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***Author's Note:***

*Hi! Welcome. If you're new here, the relatively simple greentext transitions to prose as soon as anon stops, well, really being anon. Then things get weird, and I hope you're up for it. If you're not new here, thanks as always for reading. It boggles my mind that all my strangeness found an audience, but it's nice to know there are kindred spirits out there. You're all very, very good. Enjoy!*

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 1

- >It's been a long, stupid day at work.
- >Hate the boss, hate the job. Coworkers okay.
- >Smoking a cigarette on the front porch.
- >Mailbox thing is flipped up.
- "Since the fuck when do I get mail?"
- >Feel shame upon noticing neighbor kid watching you talk to yourself.
- >Only for a second, though.
- >Opening the mailbox reveals a small parcel.
- >You hadn't ordered anything, but that was most certainly your name.
- "What. The. Fuck."
- >Pony plush?
- >Neighbor kid is still watching, better move this indoors.
- >Closer inspection within the privacy of your (shitty) home reveals that it's not just any pony plush.
- >It's YOUR pony. The one you post on /mlp/.
- >In plush.
- >There is only one conclusion.
- >Someone knows your terrible secret.
- >But who?
- >Big gay brony friend?
- >No, you've been very careful to feign indifference to anything pony related he says or does.
- >Animu friends?
- >No, if they did it they'd have sent a hugging pillow of Rarity and her delicious plot.
- >Drug friends?
- >No, they would have skipped the plush toy and just bought you some mushrooms.
- >Welp, you're stumped.
- You're holding this little bundle of mystery, all slender and feminine, with a white body and hair the color of jade, with lighter highlights in places, when suddenly the hand it's in goes numb.
- >You're fixated on it.
- >You can't stop staring at it.

- >The numbness is spreading.
- >Everything but the plush is blurry.
- >It's the only thing in your world in this moment.
- >It's everything.
- >Then the smoke alarm goes off.
- >You never put out the cigarette.

BEWOOBEBWOOBEBWOOBEBWOO

- >After a solid three minutes or so of ear rape, you eventually settle for ripping the thing open and removing the battery.
- >Fuck that noisy thing, you'd rather burn.
- >Your attention returns to your gift of unknown origin.
- >What the hell was that?
- >It felt like being in the throes of a heavy drug trip, but you aren't getting high on a god-damned tuesday.
- >Acid flashbacks are all in a person's head.
- >You wouldn't have gone numb.
- "What did you just do to me?"
- >Your stuffed pony alter-ego, for her part, says nothing.
- >You're honestly a little thankful.
- >Maybe you're getting sick?
- >There's only one solution to illness in your life.
- >Sleep it off. Take as needed until better or dead.
- >You do bring your little Zephyr along, though. Can't hurt to have a pegasus for company, yeah?
- >No, you're definitely not normal.
- >Take nyquil, go to bed.
- >You have fitful dreams of ponies, they're talking to you, hugging you, singing to you.
- >It's all a bit too intense.
- >They're running circles around you, trying to get your attention.
- >A blur of pastels, all calling to you in a lyrical, sing-song voices.
- >It's overwhelming.
- >A sudden snap, and you turn to see the silhouette of a man.
- >You can't make out any details, but he's staring at you.
- >You don't know how, but you know he's looking at you.
- >You are terrified.

>Morning comes slowly to you, with brief dips back into unconsciousness, before you finally roll over and expose yourself to the

light coming from the window.

>Fuck you, the sun. I don't shine in your stupid face.

>You let your eyes adjust for a moment, gazing at the tree outside, and try to process the dreams you just had.

>The ponies make enough sense given yesterday's arrival, but what was up with the shadow-man?

>You ponder this for a moment, before you really look at the tree outside instead of spacing out.

>A branch by your window is broken.

>That's fucked.

>No way.

>Nu-Uh.

>NOPE.

>This has got to be in your head.

>The plush on your nightstand just stares and smiles.

>You begin to get out of bed, but your knees go weak and you fall to the floor.

>With some slow, careful movements, you get back on your feet and make way to the bathroom.

>Oh. Oh no. You're most certainly not alright.

>You're so deathly, ghostly pale that you're pretty sure you could hold your breath and look very convincingly dead.

>It's a shame you don't have roommates anymore.

>It'd be one hell of a prank.

>Whatever is happening here, it seems like a pretty good reason not to show for work.

>It does, however, take a solid ten minutes for you to dial work on your cell.

>You can't seem to get your fingers to work how you'd like.

>Trudging to your kitchen, you find a whole host of new aches and pains assailing your every movement.

>Your bones, your muscles. Everything is out of whack.

>You take the time to jam a bagel and some fruit juice in your face before returning to bed, laptop and the package your little pony arrived with in hand.

>You'd intended to search the USPS website to see if you can learn more about the box's sender.

>But not only is there no return address. Or stamps. Just your name.

>Whoever did this, they brought it here in person.  
>So it's got to be someone you know, right?  
>A full, custom-made plush toy of your character would be a bit much for stranger.  
>besides, what would a stranger have to gain?  
>Blackmail?  
>There'd be much, much better things to blackmail you with.  
>You decide to test the waters. You spend at least fifteen minutes fumbling through a text message to all your closest friends.  
>"Ha ha, very funny"  
>If the culprit is one of them, their reply will confirm it.  
>You'll be able to play it off as something else to the rest.  
>You're still too tired for this shit.  
>Lay back in bed.  
>OW.  
"What the fuck!"  
>Your back is absolutely killing you!  
>Right on the shoulderblades.  
>This should be alarming, but you're just too tired.  
>Sleep on your side, hope for the best.  
>No dreams this time, you're fading in and out of consciousness.  
>But in between blackouts, you become aware of gradually increasing pain from all parts of your body.  
>You're cramping up. Badly. Everywhere. All at once.  
>You make a desperate reach for your cell phone, but succeed only at knocking it to the floor.  
>Through your blurred vision, though, your arm appears to be literally changing shape.  
>It hurts. More than anything else you've ever experienced.  
>You can't cramp hard enough to break your own bones, right?  
>You try to cry out for help, but the sounds coming out of your mouth are strangled and unfamiliar to you.  
>Oh god, it's affecting your throat.  
>You're gonna die.  
>The cramps are getting more acute in waves, up and down your body.  
>Your shoulderblades, though. The pain there is different. Stabbing, like the muscle and skin are being carved right out of you.  
>There's a pressure building there.  
>With great effort, you turn your head enough to confirm your fears.



>There are large bumps on your back, steadily getting larger with sickly, arrhythmic bulges .  
>They're moving faster.  
>Oh fuck.  
>It takes an eternity, but whatever's in there finally breaks the skin.  
>You manage to scream.

>Following that, though, a loud bang from the front of your house.  
>Oh thank god, someone heard you, someone's going to help.  
>Then he rounds the corner.  
>He doesn't seem alarmed at the writhing, self-contorting mess of a person in front of him.  
>Why isn't he calling for help?  
>Why is he coming closer?  
>Why is he wearing a mask?  
>All you can muster in your defense is a pitiful "no" as his hand comes down to your face.  
>He's holding a rag.  
>The last thing you see before blacking out is the Zephyr plushie's cutie mark.  
>A small, blue cloud.  
>You really should have thought of something better.  
>Your drugged sleep is deep and dreamless.  
>But as consciousness returns to you, a nagging sense of... wrongness pervades you.  
>Your body feels strange.  
>Your limbs are sore, that's obvious, but nothing else feels right.  
>You slog through a few moments of confusion before the horror rushes back to you.  
>The pain, the... things coming out of your back.  
>The man in your house.  
>Oh shit.  
>You jerk violently to alert awareness, attempting to bring yourself upright and get a bearing on the situation.  
>The halting stop and the pain in your neck are confusing, but only until you look back down.  
>There's a chain running from your neck to a bolt on the floor. You can feel a collar rubbing as you tug a bit.  
>You're in a dark room, maybe the size of a walk-in closet, and chained

to a concrete floor in a corner opposite the door.

>No windows. The only light comes from the cracks of the doorframe.

>You are officially beginning to panic.

>So much so that it takes a few moments for you to notice that you have no grip on the chain you're desperately trying to remove.

>Your hands are gone.

>You stare at the stumps for a moment, allowing a wave of nausea to wash over you.

>He cut your hands off.

>Nonononononononononononono-wait.

>No, no he didn't... Your arms are different.

>There are no stumps from an amputation.

>They look smooth, and rounded.

>And very pale.

>No, not pale. White.

"Well. That's it. I've gone crazy. That's gotta be it, right? This isn't happening."

>Experimentally, you touch the two stumps together. You can feel them make contact.

>They're yours.

>Bile begins to rise in your throat, but you do your best to remain calm.

>It only holds for a moment, though.

>Something's getting in the way of your peripheral vision.

>Hair? You buzzed your head a week ago. How long have you been out?

>You can't get a grip on it, but turning your head slightly gives you a better look.

>Your hair is green.

>Your skin crawls, and with absolute terror you look down at the rest of your body.

>Two more stumps where your feet should be.

>Your legs shouldn't bend that way.

>What follows is not the product of rational thought.

>There is no narrative structure.

>Blind panic takes you.

>Your unfamiliar limbs begin to flail wildly.

>You can only scream.

>And you do scream. Long and loud.

>Your throat burns.

>Suddenly, the door to your cell swings open.  
>Blinded by the light coming in from the outside, you fall silent.  
>There he is.  
>The man from your room.  
>He seemed fairly tall before. He towers over you now.  
>You can't make out his face.  
>Then comes the rage.  
"What did you DO to me!"  
>He remains silent, but being doused by the hose he's holding doesn't help.  
"Fuck you!"  
>Another blast of freezing water. Some of it gets into your throat, leaving you gagging and coughing.  
>So that's how it's gonna be.  
>You stare at him in a silent rage.  
>He says nothing, but reaches beyond the door frame and produces a mirror.  
>Your breath catches in your throat.  
>It's Zephyr.  
>Your Zephyr.  
>You. Are. Zephyr.  
>A slender, all white body, Jade colored mane and tail, with lighter highlights.  
>A blue cloud sits on your ass.  
>flank?  
>Whatever.  
>And then you see them. They look large even by pegasus standards, but's that's how you thought of her. Dash was a sprinter. Your Zephyr was a marathon runner.  
>The likeness is perfect.  
>God help you.

>Your wings are fascinating.  
>You try to move them, at first all you do is jerk your arms... er, forelegs, and contort your back.  
>Then you get it right, and the two white-feathered beauties flutter just a bit in the mirror.  
>They're a part of you.  
>Can you fly?

