

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty—The Calm Between the Storms

The next day in Ponyville was much calmer than the one that preceded it. There were no giant hordes of roving Pinkies trying to eke out as much fun as possible before Celestia vaporized them. There was also no single roving Pinkie, since she was too busy being depressed or interrogated by Twilight or something.

Unfortunately, after Pinkie failed to provide any useful answers, Twilight came to me. That was after my morning run with Taya, so I didn't have my habitual excuse of looking after my daughter to escape her. And since Taya was feeling vindictive, she didn't even try to stop Twilight when I was grabbed by magic and taken to the library.

"There are times when I wonder if that elemental in your head is even doing anything," I said when Twilight carefully placed me in a chair.

"Hey, I asked first!"

"Yeah, and I said no."

Twilight rolled her eyes. "Details. I just want to talk, anyway, so it's not like it's really that intrusive."

"Oh yeah, sure, *that's* what you want. Are you sure you don't want another anatomy lesson, Miss Sparkle? Maybe another one of our special sessions, hm?"

Her face instantly turned a fiery red and she averted her gaze. It was a good thing Taya hadn't followed us, because that might have been somewhat awkward. Or maybe not, since I pretty much already corrupted her.

"If that's what you want, I wouldn't complain," I smugly said, leaning back in my chair and clasping my hands behind my head. "I know all the mares want me, dick or no dick."

Both of her eyes flashed blue and she looked back at me, all traces of emotion on her face gone. "My host has a number of questions she would like to ask you about the cloning pool Pinkie used, Navarone," Aqua said. "Aerie refuses to allow Pinkie to discuss it. Were you put under a similar compulsion?"

"Not really. I mean, I kinda doubt Celestia wants me talking about it too much, but I'm willing to discuss it. I am not, however, willing to tell you where it is. Some things are better off lost."

"Indeed they are," Aqua said with a nod. "Though Twilight disagrees. Are you going to continue teasing her, or will you answer her questions?"

"I'm never done teasing Twilight," I said, leaning forward to poke her on the nose. "It's too funny. I do have a question, though. What's the status of the waters? How close are you to being done?"

"It's been less than a week. We've barely begun. I will keep you updated as things move along. Will you at least answer questions?"

"Oh, of course. Just expect there to be a lot of teasing while doing it, just because Twilight's so adorable sometimes."

“Understandable. There are times when I think these ponies are made to be cute, though some of the thoughts she has can be anything but. I suggest being careful the next time you mention an anatomy lesson. At least, if you have anything else to do that day.”

“...Well, now I have something to do when my period ends.”

“I just can’t imagine how Flo hasn’t died from mortification while in your head. I am going to have a very long talk with her once she’s freed.”

“Hey, don’t think you’ll change me,” I said, leaning back in the seat again. “I’m quite happy as a slut.”

She just rolled her eyes. When they went back to their neutral position, they were once again purple. “So shall we begin?” Twilight asked, back to smiling.

“Yeah, sure, whatever. Just don’t expect me to answer everything.”

“Of course. Where’s the cloning pool?”

“Can’t answer that.” Her smile immediately dropped. “Blame Celestia, not me. She almost definitely doesn’t want it studied.”

“I don’t want to study it. I want to destroy it, or block anyone from getting to it.”

“She doesn’t want it destroyed and she already has it blocked, so that’s taken care of.”

Twilight sighed and asked, “Is there any reason in particular she doesn’t want it destroyed?”

“Ask her, not me.”

“...Do you know the answer?”

“You’ve gotten much, much better at knowing the right questions to ask.”

“I’ll take that as a yes. Do you know the history of the pool?”

“Not much. Celestia definitely knew about it and I’m willing to bet she’s used it in the past. She said it was part of the old capital before the Everfree claimed it. More than that, I don’t know.”

“There aren’t any records of it here, I know that much. I would have found them... Was there anything else in the cave?”

“Nope. The thing was definitely carved out, or at least the entrance was, but I couldn’t find anything else. The pool was fed into by a stream that came in from outside the cave. I couldn’t see the actual source.”

“That’s not overly helpful... Is there anything else you can tell me?”

“Yeah. Drop it. Absolutely nothing good will come of it. Celestia’s got it taken care of and the place is warded, so going in would get you caught instantly.”

“Unfortunately, that’s my conclusion as well. I don’t understand why the princess would let something so evil stay around, but we both know she isn’t as clean as we once thought.”

“Hey, I never thought she was clean. Now, I didn’t expect her to be so perverted, but as soon as I learned how old she was, I knew she had done some shit.”

“...Either way, I need to get back to Canterlot to speak to her again. I’d also like to check on Spike. Do you mind taking me to where he is?”

“It would take hours to walk there and I’m not about to do it with something as tasty as a pony, at least not without my weapons.”

“I will... definitely remember that you think I’m tasty. But I was planning on giving myself the butterfly wings before we left, so I could fly. It’ll be cheaper and faster than a train.”

“I don’t really want to be that guy, but—”

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” Twilight said, looking down at my crotch. I reached up to slap her, but when her eyes looked back up, I saw they were blue.

“You get this one free, Aqua,” I warned. “But next time, I’ll slap Twilight’s shit in anyway.” She blinked and went back to purple. “Twilight, you need to drop this thing you have with Celestia. Nothing good will come from it. If she doesn’t want to teach you magic, she isn’t going to. Annoying her won’t make her change her mind. Annoying her about everything else won’t do anything, either.”

Twilight’s eyes narrowed slightly and she said, “Apparently, Celestia isn’t ready to trust me. At least, not with this. She said she’s been testing me and trying to prepare me, but I’m not there yet. So I’m going to keep asking her until she tells me what I have to do.”

“You ever consider, I don’t know, doing the same shit you were doing before? You said she was testing you. Seems to me like you should just keep doing the stuff you were doing, because that’s what she’s testing you on.”

“...That’s what Aqua said.”

“Funny thing about these million year old elementals in our heads, Twilight: They’re pretty fucking wise sometimes. You should try listening to her.”

“I always listen! I just... don’t always take her advice.”

“I suggest doing so this time. Nothing good will come of bothering Celestia, and then I’ll have to listen to her bitch about you after we fuck.”

“You... talk about me?” she asked, her eyes widening slightly.

“We talk about the things that stress us,” I said with a shrug. “If you happen to be causing her stress, we’ll talk about you. And from the last few times we’ve done naughty things to each other, I know that she’s tired of you annoying her. You need to chill the fuck out and leave her alone. Don’t you still have a ton of artifacts to study? Now would be a good time to do that.”

“I know. It’s just... This is the only time I’ve had to actually talk with her in a while and she doesn’t have much time to spend with me.”

“She’s also taking on all the responsibilities Luna and Cadance both had again, so she’s even busier than usual. Just leave her alone and let her summon you when she’s ready.”

“...She always has time for you.”

“Yeah, well, when you start sticking things inside of her, maybe she’ll be much happier to make time for you. But look at me now: I’m in Ponyville, just the same as you. She does have some time for me, but not all of her time can go to me.”

She sighed. “*Fine*. But I still want to see Spike. And I have some stuff on the ship that I need to pick up, since I wasn’t planning on staying in Ponyville just yet.”

“Then we’ll go to the ship first, because there’s some stuff I want to get if we’re going into the Everfree. I just need to tell Taya I’m leaving.”

“She could come with us, you know. It would be good practice for her.”

“Let her cast the spell on herself, you mean?” I asked. She nodded. “She’s strong, but I doubt she’s that strong. Flying also takes time, energy, and muscles. She just went running with me, so she’s low on energy and her muscles are also weak. I’m not taking a weak, tired flier over the Everfree. In a more controlled environment, sure. There, no.”

“Alright, I understand. Though the wings you can get with magic don’t really use muscles. Hopefully it won’t take that long to do everything we need to do. How far away is Spike?”

“Flying? Just a few minutes. About the same distance as Canterlot.”

“Excellent. Go tell Taya and then meet me back here. I would like to get started soon.”

“Sure.” I left the library and walked back to Vinyl’s pad, thankfully not getting distracted by anyone in town. Well, aside from the occasional stares from stallions that were probably wondering what that smell was.

