come up?"*

*"Sure!" Twist enthusiastically made her way to the board.*

*"It's all right," Sweetie Belle told Pipsqueak as he passed her. "I don't get it either." She smiled at him.*

"Yeah, nopony gets it but Twist," Scootaloo complained. "Still, the moon falling into Equestria would be pretty awesome."

"Y-Yeah," Pipsqueak replied as he took his seat, feeling a little better. After all, he'd never seen the material before, and at least he'd gotten the answer partially correct, even if he had completely missed the point.

The physics lesson dragged on for another thirty minutes until Cheerilee noticed most of her students beginning to fall asleep on her - or in Snails' case, just plain fall out of his seat snoring.

"All right everypony, out into the yard! We're going to get some exercise before we finish our lessons for the day." A collective cheer flooded the classroom as all of the fillies and colts emptied out into the schoolyard, save for Pipsqueak, who dragged his hooves leaving the classroom.

Cheerilee took notice of this and trotted up to the downtrodden colt. "What's the matter, Pipsqueak?"

"Nothing, Ms. Cheerilee..."

Cheerilee sighed. "Look, I know you're having a bit of trouble adjusting to a new school system, and you don't seem like a troublemaker, so why not try to end today on a good note, all right, Pip?"

"All right, Ms. Cheerilee."

"Now, come with me; I'm going to need help moving some materials for the game we're about to play."

"G-game? In school? For real?"

As Cheerilee explained the concept of physical education to Pipsqueak, a different scene altogether was unfolding in the playground.

"Will you stop calling us that?" Sweetie Belle pleaded.

"What's the matter, blank flank? You won't get your cutie mark for begging," antagonized Silver Spoon.

"Why, you stuck-up little *mule*!" Exceedingly flustered, Scootaloo stomped towards Silver Spoon until a fierce tug on her tail prevented the hot-headed pegasus from advancing any

further. "Let me go, Apple Bloom! She's just asking for a hoof sandwich!"

Through gritted teeth and a mouthful of Scootaloo's tail, Apple Bloom managed to exclaim, "Cain't...let...ya...do it...Scoots..."

After some more straining and swinging of her forehooves —missing Silver Spoon by mere inches— Scootaloo finally ceded to Apple Bloom's superior earth pony strength. However, she hadn't ceased the act before Cheerilee caught a glimpse. With a disappointed combination of a sigh and a head shake, the school mare's usual smile fell into a scowl as ushered Pipsqueak to join the other kids.

She turned her attention to the Cutie Mark Crusaders., who were all too familiar with . "Apple Bloom and Scootaloo, I have had it with you two harassing Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon, which is why for today's dodgeball game, you two will be playing on their team."

Four appalled voices sounded off with the same response, "*What?!*"

Cheerilee turned her snout up at the fillies, asserting that she wasn't in the mood for their back-sass. "You heard me girls, it will be you four and Pebbles against Pipsqueak, Sweetie Belle, Snips, Snails, and Twist. Maybe having to work on the same team will teach you fillies to have some tolerance for one another," Cheerilee proclaimed sternly as she put some tape down on the courtyard in a straight line to separate the play-space equally.

"But, Ms. Cheerilee—" Apple Bloom protested.

"No 'buts' Apple Bloom, this is non-negotiable." Cheerilee put four balls on the dividing line before announcing, "All right everypony, go join your teams so we can get started."

Grumbling under their breaths, Apple Bloom and Scootaloo begrudgingly trotted over to Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon's side of the line. Pipsqueak took note of Sweetie Belle's less-than-confident demeanor. "Do not worry Princess Sweetie Belle, I, Pipsqueak the Valiant, shall protect you," resulting in a blush from the filly.

"Princess? Me? What?"