>For a few blissful seconds, staring at your wings lets you forget the awful reality of the situation.

>He apparently can't let you have that, and with a small chuckle puts the mirror down somewhere behind the door frame.

>You snap out of your reverie and fill with a deep, sickening shame.

>The wings are wrong!

>Some whackjob did this to you, kidnapped you!

>And now he's laughing at you!

>Tears begin to well up, and a small sob escapes.

>Another small laugh, and then your captor deigns to speak:

"Hey now, don't get so worked up over it. To have done all that drawing and dreaming and writing, you must have wanted this."

>He stopped laughing, but he's still mocking you.

"Why?! Why do this to-"

>You stop with a sudden squeak. A hoof flies to your throat.

>Your voice is high and feminine. You hadn't noticed during all the screaming.

>He even took your voice.

>He clears his throat, and you make eye contact.

"I hope it sounds like you imagined. We'll get started soon. Sleep well, my little pony"

>You sit in stunned silence while he closes the door, leaving you in darkness.

>"My little pony"

>His little pony.

>Your unfamiliar voice calls out in a long, mournful wail, as tears flow freely.

>You cry yourself to sleep.

  

>You're not sure how long you were asleep.

>You're also not sure how long you've been awake.

>Time gets funny when you're locked in a dark cell.

>It's long enough to get hungry. That much you're sure of. It feels like you haven't eaten in days.

>Something you should probably be thankful for.

>There's no bathroom in here.

>Unless pastel ponies don't poop?

>This seems unlikely, but considering that you yourself are now a biological impossibility you suppose anything is possible.

>You'd spent your waking hours getting familiar with yourself.  
>No, not that.  
>Everything seems to be in working order, though you didn't spend much time investigating your, ah, marehood.  
>You can't even begin to deal with that right now.  
>Your wings give an involuntary twitch as you shift around again. Getting comfortable on a concrete floor is one thing. Staying comfortable is damn near impossible.  
>You don't like to look at your wings.  
>They're beautiful. You could watch them move around all day. You can't help but fixate on them.  
>What if they're big enough to fly?

>You shouldn't have them.  
>They're a pervert's addition to your mutated body.  
>They mean you're not human anymore.  
>Can you ever be human again?  
>The last couple of times you had this train of thought, you broke down crying again.  
>You just don't have the energy anymore.  
>You're sore, you're hungry, you're miserable.  
>You have never wanted a cigarette more badly in your entire life.  
>You also hope very much that p0nies can smoke.  
>Fuck this.  
>It's time to get some answers.

>It's time to make some noise.  
>What's the worst he can do?  
>Make you even more of a pony?  
>Let's not even think about that.

"Hey! Anyone out there?"

>...

"Hello? Hungry kidnapping victim in here!"

>You make out some small noises outside the door, but you can't tell what they are.

>This room must be more-or-less sound proof. Time to get louder.

"I don't mean to be a bother! I'm sure you're busy being a fucked-up monster and all, but you've ruined my life and I really feel like I deserve some answers!"

>Your thin veneer of sarcasm wont hold up much longer.

>More noises outside.

>Is he coming?

"Hello?"

>...

"HEY!"

>The door swings open again and just as before you are blinded by the light from the room beyond your prison.

>There he is. You can barely make out his face with your poorly adjusted eyes, but you know a smirk when you see it.

>His speech is totally deadpan.

"Hay is for horses, sweetheart."

>Is this guy ever going to take you seriously?

"You're really fucking funny for such a bastard. Care to tell me why you're doing all of this?"

He's totally silent as he steps into your cell with two trays. Putting the first down in front of you, you find ample food and water laid out for you. You realize it's actually a large dog bowl.

"What gives, buddy? I'm not your pet."

His only response is another small chuckle, as he drops the second pan to the floor beside you.

It's empty.

>Oh no. No fucking way.

"You've got to be kidding me. You let me out this instant. I'm not staying here long enough for that to be an issue."

Without another word, he turns to leave.

You don't know why, but his refusal to respond makes you worry more.

"Hey! I said to let me out! Don't you leave me in here!"

He looks back at you from the door.

"P... Please. Don't do this to me. Just change me back and I wont ever tell anyone a word."

He just closes the door behind him, leaving you in the dark again. You find yourself crying again.

You hate him.

But you really wish he'd come back.

It's only a small bout of despair, and soon hunger forces you to contemplate the food before you. Much to your chagrin, you realize that

it's mostly oats with some vegetables on the side.

>This motherfucker is really going to treat me like some pet horse?

You consider refusing to eat as protest, but an abominable hunger gets the better of you and even though the oats are bland and the vegetables lackluster, you find yourself scarfing away at the small pile.

With the food eaten and most of the water drunk, you're left alone with nothing but your thoughts for company.

You don't know how he did it, but that plush must have been what started all of this. The numbness you felt when you first held it must have been the beginning of the transformation! But if he knew about your OC and knew how to send you the plush, he must have been watching you for quite some time.

The thought gives you goosebumps. You need answers, and you need to get out of here. However, as immediate and pressing as this need is, you're currently trapped. The collar and chain that hold you in place have very little give, and without fingers you're incapable of removing either. The sounds the door makes when it opens and closes indicates a lock, and there are no windows. You have no idea where you are beyond that.

You sit there in quiet frustration for a moment, only to realize that your tail is jerkily swishing back and forth along the floor, like an irritated housecat might swing theirs.

>So it just does its own thing? Great. A constant mood indicator for him to watch. One more thing he's got on me.

With this revelation, you sigh, roll onto your side and begin to play the waiting game. You're too tired to sleep, but the chain keeps you from doing anything beside standing, sitting or lying in place in a small radius around it.

So you sit in the dark and wait.

and wait.

and wait.

You don't how long it's been, but you've officially run out of things to think about. Past relationships, clever things you wish you'd said to people over the years, how bad you wanted a smoke, where it all went wrong (p0nies. P0nies is clearly where it all went wrong).

Yep.

It's been thrilling. It's also been at least two days, you think? With no way of keeping time your time spent awake or sleeping has all been blurring together. Your captor hasn't made any additional appearances since coming by to take the pans away. You were eventually forced to use the empty one. You were so ashamed of yourself when he came in to pick them up that you couldn't even look at him. You buried your face in your hooves and waited for him to say something.

He didn't.

You shouldn't have done that. Was that bad? Is that why he hasn't been back in so long? You're getting hungry again. You stretch out your back in the hopes of getting comfortable when one of your wings gives an involuntary twitch. A look back reveals that constant rolling around on the floor has left your feathers in mild disarray.

Despite the sense of existential discomfort that comes over you as you do it, you find yourself using your mouth to preen your feathers into shape again, the way you see birds do it outdoors. The task is oddly meditative, and soon you've zoned out while your body goes about the task automatically.

You're so spaced you miss the first few notes of the lock turning and the door opening. When the light hits you, you freeze in place. He definitely saw that.

"Well well, taking the time to make yourself pretty, eh? Good girl."

The blush that rises across your face would be visible even if the door was shut.

"If you're trying not to be a cute little pony, you're very bad at it, honey."

You finally come to your senses and manage to stammer out a reply;

"Quit talking to me like that! No more pet names! I have a real name.

Y'know, the one that belongs to the real person you were stalking?"

He makes eye contact with you, and for the first time since you woke up p0nified he seems serious.

"Oh yeah, and what is your "real name", my little Zephyr?"

You start out as though to reply indignantly, when you realize that you don't know. It's gone. You had a name, a real person's name, and all of a sudden it seems like your name has been Zephyr since day one. You



know it's not, but it's all that comes to mind.

You look straight at him, no longer wary of him seeing the fear in your eyes or the trembling of your voice.

"H... How? How did you do this to me? I was a person and it... and it's all gone. How can one little plush take my name away?"

He just turns and walks away.

You don't want him to leave.

"I'm begging you, talk to me! Don't go!"

The door begins to swing shut.

"I can't do this anymore! Let me out! Please!"

Alone in the dark once more, you're no longer capable of calm. It's dark and you're alone and you're too afraid to be rational anymore.

You start screaming for him.

"PLEASE COME BACK! I'LL BE GOOD!"

Tears come unbidden, and you find yourself tugging at your collar and stomping on the floor.

"I'LL BE A GOOD PONY LIKE YOU WANT! I DON'T WANNA BE ALONE ANYMORE! JUST LET ME OUT! PLEASE!"

That's the last intelligible thing you manage before breaking down into hysterics. You scream and cry and roar at nothing for what feels like hours. You want someone to help you, save you. At some point you think you may have started crying for your mother.

It takes ages, but you eventually exhaust yourself, and end up curled into a ball on the floor, sobbing and deliriously moaning half-words.

Just at the absolute trough of your despair, when you've abandoned all notions of dignity or manhood, you see him.

The door's opening!

He came back!

He kneels before you, using his hands to raise your limp head to his eye level.

"I'm going to take you out of here, but you can never, ever disobey me ever again, or you'll go right back in. Do you understand?"

You have no words left to reply, but use your remaining strength to push yourself into him, clumsily latching onto his abdomen with your forehooves.

He carefully unhooks your chain from its post on the floor, and scoops you up in his arms like you were the lightest, most delicate thing on earth. You find yourself trembling and sobbing into his chest. He carries you out of your private hell, and through blurred vision you watch as you are lifted up a staircase and brought to a living room.

He settles himself on a couch, and still holding you in his lap begins to whisper words of comfort as you bawl with renewed vigor.

Finally, you stop crying. He's stroking your mane, and you cuddle deeper into his lap.

You know it's wrong, but you are Zephyr. And you have never been so happy in your entire life.

Bright sunlight wakes you. You find yourself lying on something very soft, and warm. Slowly opening your eyes, you find yourself awash in a sea of warm blanket, the white of the fabric very nearly matching the white of your body. He must have put you here after you fell asleep.

You'd fallen asleep as he stroked your mane and back. He made you inhuman and kidnapped you for reasons he still hasn't revealed, and you fell asleep in his lap, purring like a kitten. On an intellectual level, you know this should be utterly revolting. But something's different. Even if his reasons are imperceptible to you, and even if everything that made you break down was his doing... You feel attached. Dependent on him.

Shaking off thoughts of your still unsettling circumstances, you stretch and perk your head up for a look around your new surroundings.

What you find is in equal parts comforting and unsettling. You are indeed in a bed, but it's a dog bed. You can see the sun through a large window on the opposite side of the room, but the light shines through the bars of a large cage. Your enclosure is about the size of a large dog kennel. A small bowl of water is visible in another corner, and an empty litterbox sits opposite you.

