

## Unbound CoffeeGrunt



Image courtesy of [ProteusIII](#)

Trixie allowed Inmate 402's laughter-tsunami to subside. This mare had clearly been badly affected by her time in prison, she remembered her being much more coherent at the trial. Deep in the core of her mind, a sliver of pity floated into the light. However it was soon subjected to the raging torrent of pent-up hatred she held for the mare. Hatred that she was just barely holding in check now.

402 wiped a tear from her, still giggling slightly. "Oh Trixie, if I'd known you were such a joker, I would've made nice with you."

Trixie hardened her expression, pressurising the emotions within. "No joke. I want you to tell me why you did it, why you killed my sister." Slow, steady breaths emerged from her mouth. The willpower she used for creating magical shows that rocked the audience's world was barely capable of keeping a lid on her temper.

"Why I killed your sister? Oh, I've been so busy enjoying the 5-star accommodation here, that I've clean forgotten. It's a real pity, I'll just have that forgiveness, with maybe a side order of freedom?" Inmate 402 sarcastically batted her eyelids at Trixie, who's anger flashed across her features, then was beaten down back into the depths.

"How are you...enjoying your sleep then? I understand it has become quite the issue."

"Oh you little vixen you. I'm guessing you got a copy of the brochure they gave me? Free jewellery," she pulled the sleeve of her uniform back and revealed an ethereal, pearl band that seemed to be fused with her ankle, "haven't slept since I was put in here. 'And for a crime greater than any, the theft of a young life, this pony has been sentenced to a hundred years in suspended vitality. She will have full consciousness for the length of her term, and death will not be an escape from it.'"

"An Alicorn band? I thought they were a myth. Does it really-"

"Yes. I've been beaten up, cut open, ripped apart, still kickin'. I'm a walking abomination, and I've still got ninety years left." 402's eyes glazed over, she stared up and over Trixie, at some unseen figure in her mind. "You want regret, you're looking at it. No reprieve in sleep, only the

knowledge that I will age into a withering husk in here, with my mind still clamped in tight.”  
Trixie’s voice quavered at the sudden passion with which the prisoner pony spoke. “So...why did you do it?”

“Oh, don’t you know Trixie. You can’t *make* dreams. You can only take another’s. Me and Cassandra were... close. We never told anypony, but she’d always make time for me. As soon as that big show came up, she cast me aside, not wanting the competition. One day I was her world, next day I was her doormat. That’s what your sister was, the only pony she ever really loved, was you.” Her eyes watered slightly, and in them Trixie saw contempt, self-pity and bitter jealousy. “She always talked about you. How much she worried for you. I wanted to take it away, if I couldn’t have it... you couldn’t either.”

Trixie’s mind halted, her emotions diffused back into her surroundings. Derailed and distraught, her mind simply abandoned her. She could feel her mouth flapping open and shut, but heard no words emerge. After a moment, her brain warmed back up, and she began to voice her feelings. “I...no, Cassandra would have told me. I don’t believe you. She’d never play a pony like that, she was perfect, better than you! She was caring, and loving, and never let a friend down.” Inmate 402 simply smiled sadly. “You were her only friend. I’d love to say I’m sorry Trixie, but in the wide world of Equestria, she only cared about you and her. And while you may have seen the on-stage Cassandra, all beauty and poise, you never saw the backstage Cass, mistress of manipulation.”

“No. No, she wasn’t like that. She got her parts through talent!” Trixie’s previously pent-up anger overspilled her defenses, and they crumbled under it’s pressure. But her voice turned from a shout to a seething whisper under the heat of her rage. “She was living the dream, and you killed her for it. You’re a jealous, cantankerous mule. I hope you rot every second you wear that band.”

“I plan to, Trixie, I plan to.” Inmate 402 got up from her seat, and turned away from the vehement showmare. She reasserted herself, trying to shunt the memories out. Only she wouldn’t, solitary confinement for an Alicorn band wearer is a month of nothing but your thoughts, without even the release of sleep to escape. While it had saved her life in fights many a time, inevitably, she would grow to despise her existence, and be unable to do anything about it. But these thoughts were for later, she reassumed her cool, and trotted up to Marshal.

“Excuse me, Mr Marshal sir,” she called out in a sing-song voice, “but a lady would like an escort to her apartment, if you so please?”

“Time was up anyway 402, I hope you bade farewell to your friend.”

Inmate 402 glanced at Trixie, the living debris of her crime. She turned back to Marshal, before simply nodding and exiting the room.