*Pipsqueak turned from Sweetie Belle to face his foes. The playground eroded and crumbled around him, leaving a war-torn battlefield in its wake. Walls grew from the ground, enclosing Pipsqueak in a twisted game against a force that would make a lesser knight flee like a concubine— an ogre, a gorgon, and the two strongest Valkyries on any plane.*

*"You two better not screw this up," the gorgon muttered to the enthralled Valkyrie, at the mercy of her darkest magic.*

*"Of course, your majesty," the orange Valkyrie gritted between her teeth, doing everything in her power to resist the wicked magics that bound her.*

*"W-what are we going to do!?" Chancellor Snips strained his small neck as his eyes narrowed on the ogre who stared back with putrid breath and rotted teeth.*

*"Begin," the goddess commanded.*

*The ogre shoved his way past the bewitched Valkyries and grabbed one of the orbs of banishment. It raised the orb and threw it at Ambassador Snails. He was unable to move as the sacred artifact barreled towards him.*

*"Mine!" The shadow ninja had saved Ambassador Snails from the orb, and due to the ritual's convoluted rules, the ogre was banished from the battlefield.*

*The ogre disappeared in a puff of smoke, but the evil gorgon had obtained her own orb of banishment and threw it at the heroes.*

*"No!" Chancellor Snips yelled out as the sacred rubber collided with his face. In a groan of agony, Snips disappeared from the field.*

*"Chancellor!" Pipsqueak stared in horror at the spot where Snips had once stood.*

*"Don't back down yet." The shadow ninja attempted to rouse Pipsqueak's confidence.*

*"Right." Pipsqueak picked up the orb of banishment that had vanquished Snips just moments ago. "This is for the Chancellor!" Pipsqueak yelled as he threw the ball as hard as he could. The orb flew in a descending arc towards the gorgon, but she sidestepped it with ease.*

*"Such a loser," the evil gorgon taunted.*

*"Like, such a loser," her silver coils echoed.*

*"Apple Bloom, I think you're up," Diamond Tiara egged her on.*

*Apple Bloom picked up the orb of banishment. She glared at Diamond Tiara, wishing she could pelt her with the orb. She looked down at it and back to the Princess she had sworn to protect. She raised the orb and threw it gently.*

*"Huh?" Sweetie Belle saw the ball coming at her and reared up on her hind legs, backpedaling with her forehooves outstretched. The ball gently fell into her grasp. "I got it!" she cheered.*

*"Gee, I guess I'm out," Apple Bloom smirked at the gorgon as a sacred light enveloped her, banishing her from the field.*

*Another light erupted from within the hero's field of combat. When it faded, Chancellor Snips stood tall and proud. "I'm back!" he cheered with a plucky smile on his face.*

*"We'll win now." The shadow ninja took up an orb of banishment and threw it as hard as she could.*

*"I got it!" The enthralled Valkyrie Scootaloo caught the ball, completely at the mercy of the gorgon's spell and her own pride. "Wait, I didn't mean to do that!"*

*The shadow ninja turned to her fellow heroes. "The retht ith up to you," was all Twist could say before she was whisked into the aether by a spire of dark energy.*

*The ogre from before emerged from a veil of green fog, its eyes filled with malice and hunger. It smirked as it snatched away the orb that the Valkyrie Scootaloo had caught and threw it as hard as it could. The sound of a pony being hit echoed over the court.*

*On the floor lay Ambassador Snails, holding his stomach in pain. An orb of banishment sat a few inches away from him.*

*Chancellor Snips ran up to the ambassador's side. "Snails, buddy, are you okay?" he asked.*

*"I think so," the ambassador replied as a beam of light transported him away.*

*"You guys are so done now," the evil gorgon laughed.*

*Pipsqueak had taken all he could stand of the gorgon. He picked up the orb by his feet and threw it as hard as he could. "Be gone, evil fiend!"*

*"Evil what?" was all the gorgon could say before she was hit by the orb. "Why, you little loser!" The gorgon's eyes flared with anger brighter than the light that banished her.*

*"Sweetie Belle!" the Valkyrie Scootaloo called out, grabbing Pipsqueak's attention.*

*Pipsqueak turned around. He saw an orb of banishment, not even a second from the ogre's hoof, aimed at Princess Sweetie Belle. Time slowed down for the knight. What should he do? What could he do? What would a knight do? These questions shrouded his mind, but all pointed to one answer. He threw himself in front of Sweetie Belle, taking the full brunt of the orb's blow, and came crashing to the ground.*

*"Pipsqueak!" Sweetie Belle cried out. "Pipsqueak, are you okay?"*

*"I'll be fine, Princess... I leave it to you..." Pipsqueak closed his eyes, proud that he could fulfill his knightly duties.*

A ball whizzed past his head and hit Sweetie Belle. "Ow," she cried dully.

"Hah!" Silver Spoon laughed as she threw another ball.