When I got to Vinyl’s warm abode, Taya was sitting behind a turntable in the front room, looking down at the records somewhat dubiously. Vinyl was standing in front of her, presumably waiting for the filly to do something. “I... don’t think this is for me,” Taya said, looking up.

“You didn’t even flick them on yet,” Vinyl said. “Just try it.”

“You should,” I said, nodding. “Unfortunately, I’m about to go to Canterlot and then the Everfree with Twilight, so I can’t stay and listen.”

“Can I go?” Taya asked.

“Sadly, no. We’re gonna need to move quickly and you’ll slow us down.”

“I could just burn a hole in the Everfree!”

“Which would piss it off and make it send a ton of stuff after us. I’m not in the mood to kill everything in that damn forest.”

“Daddy, you’re far too superstitious.”

“It’s cute that you think that. We should be back in a few hours. Now Vinyl, listen to Auntie Taya. Make sure to follow all her rules and go to bed when she tells you.”

“Tch, yeah right,” she said. “I’m a rebel without a cause, gonna fight against the mare no matter what she says!”

“What if she tells you to eat junk food and to never go to bed?”

“...Well, sometimes the mare knows what she’s talking about, I guess. Have fun in the evil forest, Nav.”

“No promises,” I said as I turned to go. “Learn well, Taya.” She just hmphed.

“If I can teach Luna, I can teach you,” Vinyl said before I cut her off by closing the door.

I got back to Twilight’s house easily, since I had wings and the skies above Ponyville are usually clear. She was waiting for me outside, already sporting her cute little butterfly wings. Several ponies were staring at them, but people were used to Twilight being strange. “Ready to

go?” Twilight asked when I got to an acceptable speaking distance.

“Yep. Got Taya babysitting Vinyl, so things should be good there.”

“Alri—Wait, what?”

“I said let’s go.” Before she could contradict me, I spread my wings and jumped into the air. She joined me a few moments later and we started flying toward Canterlot, unfortunately making smalltalk on the way. We weren’t really in a hurry, so we made it in half an hour.

When my feet and her hooves hit the deck, the large iron golem that had been lying on the ground sat up and glared at us with glowing red eyes. “Pass. Word,” it rumbled.

“Pseudo sleep,” I said. Its eyes closed and he slowly lied back down.

“Nav... What is that?” Twilight asked, looking at the thing with a mix of horror and fascination.

“The golem Jak’s been building,” I said. “He got it mostly done. The password is pseudo. I’m going to assume he won.”

“Won what?” Twilight asked as she poked and prodded the golem.

“Jak had to go through Athena’s world with that thing. That was her requirement for teaching him.”

As soon as I told her where he went, her head jerked toward me. “She said that?!”

“Yeah. I thought it was really dickish, too. Well, you get what you need and I’ll get what I need.”

“...One of the things I wanted to get was the book.”

“Well, it’s staying here. Jak needs it more than we do, I bet. But you’re welcome to take that up with him, if you can find him. Either way, I’m going down.” Before I could get to the door, it opened and Gourd walked out, blinking at the harsh light. “Howdy.”

“Oh, that’s who I heard up here,” he said. “Are you here to stay this time?”

“Nope. We’re just getting some stuff we might need in Ponyville. We should be out in no time.”

“Oh... It’s really quiet on this ship. Maybe I should find an escort or something...”

“Your money,” I said with a shrug. *I didn’t even know those existed in Canterlot, but I’m not that surprised. Although I did kinda think he was in a relationship with one of the other unicorns, but whatever.* “Did Jak come out okay?”

“It took him a lot longer than you and he got all kinds of hurt, but he made it. He’s all healed up now and spending as much time as possible in that book.”

“Good. Now, I got shit to do today.” He nodded, so I just walked past him.

When I got to my room, I didn’t waste any time grabbing the shit I figured I’d need. The gun and some mags, the sword, the dragon armor, and my cloak to go over it. I also grabbed another set of clothes because fuck doing laundry when you don’t have to. It took me about fifteen minutes to get ready for war, though I honestly really doubted I’d need the armor. Still, better safe than sorry.

One thing that I didn’t do and probably should have done was check my cloak pockets.

As it turns out, not doing so was a very smart idea.

After I got dressed in the armor, I went back out to the deck, where Twilight was already waiting with a few small bags. “Nav, don’t you think you’re going a little overboard?” she asked.

“Honestly, yes. But I’m not going to risk running into trouble over the Everfree. I’d rather be overprepared than underprepared.”

She shrugged. “Good point. Are you ready?”

“Yep.” We both walked over to the side and tossed ourselves off, flying back toward Ponyville. “So when are you gonna learn some long distance teleportation?” I asked.

“I can already do it,” she said. “Just not more than once. Watcher’s guards did teach me a neat trick with teleporting several small distances in quick succession, but that’s an emergency technique that can be just as draining as teleporting in one big jump.”

“Makes sense, I guess.” That cut off the conversation until she jumped back to smalltalk, which is pretty meh. Another half hour later, we got to her library, where we dropped off all the shit we didn’t need to take into the Everfree. She also picked up another bag, presumably something for Spike.

“Are your wings ready for more?” Twilight asked.

“I can keep going for hours, Twilight. You know that.” It took her a second, but a blush quickly started to seep down her face. “But I wouldn’t say no to a wing massage when we got back. Or maybe some mouth-preening...” Her blush just got deeper and deeper. “Maybe you can show me just how hard that horn is, too.” And her ears drooped. “Man, being a girl has some advantages, I guess. I never coulda used that horn line back when I still had a dick. And now I see what you meant by those wings not using muscles. If you were a pegasus, those things would be stiffer than I was the last time we—”

“LET’S JUST GO!” she yelled, spreading her wings and jumping into the air. I chuckled and joined her, though she did her best to look everywhere but at me as we flew toward the Everfree. She didn’t have much choice after we got over it, because she didn’t know where Reginald’s cave was. At least she didn’t try using smalltalk on me, that time.

Some amount of time later, we were circling above Reginald’s cave. “You took him *here*?” Twilight demanded, glaring at me. “He came here a few years ago and the dragon tried to kill him!”

“No, Reginald tried to scare him. We already went over that with him. Spike was stealing and acted like a cunt about it, so Reginald put the fear of god into him. Spike apologized for it and now they’re cool.”

She sighed and shook her head. “Alright, Nav. I trust you on this. But if we go in there and Spike’s hurt, you’re gonna get it.”

“Oh baby! I hope you use a paddle!”

“Ugh!” That was enough to get her to shut up so we could land, at least. When we did, Twilight finally saw all the bleached skeletons out in front of the gaping black hole. “Uh... Nav, he won’t... attack me, will he?”

“Nope. These are the bones of things from the Everfree that tried to attack him. You aren’t going to try to attack him, are you?”

“...No.”

“Then you’ll be fine. Let’s go.”

I started walking toward the cave, but Flo stopped my feet in their tracks. “Nav, I think you’re forgetting something,” she said. “Something you definitely shouldn’t be forgetting.”

“And what is that?” I asked. Twilight started to say something, but I held up a hand to forestall her.

“You’re on your period. These are dragons. Remember what happened the last time?”

“...You go ahead, Twilight. I can’t go in there.”

“What?! Why not?”

“Well, remember how Spike kinda tried to rape me the first time he smelled me on my period?”

“He wasn’t trying to *rape* you, Nav. You said so yourself. He was just... curious.”

“Right. Sure. Well, there’s a *giant* dragon in there. I don’t want him getting *curious* about my vagina. How long do you think you’ll take?”

“You’d be perfectly fine, you know. But I probably won’t take too long. I just want to see what... Reginald, right?” I nodded. “I want to see what he’s doing with Spike.”

“I kinda want to know, too. I guess I’ll just wait out here. Take your time but hurry up, and all that.”

She snorted. “Yeah, okay. See you in a few minutes, Nav.” I watched that booty shake while she walked into the cave, and then looked away after about half a minute because you never know when something’s gonna come out of the Everfree. Approximately no time later, I found the remnants of a large critter and sat on its skull facing the forest, just waiting.

About twenty minutes of silence later, I heard some scratching behind me that said someone was coming from the cave. Since I figured it would be Twilight, I just waited until it was right behind me, then asked, “You ready to go, Twilight?”