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Detroit City. A sprawling mass of populace and liberalism. The Great and Powerful Trixie trotted

through the city that was second only to Manehatten on her route. She could easily organise twenty shows in the various districts, and she felt fairly certain it'd help get her name out there pretty well. She rode atop of her magically motivated stagecart, cutting through the crowds like an Admiral on his flagship. It wasn't until a small colt tried to run in front of her car that Trixie's concentration snapped back into place, and she halted the cart to avoid it. Where she had expected the colt - who had fallen over avoiding the cart himself - to simply dust himself off and run, he instead stood in her way, staring up at her atop her cart.

After a fairly awkward moment of trying to avoid the colt's stare, she slid down to face the colt eye to eye, roughly. He seemed nervous, as though he recognised her. The Great and Powerful Trixie's impatience overtook her manners. "Is there a reason you are blocking The Great and Powerful Trixie's stagecart, or are you just having a slow day, colt?"

The harsh nature of her greeting seemed to jar the colt's brain into action. Now that The Great and Powerful Trixie was closer, she could see his worn out clothing, and unkempt mane. A street pony, typical. Probably hoping for a charitable bit or two. A memory came back to her, two sisters huddling near a makeshift fire for warmth, hoping for a better future. She physically shook her head, needing none of that. The Great and Powerful Trixie had gotten where she was on her own merits, not *charity*. As her thoughts came back to the little unicorn colt, she realised he still hadn't spoken yet.

"Excuse me. But The Great and Powerful Trixie has several shows to perform, and doesn't have the time to be delayed by a mute foal! So either tell her what you want, or stop blocking her path!"

"I...I wanted...to help you."

"Help her, how will you help The Great and Powerful Trixie, she wonders?"

"I want to be like you!" A fervour sprang into the colt's voice, he bounded as he talked to The Great and Powerful Trixie. "I want to learn from you, I've heard about you. You started like us, and became famous! I'm really good at learning and magic, I promise!"

The Great and Powerful Trixie simply scowled at the colt. "What's your name then? Are you trying to be The Great and Powerful Trixie's apprentice?"

"Mah-Matrix Flare. My mom is a magician...or, she used to be." Matrix's eyes turned downwards, and Trixie sensed a tragedy around his mother.

"She was a good pony?" Trixie inquired.

"The best, her and dad were the best team. She used to do shows, and dad was really good with talking to ponies and getting her jobs. I just wanted to be like her, be like *you!*" He bounded to emphasise his wish, and Trixie felt heat grow under the collar of her garb, despite the chilly autumn weather.

"I..I dunno. I can't take you away from here, I don't have much money to feed us."

"It's okay. We can perform for money! We'll be rich and famous, we can get a big house and never have to worry about the bad ponies again!"

"The...bad ponies?" Trixie's face began to show her worry - she was getting in too deep. Matrix seemed to realise what he had let slip, his voice calmed to a deathly note, and he barely managed to project his words.

"One night...I was up later than I should be. I had nightmares. My mom, she went downstairs to

make me a cup of cocoa.” A tear formed in the corner of his eye. “She always did that if I couldn’t sleep. It wasn’t until she had gotten downstairs that I heard the noise, a big crash. I ran to the stairs to see, and these two ponies in black suits that covered their faces were grabbing her. They started shouting to each other, one of them sounded scared, so the other one shouted at him louder. Dad came down, he tried to fight them off of mommy.” Matrix choked on his words as he continued. “They...they pushed mommy at him, her hoof caught a bookcase that they had pushed over. She fell funny...she never got up.” The colt didn’t look back up, but Trixie saw tears tracing their way through the air below his head.

Trixie simply smiled and tousled the colt’s hair. “I’m sorry little colt. But I can’t help you.” Matrix looked distraught, but she continued. “Your dad no doubt loves you, and needs you to help him. He’ll be just as scared of the bad ponies as you are. I won’t take you away from him, it would hurt him more than you know.”

Matrix smiled weakly through his tears. “Thanks Trixie. Maybe one day, when I’m older. Maybe we can work together then?”

“I’ll be back here in five years then. Meet me here on this street, on this day of this month. If you still want to be my apprentice. You’ll have your cutie mark then, and it’ll be your decision.”