The ball shot past the two and hit Snips right in the snout. He fell over rubbing his nose. "Really, again?" he groaned.

"And the winners are Silver Spoon's team," Cheerilee announced.

"W-what?" Silver Spoon fumbled for words as she registered her name being combined with recognition.

"Dang it," Scootaloo groaned.

Silver Spoon reunited with Diamond Tiara for their customary 'Bump Bump Sugar-Lump Rump' and Pebbles shot a snotty grin at Pipsqueak. The other team picked themselves off the ground as Cheerilee ecstatically made her next announcement to the class. "All right class, I hope you all had fun, because now it's time for literature!" To Cheerilee's dismay, a collective groan of despair emanated from the class as they trotted back into the school house.

After all the foals were back in their seats, Cheerilee trotted over to her desk, and fished out a stack of papers with her mouth. She moved around the classroom, passing them out to all of her students, and returned to her desk. "Okay, so who can tell me about the myth of Maredoosa?"

Almost immediately Twist spoke up, "The thtory of Maredootha—"

"Somepony else, Twist. How about..." Pipsqueak raised his hoof eagerly for a change; this story was one of his favorites.

"All right then. Pipsqueak, come to the front of the class."

This was it. Pipsqueak had been hoping to inform the class from the comfort of his desk, but once again Cheerilee put him on the spot in front of the whole class.

After shuffling up nervously, Pipsqueak stood before his classmates. He had hoped that the first few times he stood before them had diminished his fear of speaking to the class. However, his prior experiences provided him with no such alleviation. He shook and stuttered as

nervously as ever. "Th-the l-legend of M-Maredusa-" Those eyes were closing in harder now, piercing him, and they stung. *Okay, that actually stings, and feels a bit sticky.* He heard some more stifled snickering from the back. Turning around, he saw Silver Spoon put something in her mouth before feeling another sting. Scootaloo began to fuss with Silver Spoon, prompting Cheerilee to interrupt Pipsqueak's stammering to address the issue; he'd been spared for the moment.

"What is going on back here that is so important?" Cheerilee inquired, moving over to the two fillies.

Scootaloo began, "Well S—"

"Scootaloo is like totally shooting spitwads at the new kid," Silver Spoon quickly cut her off.

"What? You liar, it was you!"

"Then prove it."

"Fine, the straw is right here on—" Scootaloo turned pale, the incriminating straw sitting on her desk.

Cheerilee cut in to finish the filly's sentence. "On your desk. Detention after school. Pipsqueak: please continue."

*Uh-oh.* He was back under the spotlight again, the nervousness hit him like stink on a hydra's breath. He steeled his nerves, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath.

The class waited patiently for Pipsqueak to tell them about Maredusa. "It started," Pipsqueak began, "with Pegaseus's journey to the lair of the gorgon, Maredusa. His goal: to slay the monster and use her head to defeat the dreaded Kraken." Pipsqueak seemed to spring up with new life as he told the story.

"Sweeeeeet," Snails commented as he listened more intently to the story.

"Pegaseus entered the lair of the evil gorgon. He had heard that the monster was so ugly that she could turn ponies to stone, a ghastly fate for anypony."

"Oh no..." Sweetie Belle felt a shiver run down her as she tried to imagine a creature that ugly; Opalescence on a bad fur day came into mind.

"But, Pegaseus had a plan. He brought a mirror with him. He would force the creature to gaze upon her own vile visage and turn herself to stone in the process!"



"Sounds like a real practical kind of pony, I like him," Apple Bloom commented.

"Pegaseus tip-hoofed through the dank and cold lair. He kept his eyes low to the ground and his ears open to the slightest of sounds."

"Wow, this guy sounds kind of awesome," Scootaloo added in.

"He heard the sound of slithering behind him. It was," Pipsqueak paused for dramatic effect, "Maredusa!"

The whole of the class jumped a little with Pipsqueak's sudden outburst. Pebbles, all the way in the back, had taken to hiding behind a book, as if a real Maredusa might appear.

"Pegaseus jumped forward and prepared for contact with the monster. He could hear Maredusa creeping up on him. Her giggles, quiet as they were, echoing all throughout the lair."

"Oh no, will Pegatheuth be okay?" Twist asked.