A litterbox. He really does want to keep you like a pet. Then again, how would you even use a toilet in your current condition? This might just be

the easiest solution... no, you're making excuses for him. This is still totally fucked up, no matter how nice he might be. Wait, nice?

Your conflicted train of thought is interrupted by movement in the corner of your eye. There, at the door to bedroom that holds your cage!

...Oh. Wow.

She's tan colored, with a black mane and tail. Another pony. Like you. Like you? Is this someone else he abducted?

She silently pads into the bedroom with curious eyes fixed on you. She's smiling at you, though, and she seems to be free of any restraint. She stops a couple of feet from the cage, staring in at you. After a few moments of eye contact, you elect to verbalize.

"Hello?"

"..."

"Uh, I'm Zephyr. Do you understand me? Were you human once?"

"..."

"Can you speak? Did he do something to you? Listen to me, if you can get this cage open I could get us out of here. We can get help, put this guy behind bars. You just have to work the lo-"

In a sudden, swift motion, she wheels herself around and bucks the cage, hard. The sound of the steel rattling is murder on your ears and you try to jam your hooves in your ears until it stops. As the vibration dies down, she stomps over to the bars of the cage, and with a fury like none you've ever seen, proceeds to lose her shit;

"Don't you EVER, EVER say that about Master or I'll make you regret it!"

Oh. Oh this can't be a good sign.

"Excuse me, your Master? What, you're a slave?"

Her scowl cracks into a smile so quickly that you're even more unsettled;

"No, silly! Master is just Autumn's Master. He takes care of me and loves me and I love him!"

There's no saving this one. She's all the way gone.

Is this what you'll be when he's done with you? A willing, loyal pet?

There was a time last night when you loved him more than you've ever

loved anybody. If he could do that to you with a dark room and the silent treatment, what hope did you have?

Autumn, for her part, continues to be a wellspring of disturbing information;

"I forgive you, though. Master said you're like me, and you'll come around eventually. Maybe he'll keep you, too! I never get to spend much time with the others while they're here."

There is so much bad news in that sentence that your knees give out and you slump back into the bed.

"O-others? What others, Autumn?"

"Other ponies of course! Master's toys make them happy like us, then they go live with Master's friends and make them happy! Master makes such happy ponies that it pays for all our nice stuff! He's the best!"

Okay, so he transforms people, brainwashes them, and sells them. You can freak out about that later.

"Y-yeah, Autumn, he's great. What do mean "I'm like you and I'll come around"?"

She looks surprised that you don't know.

"Uh, duh, Zephyr. Master's plush didn't do the whole job. You're a pretty pony, that's for sure, but the toy makes the others like it. I feel kind of bad for them. They don't learn to love their master for themselves!

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 2

You're aghast at what you're being told. The plush was supposed to somehow brainwash you when it transformed you! Autumn's prattling on about what her Master was going to make for dinner tonight while you're having your private breakdown, but that won't work. You need to know more.

"Wait, Autumn. You said that the plush toy didn't make you like being a pony. What did?"

She looks thoughtful for a moment before responding.

"Well, yeah, Master's toy didn't work how it was supposed to. I was pretty just like now, but I was unhappy. Master tried to fix it using another toy, but that made Autumn..."

She looks away from you, clearly distressed by the memories.

"It made me bad. Master had to tie me up, or I'd hurt myself. It took a long time, but Master made me better. That's why he's the best!"

She finishes on a smile, and for a moment you're silent as you attempt to process what you've just learned. He tried to use another plush to make her compliant? From the sound of it, that didn't work out too well. You manage to keep your voice level just long enough to ask one more question.

"Autumn. This is very important. Is that what he is going to do with me?"

"Of course not, silly filly! Master said tha-"

She's interrupted by the sound of a door opening somewhere downstairs, and before you know it she's bounding out of the room.

"Master's home! I'll bring him up to see you!"

You can't decide if that's a good thing or not. He's made you into a pony. He was planning on selling you! Now here you are, in a kennel in his bedroom, while he tries to figure out what to do with his defective merchandise!

But he hasn't done to you what he did to Autumn. Maybe he doesn't want to hurt you. He was so gentle when he picked you up. He said such nice things...

Regardless of your battling emotions, you find yourself pacing your kennel, tail swishing back and forth behind you in excitement. You realize you're acting like a dog and try to calm yourself down, but you can't sit still and they're still not back. You can hear movement downstairs, but can't figure out what they're doing. What's more important than checking in on your prisoner?

Finally, you hear footsteps trudging up the stairs toward you. The small knot of fear in your chest is overwhelmed by excitement at being able to talk to somebody again. You don't know how long you were in that hole, but you were practically jumping up and down at the thought of having company again, even if it was just Autumn telling you how doomed you were.

Then, finally, Autumn bounds back into the room, chattering happily at him as he enters holding a pair of bowls. You stare at him in silence as he opens the door to your cage and places a bowl full of fruit and vegetables before you. Without a word, he goes to shut the door again when you speak up.

"Ah, excuse me, but.."

He freezes and makes eye contact with you, and for a second your heart flutters.

"Th... Thank you for the meal."

He just smiles and pets you on the head. He's still treating you like a dog, but when he's here with you it doesn't seem so bad. In that moment of eye contact, all your worries and questions were gone, and you just wanted to be good for him.

Oh god, what has he done to you?

You desperately want to understand what's happening to you. You shouldn't want to please him, he's a monster! He taken others and done the same to them, too! Autumn does seem well cared for, though...

He takes a few steps and seats himself in an office chair, then powers on

a computer on the desk in front of him. You consider just eating your meal and hoping he'll talk to you later, but Autumn speaks up.

"Master, Zephyr's got questions! Shouldn't you talk to her?"

He gives a large sigh, then turns the chair around to speak with both of you.

"Listen, I promise to talk with Zephyr soon, but I'm exhausted right now, and I just need to relax for a bit first, alright?"

She pouts a bit, but comes up with a retort.

"Could she come out of the cage to play, then? I never get to play with the others before they go away."

This time the exasperation is written on his face.

"No, honey. She's not ready yet, and I can't have her running loose without supervision. Maybe once I rest a little."

Autumn's sitting very still, but the perpetual smile she wears takes on a slightly different look, and the odd gleam in her eye reminds you of something, but you can't remember what. It doesn't take long to remember, though.

Autumn closes the distance between herself and her Master and seems to jam her face onto his waistline. You can't make out what she's doing, but the Master seems just as shocked as you are.

It takes a moment, but the jingle of a loosed belt and the sound of a zipper opening give it all away. Oh, oh no. She's not trying to...?

Then you hear the Master's small moan, and understand true horror. She's pleasuring him, and you're a captive audience to this new kind of depravity.

For a moment she seems to be fumbling with his underwear, but eventually manages to remove his hardening member with only her mouth. For a moment she pulls back and looks up at him.

"Getting on that computer isn't going to help you relax one bit, Master. Let your Autumn take care of it."

The Master seems to have given up on stopping her, and he lets out a small groan as she licks his full length before taking it in her mouth, never once breaking eye contact with him. She works slowly and laboriously up and down his shaft, and while he reclines fully and closes his eyes you can't look away. You'd really like to, but the surrealness of the scene playing out before you and the slow heat building in your



nether region keep you fixated on Autumn's bobbing head and your kidnapper's throbbing cock.

Without realizing it, one of your forehooves finds it's way to your as of yet untested marehood, and you feel an alien thrill of pleasure as you begin to clumsily rub yourself. You're aghast at what you're doing, but it's all too much, and it feels much too good to stop now.

Autumn's been hard at work for quite a few minutes now, and the increasing volume of her Master's groaning seems to indicate an imminent finish. You're staring right at her and with small moans, you find yourself totally lost in the moment. The pleasure you're getting from the limited reach of your inexperienced hoof is astonishing. Then, with your soft moans building in frequency she turns her head just a bit and, still sucking on the Master, makes eye contact with you. The shame of being seen like this is there, but it has absolutely nothing compared to the sheer eroticism of the moment.

With a shuddering groan the master comes, and Autumn never once breaks eye contact with you, even as she swallows. The Master pants for a moment, then mutters about cleaning himself off and departs for the bathroom. For a moment, shame overwhelms you. Here you are, sitting in a locked cage, getting off to a man and a small pastel horse going at it.

You're momentarily distraught at your new-found perversion, and disgusted by the unfamiliar pleasure radiating from your crotch. Autumn wastes no time in trotting over to your cage, and before you can ask what she's doing, she's put her forehooves through the bars, looped them around your lower legs, and pulled you ass-first toward the bars.

Splayed upright with your legs pressed against the bars and you marehood pointed right at Autumn, you balance on a forehoof to keep your wings from getting crushed. Your confused stammering manages to give her momentary pause.

"Wa... Wait. What're you doing?"

She looks up at you with bedroom eyes, and begins to lower her head toward the gap in the bars opposite your marehood.

"Shhhh little Zephyr. Let Autumn teach you one of the best things about being one of us."

You began to protest, but it all faded into a moan when her tongue met your folds. She went to work quickly and mercilessly, assaulting your marehood and overwhelming you in pleasure. You try to work yourself away from you, but she keeps her forelegs locked around your rear ones, and you can't muster the strength to break free. You're helpless, and both of you know it.

Your moans grow louder and she begins to assail your clitoris. Rapid flicks of a rough tongue back and forth over your new anatomy produces sensations more intense than you've ever experienced. You're absolutely lost in blind ecstasy, to the point where your moans for her to stop have instead become demands that she not.

But then she does. Your eyes snap back open and down to Autumn, who is removing her soaked face from your nethers and staring up at you. You begin to mewl in frenzied desperation. She gives you a smile and makes her demand.

"You want me to finish? Then repeat after me; I'm Zephyr, and I love being a pony"

Some small part of you knows what she's doing here, but you need this. In quick breaths you moan it back to her.

"I'm Zephyr, and I love being a pony"

She rewards you with a small lick up the length of your folds before continuing;

"And I love my Master for making me one."

This time you do stop for a moment, but another small flick of her tongue and you find yourself crying out again.

"And I love my Master for making me one!"

Her assault resumes, and your moans become pitched. You know that you're building towards climax, and you've never needed anything more in your entire life.

She only has to stop for a moment this time.

"Again"

"I'm Zephyr and I love being a pony! And I love my master for making me one!"

It's coming. Your eyes roll back into your head and spasms wrack your body.

"Again."

"I'm Zephyr and I love being a pony! I love my Master for making me one!"