“Half right,” Spike said. I finally looked over and saw him holding a box of shiny cupcakes. “She’s still in there, talking to Reggie. She just told me to come out here for a few minutes, then cast some spell on me.”

“Oh.” There wasn’t enough room on the skull for both of us, but he ignored that and sat next to me anyway.

He sat for nearly a minute, presumably waiting for me to say something, before giving up and saying, “So... How’s Ponyville?”

“It’s alright.” I went silent again, because I knew what he wanted me to ask and I wasn’t going to ask it.

“It’s been boring here,” he said after another long wait, confirming my suspicion.

“Reggie just keeps talking and talking and talking. We almost never actually do anything.”

“Have you been listening?”

“Sometimes. His stories are kinda neat, but he mostly just talks about being a dragon and stuff. A lot of the rules are really silly. Like, why can’t I have a relationship with something that isn’t a dragon? Kumani did it!”

“Yeah, but she was breaking the law to do so.”

“Well, maybe I want to break the law, too! Didn’t you tell me that laws should only be followed if they make sense?”

“Well, that law does make sense. Unless you want to start porking Celestia, you’d be hard-pressed to find someone that would live as long as you do. And even then, you’ll outgrow even her. Sex would be kinda hard.” *And not the sexy kind of hard.*

“There’s more to relationships than sex, Nav.”

“If you really and truly think it’ll work out well with this girl or guy or entity, see how you feel when we leave for the changeling hive. If you still think so, just straight up tell the chick you’re interested. It’ll probably end poorly, but you know, what’s life without its speed bumps?”

“What’s a speed bump?”

“Don’t worry about it.” He sighed and finally shut up before grabbing another one of those weird cupcakes. “Those sapphires?” I asked.

“Yep,” he said with his mouth full. “I would offer, but...”

“I don’t want to break my teeth, yeah. So, did Reginald actually teach you how to fight yet?”

“Sorta. Kumani was doing more, but we could actually spar. Reggie’s just explaining stuff to me. I figured out how to make spikes come out of my tail now, at least.” He thrust the cupcakes into my hand, then jumped down off the head and walked a few steps. When he saw that I was looking, he lifted his tail and sure enough, spikes shot out of it.

“Well, you can live up to your name now,” I said. He smiled and sucked the spikes back in before sitting right back next to me, pressed up against my hip. “I don’t suppose Twilight told you what happened with Pinkie?”

“Nope. Did she have some kinda party? Because that wouldn’t really be weird.”

“Nah. Don’t worry about it, though.”

“Well, I *wouldn’t* have worried if you hadn’t brought it up...” After a few seconds he shrugged. “So, do you want to spar?”

“I don’t have a practice blade on me. Besides, you wouldn’t want to hit a lady, would you?”

He snorted. “You sure were going out of your way to make me think you weren’t one. And we don’t need weapons. I just won’t use anything sharp so we can go hand to claw.”

“What, *wrestle*?”

“Yeah. Sounds fun to me!”

“...Spike, you’re bigger than I am now. I’m pretty sure you’re stronger now, too. Despite popular belief, women are, on average, weaker than dudes, and technique only really matters so much in a hand to hand fight. Your strength would come out on top.”

“So? It’s still good practice. Or are you just lazy?”

“Lazy and in pain. I’m on my period and I’m getting cramps mixed with being stupidly horny. There’s a reason I’m sitting instead of standing.”

“...Oh. Anything I can do to help?”

“Not without pissing Twilight off enough to fuse my vagina shut, no. I need to be very thoroughly fucked. At least, it worked last time.”

“Uh... Well I mean...”

“Yeah, I know, not the most pleasant of images. And I really don’t want to let any pony do it, because of all that blood. It’ll end in a day or two and I’ll be back to normal, though.”

“I... *could*—”

“I should visit that vampire again,” I said, leaning back. “She had a lot of fun. Sort of. And so did I...”

“V-vampony?” Spike whispered, his ear tufts drooping.

“Yeah. She got to me hungry and went to fucking *town* on my vagina. Then lost it and sucked out half my blood. I’m still not fully recovered from that... Maybe seeing her isn’t the best idea.”

“Did... did you tell the princess on her?”

“Psh, *no*. Why would I do that? She isn’t hurting anyone.”

“She sucked out half your blood!”

“Ahem,” Twilight coughed, finally making herself known. “Who sucked your blood, Nav?”

“That is not a question I’m going to answer,” I said before hopping off the skull. “Time to go?”

“Aqua, you really need to stop taking his side,” Twilight said, her eyes flicking to the right. “No, that *doesn’t* make me feel any better!” ... “Ugh, *fine*.” Her eyes flicked back to me. “Yes, it’s time to go. Mister Reginald regrets that he can’t see you, but understands why you can’t. And his nose is a lot more sensitive than Spike’s, so let’s get out of here quickly before he smells you all the way out here.”

“Sounds good to me,” I said, spreading my wings. “I’ll see you later, Spike.”

“Wait!” I lowered my wings slightly. “Why can’t I come back to Ponyville, at least? I have my crossbow, so I can hunt. There’s plenty of room at your house and the library both. There’s no reason for me to stay here!”

I sighed and lowered my wings the rest of the way. “Spike, there’s no easy way to say this. In the week or so before we got to Canterlot, you were kind of a dick. At best, annoying and clingy. I think you’re missing... *something* in your upbringing. No offense to you either, Twilight, but you’re not a dragon. Reginald is. He’s an old, wise dragon that can really help you out. Not just with... your puberty or whatever, but with what it really means to be a dragon. The stuff you can’t just learn overnight. You’re perfectly welcome to come back to Ponyville, Spike. I wouldn’t blame you if you did. But I really think being here would be good for you. You already seem

more mellow than you were before.”

“...When was I a dick?”

“When you helped bring the money back and then I got the naga to carry it to Watcher’s room, for one. And Watcher told me you had some discipline problems while I was away. So I’ll say again: In the end, it’s your decision. The boat’s done, so you can go back and stay there if you want. Or you can stay in Ponyville. Or you can stay here and learn, which is my suggestion.”

Before Spike could respond, Twilight sighed and said, “Nav’s... sort of right, Spike. I don’t think you’re too clingy or being a jerk, but Reginald *can* teach you. And it’s important you learn. You spent time learning from Kumani, but she was young, too busy fawning over Nav, and female. Reginald can help you a lot more than she could, and you can learn all kinds of interesting stuff about history while you’re at it. I wish he would let *me* stay, but he said no...”

“You both... really think I should stay?” Spike slowly asked, looking at me.

“Yes, we do,” I said, nodding. “That’s not to say you can’t visit Ponyville or Canterlot, but I think you should spend most of your time here.”

“...Okay. Does that mean I can come back to Ponyville today?”

“You should... probably wait until my period’s done,” I said. “If you don’t mind, at least. Twilight’s got that spell on you, but dragons have some magic resistance and I don’t want to risk it wearing off.”

“It won’t,” Twilight said. “But it still might be a good idea for you to wait.”

Spike sighed and nodded. “Fine, I’ll wait a few days... But if I have to wait for that to wear off, it better be because we’re gonna spend time together!”

“If I’m still in Ponyville, sure,” I said. “I just went there for a few days to get out of Canterlot. I’ll be heading back soonish.”

“Cool. It’s a date, then.” I blinked. “Er, not a date, but... you know what I mean.”

“Sure. See you later, Spike.” He lifted his arms for a hug, but I was already shooting my wings out to catch air, so I pretty much left him hanging. Twilight chilled on the ground for a few more seconds to talk to him while I circled the small clearing. Finally, she joined me in the air and we started flying back. A few seconds after she did, she opened her mouth, but I said, “I don’t want to talk about it.” Her mouth promptly closed.

Well, for a few seconds, anyway. “Too bad,” she eventually said. “Spike was raised *by* ponies, *like* ponies, Nav. He’s going to be more ‘clingy’ than you’re used to, especially since he’s your friend. More so, given the dragon jealousy he has. If he’s going to stay among ponies, that’s not a bad thing.”

“If.”

“...Yes, if he doesn’t, it could be somewhat of a problem. But you’re going to be alive for a while, Nav. I have a feeling that the two of you will be together for a very long time, or at the very least, you’ll stay in touch. You have to ask yourself, if he *doesn’t* change and stays just as clingy, what will you do?”

