It's said that most drink to forget, but Berry Punch always drank to remember. She sat against the wall, staring at her empty travel bags that waited for her decision. She took a nearby bottle and let the sweet contents slide down her throat. She remembered.

Her family owned a vineyard on a small island just off the coast, she had spent her whole life there, working alongside her father. Her life was a very simple straight line back then; she would inherit the vineyard, she would marry a pony from the village, she would have a child, and that child would inherit the vineyard from her. She didn't mind, but sometimes she wondered if she was missing out on the rest of the world.

Then *she* came into her life. Even now, her cheeks flushed at the memory of that unicorn walking along the beach during the sunset.

Though their island was beautiful, it very rarely had any visitors, so Berry was very eager to meet somepony that she *hadn't* known her whole life. Berry had went about introducing herself and asking where the unicorn was from.

The unicorn had stared at her for a long moment before she spoke. "You are the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," she said it as though she were talking about a sunset or a sculpture. Berry had been both offended and intrigued by this straightforward statement, either way, her heart had began racing.

"If you would allow, it'd be my great pleasure to take you to dinner," she had smiled and taken up Berry's hoof as she said this. Berry vaguely recalled nodding. As the two walked away together, the unicorn had whispered in her ear, "My name's Romana, in case you were wondering."

Over dinner Berry had found out that Romana was a clockmaker from Ponyville who had decided she wanted to see all of Equestria. She had been traveling for months and this was to be her final destination before returning home.

Berry had listened to this all with great fascination, but the only question she remembered asking was, "Did you really mean what you said on the beach? About me, I mean."

Romana had smiled and said, "I'm not in the habit of lying."

Dinner proved to be great. Breakfast the next morning was better.

True to her profession and cutie mark, Romana did not enjoy wasting time and within two weeks she was once again holding Berry's hoof between hers. She said, "It would be the greatest pleasure if you would come back with me to Ponyville and that you would be my wife." Berry remembered crying too hard to do anything but nod.

Berry's father had been heartbroken. "After your mother passed," he had said, "you've been the only family I had. I tried to do right by you, I thought you were happy here. But if everything in this life means so little to you that you'd throw it away on a girl you barely know." He then walked away, "Just go, I won't trouble you any further." She had called after him, but he just said he had work to do.

Romana had let her cry on her shoulder for that entire night. Romana had even said that if she wished to stay, that she'd understand. Berry made it clear that they were leaving together.

The trip back across Equestria had been the most exciting thing in her life. She had

seen and experienced so much for the first time, she felt like a child again.

Ponyville had almost shocked her in it's plainness. Romana had seemed so glamorous to her that she had half expected the town to be paved in gold.

They actually had a 'Welcome Home' party waiting for them. It had apparently been organized by a very young, very pink, and very energetic earth pony. It made her feel crowded, rather than welcome. She had known everypony on her island, but she had gotten to know them over time. Here, everypony wanted to know everything about her all at once. She had just said she was too exhausted from the trip and had left early with Romana to her new home.

Romana rushed ahead of her at the door calling for her to follow. When Berry got to the living room she saw a green unicorn slouching on her their couch next to an off-white earth pony. "These are my oldest friends, Lyra and Bon-Bon. They recently got married themselves so they'll be helping us with arrangements."

Berry had smiled and listened about how they had both been friends with Romana in school and how they had gotten together and blah blah blah. She really wanted to make a good impression, but what she wanted more than anything was to go to bed.

After the third inside joke that she had to feign laughing at, Berry confessed how tired she was. "Well just go on up, bedroom's at the end of the hall," Romana had said without doing more than glance her way. "I want to catch up a little more and I'll join you later."

Spending the night in a new bed, in a new town, alone, while her fiance talked to two other girls wasn't what Berry had in mind for her first night in Ponyville, but she kept her smile on until she was out of sight and threw herself onto the bed. She tossed and turned, trying to get find a comfortable spot. She sniffed the air as she stared up at the ceiling, trying to figure out why it smelled so different here from her own home.

Thinking of her home that she left behind lead to her thinking about her father. Then she had started crying and *why wasn't Romana there for her now*!? Feeling homesick and miserable she dug into her bag and pulled out one of the bottles she brought with her and downed as much as she could as fast as she could. Now she felt at home. She fell back into bed and was asleep before she could have another unhappy thought.

The next several days were a blur of chatter between Romana and her two friends. Berry ended up having to keep checking their cutie marks to keep their names straight. At the various shops, she found herself hanging in the back just idly looking at nothing in particular while the other three fussed about. After the third shop, she took Romana aside.