The last call is carried long and loud by the force your the most incredible orgasm of your entire life. Zephyr lets go of your legs, and you curl up into yourself on the floor or your cage as a warm haze of afterglow settles over you.

For a moment, you are satisfied and at peace, until you hear Autumn speak;

"Hear that Master? She's coming around just like you said!"

Sure enough, there he is in the doorway to the bedroom, looking absolutely flabbergasted. You feel your face grow red hot as you begin to blush. A sense of cold, terrible shame rises up out of your stomach. Here you are, mutated, abused, and caged, and now you've screamed out your love for the man that did it to you. All of that, mind you, while another brainwashed transformee violated you!

and you liked it...

A quick sob escapes, and the Master suddenly stops scolding Autumn as the two turn to the sound of your crying. The Master gives a long sigh and a quick facepalm, while Autumn's expression sinks and she runs to the nearest set of cage bars.

"Oh no, honey, I'm sorry! I didn't want to make you unhappy! Please don't cry, I just wanted to help!"

A lower, slower cry joins your own, and you realize that Autumn has started crying too. You can't explain why, but you feel worse for her than you do for yourself. You're about to forgive her when you find yourself being pulled out of your cage.

Suddenly you're in the Master's arms, and with his face mere inches from your own you're too shocked to continue crying. He pulls you into a tight hug, and for a moment everything is perfect. He quickly sets you down on his bed, does the same with Autumn, and sets her down beside you. You share a hug yourselves, and the matter is settled for the moment.

With all that done, he sits down in his office chair, and with you two seated squarely on the bed, it's finally time.

"Alright, let's talk."

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 3

That's it? Just like that he wants to talk? All the begging and screaming in your cell got was sarcasm, but apparently getting eaten out merits a sit-down talk?

Your thoughts derail for a moment on having been "eaten out". You've only been female for a short while now, and most certainly hadn't come to terms with it prior to the strangest sexual experience of your life five minutes ago. It was... incredible. But moreover, it wasn't just Autumn's magical tongue that had done it for you. You can't help but worry that being so helpless had somehow contributed. You'd realized at some point mid-coitus that you were completely at her mercy, and that had been the transition from fear to joy. You'd always been the dominant member of your relationships. How the hell does a plush make you into a trembling, mewling little sub begging for more?

Yes, this is a talk you need to have.

"I... I don't really know where to begin" is all you can sigh out at your expectant abductor. "I'm at quite a disadvantage here. Could we just start very simply?"

He gives the smallest flash of a smile before nodding, and something about his smile makes you knees go weak for a moment. His face turns dour when you speak next, though.

"Why me?"

He ponders for a moment before responding.

"Honestly? Someone requested a white pegasus with green hair, and I already knew all about you."

So he was going to sell you. More over, you're apparently a commission piece. But he knew about your OC? He knew where you lived?

"How did you know who I was? Those were just internet posts. Totally anonymous."

"Sweetheart, I've spent a year doing this, and I've got dozens of files on people like you used to be. All the clues are there if someone wanted you bad enough, and I did."

He's keeping his voice level, but something tells you he's never had to explain himself to anyone before. Well, anyone but Autumn.

"Why turn people into their own characters? Wouldn't you do better selling the mane six?"

This time there's a note of laughter in his voice.

"I get those requests all the time, but turning someone into something completely different is too traumatic. There's no use turning someone into a Pinkie look alike if they're going to act like a lobotomy victim."

"And you DID that to someone?!" You're having a hard time staying calm. The feeling is not just horror at what had been said, but a small sense of disappointment, as though you'd thought of him as a nice person. He's not nice! He can't be nice!

So why did you want him to?

"No! That's not how it works. The characters you make up are, in some small way, a part of you, and that makes the transition easier.

Zephyr was someone you invented by thinking about her, and whether you realize it or not, that made it easier to become her. If you woke up with a face you had no real psychological connection with you'd go right off the deep end."

Easy? It made it easier? You wanted to die down there, and he's talking about making it easy on you! Tears well up in your eyes and you need a moment to compose yourself. If you start screaming now you might not get all the answers you need. He's clearly noticed your distress, but

remains silent.

There's an angry tremor in your voice, and off to the side you can see Autumn becoming uncomfortable with the situation.

"How does anyone do something like this? You made a man into an impossible thing with just a plush toy. I can't think of much to explain it. You're not going to say magic, are you?"

His expression grows darker as he picks up on your rising temper, but he does reply.

"Sufficiently advanced technology, actually. I had been working on nanomachines prior to being let go for... ethics issues, but I still knew everything I needed. I was broke and getting desperate, and at some point during my long bout of unemployed misery I stumbled onto a certain cartoon show, and it's fans."

"Now, I was one of those fans, but I noticed a lot of them seemed to want a pony companion, or pet. I knew how to reshape living flesh with nanobots, and I needed the money."

Your hand went numb when you first held the plush. Was that the feeling of being overrun by tiny machines?

"Autumn said that they didn't finish the job. Was I supposed to have been brainwashed by the time you showed up?"

He takes a quick glance at Autumn, whose deer-in-the-headlights expression almost makes you feel bad. You hope she won't get in too much trouble for saying too much. He gives a long sigh, and then looks you right in the eyes.

"No. One of the functions of the machines was to induce certain subconscious responses, but they were just to help you accept your new life, not overwrite the old one. You would still have been you, just without all the screaming when you woke up."

He hasn't broken eye contact the whole time. The back of your mind



screams that he's a monster, but as long as you're looking at those eyes you can't help but believe him. You're about to ask a follow up question when he continues without any prodding;

"When I took Autumn, the nanomachines didn't do their mental tasks, and she had the same freak-out you did. I panicked and re-dosed her on the mental modifiers, but that just made it worse. She became unstable. Sometimes she'd be fine, then seconds later she'd be screaming and beating her head into a wall to "get it off me". It's taken nine months of work for her to level off into the pony next to you.

She's still not totally fine. Once a customer asked if she was for sale, and she had a major violent episode. For better or worse, she only wants me for a master."

"When I realized you weren't totally affected, I got nervous and put you in the same room I used for Autumn to keep her from hurting herself. I hoped that maybe you just needed more time, and by the look of it you are getting used to that little pony body of yours."

There's a knot in your chest that's threatening to burst at any moment. Your mind is locked in battle with itself between primal fear of being changed from within against your will, and a sudden rush of joy that he cares so much to have worried.

You hate him.

You love him.

Completely unable to cope with opposing emotions, tears begin to flow as you reply;

"So what, then? You keep me in a dog crate until I'm worth selling into slavery?"

There is a hint of shame in his voice, but he does you the service of answering truthfully.

"Now you live here with me until I decide you're not a liability. You need

to like your new life before I can sell you. I can't have you running away from a buyer or you could get me arrested and Autumn here locked in a bio lab, with you, I might add, for the rest of your lives."

The thought hadn't occurred to you that putting yourself in the hands of the authorities might very well mean being a guinea pig for doctors. Suddenly the world you came from seemed just as frightening as the one you were in.

In a sudden motion he lifts you up and holds you at eye level. There, utterly at his mercy, you hear his pronouncement.

"I am your Master, and you will obey me."

An unwelcome thrill runs up your spine and your mind reels. He wants you to be a pet! He wants you to like it!

"Do you understand me?"

You make eye contact, and the words have left your mouth before you knew you'd said them.

"Yes... Master."

God, you're so fucking wet right now.

As soon as what you've said sinks in, you know you shouldn't have called him Master. Something about feels... permanent. From this moment on, you may very well be irrevocably his pet for life, abandoning any notions of independence or personhood you had left after this ordeal. This is awful.

But it feels sooo good...

Your Master wastes no time in following up on his declaration, and you find yourself seated on his lap in his chair. You open your mouth as if to speak, but he places a finger over your lips and you fall silent.

His hands begin to slowly massage your neck, and you have difficulty

remaining upright with this new sensation. He looked strong before, but now he's powerfully rubbing his hands along your muscles and you just want to melt away. You close your eyes as his hands move down to your upper back and shoulders, slowly pushing away days of pent up stress and poor sleeping positions from the cell.

You're completely relaxed by the time he leans in behind your ear and whispers;

"Do you promise to obey me, and serve me faithfully for the rest of your life?"

You know you shouldn't agree, but it's far too late to stop now. Your reply is breathlessly whispered;

"Yes, Master."

His hands dig lower and your forelegs finally give out as your back arches.

"Do you promise to be a faithful and loyal pet, to me or anyone I choose to give you to?"

You understand that you're signing your life away, and it sends shivers up your spine as you give a soft moan and reply;

"Yes, Master."

He's worked his way down to your rump, and as his fingers dive ever closer to your marehood you're forced to admit to yourself that you want him, and you want him bad. One hand rolls you onto your side while the other begins to tease at your most sensitive region.

"Are you going to be a good little pony, just like Autumn?"

You're far too horny to consider the implications of that. you'll agree to anything at this point, as long as he'll give you what you need.

"Yes, Master!"

Suddenly his hand stops teasing you, and you open your eyes in time to see him loop a rope around all four legs and draw it taut. He looks you right in eyes;

"I don't believe you. Not yet."

He lifts you up and carries you across the room, as your struggle madly against your bonds. He can't plan on leaving you like this? You begin to beg him for release, but all he does is lay you on the dog bed in the cage and lock you in, still tied. He makes a brisk walk to the door, calling for Autumn to follow him and leave you be.

Autumn spares you a quick glance, eyes full of sympathy, before doing as her Master commands.

Your arousal is maddening, and you're completely incapable of doing anything about it. You try to buck your legs out of the ropes, but no amount of effort on your part seems to dislodge your restraints. Rolling around the cage does you no good, as you can't find anything to grind your sopping wet marehood against to get some satisfaction.

You're horny, helpless, and the man you just submitted to, body and mind, is leaving you to stew in your arousal for as long as he pleases.

There's nothing for you to do now but languish in here until your Master decides you've had enough, and the notion that he has that much power over you does nothing but make the heat in your crotch worse.

He's a monster, and you're beginning to love him for it.

You writhe around your cage for hours, trapped in a deep heat that only relents little by little as time crawls on. Your mind flits back and forth to memories of Autumn's tongue probing you and the Master's warm hands massaging the base of your wings. This is torture and it Hurts. So. Good.

Finally, long after the sun went down, you'd calmed down enough to think about anything other than sex. Still quite hot-and-bothered, but not enough to ignore your hunger pangs. You manage to wiggle yourself over

to the food bowl he left earlier, and manage to leverage an apple out of the bowl and onto the floor.