“I’ll be here for you Trixie. We can be stars together!” The little colt was once more brimming with ecstasy as he cantered out of the city. It was the last time Trixie ever saw him. She had kept her word, and on the 7th of September five years later, she had waited for that colt on the very same street. But whether the colt had simply forgotten or changed his mind, or if the ‘bad ponies’ had finally caught up to him, Trixie would never know. She had hoped that after that time, the little colt would still be there, waiting to join her on stage. After some time she realised, hope simple makes foals of you.

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Another slug hit Trixie’s stomach hard, she grimaced as she fought the burning sensation in her gut. Her once excellent mind was warping and fading, and she could feel herself losing control of her limbs. Breathlessly, she ordered another shot of the Appalalachian Moonshine. It was doing a terrific job of making her care less about her life, and by now, her memories were essentially drowning themselves. She furrowed her brow as she forced her eyes to focus, and saw a pretty irritated griffon sitting across the bar. Trixie giggled, griffons looked so silly with their half-lion, half-bird getup. Why didn’t they just have hooves like everyone else and stop trying to be so different? She felt confident that she could beat the griffon in a fight, her shield of inebriation gave her extra confidence, but she could do with a little more.

Another shot hit Trixie’s digestive system, and neatly knocked out the part of her mind that had been monitoring how drunk she was. Motor control was the next to go offline as she slurred her speech for more liquor, and in the end, a trio of shots knocked out the master control, and she fell off the stool in her drunken stupor, whether she was conscious before she hit the floor was anypony’s guess.

The elements of consciousness slowly poured into Trixie. First came Sound, the yell of screaming eagles as her ears began to readjust themselves to the hammering her body had received. Next came the element of Touch, she could feel the ice-cold ground beneath her, and a sticky sensation on her face. Taste and Smell came next - then she wished they hadn't, neither had anything pleasant to report. Sight made itself known next, first a bleary view of the alleyway she had been thrown out into, until her eyes refocused and saw her situation. And finally came Thought, as she realised the pitiful situation she was in, before it was attacked by a searing migraine.

Slumped in an alley, in a fluid that smelt worryingly like a concentrated version of the liquor she had been pumping into her system. She felt her pockets. Purse gone .Typical. Her hair had dirt and the debris of the alley matted into it. She felt certain she could cry over her condition, but her body was far too dehydrated to muster tears. She had tried running, but her past was always a second behind her. She had tried forgiveness, but had found it all so unforgivable. And finally, even the inebriation alcoholic ponies boasted the merits of had only staved off the inevitable. Evading her past had been another failure on a list longer than her foreleg. She now had only one option, grab it head on, and become it's master. She needed to get away from Canterlot, somewhere where ponies knew the bitterness of The Great and Powerful Trixie, and not the little filly that hid inside. She thought of a town. The last town she had performed at. If there were a place she could finally settle down and be at peace, it was that idyllic village she had left behind. She'd show them the true Trixie, not the embittered mare they had seen on stage.

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Marshal lead Inmate 402 back to her cell. Somewhere in his mind, he pondered her sentence. Clearly her psychological health was being affected by the Alicorn band, he'd raised the concern with his superiors, who had scoffed at the idea of caring for prisoners. He agreed that the sentence decided be carried out, but surely it was better to fix a broken pony than punish her to death. He'd been threatened with insubordination, and as punishment, had been assigned to her personally. He'd considered it his duty since to ensure both her safety, and the safety of the ponies she meant. Not exactly an easy assignment, nor a successful one.

"Okay 402. Night time, have a good one."

"Pffft, I'll just sit and stare at Luna's moon some more, eh? Maybe I could howl at it again."

Marshal cringed. "Just as long as you don't cause any trouble 402."

"Oh Marsh, why so serious?" She giggled in her maddened, high-pitched voice she occasionally lapsed into. "I have the whole night to think about this wonderful world, through that tiny letterbox in the wall you guys call a window."

"Accommodation isn't my concern 402. Just aiming to keep mutual safety between you and the other prisoners."

"Mhmm, and that's where I'm sorry Marshal, really." Marshal turned towards her, curious. He was met by her foreleg crashing into the side of his throat. His blood flow to the brain interrupted

by the attack, he fell unconscious after a few seconds. Soundlessly, he fell to the floor, where Inmate 402 caught him midway. He was such a sweetheart, always keeping an extra eye on her. She pecked him on the cheek, and gently lowered him to the floor. Unconscious but unharmed, he lay on the floor at her hooves. She pulled the keys from his person and unlocked her cuffs. First forelegs, then hindlegs, then that infernal band around her chest. She breathed freely as that weight fell off her, carefully lowering them to the floor.