"I really don't think I'm being of any help here, is it alright if I just went back home and unpacked?"

A frown had tugged at the corners of Romana's mouth, "But we're planning *our* wedding."

Berry actually giggled at her concern and leaned forward so that their muzzles touched. "The only thing I *really* care about is that I'm marrying you. I'll let the details be a pleasant surprise."

Romana kissed her and hurried back to her friends.

Berry actually didn't have much to unpack, what she really wanted to do was dig into the yard, and she did. Over the next several days, while Romana was out with her friends planning their wedding, Berry was digging and tending and planting until at the end of the week she had

what would eventually become her own little vineyard. It wasn't much, but it made her feel at home.

One day stood out in her memories, even more so these days. Romana had told Berry everywhere they'd be going that day, as she always did. Around lunch, Berry thought 'I'm going to be living here now for the rest of my life, I may as well start trying to actually get to know the place and *at least* my bride-to-be's friends.'

Berry went to the restaurant where Romana had said they'd be eating lunch. She put on her best smile as she went around the corner. Then she stopped. Romana and Bon-Bon were there, but Lyra wasn't. There was no reason she could think of not to go over there, but the way they were talking and the way they looked at each other made her feel like she'd be interrupting.

As she turned to leave, she saw Lyra come hopping up to the table, a tray of hay fries in her mouth. Berry breathed out a sigh of relief, but she really didn't know why. Now, she knew and she thought she was a fool.

Finally, the big day came. Everything was perfect, the food, their dresses, the hall, just everything. She had never smiled so much before or since. At the reception, she had taken full advantage of the open bar. After an hour she was hugging everypony she saw, despite not knowing nearly any of their names, when her forelegs wrapped around a pony she *did* know.

"Your wedding was beautiful," her father said. He was crying, she'd never seen him cry before. He stood up straight and looked her in the eye, fighting back his tears. "I'm sorry about what I said." He stopped to inhale, trying to speak without his voice cracking. "And I want you to know that I would burn down everything I own if it meant that you'd smile like you did today for the rest of your life."

She didn't even notice Romana by her side until she felt her hoof touch her shoulder. Berry's father wiped his eyes before he looked at the unicorn. "Now you take care of my little girl. I'll be checking on her every so often to make sure she's happy. If you can agree to that, then I have a business proposal."

Romana had cocked her head to the side, apparently those had been the last words she had expected to hear. "You see, I think it may be time for our little family label to go Equestria-wide and Ponyville would be a good place to start. Looking around town, I noticed there were certainly no shops that sold wine and clocks. Could be a good idea, eh? Something to help you lose the time and something to help you find it again."

Romana bowed her head and took his hoof in both of hers. "I look forward to being your business partner," she looked up at him and smiled before adding, "dad."

Berry's father let out a loud bark of a laugh and pulled them both into a hug. He then leaned forward and said loudly into Romana's ear, "Just watch out for this one, eh, she likes to sample the goods a bit too much." Releasing them both he turned towards Berry as the music picked up and he touched her on the head with his hoof and asked, "May I have this dance, little one?"

Married life suited Romana and Berry well. They worked and played and loved together with reckless abandon. After a few weeks they started getting their first shipments of wine to sell. It would become a joke that Berry was her own best customer, much later it would become a joke not told in polite company.

Not more than a month after their wedding, Bon-Bon and Lyra announced they'd be

having a foal. After the expected hopping around the room passed, the two went on their way to start preparing their home. Alone, Berry asked if Romana might be interested in a foal of their own. Romana had then thrown herself on top of Berry with more energy than their first night together. It seemed that the thought *had* crossed her mind.

When Berry wrote her father to tell him that she was pregnant he wrote back insisting that he be kept updated every week and that nothing would keep him from being there when his grandchild came into the world.

Romana and Berry had gone back on forth on names. Romana wanted something proper, respectable. Berry wanted to name their filly Cherry Daiquiri. Romana patiently explained, as she always did when she thought Berry was being silly, that naming their filly after such a beverage would, at the very least, be in poor taste. They resolved to resolve it after the birth and Berry's father, during one of his many visits over the following months, resolved to stay very much out of the discussion.

Now, Berry sobbed as she looked at the empty bottle in front of her carrying her family's label. She wanted, more than anything, for those days to be her most recent memories, that everything since then had been some strange and horrible dream. But it wasn't a dream and her memories still came and not one day after her filly was born she received the news that her father had died in a boating accident coming to see her.