You pause briefly at the notion of eating directly off the floor, still on the fence about surrendering that particular shred of dignity, but no piece of fruit on earth has ever looked as good as that apple does right now. With a small sigh of resignation, you take a small bite.

Oh. My. God. Either the plush rewired your taste buds or this is the greatest apple in the history of it's kind. You have to stop yourself from devouring it as quickly as you can in favor of small bits of it to savor this astonishing taste experience. Based on what he's been feeding you, you have to assume you've become a full herbivore now, but if all greens are going to taste like this you might be able to go without bacon.

Go without, but never forget. Mmmm, bacon.

After picking the apple down to nothing but a skinny core, you're delighted to hear footsteps coming up the stairs, and your Master enters a moment later. You wiggle around enough to present your rump to him in the hopes of getting some attention to soothe the still-present yearning in your nethers, but all he does is chuckle at you.

"Nope. You've got to earn it, honey. And I'll have you know I've given Autumn some incentives not to get frisky with you, either. Be a good p0ny and maybe you'll get what you're after."

You look down dejectedly, only to be taken by utter surprise by a playful slap on your rear end. You were only barely upright to begin with, and his spank sends you toppling over. Blushing and trying to suppress renewed arousal, you turn to see your Master trying not to laugh at you. You go for broke and make one final bid for release.

"Please... Master. I promise to be a good girl, could you at least untie me?"

He's all smiles now. He's wormed his way into your head and he knows it.

"I prefer to gag my pets for their pleasure, but if you're going to whine all night I'll make an exception. I'll untie you and let you come when I decide you're ready. Now then, quiet down and get some rest."

You're silent for a moment, attempting to process his line about gagging you, but realize the situation is hopeless and respond with a quiet "Yes, Master."

While he sits himself down on the bed near your cage, Autumn strolls into the room and right up to your cage. She looks you up and down, and her face droops to a small frown.

"Oh you poor thing! It must be terrible, all tied up and on edge like that. I'm really sorry, but Master says that I need to let this happen so you can come out of the cage. Then we can play together, and not just the raunchy kind, either! I get so lonely when Master isn't home. Please feel better!"

She then leans into the bars and gives you a full-on kiss goodnight. Just when you thought you couldn't possibly feel any more embarrassment tonight, she had to prove you wrong. Jeez...

You really can't get a read on this mare. She must have been a person like you at some point, but the way she talks and acts... You like Autumn, and hope she continues to like you, but you also really hope you're not this bubbly about everything by the time Master's done with you.

Autumn clambers up onto the bed Master is already in, and gives you a cheery "Goodnight, Zephyr!" before curling up beside the Master and telling him the same. You resign yourself to a night of arousal and probably more than a few fucked-up wet dreams, and settle onto your dog bed.

"Goodnight Autumn. Goodnight... Master."

He looks at you approvingly through one eye.

"Good girl. Sleep well."

With that, he hits the lights and rolls over. As far as you can tell the two

of them are asleep in no time. You, on the other hand, continue to fitfully roll around in your little bed, eventually managing to get the blanket on top of you rather than under you, and proceed to spend the next few hours wishing you could either touch yourself or fall asleep. You do eventually nod off, wondering what new indignities will come with your next day of ponydom.

Your night goes about as well as you thought it would, and when sunlight wakes you the next morning you feel downright filthy. It's all a little hazy, but you're pretty sure one of your dreams involved being mounted by a stallion, confirming that you're most assuredly not the same person who opened the box and started all of this.

You lift your head and look around the room, but Autumn and your master are nowhere to be found. You try to wiggle out from under your blanket, but you've managed to tangle yourself completely. With your legs still tied, you're not getting out of bed without help. And as much as you hate it, you really need to use that litterbox.

This is going to be a problem.

At first you try to sit tight and wait for one of them to come by so you can ask for help, but it's not a long-term solution. Much like a long car ride, you've nothing to do but sit there and think about how badly you need a bathroom, and soon enough you find yourself calling out for the Master.

He turns up after a minute or two, looking annoyed with you.

"Yelling at the top of your lungs first thing in the morning is not what I'd call good behavior, Zephyr."

You're astonished to find yourself feeling guilty, but this can't wait.

"I'm sorry Master, but I'm still tied up and stuck in bed and I need to use the bathroom, or litterbox, or something. I don't want to ruin the bed."

Just like that he's back to smiling. "Good girl. I'll let this one slide. In fact, I'll do you one better." He unlocks the cage and separates you from

the tangled mess of bedding, but pauses when he takes hold of the knot keeping your legs in place.

"Alright, I'm going to untie you, and then I'm going to take you outside as a reward for good behavior. If Autumn or I see you so much as brush your crotch with a hoof you're going to be in trouble. Real trouble, understand?"

Your enthusiastic nod is a product of exuberance at Master's rewarding you, and of a building physical need.

"Yes! Thank you thank you thank you! I'll be good!"

You're free in an instant, and while you take a moment to stretch your sore legs Master produces a leash and affixes it to the collar you've been wearing since you first woke up.

You have some major issues getting down the stairs, but manage to do it without falling over more than twice. Autumn's all encouragement, but you can see the laughter in the Master's eyes every time you stumble. When the three of you finally step outside, you gasp in shock. You were on the edges of a mid-sized city when he took you, and you'd assumed he operated from a fairly close location.

Given that you saw nothing but tree-covered mountains as far as the eye could see and no sign of other human settlement, it seems you assumed wrong.

"Wha... Where are we?"

"Far enough away that no one's going to come looking for you here, if that's what you're asking. We're in the middle of nowhere for a reason. Come on, now."

With a small tug on your leash he urges you forward, and you find yourself trotting towards the treeline by the clearing that constitutes the Master's yard. You end up getting tugged in one direction or the other more than once, but soon you've figured out how to keep stride with the Master and leave a little slack.



You do take a moment to ponder how ashamed you should be at being proud of that. You wonder if he tells buyers things like that "Takes well to leash training" or "May develop anxiety if left alone for long periods" just like a dog up for adoption. It turns your stomach a little, but you're too tired and preoccupied to worry about that now.

And then soon enough you're at the treeline, and he just looks at you expectantly.

"Well, go on."

"Wait, here? With you watching?"

He seems more annoyed now than he did before.

"You ever see anyone give their dog privacy for this stuff?"

"But I'm NOT a dog."

"But you ARE a pet. Now start acting like one."

You fidget for a moment, but you're relieved to see him look over at Autumn as she chases a nearby butterfly.

Finally, business done, you can appreciate being outside for the first time since opening the box. Master's house seems to be in the middle of some very dense and unpopulated woods, no doubt to keep prying eyes away from his business. He takes you on a fairly long walk around his yard, then leads the two of you indoors.

With your walk concluded, you expect to be put straight back in your cage, but the Master's full of surprises today. He produces a pair of strawberries from the kitchen, giving one to each of you for good behavior. Before you realize what you're doing, you've eaten that little bit of heaven directly from the palm of his hand and accepted your pat on the head with glee.

He's too good at this. A few days ago you were terrified by this man, and now you're accepting treats for good behavior... Just like the pet you

agreed to be. Considering that you're miles from civilization and still unfamiliar with this body, escape simply isn't a viable option.

Resistance... You can't go back in the basement. You just can't.

While you contemplate what's looking like your inevitable domestication, Master orders the two of you to wait for him in the living room.

He goes downstairs, and Autumn strikes up a conversation while the two of you sit on the rug waiting.

"I'm really sorry about making you cry yesterday. I thought it would help." You can tell by the tone of her voice that she really means it, and you can't help but be touched by her sincerity.

"It's... alright. I know you didn't mean any harm, I'm just not used to those, ah, feelings quite yet. Aaand you came on pretty strong, there."

For the first time in days, you crack a genuine smile. All those tears and all that shame can't stand up to Autumn's good attitude. You do wonder how much of it is the person she was or if it's all the Master's machines. You decide not to ask, though. Today is going too well for you to risk a sensitive topic. You settle for asking her how she handles stairs so well on four legs, which hold the both of you over until Master reappears a few minutes later.

He seems pleased to find the two of you chatting away, and seats himself on the couch.

"No restraints and you sat right down and waited for me. Good girl, Zephyr."

You had thought about your options yes, but you could have at least looked around a little, tried to learn something about your circumstances. It didn't even occur to you. You're still ashamed to admit it, but he's got you right where he wants you.

He gives a quick pat to the cushions on either side of him, and you follow Autumn's lead in clambering up onto the couch and laying down beside

him. He begins to stroke you mane with one hand, Autumn's with the other, and soon enough you close your eyes and set your head down on the cushion. You're not asleep, but you're certainly very comfortable.

His hand starts taking longer strokes down your back, and you stretch yourself out on the sofa to enjoy it better. You end up plopping your head down on his thigh as a makeshift pillow. You're loving this. Suddenly your mother's cat constantly trying to get this attention makes sense.

Just as you're on the edge of nodding off he rolls you onto your side, and the whole damned cycle begins anew. He begins to rub more sensitive regions, but you know how this turns out and try to roll away from him.

Sure enough, the rope comes back out, and no amount of wiggling stops him from putting you back in bondage. With you back to helplessness, he begins to rub and tickle you in erogenous zones you didn't know you had. Before long you're moaning for more, and he's happy to deliver. His fingers run along the outer edges of your folds, and begin to lightly probe you. A day of pent-up arousal comes back in full force, and you're already trembling.

And then he stops. Like it never even happened, he picks up a remote and asks Autumn what she wants to watch. You begin to beg for release while he channel surfs.

Your mewling and whining only earns you a ballgag, strung taut, leaving you silent and squirming as they settle on a black-and-white comedy. Every now and again his hand brushes or probes your marehood, building your arousal without offering any release. He's just going to toy with you. All. Day. Long.

Your Master is cruel, and it feels amazing.

It's been hours. After the movie ended Autumn took over the remote and has been watching cartoons ever since. Master is reclining with one hand curled around a book and another around your snatch, slowly rubbing up and down. Hours of teasing have left you exhausted and sore and your wings have been fully outstretched for long enough that they're beginning to cramp. You can barely think through the

haze of arousal, and all you can think about is getting off.

Right now you'd give anything, absolutely anything, if he'd just pick up the pace and let you come. The ballgag in your mouth keeps you from telling him as such, and in utter desperation you try to earn yourself a reprieve by nuzzling your face into his crotch and hoping he'll accept your offer. You take a deep breath while you're in there, and the scent of his manhood is detectable through his jeans. It's a dizzying, wonderful smell, and you want more. He seems a little surprised by your gesture, and removes your head from his lap and lifts it to face him.