Now the hard part. She stalked through the corridors, aiming for the roof. She could hit the security detail there and open an escape route for herself. Moving more quietly than a pony had ever done before, she slipped past tired guards getting ready for the nightshift. But she was alert as ever, the band intended to punish her had become an ace card. However her confidence was not.

She pirouetted around a corner, straight into a guard. He let out a shout, reaching for his truncheon. A strike to the shoulder, then uppercut to the chin, and he was out of action. But the damage was done, and she heard the hurried clip-clopping of guards rushing towards her. Things were about to get loud, fast. All pretence of stealth discarded, she sprinted for her exit. Alarms rang, they'd found the body. Security would be arming up. And 402 knew what that meant. A guard turned around the corner ahead of her, crossbow shouldered, she was in a corridor with nowhere to run. The dart flew and hit her in the shoulder. It barely pierced, but she played across the edge of consciousness as she ran. Ketamine darts, horse apples, they'd slow her down, but not stop her. She giggled as she ran into the still-reloading guard, bowling him to the floor. Skirting round, she found the staircase. Pushing up, every stair a leap, almost free! She pounded the flagstones as the sound of crossbows firing below her lagged behind the bolts pattering off the walls.

She burst through a door, the roof opened up around her. So close she could barely breathe. Then they appeared, from every corner, every doorway, guards armed with crossbows brimming with Ket. Terrific.

"Oh boys. Now now, there's enough to go around, let's be gentlecoltly about this."

"Step down 402 and allow the officer to cuff you. First strike."

"When I'm so close? Pffft, I won't even have Marshal for company now. How lonely will those ninety years be?"

"Stand down. Allow yourself to be cuffed, or we will fire. Strike two."

402 hesitated. "Oh okay." She held both her hooves out for the oncoming guard, who approached her with extreme trepidation, perfect. He got close to her...just a little closer and boo. She grabbed his hoof, pulling him around and getting a foreleg around his neck. She backed towards the edge of the roof, ever closer to freedom.

"Step down guards." She cackled as some of the guards put down their weapons. A bark from the head guard made them raise them again, however. "Oh, if that's how it'll play out. I'm not sure how many darts this little colt can take." She shook the irritated stallion in her arms.

"Third strike, gentlecolts Open fire."

Darts peppered both 402 and her hostage. She lingered on the edge of consciousness, but as planned, never slipped out of it. Confusion spread as the guard she had held fell to the floor, probably suffering an overdose. She brought herself to a two-hoofed stand, slipping her sleeve back and kissing the Alicorn band.

“She has a band! Move to apprehend, fire will be ineffective!”

“Oh boys, there’s something else on my file you forgot.” She strained muscles that had lain unused for eight years, her plan relied on this final effort. The fabric on her back ripped, and was torn open as her wings spread forth. Regal blue burst from her orange uniform. She shot the head guard a cheeky wink as she skydived from the edge of the roof, and swore she saw his crossbow arc through the air behind her.

The fresh air, the beautiful night, the euphoria of long forgotten freedom. She had the entirety of Equestria to enjoy, and a hundred years of immortality to enjoy it with. She ripped off her uniform mid-air, revealing her regal-blue coat and emerald mane. Her cutie mark, a nightshade flower, was revealed, she stroked it with a hoof as she flew. Deadly beauty, her in a nutshell. Velvet Storm flew through the air, her freedom stretching out below her. She glided over the tall walls marking the perimeter of the prison, feeling the bolts from below. The perimeter guards’ last-ditch attempt to stop her. A speck against the starry canvas of the night, she glided over the cliff-edge that marked the edge of Canterlot. It was then the Alicorn band betrayed her. It seared red-hot, burning her ankle in mid flight. Where it had once held her mind in a permanent state of consciousness, it now rushed to snuff it out. Her concentration slipped from her grasp, and she began to fall at an accelerating speed towards the cold stone of the Canterlot mountainside.

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#### Author Notes:

Well here’s the pre-penultimate chapter. Yeh, that’s about it. The next chapter, A Little Piece of Heaven, will be followed by one final chapter, Warmness on the Soul. I aim to wrap up the story so that I can never resurrect it. I don’t want to draw this out and ruin it.

So thanks to the pre-readers, thanks to the community, and thanks to Hasbro for such an awesome show. Oscar speech aside, the next fic will be a doozy in length compared with this. Much will happen, and happiness and sadness are planned. But in the end, I want a happy story for my sad Trixie, and everypony else too.