She could not remember anything of the days that followed. She supposes that she cried and that Romana comforted her. They must have had help with the new foal, so Lyra and Bon-Bon were likely there. She's been told that a lawyer told her that her father named her primary beneficiary of all his property and that he'd named the pony who would run it in her stead for as long as she was in Ponyville.

Her memories didn't start again until she was awoken by the sound of her foal. Romana was still asleep next to her and Berry didn't want to wake her. She approached the small creature and remembered feeling for an instant nothing but hate. 'This thing cost me my father,' she thought. Then the little pink unicorn opened her eyes, eyes that looked so much like her father's, and she wept. She lifted the pony up and set her to the ground. Berry nuzzled her face and whispered, "May I have this dance, little one?"

It wasn't so much of a dance as it was the little unicorn shuffling her hooves while Berry swayed from side to side. After a few minutes she fell forward and kissed the little unicorn on the nose. The smallest creak was all that announced Romana coming into the room.

"I've been thinking and Cherry Daiquiri is a beautiful name for her, given her colouring," was all Romana said. She then laid down next to Berry and placed a forehoof onto of their filly's own.

"Hello Cherry," they both said.

Berry almost put away her bags at that memory, as she had done so in the past. Instead she opened another bottle.

The months and years that followed were a beautiful haze. Lyra and Bon-Bon's own little unicorn, Tootsie Flute, had instantly become Cherry's best friend and near constant companion. Their shop sold fruitfully and little Cherry was curious and eager to help in any way she could. Mostly her help was hopping around and singing little songs. As she got older, she'd become more fascinated with the design of the clocks and the shape and texture of the bottles

they sold.

Nothing could repair the damage to Berry's heart from the loss of her father, but Cherry instead became like a new heart. She would wake, sleep, breathe, and eat all for the purpose of having more time with Cherry.

Berry still loved Romana and spent her evey free moment with her and would often send Cherry to bed early so that they could be together, but Romana always had a slight rigidness to her. Romana would not dance down the street laughing and singing songs with her as Cherry did. Berry also felt a small bit of resentment every time Romana tried to explain away her behavior or hide that Berry had been drinking. Berry was *happy*, that should have been enough for Romana.

There were bad moments though. Their first time going on the town as a family, a stupid pegasus named Rainbow Dash had crashed near them while trying to perform some stupid trick. Berry had screamed until Romana had to push her away to keep her from hitting the girl. After that Berry always kept one on Cherry and the other on everypony else.

It made her crazy how little they cared for the safety of the children of this town. A pony not paying attention with a cart or a loose sign and her filly would just be another sad accident and everypony would just gather around and say, "Well isn't that a shame." Then they'd go right back to their stupid and dangerous behavior.

She had made certain that at all times either herself or Romana was with her. She had to argue with Romana and put her hoof down with Cherry that this meant even at Lyra and Bon-Bon's. It wasn't that she didn't trust the two mares, it was just that they still behaved so much like children themselves that she was surprised their filly still had two eyes and four legs.

The day came that Berry had been dreading for some time, Cherry's first day of school. Romana hugged and kissed their filly like all the other parents. Berry patted her on the head and marched into the classroom and dropped, what she considered to be, a modest list of things to look out for to keep to her filly safe. It was over ten pages long and Berry strongly suggested she memorize it before backing out of the room without breaking eye contact.

After that first day, Cherry stopped spending so much time with her. They still had fun at home and in the shop, but more and more she was only asking Romana to take her places. Berry asked Romana about this and she at first only said that other foals were picking on Cherry. Berry put aside her anger at that stupid Cheerilee for not doing a better job of watching out for her little filly and asked what that had to do with Cherry not want to spend time with her.

Romana inhaled and exhaled once quickly, her usual sign of having to say something she didn't want to. "They're making fun of her because of your drinking," she said simply.

Berry could think of nothing to say to that, but simply backed away. That day was the first time she looked at her travel bags since coming to Ponyville. Instead she had a few more drinks and then put the bottle away.

She tried staying sober, at least during the day. It wasn't always easy and it seemed to have very little payoff since Cherry still always asked if Romana could take her out and would stay as far from Berry as she could get away with when Berry insisted that *she* take her.

Then came that most important day in a little filly's life, the day Cherry got her cutie mark. It proved to the second worst day of Berry's life.