"You really are that horny, aren't you? Well, I'm not totally without sympathy." He reaches around your head and removes the ballgag.

While you try to work out the kinks in your aching jaw, he makes his demand;

"Tell me what I want to hear, and we'll see if you've earned it."

He wants another token of submission from you, and you're ready to give him all that and more if he'll just let you finish. You put on your best puppy dog eyes and begin to beg shamelessly.

"I'm your pet pony! I'll obey every command, no matter what you ask! I'll never run, I'll never resist! You are my master, and I'll be yours for the rest of my life! Please, just let me come! Ffuck me!"

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 4

He makes a show of pondering your answer, and for a second you worry he's going to keep playing with you. Finally, he speaks.

"Make it worth my while and we'll see what you earn."

For a moment, you're at a loss as to what he means, until he unties your legs and begins unbuttoning his jeans.

Is this really happening?

Down goes a zipper, and with some quick adjustment to his underwear his manhood springs forth, already getting hard. It's only inches from your face, and for a second you freeze. You're a man. A straight man. You've never wanted a dick before in your life. You shouldn't be doing this. It shouldn't look so good. It's staring you in the face and all you can do is stare right back.

The heat in your crotch and the feeling of your own juices running down your leg urge you forward. You lean in close to his member, taking another moment to steel your resolve. The smell of masculine sweat wafting by your nose is intoxicating. He's big and all your little mare brain can think of at the moment is getting him inside you.

You take a final moment to look up into his eyes, before looking back down. You're less than an inch away now. Any shame you had left is drowned out by the haze of arousal, and with closed eyes you take an experimental lick of the head. It's firm and warm on your tongue, and the taste of sweat and precum drives you wild. You're dimly aware of a giddy squeal of approval coming from Autumn as you begin to take long, slow licks up the length of him.

His hand finds its way to your mane, and with a quick "Good girl" he slides himself into your mouth. Your jaw opens as far as it can go to accommodate him, and after a moment of surprise at the new sensation

you begin to suck on the head of your Master's dick. Running your tongue in quick circles over a velvety head, you open an eye to sneak a peek at Master's face. He's clearly enjoying himself, and after a small groan looks down to make eye contact with you. He smiles, and there's a flutter in your chest when he calls you a "Good girl".

You begin to bob your head with gusto, and are rewarded by a small groan from above you as he lays his head back to enjoy. He's loving this, and so are you! You've been gradually easing more and more of him into your mouth on each stroke, and while you're hardly at his base you're amazed at how much you can take before you overdo it and gag just a bit before recoiling. You're quick to recover, but he's just as quick with quip.

"Don't worry, you'll have plenty of chances to get there, pet."

You settle for increasing your tempo, and along with the sounds of your blowjob you can hear small moans coming from Autumn as she touches herself. You feel small twitches near the base and realize what's happening a second before it does. Your Master leans forward and grabs hold of the back of your head as warm cum floods your mouth. You were aware of the bitter taste before now, but you nearly cough it up before you hear him speak.

"Swallow."

There's no second thought in your mind. He commanded, and you obey, looking up at him with a moan and with one gulp drinking a mouthful of his seed. You're still burning up, but there is a thrill of satisfaction in obeying him that you've been trying to ignore up until now.

"Yes, Master."

He's breathing heavily, and there's a surge of pride as you realize you must have done well. He leans over and scoops you up, and your mind immediately turns to your promised reward.

What you get is a kiss on the forehead. "You've done very well, Zephyr. I didn't expect so much enthusiasm! I suppose you've earned a suitable reward."

Master lays you down on the sofa with care not to hurt your wings and wastes no time putting his hands to work.

He begins with slow, deliberate up and down motions along the length of your folds, and you bite down on your lower lip as he begins to glide them back and forth, slowly working them into your sopping wet marehood. Up until now, his fingers had barely probed you during his teasing sessions, now your back arches as you feel two of his fingers pressing on your inner folds. There's only a little pain as he gently pushes deeper into you, and you open your eyes to find him wearing his trademark smirk as you gasp in astonishment at your first taste of penetration. He begins an agonizingly slow in-and-out motion, and your head is spinning as you look down to see his fingers coated in your juices. You let out a long, deep moan, but it's cut short as Autumn enters your field of vision and begins to roughly kiss you.

Her tongue enters your mouth, and soon your throaty moans are blocked by the force of an intimate, prolonged kiss. You're forced to come up for air as he begins to work his fingers in circles, rubbing your inner walls and flooding you with alien pleasures you'd never imagined before. Autumn settles for kissing and biting at your neck as you moan "Master" in long breaths.

Autumn moves further up and nibbles your ear before whispering in a breathy voice;

"See, sweetie? I knew you'd come around sooner or later. Now, I think you owe me from last time."

Your eyes grow wide as Autumn pulls herself onto you, and soon she's buried your face in her snatch. Remembering what you could of Autumn's efforts on you, you begin to lick at her folds and clit, savoring the sweet taste of her as she uses a hoof to push you deeper in.

Master's fingers begin to speed up their attentions, and your moans are reduced to high-pitched squeals as his thumb settles over your clitoris and begins to rub.



You're getting lightheaded, and all rational thought is gone by the time your eager attentions to Autumn's slit earn you a faceful of her juices as she comes to a shuddering orgasm. She rolls herself off of you, and Master's assault on your marehood reaches it's peak. You begin to buck your hips in rhythm with his ever more frequent thrusts as your vaginal muscles clench down hard on his digits. You can't think, you can't breathe. This is the most amazing experience of your entire life.

Every inch of you begins to convulse as an orgasm two days in the making rocks your body. Your mind is utterly, blissfully blank as you give a moan that is very nearly a scream and you swear you feel the earth move as Autumn's mouth finds yours for one final, sloppy kiss.

Master removes his hand from you, and presenting his Zephyr-coated fingers to you gives one final command.

"Lick them clean"

You greedily obey, gazing gratefully into his eyes as you taste yourself on his fingers.

Finally he pulls his hand back, takes each of you in his arm as he leans back onto the couch and allows you both to cuddle onto his chest and bask in your afterglow.

Head resting on his shoulder, you are satisfied in ways you didn't think possible. If all that torment was meant to make you feel this way, every last second was worthwhile. In this moment, in his arms, you've never felt more attached to anyone before in your life. If this is what being his pet means, then you're the luckiest pet on earth.

"Well my little p0ny? How was it?"

Still panting heavily and reeling from the force of the orgasm, you finally say what he wants to hear.

"Master... I don't ever wanna be a guy again."

Autumn's hoof pulls you closer to her, and locked in a three way embrace

you pass out before any more words can be exchanged.

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You're the first to wake up, still nestled with Autumn and Master. Dim rays of sunset fall in through the window, and you're well and truly at peace in the moment. You know you should be alarmed by what's just happened, but you're still very pleasantly relaxed in the way only a good lay provides.

You stretch a little, and take a moment to gaze up at the man who changed absolutely everything about your life. It's hard to imagine being as truly afraid of him as you were when you awoke in your cell, and you have to acknowledge that his efforts to render you docile have paid off. You're a little ashamed to admit that if he gave you the chance to go back to your life you'd really have to sit down and think about it. You're still not a fan of being sold to a stranger, but even if you fled out the door you'd be hard pressed to make it to civilization. Your p0nified body seems weak and ill-suited to strenuous travel, and you're not sure if your wings can actually get you off the ground.

There's no two ways about this, you are a dependent pet, just like he wanted. If that's the case, you may as well use it to your advantage. You want to get back outside, both to see the sunset and relieve yourself without having to stoop to the litterbox. With that in mind, you slowly remove yourself from the tangle of limbs you'd all collapsed in to and pad off toward the door. It takes some doing, but you're able to acquire what you need.

You use a forehoof to nudge Master's leg, and it takes him a few seconds of groggy staring for him to break into a grin at the sight of you. There you are, sitting in front of him with a leash hanging from your mouth, tail swaying behind you like a well-trained dog. He wakes Autumn with a kiss on the forehead, and she's all giggles when she catches sight of you.

"Hmmmm. Y'know Autumn, I can't figure out what it is she wants."

"It's pretty hard, Master. Maybe she wants you to tie her up with it and go another round?"

"Teeempting, but I think we'll save that for now. Good girl, Zephyr."

It only takes a few moments before the three of you are in the yard, watching a dozen brilliant crimson hues streak across the sky. Master's hand rests atop your head as you sit beside him, and you find yourself nuzzling his leg in an open display of affection.

You're overcome by a great sense of inner peace, and you find yourself leaning against his leg. A breeze ripples over the yard and a chill runs up your spine as the breeze catches on your wings. You give them an experimental flap, feeling your feathers move as you flex.

"Master?"

"Yes?"

"Do my wings really... Can I fly?"

He throws you a sideways glance, and for a moment examines each other. He must be wondering if you'd try to fly away if you could. You can feel your ears and wings droop as you break eye contact.

"You won't let me try, will you? I... suppose I understand why."

He stares at you for a few seconds in utter silence, and you're so despondent that you barely hear what comes next.

"Give me some time. I promise to let you try before you leave here."

There's no way he can really mean that, right? He doesn't trust you yet. That shouldn't really surprise you, given the situation and the intended relationship. You're still a little disappointed, though. You trust him a lot more than you probably should, and the only thing that really scares you is the idea of being sold.

"Thank you, Master."

He looks back down with soft surprise. It just kinda slipped out of your

mouth, and all of a sudden he's back to slowly scratching your mane. He must really be a good master if you're already this good of a pet...

You stay out together until well after sunset. You're captivated by a brilliant night sky. There's almost no light pollution and you're fairly high in the mountains by the look of it. Isolated, remote. You'd never be able to get out of here on your own. But you don't really care. You just want to get closer to those stars.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 5

You reluctantly head back in with the Master, and for a few minutes the three of you eat dinner in comfortable silence. You and Autumn tuck in to a large bowl of salad while Master enjoys a foul smelling piece of beef. You're sure it smells fine to him, but your re-wired pony nose thought it reeked of death when you caught a whiff.

After a few minutes of being reintroduced to the formerly disgusting cherry tomato by your new taste buds, Master clears his throat and begins to speak.

"Alright, Zephyr, tomorrow is going to be a big day here. There are a few buyers coming by for the ponies downstairs."

You sputter for a moment, spraying a few bits of lettuce onto the floor.  
"There are others?"

"Yes, two of them. The subconscious suggestions worked just fine on them, so now I've got their new owners coming to pick them up."