“Continue being his friend. It’s annoying, but not enough at the moment to make me cut

contact. The thing is, he needs to remember that when I'm on that ship, I'm not just his friend. I'm also his commander. If I give orders, he needs to obey them. No backtalk, no dark muttering."

"He's not a *soldier*, Nav!"

"I know he's not. But neither are you, and yet I have a feeling that if we got in a fight, you'd follow my orders."

"Well... yes. You have more experience than I do and you're... more knowledgeable about it. Of course I would do what you told me."

"Yeah. Spike's been giving me and Watcher lip both in and out of combat situations. If we're in private and it's not really important, whatever. But when he's fighting zombies and Watcher tells him to do something, he needs to fucking do it. Or when he's carrying a large bag full of money and I tell him to give it to someone, he needs to give it to someone."

"Yes, he does. But that doesn't have anything to do with him being clingy or a jerk."

"Not about being clingy, no. But undermining my authority in front of the troops kinda makes him a dick. And Watcher's old and crotchety. Making him repeat himself is mean."

"If we weren't flying, I'd kick you."

"Good thing we're flying, then." *And that I'm wearing armor.*

"This is why you should ask *me* before doing anything like this with Spike, Nav. You've been here for so long, but you still don't know what it means to be a pony."

"There are no words for how cheesy that is." She darted closer to me and kicked me. Given my previously mentioned armor, I barely even felt it. "You're lucky you're so adorable, or that might make me mad."

"You are so insufferable sometimes!"

"You know you love it, babe." She groaned, which made me laugh. It also made us both shut up until we got back to the library. Since it was a public building, even if she didn't specifically govern it anymore, we just let ourselves on in.

I started to grab the few bags I left near the door so I could leave, but Twilight stopped my hand with magic. "Do you have anything else planned any time soon?" she asked.

"Not really. Why?"

"I had something I was working on before... we went up north," she said. "I wanted your opinion on it. It might take a little while, though."

My mind quickly went to Taya, who I should probably get back to liberate from Vinyl. However, I knew she could cook if needed and there were plenty of bits in my room that she could use to buy food if it came to that. So I just shrugged and said, "Sure."

She beamed and said, "Right this way!" She started prancing to the basement door. When she got there, she magicked up a key from who knows where and shoved it right in.

The librarian dude, who hadn't been paying much attention until then, looked up and asked, "So you were the one with the key to that?"

"I was," Twilight said, nodding. "And I'll be the one keeping the key to it, since there aren't any books down here."

The librarian shrugged and said, "It doesn't really matter. I was just wondering what was down there."

"Just a few of my things. You coming, Nav?" I left my bags there and pulled off my helmet, setting it down next to them. That done, I followed Twilight into the darkness that quickly turned bright when she flicked a switch. Before I had time to look around, her horn lit up and the door closed, then locked. "We wouldn't want to be disturbed," she said to my questioning glance.

That was enough to make me finally look around the room, at least. I... didn't actually see anything out of the ordinary. "So what are we looking at?" I asked, rubbing my finger along one of the beakers in her lab.

"Oh, we need to go a little deeper first," she said, walking toward a random, mostly nondescript wall. It was blank, but there were a few pictures and sconces on it. She reached up and pulled one of the sconces down, which opened a staircase leading down.

"Alright, now you're getting into creepy territory," I said. "If you're hiding insurrectionist stuff down there, I'm out."

"That's just silly," she said as she began walking down the stairs. "I just really wanted this to stay secret." I sighed and followed her, wondering just where in life I went wrong. Thankfully, this staircase wasn't particularly long. Not so thankfully, it ended in a small dungeon.

"Twilight, what the fuck." In the center of the relatively small room was a table with a few straps that looked perfect to accommodate nearly anything of any reasonable size. Along one wall were a number of rungs that looked like they were supposed to hold things. Under those rungs were a few locked chests. Strangely enough, there was a mirror on the ceiling. "Are you fucking torturing people down here?"

"No, of course not! No pony else has even seen this..."

"I'd fucking hope not! This is the kind of shit that gets you institutionalized, Twilight! Jesus, why would you even—" Her horn lit up and I immediately stopped talking, because one of the chests opened. When it did, I saw something large, pink, and floppy. That's when it clicked. "...Oh."

Twilight started walking further in, to stand on the other side of the table. I didn't move. "After... what we did with Luna, I started thinking about making this place," she said, a small blush on her face. "It took me a while, but I eventually did. It didn't get finished until after you had left, and even now, I'm missing a few... tools."

"Congratulations, you built a sex dungeon. You went way past creepy and got all the way into disturbing."

"Hey, it's private! It can't be disturbing if nobody knows about it!"

"You fucking *showed me!*"

"Well, of course. Who else is supposed to teach me?"

I blinked a few times. "You... want me to teach you? What, the ins and outs of BDSM?"

"Yes!" *Should have seen that one coming. Always the nerdy ones.*

"Well, get on the table," I sighed, my wings sagging slightly. "Guess I can show you a

few things.”

She smiled and shook her head. “You’re the one on the table, Nav.”

Oh boy. “That’s... a nice offer, Twilight, but I’m still on my period.”

“Nav, I heard you say you needed to... have sex. And you’ve been flirting with me all day! You can’t have it both ways. Either flirt with me and put out or don’t flirt at all.”

“Maybe you don’t understand what a period is. I’m *bleeding* from my *vagina*.”

“So? If we’re using toys, it won’t matter.”

“Twilight. That’s gross. Don’t be gross.”

“Oh come on! You let some fake vampony do it!”

“Uh huh, right. *Fake*. And I didn’t *let* her do it. It just sort of happened.”

“Then just let this happen! You know you’ll enjoy it.”

“Oh yeah, I will. And I’ll be happy to play with you later, when I’m not bleeding from my vagina. But right now, I am, and I’m not doing anything sexual. Give it, like, two days. But you have no idea what you’re doing as a dom, so I’m not going to let you experiment on me while I’m liable to get pissed off and in even more pain. If you’re really in that much of a hurry and you really want to experiment on a chick, I can go get Dash.”

She blinked a few times. “Why Rainbow Dash? She’d never let someone else be in control of anything!”

“Dude, she’s the biggest power bottom I’ve ever seen. Like, holy shit. She’s into all *kinds* of degradation. That said, she’s probably a little too advanced for you at the moment.”

“And she’s also my friend. I wouldn’t want to use her like that.”

“Oh, what, I’m not your friend? I see how it is. Fuck you too, Twilight.”

“That’s not what I—Why do you always do this?!”

“Because you’re fucking adorable when you’re flustered. I’m leaving now, Twilight. I’ll be back when my period’s over.”

I turned to go, but the door slammed shut. “I don’t think so,” she said. My hand immediately went to my pocket for the ring, but she stopped me and then turned me around. When I finally faced her, I found that she had a mean smile on her face. Then she slowly floated me toward her and planted a kiss on my nose, followed by whispering, “And you’re cute when you’re scared.” Finally, she dropped me. “See you later, Navi!” After that, she teleported out.

“...What just happened?” I quietly asked, not moving from my position on the floor.

“She just got you good,” Flo answered. “Well, assuming the door isn’t locked. If it *is* locked, then you just got rape dungeon’d, since you don’t have your key.”

I sighed and sat up, rubbing horse spit off my nose. “Here’s hoping it isn’t locked,” I muttered as I walked to the door leading up and out. Sure enough, it wasn’t. Moments later, I was out of the library and heading back to pretend to be a good father.

Well, I was *trying* to do that. I got halfway across town before another sphere of magic grabbed me, this one light blue. “There you are, Miss Navarone,” Rarity sweetly said from behind me. “We need to have a conversation, I believe.” *Oh boy, here we go.* “Come along, now,” she

said, dragging me along behind her. When she actually turned me to face her, I noticed with some small amusement that she had a scrunchy around the dock of her tail.

“I can walk, you know.”

“Yes, yes.” Of course, she didn’t let me go. I wasn’t really expecting her to, even though I wouldn’t have actually run off. There was no stopping what was coming, only delaying it and making it worse.

When we finally got to Rarity’s garish abode, she quietly closed the door behind us and then casually tossed me onto her couch. “That wasn’t very polite,” I said, leaning over and rubbing at my aching ass. I had a knife and some other stuff back there that did not mesh well with being dropped.