Berry and Cherry had been minding the shop as per usual. Cherry had been fiddling

with the mold used for making the wine bottles when her horn started to glow. Cherry dipped her head forward and her horn etched into the insides of the mold. Once she stopped, the two made a bottle to test it and it came out with the most beautiful raised designs she'd seen. Cherry's horn glowed bright again as she rushed over to an unfinished clock and she etched into the wood surface and her horn stained and chipped at the glass. When Berry stopped marveling at the pieces she looked down to see that Cherry's cutie mark, three jems showing her dedication to making mundane things into objects of beauty, had appeared.

The two ponies shrieked and hopped up and down like they had before. Berry was overcome, she knew she had to tell Romana right away, but she couldn't leave Cherry alone. Looking out the shop window, she spied Derpy, the mail pegasus. Berry ran out and grabbed the wall eyed mare by the tail and yanked her inside the shop. Berry tossed the confused mare a few coins and said that if her filly was still whole when she got back in a few minutes that there'd be a few more bits where those came from and then threatened something horrible if any harm came to her.

Berry rushed down the street. Romana had said she was having lunch at Bon-Bon's while Lyra was in Canterlot visiting her mother. She ran as fast as she could down the road all but fell on her face when she stopped in front of the house. She was about to knock on the door when she glanced in through the window and felt her heart break a second time.

She saw them, Bon-Bon on top of her Romana, kissing. She could only stand to look for a moment. Then she turned around and walked away. She wanted to run, to get as far away as possible as fast as possible, but she couldn't find the energy.

Berry finally came back to the shop and threw some bits at Derpy and told her to get out. She sent Cherry to her room and then she drank until she passed out.

Memories got blurry here. Time passed. She stopped working. She stopped going out. She stopped talking to anypony that wasn't Cherry and even then she said little.

After a few weeks of being in a drunken stupor, Berry took out her travel bags. She had thought about everything she'd need to get back to that little island she started on. She thought of how much simpler it would be. She thought of Cherry. She put the bags away.

However, Berry *did* come to an important decision that night, if Romana can have *fun* then so should she. She went out again, to all the bars and clubs in Ponyville. She flirted with anypony who looked her way and even stole a kiss or twenty.

One night, while Cherry was over at Lyra and Bon-Bon*'s* with Romana *watching* her, Berry even brought one of those flirty ponies home with her. They kissed their way into the house, kicking the door shut. They were on the couch when Berry looked over and saw a simple little sketch Cherry had doodled, it was the three of them together. It was labeled, "My Family." Berry pushed the young pony off her and asked that they leave and not come calling ever. Berry then cried the rest of the night.

After that night she stopped going out to bars and clubs and the only *fun* she resolved to have was the kind she used to have with Cherry. She started going by her school during the day, just to make sure the other fillys and colts weren't being mean to her little one.

She told Romana that she could still have her when she wanted to *play* at Bon-Bon's, but that *she* would watch Cherry the rest of the time. Romana had only nodded.

But no matter how hard Berry tried to make it like the old days, Cherry refused to have

fun with her. Cherry didn't laugh with her. Cherry didn't pretend to stumble with her. And Cherry most certainly didn't dance with her.

Then came last night, she had the bags out again. She put them away, but had too much to drink after and passed out.

Berry didn't wake up until late that afternoon. She leapt to her hooves when she realized that it was that big cuteceañera that everypony in Cherry's class would be at. Berry quickly drank away her hangover and ran down to Sugar Cube Corner. Her throat ached for something that would actually hydrate her and so she stuck her muzzle in the nearest punch bowl. When she looked up, she saw Cherry, and from the look she got back you'd have thought she used the punch bowl as a toilet.

Berry put on her biggest smile and walked over to her little filly and gave a grand bow, determined to make her have fun. She looked up at her and asked, "May I have this dance, little one?"

Cherry had only glared at her in response. The little pink unicorn yanked on Berry's tail like *she* was the filly and lead her to the door. Cherry took a deep breath, "No mom, I don't want to dance. I want you to go home."

Cherry refused to dance with her before, but this time, she felt like she meant she didn't want to dance with her *ever again*. Berry tried to keep the crack out of her voice, "You loved dancing."

Cherry sighed, an ugly, impatient look on her face. "Mom, you're embarrassing me. Again! Why don't you go home and have another drink, but *far away from me*."

Berry's heart broke one last time in that moment and she turned away without a word. She was a few paces out when Romana ran around in front of her. "She didn't mean it," she said quickly. "Listen, you go home and rest and I'll talk to her tonight while she stays at Tootsie's."

"You mean while *you* stay at Bon-Bon's," Berry said icily.

Romana just looked at her with her head cocked to the side, as though she hadn't heard her right. "Excuse me?"