Pipsqueak smirked. "Pegaseus took out his sword and swung around wildly. He felt the blade catch something. He had struck Maredusa!"

"That's awesome!" Snips piped up, unable to contain his excitement.

"Maredusa laughed, though. No blade could kill her, but that's not what Pegaseus was trying to do. He now knew where Maredusa was: skewered, if unharmed, on the end of his sword. He pulled out his mirror, introducing Maredusa to her own horrid reflection. 'Behold, your own ugly form,' he yelled out."

The whole of the class —well, almost the whole— were on the edge of their seats. What would happen next?

"Like, aren't you getting a little too into this?" Diamond Tiara sneered.

Pipsqueak ignored her. "Maredusa was turned into stone by her own vile image. Pegaseus cut off her head and attached it to a shield. Maredusa was no more and Pegaseus was able to return home and defeat the kraken. He became a hero!" Pipsqueak pumped a hoof into the air. In his own way, he felt triumphant.

"That was really good," remarked Cheerilee with a cheery smile. The schoolmare glanced at a clock on her desk before addressing the class, "Well everypony, we're out of time, so class is over for the day. I'll see you all tomorrow." Pipsqueak began to make his way to the classroom exit before he felt a scrutinizing gaze on the back of his head. "And just where do you

two think you're going?"

"Oh, Ms. Cheerilee, I—"

"Take your seats. I want an essay from both of you about why you're both in detention; two thousand words."

"But we were—" Scootaloo started.

"The faster you finish, the faster you can leave."

Sitting down, the two begrudgingly got to work, and an hour later they finished. After turning in their papers to Cheerilee, she treated the pair to a free lecture. "Now, Scootaloo, I want you to promise me that you'll try to get along with Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon."

"But, Ms. Cheerilee, they always call us blank flanks, and we've tried asking nicely but they never stop."

"Well I'll have a talk with them tomorrow, but you shouldn't resort to violence to deal with them. If you'd have told me earlier, then you wouldn't have had to write that whole essay. Do you understand, Scootaloo?"

After sighing, Scootaloo swallowed her pride. "I'll try to control myself next time they start making fun of us in *class*." Scootaloo smirked, having left herself a moral gray area to work on.

Cheerilee nodded and turned her attention to Pipsqueak "Now Pip, I'm willing to overlook your tardiness this morning because you're a new student, and you came in with Snips and Snails without knowing any better, but that fight this morning—is something wrong, Pip?"

"Well, Ms. Cheerilee, this morning I..."

"You what, Pip?"

"I only did what my father taught me was right. He always said that I should only fight if I'm protecting somepony and—"

"What do you mean 'protecting somepony'?"

"Well, this morning I saw Snips and Snails being picked on by Pebbles. Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon tried to take my lunch bits for the week away."

"Pipsqueak, I've heard enough, and I'm going to speak with all three of those foals tomorrow; in the meantime, it's been a joy having you and I hope your next day of school is

better than your first.” With that done, the schoolmare shooed both Pipsqueak and Scootaloo outside of the schoolhouse.

Walking down the road to central Ponyville, Scootaloo nudged Pipsqueak in the side. “So, I noticed you were getting along pretty well with Sweetie Belle.”

“Uhhh... yeah, she’s really nice... and stuff...” Pipsqueak responded, attempting to dodge the question.

“Oh, come on, no need to be shy about it; I can tell that you—”

“I what!?”

“You totally have a thing for Sweetie Belle,” Scootaloo elaborated with a devious grin.

“I-I uh—”

A gravelly voice cut Pipsqueak off. “Hey, colt! Now that I got ya all alone, I’m gonna make you pay for what you did this morning. You only got lucky because I was so tired from beatin’ on those other two dweebs!” It was Pebbles, and beside him stood Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon.

“H-he’s not alone,” announced a new voice from behind Pipsqueak. It belonged to Snips, who stood with a nervous-looking Snails. “He’s g-got us to stand by him!”

“Like, you losers should leave now before Pebbles totally pounds on you lame-os *again*,” Silver Spoon advised in a very stuck-up tone.

“I reckon it’s y’all who ought to be leavin’,” said Apple Bloom, with Sweetie Belle and Twist in tow as they joined Pipsqueak’s side.

Diamond Tiara started, “I don’t know where all you blank flanks got the nerve to—”

“Stop calling us blank flanks!” Sweetie Belle protested.