“You’re right, it wasn’t. Now, I’m giving you a choice of three things, Navarone. Attend Fleur’s party in an outfit of my choosing, spend a day with me in Ponyville in an outfit of my choosing, or go to Fluttershy right now and apologize.”

“...Is killing myself an option?”

“After our time in the Antarctic, I am now aware that it’s possible for somepony to be resurrected. Should you decide that self-harm is an option, I shall see to it that you will be brought back, one way or another. So no, it is not.”

“What about... none of those? I mean, really now, what are you gonna do to force me? You’re too cute and cuddly to try to hurt me, and you already learned your lesson about that anyway.”

“The weapons of a lady are not those of base violence, Navarone. Should you fail to take one of my choices, I *will* make you suffer. Fluttershy told me who you chose above her and that it’s to be a secret. Loose lips can put that in the public eye. And when we leave again on that airship, I will be going with you, despite what we all think of the idea. But go I shall, and I will be most uncooperative. And so too shall most of the rest of us. Pinkie and Applejack, at the very least. Perhaps Rainbow Dash. I *will* spread what you did to Fluttershy, and that you did it knowingly. The others *will* support me. You do *not* want three unhappy mares aboard your ship, Navarone. That is not to mention what *other* harm I might do in the interim.”

My eyes narrowed very slightly as she named threat after threat. When she finally went silent, I slowly said, “What would a day with you in Ponyville entail?”

“I would find a very gorgeous dress for you and we would go on a spa trip, out for tea, shopping, and whatever else I might think of.”

“Well, good luck finding a necromancer,” I said, pulling out one of my daggers. She just impassively watched as I started to slam it into my chest, but was stopped by Flo yet again. “God dammit, Flo! You never let me have any fun!”

She answered using my own voice, so Rarity could hear: “I am not above letting Miss Rarity spank you, Navarone. You know she has to have experience with Sweetie Belle.”

“Indeed I do,” Rarity said with a nod. “And I can find a hairbrush quite quickly, I assure you.”

“Hah, jokes on you!” I said with a smirk. “I’d bleed all over you and get turned on at the same time!”

“What was that threat you made on me so long ago?” Rarity mused aloud, tapping at her chin with a hoof. “Was it perhaps to drag me into the market and spank me where all the ponies could see? Hmm, or would that turn you on as well? Maybe we should find out.”

“Oh, you’re no fun,” I sighed, putting my dagger away. “Fine, fine, I’ll go talk to fucking Fluttershy. Where is she?”

“At her home. Hopefully she’s no longer crying.”

“God, I hope so, too. I hate dealing with crying people. What exactly do you want me to say?”

“At this point, she knows full well that you knew about her crush on you, so you need to apologize for telling her in such a blunt way that you chose Celestia right after hugging her as you did.”

“Alright, that’s doable. Maybe not less painful than spending a day with you, but certainly less annoying and time consuming.” *And reputation destroying.* “I don’t suppose you’d want to come along for moral support?”

“If you need me to hold your hand while you apologize, I would certainly be willing.”

“I meant for *her*.”

“...She has her own sources of comfort. Speaking of which, I suggest staying in your armor when you go to speak with her. Some of her animals were... not pleased with what happened. Including her bear.”

“Her bear’s a dude, right?” She gave me the flattest possible stare she had for that. “Hey, if I got forced into having feminine wiles, I might as well fucking use them. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have someone to go speak to.”

“You’re excused. For now. After you speak with Fluttershy, I also suggest you visit Rainbow Dash. I haven’t seen her since... the Pinkie incident. I *would* check on her, but I’m afraid I lack wings.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll take care of that too. Unless her bear tears off my wings, anyway.”

“Oh, don’t be such a foal. Wings grow back!”

“...No they don’t. Or at least, they normally don’t. Mine probably would, eventually.”

“Then don’t be such a foal. I shall see you later, Navarone.”

“Right. Later, Marshmallow.” She hmphed at the nickname and slammed the door behind me when I finally got outside. “So, Flo, didn’t you say you wanted to spend more time in control?”

“Oh no, you aren’t getting out of this one, mister,” she said, probably shaking a watery finger at me. I sighed and started walking. “You just *had* to lead her on, even when I told you it was a bad idea. Well, now you’re going to own up to it. I’ll *help* you, but I won’t do it for you.”

After everything I’ve done for you, this is how you repay me?

“Helping you be a more mature and well-rounded adult? Yes, this is how I repay you.”

I never asked for this.

“You’re welcome.”

And I definitely wasn’t thanking you. She answered me with a cruel giggle. Though she wants it known that it was a *cute* giggle, thank you, and that I need to stop being a baby. I also want it known that I’m going to tear out your eyes if I catch you reading this.

It was a long, lonely walk to Fluttershy’s cottage all the way out on the edge of the Everfree. I could have and probably should have flown, but I didn’t want to go at all, so I really wasn’t in a hurry.

When I got in front of the forlorn cabin, I was having some very conflicting feelings. I knew that what I was about to do was a good and probably necessary thing, but I really didn’t want to do it. I also didn’t want it to be necessary, but I couldn’t help it if the ponies were fucking pussies. The eerie silence within and all around the place didn’t help my feelings in any way.

My hand slowly reached up to knock upon the door, my gauntlets echoing dully on the old wood. After the last polite knock, silence reigned for nearly fifteen seconds, before a quiet shuffling from the other side slowly got louder and the door swung open. On the other side was a large bear that only just fit inside Fluttershy’s small domicile. As soon as it saw me, it started scowling.

“Is now a bad time?” I facetiously asked. That scowl turned into a growl and the thing fell onto all four legs, an attack position if I ever saw one. “Is the Missus in?” I was only tempting fate, but I figured if he tried mauling me, I’d have an excuse not to have to talk to Fluttershy.

A small whisper from within stopped the bear’s slow advance on me. His head turned back and another tiny whisper came out. He sniffed and turned his head back to me, standing back up on his hind legs. When he was at his full height, one of his paws gripped my shoulder and his head leaned in. Since he most definitely had my attention at that point, the claws on his other paw pushed out and he poked me in the chest with one finger, then raised that finger to his throat and slowly drew it across, presumably telling me he wanted to cut my throat. With that message given, he moved out of the way and used the paw on my shoulder to thrust me inside.

Fluttershy was lying across the couch, a despondent expression on her face, though she didn’t turn to face me. She was holding what I assumed from the glare to be Angel, cuddling him tightly. Strangely enough, there were no other animals present. She apparently noticed how my gaze sought for them despite not looking at me, and sadly said, “With nopony to care for them, most of my critters left... A few stayed nearby.”

Flo, is it too much to ask for you to just stop my heart right now? Given her lack of response, I could only assume yes. “That... sucks. Listen, Fluttershy—”

She finally actually turned to me, her normally warm teal eyes now dull and empty. Despite myself, I stopped what I was going to say, so she took that as a sign to speak. “Do you want anything, Nav? Tea, maybe?”

“...I’m fine.” I sighed, my shoulders and wings sagging. “Fluttershy, I’m really sorry about—”

“It’s okay, Nav.”

“Oh, really? And here I was, thinking you’d be upset. Maybe get really sad, mope about in your house, have your bear try to scare everyone away. But no, if you’re okay, that’s cool.” She looked away again. “Fluttershy, my people... My *family* didn’t deal with problems. I’ve known for ages that you had a crush on me. Hell, I figure you never lost the crush you had from before the first time we had this talk. I just... didn’t know how to deal with it. I thought all you wanted was to ‘fix’ me, to *change* me, and I didn’t want anything to do with that.”

“Everypony needs comfort,” she whispered, still not looking at me. “Everypony needs love. Everypony needs somepony to care for them, Nav. And you’re so... different. So unlike a pony. I thought... we could be outsiders together.”

“But you’re not an outsider. You’re just an introvert living in a very extroverted place. I can’t deny that it makes you different, but it doesn’t make you an outsider. If you were actually seriously looking for a boyfriend or a girlfriend, you could find one within days. You’re beautiful by pony standards, extremely nice, good at cooking, and you have that cute, shy girl thing that a lot of guys just adore. I understand that you’re probably afraid, but just because you’re afraid of those you consider ‘on the inside’ doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be afraid of people like me, actual outsiders. And it definitely doesn’t mean you should consider me the only viable alternative, especially given how bad of a person I am.”

