

“On your left!” the teal unicorn cried sharply as she dodged a lumbering mass barreling towards her. Her friend, a white-coated earth pony with a flowing purple and pink mane, cursed loudly and pivoted on point, delivering a perfectly executed sweeping kick with her front legs which knocked the infected to the ground. Lyra and Bon-Bon had to shout to hear each other’s directions to be heard over the din: unicorns, pegasi and earth ponies scattered in every direction around them, many screaming in terror as they fled the onslaught. Joining the cacophony were the grunts and groans of the infected, some spouting clipped, guttural gibberish as they lumbered after the fleeing townponies. Outside of the occasional friendly spar between the two, tonight was the first night in years that they had actually fought with the intention of harming another pony, infected or otherwise.

The unicorn and the earth pony had met one another roughly a decade ago while overseas in Yokeyo. They studied under the same sensei at Yokeyo’s prestigious - and exclusive - Filly’s Dojo for Martial Arts. As the weeks and months wore on, the two quickly realized through the intense regimen that they were without question the most gifted students at the Dojo; their skills remained unmatched by any of their peers, and the more often they sparred one another, the faster they became accustomed to each pony’s style and technique. They learned from each other, Lyra mimicking and eventually mastering Bon-Bon’s unique style of fancy hoof-work while Bon-Bon learned from Lyra how to efficiently strike at pressure points and weak spots on a pony’s body. The two friends had both graduated at the top of their class, a rather unusual occurrence given the simple fact that the Dojo never had two valedictorians before. They went on to become masters of hoof-to-hoof combat, living legends in their own rites as they traveled exotic, foreign lands together to compete and showcase their talents.

The fluid motions of physical combat quickly returned to the two ponies as they fought; though it had been a good few months since their last spar together, the long and rigorous hours of their extensive training had ingrained a muscle memory deep within the cores of their very beings that was nearly impossible to lose. Lyra brought a tremendous chop down on the horn of a charging infected unicorn, snapping the enamel in half with ease. The infected unicorn’s horn clattered to the cobble, jagged and broken. With a high-pitched cry that came more from within the pit of her stomach than the top of her lungs, she followed up with a dizzying flurry of punches to the midsection and neck of the infected, dazing it temporarily. Without missing a beat, she tucked her extremities into herself and rolled to the side, scooping up the severed horn in one continuous motion. Before the infected had a chance to recover, she sprang back to her hooves and drove the tapered tip of the horn through the top of her assailant’s agape mouth. Sealing the deal, Lyra withdrew her front hoof from the teetering infected unicorn’s mouth and did a backflip, striking the bottom half of the jaw once with each hoof, driving the horn through the top of the skull.

“Lyra! Behind you!” Bon-Bon shouted as the infected Pegasus she had previously engaged tackled the off-kilter Lyra, sending the two toppling to the ground. The earth pony dashed over to the two now struggling on the cobble and slid on her side, not entirely unlike a baseball player sliding home; back legs first, her back left hoof connected with the side of the Pegasus’ face.

The force of the blow sent the infected reeling, tumbling several times end over end as Lyra kicked her hind legs into the air and righted herself in an impressive display of athleticism.

Had they not been fleeing for their very lives, anypony who had come upon the scene would have surely stopped to gawk at the seemingly innocuous pony friends, masterfully taking on and taking down any infected that crossed their paths as they shrieked and cried wavering kung-fu howls. The sounds of hoof-strikes and snapping bones joined the swirling sounds which traveled freely through the cool night air as the infected continued their assault on the two martial artists, drawn to and enraged by the sounds of their efforts to defeat all who had the audacity to oppose them. As the virus and violence spread throughout Ponyville, the infected amassed in the market square as they grew in numbers. Where there were initially only roughly a half dozen that had been the source of the terror in the normally sleepy town, as more and more ponies fell, so too did the infected grow in numbers. Lyra and Bon-Bon were entirely focused on the two or so combatants that they each engaged simultaneously; as such, they only barely noticed the increasing volume of the groans and grunts which surrounded them.

*“Heee-YAHH!!!”* A roundhouse kick snapped the neck of an infected earth pony, its head swiveling nearly three hundred and sixty degrees from the impact.

*“Hoooahhh!!!”* A well-placed uppercut unhinged a Pegasus’ jaw, the lower half flapping uselessly as its owner staggered backward.

“Take *that*, you fucking monster!” Lyra cursed as a downward blow absolutely shattered the skull of one of her combatants, squishy brain matter punctured by sharp shards of bone. The infected collapsed to the cobble, unmoving.

“Lyra!” Bon-Bon chided, “Watch your language!”

“For Celestia’s sake, Bon-Bon, now’s not the-” she paused briefly to dodge another charging infected, “-time to reprimand a pony on her foul mouth!” Bon-Bon shot her a coy sideways glance, grinning as she stiff-armed the same infected that had turned and tried to charge the earth pony. She didn’t even wait for the infected to crash to the ground before she drove her two front hooves into its neck, crushing the windpipe.

“There, that takes care of that,” Bon-Bon said with an air of finality. The two friends, no longer seeing any infected ponies in their immediate field of vision, turned to look at one another and smiled briefly. They were back in their element: it had been far, far too long since they had been in any real danger, and the adrenalin junkies relished in the waves of raw energy that cascaded through them. Their smiles, however, were short lived as each pony saw what lurked behind the other’s back. The two ponies spoke two words simultaneously:

“Oh, shit.”

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[Chapter Six: Inspiration =====>](#)