“Make us.”

Scootaloo prepared to charge at the stuck-up fillies until Pipsqueak held out a hoof. “We can win this without fighting.”

*The sun melted away and the sky shattered to pieces. He had no sword, no shield, no wand, yet the hulking ogre and the snide gorgon stood before him. He had no weapons to fight with, but at his sides he found something greater than any blade: allies.*

*"We're not gonna stand fer any more of yer bullyin'," the holy Valkyrie, Apple Bloom, cried out, pointing an offending hoof at the ogre.*

*The ogre growled a little as the evil gorgon smirked at the rag-tag party of down-trodden ponies. The ogre stomped a foot deep into the ground, digging himself into the dirt for the traction he would need before charging at the assembled warriors.*

*"Let me at him!" Valkyrie Scootaloo wanted to leap into the fray more than anyone else.*

*"I just might," Valkyrie Apple Bloom agreed.*

*"Wait, no." Pipsqueak tried to hold back the mounting tension on his side of the battlefield.*

*"He'th coming!" the shadow ninja warned everyone.*

*The ogre barreled into the gang of ponies, knocking everyone to the ground with its hulking frame. "Like, you all look ridiculous!" the evil gorgon laughed at them all, sprawled out over the field.*

*"We may be hurt," Pipsqueak pulled himself up off the ground, "but we aren't beaten."*

*"What are you talking about?" Diamond Tiara replied in confusion.*

*The ogre walked up to Pipsqueak and lifted him into the air. He hung there, suspended by the monster. The knight stared unflinchingly into the beast's eyes. The ogre almost felt like backing down as Pipsqueak's unwavering eyes bored into his own, dampening the ogre's resolve.*

*"Like, hit him already!" Diamond Tiara commanded.*

*"Yeah, hit him!" her silver coils echoed.*

*The ogre raised a hoof, and, after hesitating momentarily, hit Pipsqueak right in the stomach. Pipsqueak almost threw up his lunch from the attack.*

*"Put him down!" Valkyrie Scootaloo took her chance and jumped on the ogre from behind. The ogre was forced to drop Pipsqueak as he bucked around, trying to rid himself of the tiny warrior.*

*Two resounding war cries erupted from Snips and Snails as they joined the fray. They latched themselves onto the ogre, trying to slow him down. The ogre tried to buck harder to rid*

*himself of the Valkyrie and paladins, but the warriors had committed to their mark.*

*"Are you okay, Pipsqueak?" Princess Sweetie Belle asked while rushing over to the fallen knight.*

*"I'm fine," Pipsqueak replied as he got back on his hooves. Before him, an enraged ogre was growing more and more exhausted as another Valkyrie and a ninja jumped on him.*

*"Like, get up!" the gorgon yelled at the ogre. "Honestly, you're like four times everypony's size, and that's the best you got!?"*

*The ogre managed to exert one last burst of energy, finally bucking the party of fillies and colts off his hide. It looked around and saw Pipsqueak standing by Princess Sweetie Belle, the knight's eyes were filled with determination. It walked up to Pipsqueak again.*

*"I'm not going to hit you," Pipsqueak told him as he was yanked off the ground yet again. "You cannot harm me!"*

*The ogre shoved a hoof in Pipsqueak's face.*

*"Pebbles," the voice of Cheerilee cried out, "what do you think you're doing!?"*

*The ogre looked upon the goddess. This time it could have cried; it couldn't say anything in the end.*

*The goddess gazed down upon the weary ponies. Pebbles, if a bit scuffed up, looked no worse for wear. "We are going to have a talk with your parents young stallion." The goddess condemned the ogre to imprisonment in her sanctuary, away from the field of battle.*

*With her ogre gone, the gorgon stood alone against Pipsqueak. "Like, whatever. I'm leaving," the gorgon nonchalantly dismissed the ponies and turned around, bored with the display.*

*"Coward!" Pipsqueak called back.*

*The gorgon jerked. "And what's that supposed to mean, loser?" she snarled.*

*"You spend all your time insulting us, but without your ogre you just slither away. Are you so vile and weak on your own?" Pipsqueak's body ached from the savage beating it received, but he was spurred on by a new sensation welling deep within his heart. "Are you so cowardly that you would have your servant knock us around, and then just walk away when it's not present?!"*