“You’re not—”

“Fluttershy, I am an awful, awful person. I have my moments, but look at what I *just* did to you. There was no excuse for that, and it wasn’t until after the fact that I ever considered it might be a bad idea. Hell, the only reason I’m here right now is because Rarity threatened to do awful things to me if I didn’t. That’s not the kind of person you want anything to do with. There ain’t no one that can fix me but me, and I’m not in any hurry.”

Her eyes slowly closed and her head slumped down on the couch.

“If...” I stopped, looking away. “No. No ifs. I’m sorry, Fluttershy. I really, really am. I’ll... see you later.” The house was once more wreathed in absolute silence as I slowly walked to the door and let myself out.

After finally extricating myself from Fluttershy’s humble abode, I slowly spread my wings and leapt into the air, wanting to get away from that depressing business as quickly as possible. Judging by Flo’s complete silence, I suspected I probably screwed up. That wouldn’t really be surprising. I am, after all, a terrible person.

Since Rarity’s instructions were still guiding my mind, my wings took me to Rainbow Dash’s floating manor. The place was, somewhat surprisingly, exactly where it was supposed to be. It seemed that not even a few months of neglect could make the thing shift from its position. I wouldn’t be too surprised to learn that she had Twilight anchor it in place with magic or something silly like that.

When I finally landed, I knocked on the door. My hand went right through it, since the place was made of fucking clouds. After I realized that, I just let myself in. “Dash, you here?” I

called, not wanting to intrude on her doing anything inappropriate with Gilda when I wasn't willing to join them.

There was no response, so I continued walking in. The place looked about as clean as it normally did, which meant she was probably either there or had just been there recently. I figured if she was anywhere, at that point, it would probably be her bedroom.

And sure enough, that's where she was, gagged and tied up in some very sexy lingerie with a few buzzing toys stuck in places. She looked up at me with a massive blush on her face and moaned.

"Alright, give me two grunts for 'I wanted this' and three for 'Oh god please help'." She grunted twice. "Oh, good. Gilda? One grunt is yes, I guess." She grunted once. "Hot. Does this have anything to do with the Pinkie thing?" Another grunt. "Alright, cool. Rarity just wanted me to check on you, since we hadn't seen you since yesterday. Tell Gilda I said hi when she lets you go." She grunted one more time as I turned to yet again let myself out.

But I stopped and turned back, then walked up to the bed. She eyed me with well-founded worry, since I took all the controllers attached to the toys and turned them up.

"Have fun, Dashie," I said as I turned to go again. This time, however, there was someone waiting in the door.

"Going somewhere?" Gilda asked with a brutal smile, holding up a long string of rope. I met her smile with my own.

Twenty minutes later, I left Dash's house with an even bigger smile on my face, an extremely unhappy Gilda tied up next to a smugly satisfied Rainbow Dash. When I left, she was buzzing more than Dash, though I had to do some things I wasn't proud of to find all the toys needed for that. I also left a note for a certain friend of ours.

Since I didn't have any desire to be on ground zero when Gilda was untied, I stopped by the library after leaving. When I got there, the new librarian was still just chilling at the front desk he set up. "Do you know if Twilight's here?" I asked.

"I am hardly her caretaker, Lady Navarone," he said, not looking up. "If she is, she's probably upstairs." I shrugged and started walking to the stairs, but he continued, "And the next time you depart, please do not forget your things. This is a library, not a storage facility." When I looked back at him, he was pointing to the bags and my helmet I left sitting next to the door.

"Oh yeah. Totally forgot about those. Yeah, I'll grab them when I leave."

Twilight was thankfully sitting in her room, writing something down. She barely spared me a glance when I walked in, though she actually looked up when I started talking. "Rainbow Dash is baking a cake or something," I said. "She said she wanted you to try it when she's done, since you gave yourself wings and all."

"...*Rainbow Dash* is baking?" she asked, one of her eyebrows lifting.

"I know, I was surprised, too. She said it should be done in about three hours, and to just let yourself in since she can't really hear anyone knocking and sound doesn't carry well through

clouds.”

She shrugged. “Alright, I guess. Though why she wants *me* of all ponies to taste it, I don’t know.”

“I know, right? I guess she just doesn’t like the rest of us enough. Or maybe she’s just planning a surprise for them and she knows how well you can keep secrets. Either or. Anyway, I need to go rescue Taya. See you later.”

“Right. See you, Nav.” As soon as I left her sight, the biggest smirk possible spread across my face.

Flo just sighed.

When I got downstairs, I grabbed the shit I left on the floor and departed, finally heading back to Vinyl’s house. I was hoping I would actually make it that time, and I finally fucking did. That was good, because I was really tired of being in that black dragon armor in the summer sun.

When I got inside, I saw a visibly pained Vinyl watching Taya work her music tables with the exact opposite of proficiency. The noises coming from them could at best be described as unique. At worst, I’d say they were one of the most painful things I’ve ever listened to. I was very grateful my ears weren’t as sensitive as a pony’s.

Since I absolutely refused to listen to that longer than necessary, I walked over to them and flipped the off switch. Vinyl actually visibly slumped in relief and Taya finally looked up from the no longer spinning records. “Sorry it took so long,” I said. “I got sidetracked a lot more than I wanted to.”

“You need to learn to start saying no.”

“But then life wouldn’t be as much fun. You want to go do something after I get changed?”

“We could go practice! Though you might not want to get changed if we’re gonna do that...”

“Taya, it’s fucking hot outside, in case you didn’t notice. I don’t want to be running around in this armor in the heat while also bleeding from my vag and cramping.”

“You’re so lazy, daddy. Wanna just go on a walk, then?”

“Works for me. You want to come with us, Vinyl?”

“...No thanks. I uh... I need to rest my head for a bit.” She seemed kinda winded after the pain Taya put her through, so I wasn’t really surprised.

“Alright. I’m gonna go get changed, then. I’ve been in this armor for far too long.” While I was walking further into the house, Vinyl fell back onto the couch, both hooves going to her forehead to gently massage it. Taya finally hopped off the bench behind the music table and did who knows what.

When I got up to my room and removed the armor, I looked over the clothes I had grabbed. I shouldn’t have been as tempted as I was to put on a skirt and blouse and just let all the ponies find out about what happened, but I really didn’t want that to happen just yet if I could fix it. Given that, I just threw on some normal clothes. At the very least, I was happy to be out of my

armor and without as many heavy weapons weighing me down.

Soon enough, I went back to the living room, where Taya was staring at Vinyl, who was making a very pointed attempt to not look away from the ceiling. As amusing as that was, I didn't really want to watch them, so I just gathered up my daughter and departed, letting Vinyl rest in peace.

When we got outside, Taya said, "I don't think she liked my music."

I guess you could call that music, for a given definition of music. "Can't win 'em all. And you also can't be good at something the first time you tried it. Remember starting out at magic?"

"Yeah. It... was difficult. I guess music's the same way."

"Everything is. That's the way of the world." We went silent for a few seconds before I asked, "So, is there anything in particular you wanted to do?"

"Not really."

"Alright. Want to get tickled?"

"...Not really, no."

"Okay, just checking." And so we started walking through the town, perusing the carefree peasants as they went about their day. Well, until we were accosted by another filly about two hours into our long fucking walk.

"Nav, you're back!" Scootaloo yelled, pouncing from her speeding scooter onto my face. That immediately sent us both onto the ground before Taya could catch us, which at the very least gave me a chance to realize that Scootaloo was just glomping me instead of attacking me.

I did a quick body check and realized that I wasn't damaged or hurt at all, which meant that pony physics were in effect. Since I was fine, I just patted her on the back and said, "Sure am. Kinda figured you woulda seen me by now."

"We've all been in school until now," she said, letting me go and sitting on me instead, a big ol' creepy smile on her face. "And we really need your help, too!"

"We who?" I asked, knowing what she was going to say and already dreading the answer.

"The Cutie Mark Crusaders! Or ex-Crusaders. I don't think we ever came up with a name... But we need your help!"

Ugh. "What do you need?" I sighed.