Berry couldn't take this anymore. She'd played house long enough and had nothing to show for it. Her hoof lashed out and across that blue face she had kissed so many times. "I saw you together," she sobbed. "The day Cherry got her cutie mark, I saw her on top of you. I saw you."

Romana stood, completely still, not even tending to the small cut Berry's hoof had left on her cheek. Berry walked past and towards that house that she could no longer think of as her home.

The empty bottle fell to the ground, Berry was out of memories and no warm, fuzzy feelings or even any guilt cropped up to make her put the bags back this time. Berry packed the few things she wanted to ever see again from this wreck of a life. She shut hers bags, threw them over her back, and went out the door.

Berry had come to the edge on Ponyville, she looked down the winding road that would start her back to where she came from. She heard hooves clattering behind her. She didn't even have to turn around. "What do you want, Romana?"

"I want you to stay," she said simply, evenly, in that tone she used when she thought

Berry was acting silly.

Berry turned around and came up to the pony that she once swore to love and she looked at her like a bored stranger, she felt nothing. “Why?”

“I didn’t do anything with Bon-Bon,” she said quickly. “She kissed me. She and Lyra were having a fight, that’s why Lyra was in Canterlot in the first place. She kissed me and I pushed her off, do you not recall that Tootsie visited *us* more often after that? I only went back there one time that whole month and that was to apologize to Lyra.”

Berry blinked, these words meant nothing. “And why should I believe you?”

Romana took Berry’s forehoof in between both her own and pressed it gently to the spot it had struck hours ago. “I am not in the habit of lying.”

Berry quickly pulled away and let Romana drop back to all fours, “Pretty words. You always had lots of those. Just throw out more lines like that and I’m sure you won’t be lonely long.”

Then Berry saw something she never remembered seeing, Romana’s eyes filled with tears and she simply fell. “I can’t do this,” she breathed. “I can’t keep pretending to be strong, I can’t! I *CAN’T*!”

Berry’s mouth fell open, could only watch as Romana sobbed into the dirt road. “You drown yourself in your memories like *you’re* the only one who ever felt pain! I hurt too!” Romana pressed her nose to the dirt and spoke into the ground, “I was so lonely for so long before I met you. I had been friends with Lyra and Bon-Bon, we’d all lived together. I was happy. Then they became a couple and it was no longer the ‘three of us’ it was just ‘them’ and ‘me’. Then they left to get a place of their own and it was just me and the clocks, ticking away in that empty house. I couldn’t stand it. I left. I went all across Equestria and I finished on your little island. I watched the sun set for what I thought would be my last time. Then you came up to me.”

Romana looked up, her face covered in dirt except when the tears rolled down. “Do you understand what I’m saying to you? I was going to walk into the sea when you came to me. All I wanted from that moment on was to be with you. Maybe it was selfish of me to ask you to come with me instead of staying with you, but every where I went on that island I saw that beach and how pathetic I had been in that moment. Every day since then, I’ve lived only to see you. Without you,” Romana choked on her words. “Without you, I’m nothing.”

Berry’s bags slid off of her as she dropped down in the dirt, she wasn’t sure when she started crying. She wrapped her forelegs around her wife’s neck and pressed her cheek hard against the one she’d injured. “I’ve done terrible things,” she croaked. “Terrible things to you and to Cherry. How do I live with that?”

Romana ran a hoof through Berry’s mane as she began kissing her, “These things you’ve done are now just memories. You can’t let yourself drown in the past, be it wonderful or horrible. You can make new memories.”

Berry’s mind flashed at all the mares and stallions at the bars and clubs, at how she’s humiliated her own daughter, she felt that fresh cut pressing against her cheek, “But you don’t even know the half of what I’ve done. You don’t-”

Berry was silenced when Romana kissed her full on the lips. “And I don’t care right now. We can talk about it later and we can fight about them, but we’ll deal with it as a family. No

more running into our memories for shelter no more hiding behind false happiness. Right now, we need to start forgiving ourselves and each other."

Berry looked down at a bottle that had fallen from her bag, her family's label on it. "There's some memories I can't let go, that I don't want to let go."

Romana looked at the bottle and then pressed her forehead to Berry's. "I loved your father too. I did not know him long, but I think he may have been the best man I ever met. He would not want you to hold on to him like this."

Berry couldn't speak anymore, she only nodded.

Romana stood up on to shaky legs and placed a hoof on top of Berry's head. "May I have this dance, my love?"

Berry stood up and they danced. It wasn't much of a dance, it was shaky and awkward and neither of them said anything, but it was a start.