*"Vile? Slithered?" the gorgon stared at the knight before smirking. "Fine." She walked up to him, and slugged him right in the muzzle.*

*Pipsqueak reeled a bit, but got back on his hooves. The foulest creature he had ever seen in his life stared him in the eye; creature so foul and disgusting it might have turned a lesser pony to stone.*

*Pipsqueak was no lesser pony. "Is that all you got?" Pipsqueak asked. "Overused insults and a weak buck?"*

*"What are you trying to say, huh?" the vile monster replied as she delivered another blow.*

*Pipsqueak steeled himself for the attack. He didn't even flinch as her hoof made contact. "That's all you are. You try to put down others because you have nothing yourself! What can somepony who just hurts others ever amount to? It's ugly!"*

*"You better not be calling me ugly!" The grotesque gorgon pummeled Pipsqueak again.*

*"You are ugly! You're hideous! How can anypony who hurts others ever be anything but ugly!" Pipsqueak roared back, shoving a mirror in the gorgon's face. "Look at yourself! You hurt and manipulate others for your own pleasure. You're not brave like the Valkyries or paladins, not smart like the ninja, and you'll never be as fair as the princess. You're just a vile monster!"*

*"Shut up!" she yelled back. Diamond Tiara hated what she heard. She wanted to pummel Pipsqueak into dust.*

*"It's true." Pipsqueak looked at her, eyes filled with purpose. **"Begone!"***

*"Yeah, well... well... you're just a loser!" Diamond Tiara turned around and galloped as fast as she could from the righteous colt.*

*"W-wait for me!" Silver Spoon ran after her.*

*"We did it!" shouted Scootaloo trotting up to join the others.*

*"Yeah, we sure showed them," Apple Bloom exclaimed, puffing her chest out proudly.*

*"Dude, do you know what this calls for?" Snails addressed Snips.*

*"What?" Snips inquired*

*"A sweet celebration pose."*

"You don't mean-"

"But I do."

Both colts focused their gazes upon one another. Simultaneously they both raised their forehooves and brought them together shouting the word "Bump", reeling back their forehooves they connected again from a lower angle shouting "Bump" yet again, and recovering they touched both of their elbows together while shouting "Sugar-lump", and, to complete the act, united their posteriors together in what could only be referred to as the most colt-cuddlingest act in Equestria shouting "Rump" as they completed.

A look of absolute mortification crept into their faces as they realized what they had just done. Rubbing his neck awkwardly, Snips asked, "So, you okay with not talking or seeing each other till tomorrow, Snails?"

Snails eyed the ground skittishly. "Yeah... I think that's best, eh... Guess I'll see ya." And the two departed in opposite directions, never to speak of this event ever again.

Twist galloped up to Sweetie Belle and Pipsqueak who were facing each other. She was stopped by a smirking Apple Bloom and Scootaloo who pulled her away by the tail in order to give the 'Princess' and the 'Knight' some privacy.

"So my lad- er, Sweetie Belle, I-err... uhhh..." Pipsqueak began stumbling all over his words, and feared that he may have blown his chance with her.

Sweetie Belle only giggled and looked Pipsqueak in his eyes, not focusing on his face which was slowly becoming scarlet in color even under his fur. "Well, Sir Pipsqueak the Valiant, will you escort your Princess to her palace?"

Pipsqueak snapped a full salute with his right forehoof before responding, "You can count on me, Princess! I, Pipsqueak the Valiant, am at your service!" Sweetie Belle giggled, before trotting down the road to Carousel Boutique, Pipsqueak at her side. Maybe life in Ponyville wouldn't be so bad after all.

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### 20 years later

\_\_\_\_\_ "And that children, is how I met your father." Sweetie Belle's eyes fell lovingly on her two foals who nodded off during her story. She bent down to kiss them good night, tucking them in one last time before blowing out the candles in the room.

Making her way to her own bedroom, her eyes lay longingly upon a picture of a stern-faced stallion in a military dress uniform. Even though it wasn't the real thing, she could feel an aura of bravery emanating from the portrait.

Before she turned away to bed down for the night, she looked around to make sure nopony was present, and she addressed the portrait with a sheepish grin, "Your Princess is waiting for you, so come home soon, Sir Pipsqueak the Valiant."

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