"We have a new friend that needs you," she said as her tail started to swish back and forth. If I still had a penis, I would be a lot more concerned about that, but it wasn't too problematic at the moment. "Just come with me to Applebloom's farm!"

"...This new friend wouldn't happen to be Applejack, would it?" I asked. "Because if Applejack needs help, she's just gonna have to deal with it for a few days."

"I said *new* friend, Nav! Now come on!" She finally hopped off me and galloped over to her scooter. She was buzzing off before I could even get to my feet.

"So we're just gonna keep walking, right?" Taya asked.

I sighed and started following Scootaloo, hating myself on the inside for it. Taya also sighed and joined me. Of course, Scootaloo's gotta go fast, so she didn't even try to wait for us.

We continued on at a more sedate pace, taking much longer to get to the farm.

When we finally made it, none of the three girls were anywhere in our immediate field of view. The only one that I could see from the front of the farmhouse was Big Mac, who was for some reason plowing a field. He didn't even look up when we got there, but he did when we approached him. "You see Applebloom or Scootaloo anywhere?" I asked.

"Eeyup. They're..." He blinked a few times and his ears twitched. "Y'all alright?"

"Just peachy. Or apple-y, whatever you guys say here. Scootaloo just said she needed my help, and... What?" The way he was looking at me, I figured I had something on my face or was bleeding and just hadn't noticed it.

"You uh... your voice ain't right."

"Oh, yeah. I kinda got cursed and turned into a girl. My voice is higher because I have a vagina now instead of a dick." His eyes widened and a large blush immediately spread over his face. "Yeah, I was pretty angry, too. I assume they're in the clubhouse?"

"G-girl?" he said.

"Yeah, girl. Mare. Female. Ass and titties. Vag. No dick. You know, like your sisters?"

"I uh... I..."

"Don't tell me you can't talk to girls." His eyes shot away from me and his ears lowered. "Ugh. Are they in the clubhouse?" He shook his head. "Well, great. Where are they?"

"B-b-barn..."

"Thank you. Come on, Taya."

We both turned to go to the barn, but Big Mac actually stammered some more stuff out. "Y-you smell n-nice..."

Oh god. "Thanks, Big Mac. I'll see you later."

"Y-you too." Thankfully, he actually let us leave that time.

We didn't get all the way to the barn before we were accosted by yet another one of the Apple clan, with Applejack coming out of the house to walk to us. She met us a few meters away from the barn. "You need something, Nav?" she asked.

"Scootaloo pounced on me in town and said she and the others needed my help for something," I said with a shrug. "I have no clue what it is. Hopefully it won't take long and it won't involve cutting off my fucking toes. Big Mac said they were in the barn."

"Alright. You and Taya are welcome here, of course. But if I find out you're hittin' on my brother, there ain't nothing out there that'll keep you safe from me."

"First, I'm not gay. I may occasionally partake in the dick, but only because my body really needs it and only when the giver is good at it. Second, tell *him* that, not me. He told me I smelled nice, which is awkward farm boy talk for 'you're hot, let's bang'. Third, he's your brother and you already don't like me. I really don't want you hating me. Fourth, isn't he a fucking virgin? I'm not about to take that from him, especially since it would be boring for me."

She shrugged. "Don't know if he's a virgin or not. Ain't none-a my business. I didn't figure I'd need to give *him* this talk, but I reckon I ought to, now. Have fun with the girls, Nav."

“Yeah, right. *Fun*. See you later, AJ.” She tipped her hat as we went back to entering the barn.

Before I could actually push the door open, though, Taya said, “Why did you say Applejack doesn’t like you, daddy? She’s never said anything like that to *me*.”

“Applejack is, unlike most of her friends, a relatively mature adult,” I said. “Because of that, it took me a while to realize that she really, really doesn’t like me. She manages to tolerate me because I’m not a complete dick and I haven’t done anything mean to her or her family, but for some reason, she just absolutely does not like me. I think it’s because she’s the element of honesty and I’m a dirty, dirty liar.”

“I think you just like being a victim.”

I tousled her hair and opened the barn door, entering the comfortably cool shady interior. Inside were three familiar fillies and a pudgy orange one that wasn’t as familiar. They all looked away from the giant pumpkin in the middle of the barn and toward me when I stepped in. The familiar ones all smiled in delight and started bouncing toward me. The unfamiliar one just gaped, her eyes going wide.

“What took you so long?” Scootaloo asked, stopping right in front of me. Applebloom and Sweetie Belle both continued to either side of me to hug me around the waist.

I put one hand on Applebloom’s head and one on Sweetie Belle’s. “It’s hot out and I wasn’t in any mood to get sweaty, so I just walked. Also, Taya’s really out of shape so she can’t really run for long anyway.” Taya scoffed while I knelt down and dragged all three of the fillies up in a hug, making them giggle in delight. Now, I didn’t really like kids, but I wasn’t going to go out of my way to be a dick to them. Especially since those three were the only fillies that didn’t show too many signs of creepy crushes on me after what Luna did. “So who’s this?” I asked, looking at the one I didn’t know.

“That’s mah cousin, Babs Seed!” Applebloom said, pulling away from my hug and trotting to her. Scootaloo also pulled away from me since she likes to pretend she’s ‘too cool’ for that stuff, but Sweetie Belle was content to stay in my warm grasp. “Babs, this is Sir Navarone. He gave us our cutie marks!”

“You know I’m not a knight anymore, Bloomers,” I said. “And I didn’t *give* them to you. I just helped you realize what your talents were.”

“Details,” Scootaloo scoffed, waving a hoof. “What matters is that you can do it for Babs, too! What’s her special talent, Nav?”

I patted Sweetie warmly on the back before letting her go and standing so I could walk over to Babs. “It’s hard to tell anything about her when she can’t even tell me hello,” I said. “I know I’m not *that* scary, am I?”

“You’re not scary at all!” Sweetie happily said.

“I… know you,” Babs finally said, letting me hear her god awful accent. *Oh, you poor thing. What is that, Jersey? New York? Jesus.*

“Well, I’m kinda famous,” I said. “I’ve been in a few papers, I think. And in a few

magazines. It's not too surprising that you've heard of me."

"No, I... I remember you from... somewhere..."

There will never be an end to the hate I feel for you, Luna. "I don't know from where," I said with a shrug. "I haven't been to many pony cities on the continent outside of Ponyville and Canterlot. Unless you're secretly a changeling, I don't know how you'd know me."

Scootaloo impatiently broke in, thankfully. "Know you, shmo you! What's her special talent, Nav?" The other two leaned forward, smiling in glee.

"I'm afraid I haven't the slightest," I said with a shrug. "I knew the three of you for months before I figured it out. I just met Babs here and I don't know enough about her to be able to even guess."

"She likes—" Applebloom started, but stopped, a confused look on her face. "Er... What *do* you like, Babs? I guess we uh... we never really asked..."

"That's definitely the most important step of finding your special talent," I said. "But even if I do know what she likes, I can't help you. Remember, I got in a lot of trouble for helping you three. I don't want to make even more people upset." The three of them sighed and kicked at the floor in disappointment. "Yeah, it's a shame. I wasn't able to tell Taya what hers was, either."

"You didn't even know, daddy."

"Didn't I, though?"

"No, you didn't. You didn't even want it to be in combat magic!"

"Taya, your cutie mark is two lightning bolts, not combat magic. We've been over this." She sullenly muttered some stuff that I pretended not to hear while I looked back to the girls. "Either way, I'm afraid I can't help you."

"What if Applejack said you could?" Scootaloo answered, hope infusing her voice.

"I still wouldn't, in case someone else got mad. Besides, that would take away all the fun you could have trying to find it with her."

"...Most of what we did kinda wasn't fun," Sweetie Belle awkwardly said, scratching at her neck with her hoof. The others looked away and nodded.

"But you had fun doing it *together*," I said. "And that's what's important. You three wouldn't be such good friends without those experiences, would you?"

"We probably wouldn't be friends at all!" Applebloom said, suddenly more excited. "Nav's right, girls. We should help Babs ourselves!"

"Yeah!" the other two shouted, presumably happy to find something they can do together.

"You can help!" Babs quickly and somewhat nervously said, flashing me a flimsy smile.