"Downstairs? In another hole like mine, alone in the dark?" You can't hide the anger in your voice, or the sour notes of disgust in the last part of your sentence. He and Autumn seem taken aback by your reaction, but Master is quick to reply.

"A hole like... Nonono, Zephyr, it's not like that. They're in a comfortable room with everything they need, and I check in on them a few times a day. They're happy in their new bodies, and they're content to wait together for their new lives."

You relax a bit at having heard that, and a surge of guilt comes over you at having been so angry with him. You were only concerned for the well being of others, but you find yourself prostrated in front of him.

"Please don't be upset! I'm sorry I got angry! The thought of somepony being down there like I was..."

He leans forward and pulls you into a hug as you try not to cry. He holds you close and whispers into your ear. "Do you trust me?"

Your response is an immediate, emotional "Yes". You know you shouldn't, but you just do. He scoops you up and starts walking toward the door. You're trying not to panic. You know he wouldn't put you back in the hole, but you're just plain scared of it. He begins to whisper words of reassurance, and you manage to relax enough for him to carry you down the stairs. He quickens his step to get you by the door to the cell as you do your best not to look at it. Finally, you step through another door, and you let out a breath you didn't know you were holding.

A small kiss on the forehead brings you back down to earth, and a look around shows you another door opposite the one you came in through, and then a long window to the side of it. It takes you a few moments of looking through the window to grasp what you're seeing.

There they are. A yellow mare with an orange mane and a big, green stallion with a red mane, sitting together on a bed and watching, of all things, MLP. They seem to be chatting about the show with one another, oblivious to the two of you watching.

"Can't they see us?"

"It's a two-way mirror. They see their reflections. I keep an eye on them from here for their first day, make sure all the suggestions stuck."

"Can I talk to them?"

"I don't see why not."

Master opens the door to their room, and the two strangers perk right up and trot over to him, exclaiming "Master!" in exactly the way a happy pet would. The mare speaks up first.

"We didn't think you'd be back down to see us before tomorrow! Are our masters here early to take us home? I can't wait!" She's literally hopping up and down as she says the last bit.

"No, nothing like that. There's just someone who wanted to meet you." He steps aside, revealing you to both of them. You find yourself oddly embarrassed, and slouch a bit. The stallion seems happy enough, but the yellow one is right in your face in about two seconds.

"Ohmigosh! Hi! I'm Gizmo! What's your name?"

It takes a few moments for you to realize that you're being poked in the forehead by... a... horn...

Unicorn!

"I'm Zephyr and, uh, does that thing work?"

"What thing? Ooooh, that!" She cries, crossing her eyes a bit. "Nope, just for show. Master is a miracle worker, but not like that."

"And I'm Evergreen, pleased to meet you" The stallion adds. You take a moment to look them over. Gizmo's cutie mark is a wrench, while Evergreen seems to have a small tree on his flank. Even with Master watching, you need to ask the uncomfortable questions you've got if you're ever going to put your mind at ease.

"So, um, guys. You remember being human, right? None of this bothers you at all? You don't have any problem with being a pet?"

They both look at you like you've grown an extra head, and turn to look at each other before Gizmo settles the matter.

"Are you kidding? I was studying to be an engineer, and the stress was killing me. Ponies became my escape, and now that I'm a pony, it's a literal escape! No more tests, no more work, just an owner to love and get loved by! It's just perfect! Besides, I used to be all kinds of ugly. look at me now, I'm friggin adorable!"

You've got no reason to doubt her, she's clearly in love with her new life. Evergreen picks up where she leaves off;

"I had a dead end job and no real prospects. I admit, I probably should have spent more time on this character before posting him, especially my colors, but as long as my owner likes me, I'm cool."

They're sincere. They remember everything, just like you, and they were



both pretty unhappy, just like you. So the only difference between you and them was the body horror issues in the beginning?

While you're standing there trying to figure out what this means for you, Gizmo rolls a small ball over to you, and soon the three of you are engaged in a small soccer game on the floor of the playroom. Master calls for Autumn, and soon it's a 2-on-2 game while Master sits back and seems to bask in his handiwork. You spend the next few hours playing with the other ponies, all troubles forgotten amid the joy of feeling really, well, normal.

Evergreen is the first to tire out, and while it seems Gizmo's boundless reserves of energy could keep her going all night, Master tells you and Autumn to go upstairs while reminding Evergreen and Gizmo to rest up for tomorrow.

You're about to climb into your cage in the bedroom when Master lifts you into the bed with him and Autumn, and you find yourself cuddled against one side of him while Autumn does the same on the other. Master turns the lights out, and you work up the nerve for one final question.

"Master? Am... am I getting sold tomorrow?"

"No. I called your buyer and told him you weren't ready yet, and that he shouldn't come by tomorrow. He seemed really anxious to meet you."

"But not tomorrow?"

"No, honey. Did you want it to be tomorrow?"

"No. I'd rather stay here."

He falls quiet after that, but you can tell he's looking at you in the dark. Did you say something wrong? Apparently not, as he begins to stroke your mane, and continues until you fall asleep.

Soft rays of light coming from the window force you into the waking world, groggily coming around to find yourself still cuddled against Master's side. You let yourself lie there for a moment, head resting on his

shoulder, feeling the light movement of his chest steadily rising and falling. Across from you Autumn has more or less climbed onto him in her sleep, with two of her legs draped across his abdomen. You begin to slowly stretch your limbs, mostly in the hope that relaxing a little more will put you back to sleep.

Stretching a hind leg over the Master, you're taken aback when your hoof brushes something, and it takes you a few seconds of looking down to realize that you just accidentally prodded Master's morning wood. You're still instinctively a little embarrassed, but memories of yesterday morning's, er... activities come quickly to the forefront of your mind. Even after yesterday's oh-so-satisfying depravity, he was really, really nice to you. Playing with Autumn, Gizmo and Evergreen had been a blast. Why not show him how much you appreciate his kindness?

With great care not to wake him, you slide a hoof over and prod at Autumn until her eyes flutter open. She's about to say something when you raise a hoof to your muzzle in the closest approximation of a "shhhh" gesture you could accomplish with your finger-less p0ny limbs. She shuts her mouth and gives you a quizzical look, but follows your lead when you point toward the foot of the bed and slide beneath the covers.

Soon the two of you are eye to eye and only inches away from Master's pajama tent. In complete silence, you carefully release his member from his underpants. He stirs a bit, but remains blissfully asleep. You stop for a moment to appreciate the girth of your Master's rod, and the pungent aroma of the night's sweat. Autumn seems to get where you're going with this, and after sharing a mischievous giggle, the two of you set about the task at hand.

You begin just as you had before, with long, slow licks up the length of him, savoring the taste of his manhood in ways you realize should probably still bother you. Autumn begins to slowly kiss and flick her tongue along his shaft, working her way up and down. You can feel his member getting stiffer under your tongue, and he only gets harder as Autumn works her way up to the head, flicking her tongue in quick circles at his tip while you continue your assault along his base. Soft grunts and moans can be heard from above the blankets, but otherwise Master remains asleep. Time to step up your game.

You raise your head to Autumn's level, and the two of you share a kiss, swapping spit and the taste of precum as your tongue dances with hers. She breaks the kiss and begins to lick at his base while you kiss the head of his member before upping the ante and taking him into your mouth. Slowly bobbing your head along, the soft sounds of your sucking mingle with Autumn's as she begins to suckle on Master's testicles.

You giggle a bit as you feel him twitch and suddenly jerk upright a bit, as the covers are thrown off from above you. Master's breathing heavily and staring at the two of you, seemingly amazed that he isn't dreaming at the moment. The silence is almost awkward until you break it with a laugh. You just can't help it. What a sight this must be! The three of you, motionless and wordless, while you've got his dick in your mouth and Autumn's got a mouthful of balls.

For a moment the other two join in your laughter, and for a moment it seems as though your shenanigans are over until you feel his hand at the back of your head. You don't resist, but you do allow him to slowly push you back onto his penis, looking into his eyes the entire time, he seems to have done the same with Autumn, and the two of you redouble your efforts, sucking, licking and trading places with increasing frequency. Master's grunting becomes full-on moans and you feel yourself getting wet with excitement as he seems to approach orgasm.

Then, of course, the doorbell rings.

The surprise of the sudden noise causes all three of you to jerkily separate at once, as Master hurriedly springs out of the bed and attempts to jam his rock-hard member into a pair of pants. He stops for a moment to stare at the two of you, still panting a bit on the bed.

"You two! How am I supposed to open the front door straight-faced with a tent like this!" he accuses, gesturing towards his obvious erection, still straining through his jeans. Autumn just giggles, but this is too funny for you to play nice. Sarcasm drips from every syllable as you reply.

"We're just SO sorry, Master! I guess you'll just have to punish us later." With a small shake of your rump for the word "punish".

"Oh, you can count on it" he counters with a smile, and strides toward the

stairs, having done his best to camouflage the boner. You and Autumn take a moment to share a laugh, and after she surprises you with a small peck of a kiss, the two of you take off down the stairs. Autumn is always excited to see new people. You want to see exactly what kind of person buys a kidnapped, transformed fellow MLP fan for a pet. You watch from halfway up the stairs as Master talks to them at the doorway, blocking your view. Finally he moves, and you get a decent look at a would-be pony owner.

They aren't quite what you'd expected, that's for sure. A man and woman walk into the house, still exchanging pleasantries with Master about the drive all they way out here. They're well dressed, and you spot wedding bands on both of them.

A married couple? You'd sort of assumed that all the buyers would be single and male. Master looks up and gives you quick wave as the two guests begin to talk with Autumn, an audible squeal of joy coming from the woman as Autumn introduces herself. You're noticed as soon as you're down at the landing, and the woman is all smiles when she sees you.

"Oh my goood, you're both just cute as a button! Look, honey, she's a pegasus! What's your name?"

"Hello, I'm Zephyr. Are you here for Gizmo and Evergreen?"

She begins to pet you the way one would greet a dog they'd just met. Examining your face while stroking your mane.

"Just Gizmo, actually. Are you friends? What's she like?"

So someone else must be coming for Evergreen. Gizmo is going to be a family pet, then? You suppose that with her level of energy having two human companions will probably be a good fit.

"She's a lot of fun, and she's very excited to meet you. You should go see her downstairs!" You'd seen Master opening the basement door out of the corner of your eye, and figured it might be good to lead them along to the sale. Maybe if you're quick about it you can get back into bed and finish what you started.