"She's right!" Applebloom said. "We were just putting the finishing touches on our float for the Summer Harvest Parade!" Her southern twang got especially bad on those last few words, making me almost flinch. I didn't know if it was from nostalgia or just feeling sorry for her.

Either way, I regretfully knew what I had to do. I somehow summoned a smile onto my face and said, "How could I turn down those cute smiles? Of course I'll—"

Before I could finish, the barn door slammed open and a very irate Twilight stepped in,

glaring at me. “You’re coming with me *right now*, mister!” she yelled, grabbing my wings with magic and dragging me out.

“Well, maybe later, girls,” I said, trying and probably failing to sound regretful. “But Taya will stay to help!”

“What? I never—”

“See you later, Nav!” the three girls called, with Sweetie Belle wrapping a leg around Taya’s shoulders. Given that Twilight and I teleported away after we got out of the barn, Taya wasn’t able to follow us anyway.

We didn’t get too far, though. Twilight pushed me onto one of the beds in Applejack’s house before I could even realize where we were and held me there with magic. “What is *wrong* with you?” she asked, trying not to yell.

“A lot of things,” I said. “Can you be a bit more specific?”

“You left Rainbow Dash and Gilda tied up with... TOYS in them!”

“That’s only kind of true. True, I did leave them like that, but Dash was already tied up when I got there. Gilda tried to do that to me, but I was wearing armor and turned the tables on her. Didn’t you see my note?”

“It’s not even my birthday!”

“It said happy *early* birthday. Come on, Twilight.”

“Yeah, well, it’s *not* my birthday. But I *am* in heat. And after *that*, I need something to help me. So I hope your tongue isn’t bleeding either.”

“I never—” She shut me up by jumping on top of me, her sopping wet crotch right in my face.

“Get to it!”

Ugh, the things I do for friends.

Some unknown amount of time later (and an abrupt entrance by a confused Big Mac wondering just what all that moaning was, followed by another ‘nope’ session), Twilight finally let me go. “Now I hope you learned your lesson,” she said as she hopped off me.

“That mares in heat don’t take kindly to the idea of consent?”

“That friends don’t tie up friends and shove toys in them!”

“So... only do that to strangers? Got it.” She slapped me with one of her butterfly wings, which was funnier than anything else. “Wrong lesson?”

“You are the most perverted... being I have ever known. I hope you’re proud!”

“More than you could know, Twilight. More than you could ever possibly know. Applejack did let you use these beds, right?”

“Yes, I asked. I suppose she didn’t tell Big Mac, but then, I also didn’t tell her what we’d be doing on them.” She shrugged. “I’m a little burnt out on shame. I think you’re rubbing off on me.”

“But I don’t have a dick anymore. I can’t rub off on you!”

“And on that note, I’m going back to the library. I will see you later, Nav.”

“You call me the pervert and here you are fucking me and leaving. I see how it is.”

“Like I said, you’re rubbing off on me.” She used her magic to slap my ass, winked, and teleported away before I could say anything.

“I’m a terrible fucking influence.”

“But it’s fun,” Flo said. “And isn’t that what matters?”

“I suppose. Think I should find a bathroom before hunting down my daughter?”

“Absolutely. Your face is uh... wet.”

“Here’s hoping I can find one, then.” I left the room and immediately bumped into Big Mac on the other side. *I just can’t win, can I?* As soon as he saw me, his face got even redder and his eyes jerked away. “Thanks for watching out for the fillies, Big Mac. I wouldn’t have wanted them to hear or see that. Unfortunately, a certain horny pony just couldn’t contain herself. Can you point me to a bathroom?”

He very loudly gulped and slowly pointed to the right, still not looking at me. I started walking, fully expecting him to say something. Surprisingly enough, he didn’t. Because of that, I didn’t mention the very large boner he had been completely failing to conceal. It wasn’t hard to understand why, given Twilight’s juices all over my face. Ponies quite like their hormones, after all.

With his mostly useless directions, finding a bathroom was relatively easy. I washed up as well as I could without taking a shower, then set off to find my filly. Thankfully, I completely avoided both Applejack and Granny Smith. I didn’t want to see Applejack because she might be mad at me for getting pseudoraped by Twilight in her house and I didn’t want to see Granny Smith because she was weird and annoying.

I figured the girls would still be in the barn, but they sure weren’t. The big pumpkin float thing was still there, so I knew they hadn’t fucked off in it. My second guess was their clubhouse thing, so I took to the air to find it. Sure enough, that’s where they all were. Taya was looking about as uncomfortable as she usually does when she’s with other people and I’m not there. Babs was doing her best to talk to her, but Taya was doing her best not to say much, it seemed. The others were presumably brainstorming fun things to do with Babs to help her get an ass tattoo.

“Well, I survived,” I said, formally announcing my presence. Babs and Taya both looked up with hope in their eyes. “Did you finish the float?”

“It was already mostly done,” Scootaloo said with a seemingly nonchalant shrug.

“It’s definitely done now, though!” Applebloom said.

“But we would have liked your help,” Sweetie Belle sighed.

“Blame Twilight,” I answered with a shrug. “You know how she is sometimes. Anyway, Taya, do you want to stay here, or would you like to go help Vinyl?”

She blinked a few times, not knowing anything about Vinyl needing help, but she eventually nodded and said, “I uh... I think she... needs me? I should go with you.”

“Then I’m afraid we have to go, girls.”

All four of them “Awww’d” at that, surprisingly enough. I don’t know if they were sad that I was leaving or that Taya was leaving, though.

“But we didn’t even get to play together!” Applebloom said.

“I know, I know. But Vinyl did say she needed my hands and Taya’s magic for something. Since we’re staying with her, it’s only fair that we help.” They all sighed, so I said, “But I might be at the parade. You can see me then, right? Well, you can see me from your float anyway.”

“Yeah! We’ll be at the front, of course,” Scootaloo said. “I made sure that this thing can *move!*”

“...As long as you’re careful,” I said. “Anyway, we need to go. I’ll see all of you later.” Taya immediately jumped up to my side, happy to get away.

Before we could bail, though, Sweetie Belle asked what I had been waiting for one of them to ask the entire time. “Wait, before you go, is something wrong with... your voice? You sound different!”

“Yeah, about that... Well, long story short, I made enemies with a demon and he cursed me, turning me into a mare.”

“You’re... a mare now?” Scootaloo asked, her eyes going wide.

“Well, I’m a female human, essentially. I don’t like talking about it.”

All four of them looked very confused, but Babs broke out of it the quickest. The confusion on her face went straight to abject disappointment, which hopefully meant that I murdered the shit out of her crush on me.

The others weren’t so sad, though. “So... can we play dress-up next time?” Sweetie Belle asked.

“You won’t have any clothes to fit me, silly,” I said, tousling her hair. “I’ll see you girls later.”

And just like that, the three of them got over it. “Bye Nav!” they called, waving. With that, the two of us left and I resolved to avoid them as much as physically possible.

About half a kilometer down the road toward Ponyville, Taya finally asked, “So what did Vinyl need help with again?”

“I was lying.”

“...Oh. I thought so. Just checking.”

“Taya, lying is wrong.”

“Okay, daddy.” She pushed up against me the rest of the way to Vinyl’s pad.

Time for a message from your sponsors!

It’s been a little while, hasn’t it? I’ve been a busy little god of chaos, too. Stealing the

elements, placing them all over the world, setting traps, setting traps off, making deals...

Putting all the pieces in place.

Most things were going according to plan, as they are wont to do. Those that weren't were being corrected. Locals on one popular island were riled up. Locals on another were completely ignored, because some would recognize me. I didn't even have to touch locals on the last island, since they were in a perpetual state of war anyway.

All in all, everything was going just peachy.

Which was dreadfully, horribly, frightfully *dull*. Especially since the heroine of our story is currently sitting and waiting on her perky little rear.

So I decided quite quickly that it was time for an indirect intervention, using my new 'favorite' pawn. It was time for a magic duel, though I imagine Trixie's opponent wouldn't be using much herself.

Unfortunately, Trixie is nearly useless, and would need a few extra days to prepare. I suppose that would give our protagonist long enough to escape her yucky bodily functions, though, so at least the fight would be slightly less biased.

Not that I really expected Trixie to win, of course...