Soon all five of you are downstairs in the playroom, and Gizmo's enthusiasm reaches new heights the minute she lays eyes on her soon-to-be masters. You stand aside with Master and Autumn as the trio of husband, wife and p0ny get their introductions aside and engage in a bout of hugging. Gizmo seems like the happiest person... p0ny on earth right now, and you have to wonder if you'll be this happy when Master sells you.

Sells you. How could you be happy with that arrangement? He's going to take some cash and then pass you off to a complete stranger! Maybe you'll end up with people like Gizmo's owners. They seem like very nice people... But you're still not a fan of being sold at all. The problem you're having is pinpointing why. Being treated like a commodity is one thing, but the sinking feeling in your chest when you think about it is less about that and more about leaving here. Autumn treats you like you're family, and even Master seems to have some small attachment to you. Whether that's an act to win you over or genuine affection is still in doubt to you, but you'd like to think he cares.

Gizmo and her family have taken seats in a corner and are having a conversation about themselves when you hear the doorbell ring again. Master quietly ducks out of them room and you gaze over at an excited looking Evergreen. You hear the door open again, and all eyes turn to see the newcomer. He looks a lot more like the kind of person who'd...

Oh shit! Jake?!

Big gay brony friend is here. Now! What the blueberry fuck? HE'S gonna buy Evergreen?

Wait. If you can convince him to, ah, p0ny up the cash for you and outbid the guy who wanted you, you might have a way back to normal. Or at least to guaranteed good treatment in a new home. You have to talk to him!

Gotta play this cool. Master wouldn't let this happen if he knew. Jake slips a fat looking wad of cash into Master's palm and saunters over to Evergreen, who is eyeing him expectantly. Where the hell did Jake come up with that kind of money? You knew he had a decent job, but you

never knew what he did with all of it. You sort of assumed he blew it all at conventions or something.

He and Evergreen are talking to one another quietly, but Master is seated nearby. You need to convince Jake to buy you, but how? With Master there you can't risk telling Jake what's happened. You could very well end up in the cell again and... and you'd be betraying Master's trust. Should that bother you as much as it does? You don't really know if you want to go back to being some guy with a crappy job, but at the very least you could live with someone you know and trust not to mistreat you. That alone could be worth it. You've got to try.

You trot over and listen in on the conversation for a few moments. They seem to be talking about their various fandoms, because that's exactly what Jake would talk about right off the bat with a housemate. With a quick roll of the eyes, you seat yourself in the conversation and pay attention without speaking. If you wait for just the right moment, you could cut in, steal the show, and maybe go home as part of a set.

Fifteen minutes of talking later and no opportunity has presented itself. They've been talking about Star Trek the whole time. And while discussing the pros and cons of the Excelsior class starship was something you'd be down for on most days, this is just agony. But then he picks Evergreen up, holding him around the chest facing forward like a cat, just way bigger, and you catch the tail end of a sentence. "-I've got no significant other right now, so it'll just be you and me, buddy."

Shit, he's leaving! You've got to do this now! You try to slide up as smooth as you can and cut in.

"Y'know mister, if you're willing to pay I could come home and be your S.O."

The thought of following through on that offer with your friend is deeply disturbing, but you've got to pique his interest fast if you're gonna go with him. Why is he even getting a stallion to begin with?

"You're very sweet, and really cute, but you're not really my kinda pony, girly girl."

He drives his point home by cupping Evergreen's sizable testicles, eliciting a grunt of approval from the stallion. They share bedroom eyes while your jaw drops.

Oh.

You didn't...

When you called him "gay" you didn't mean it like...

You're kind of a shitty friend.

You're too busy sitting there in absolute shock to notice Jake heading for the door with Evergreen in tow. You never knew! It wouldn't have changed anything, but still! You owe him like a quarter million apologies for all the off-color jokes you-

Shit! He's heading up the stairs!

You take off after them, but make it to the base of the stairs just in time to hear the front door close. Shit! He's gone! An absolute godsend falls into your lap and you screwed it up! That was your one, probably only chance at ever being in control of your life again! Fuck!

You hang your head in shame at having failed so very, very hard, and were now confronted with the renewed inevitability of being sold. You rear up onto your hind legs, and leaning against the two-way mirror you gaze in at Gizmo and her new owners. She seems so, so happy. You just don't understand how. Master and Autumn are sitting together in a corner, seemingly unaware of your having left the room. They really do trust you, don't they?

You're lost in thought for a few minutes, enough that you miss the sound of approaching footsteps until his shadow falls over you.

You jump back, startled. He's large, vertically and horizontally, and the look in his eyes is... predatory.

"Not ready my ass."





# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 6

"Not ready my ass."

Oh. Oh no.

Before you know it you've backed into a corner, with him advancing on you the entire way. He's overweight, hairy, and the look of excitement on his face is absolutely terrifying. The look in his eyes...

This person means to do you harm.

"MA-Mmmmph!"

A hand clenches over your muzzle, blocking your call for help, you struggle against it, but his grip is firm, and stars fill your vision as his free hand slaps you hard on the side of the head.

"Ssshhhh, baby, no use spoiling the moment. You're mine, after all."

No. No no no. You don't want this. He pulls you in close, hand painfully tight on your jaw as he does. You begin to buck in the hopes of getting free, but all that gets you is another slap, this time right on the ear. Somewhere among the burning sensations coming from your ear you feel a small trickle of warmth. He drew blood with that.

Soon you're pressed against him, absolutely terrified of him in ways you never were with Master, and in a low, craven tone he starts whispering to you.

"You're exactly what I wanted, you know that? Such a pretty white coat. You're so pure, so beautiful. I'm going to love you so, so much, and that flawless body of yours is gonna show every last inch of it."

Tears come unbidden as you realize you're at the mercy of a sadist. He doesn't just want to hurt you, he wants to get off on it!

"He's trying to keep us apart, my pretty little pony, but don't you worry darling, I'll pay whatever he wants to get you home. I've got such a wonderful home for you. Steel and locks I made myself, just to fit you."

Could Master really mean to sell you to him? Somewhere you think you feel your heart breaking at the notion of him caring so little. You have to get away from him. You have to get to Master. Your struggles renew in desperate thrashes to get loose, but his grip is iron and you're too weak. Master's only a room away, but unless you can scream that may as well be miles.

"It's alright, my love. You can squirm all you like. Daddy loves it when you squirm."

He lifts you by your muzzle, so only the tip of your rear hooves touch the ground. Moving them makes gravity strain your jaw and neck, effectively ending your kicks. His other hand begins to wander, first along your face and neck, and then down to your wings. He takes a painful grip on the base of one, and brings his face right up to the side of yours.

"They're so perfect. Flawless. Breaking them is going to be a night to remember."

He's looking into your eyes, and just seems to drink up your fear.

His hands begin to wander, and his whispers degrade into short, heavy breathing, and as he presses you against him again you can feel him through his pants.

You shut your eyes as tight as you can. This isn't happening. You're not here. You're still in bed curled up with Master and Autumn and when this bad dream is over they'll both be there for you. You're outside staring at the stars with Master and Autumn. Anywhere but here. Anytime but now.

The door swings open and he freezes. You begin to struggle madly, trying your best to scream through his hand. Master walks through the door, smile still on his face.

"Hey Zephyr, you still out here? Gizmo's about-"

His face goes blank for a moment when his eyes fall on you, and for a moment you're afraid this might have been some kind of setup. You're looking him right in the eyes, silently pleading for him to be the Master you think he is. Silently begging him to save you.

You see his face contort in anger, and hope flutters in your chest.

"What the hell do you think you're doing here? I told you she wasn't ready! I told you not to come here today... Is she bleeding?"

He pulls you close and stands to face Master, his other arm now squeezing your chest, restricting your breath and dampening your efforts at thrashing free.

"I've got your money, what else matters?"

"You put her down right this instant and get out of my house."

"I'll double your money and take her today."

Master's voice falls to become steady, and deathly serious. He takes a step forward, and your captor seems to realize that Master is large, fairly well-muscled and very angry.

"Put. Her. Down."

His hands suddenly unclench and you fall to the floor. You land ungracefully and it crushed your tail something fierce, but adrenalin and fear carry you to Master as quickly as your body could possibly take you. Master puts himself between you and him, both hands clenched in fists as he makes his next demand.

"The deal is off. Get out of my house."

Your would-be owner begins to ascend the stairs, but only after making a final, chilling threat.

"She IS mine, and I WILL have her!"

"Come back here again and I swear no one will ever find you in these woods."

Finally, you hear the front door close, and Master wheels around and grabs hold of you.

"Are you hurt?"

You open your mouth as if to reply, but only a pitiful sob escapes as you break down into tears. Master's arms wrap around you, and while your initial reaction is to jerk away from the sudden contact, soon enough you're sobbing into his chest. He holds you tight and whispers kind words to you, just like when he took you from the cell. He saved you! He'll always save you!

"Listen, Zephyr, this is important. Did he... do... anything?"

You just shake your head no, still pressed into his shoulder. You want to tell him that it would have happened if he hadn't been there. You want to tell him everything that happened. You want to tell him that you love him. All that will have to come later. Now is the time for tears, and to hold onto him as long as you can.

-----

At some point while you were crying Gizmo and her owners emerged on their way out. They seemed concerned, and for a moment the shame of having to tell anyone what happened makes you feel even worse, but Master quietly played the situation off and sent them on their way without a fuss. Autumn seems to realize the gravity of the situation, and you feel a hoof softly settle on your back. Finally, tearfully, you retell everything he did and said.

You can't see either of their faces, but you can feel Master's muscles stiffen when you tell him about your wings. Your sobs fade to sniffles, and as he carries you up the stairs to the living room, you see a clearly distressed face lost in thought. He sets you down on the couch, wraps you in a blanket, and tells Autumn to look after you for a few minutes. He silently looks out a window toward the driveway, and seemingly satisfied

by what he saw, heads into the kitchen.

The moment he's out of sight you start feeling nervous. He.... he said he would have you. He said you were his. What if he's still out there? What if he comes back? Your eyes begin to flit back and forth around the room at any possible entryway, and you find yourself trying to shrink into the couch cushions. You jerk away from a sudden touch on your neck, only to realize that it's Autumn, gently nuzzling you as she sits on the side opposite the couch cushion.

The reminder that you are not alone helps you keep yourself under control for the time it takes Master to return, though the sound of his footsteps sets you on edge for a moment before he returns. For just a second, the possibility entered your mind that it could be that... man, and suddenly an icy fear gripped you. Master returns to find you silently cowering from him, even as he lays two bowls of what smells like hot cocoa on the coffee table in front of you. For a few minutes the three of you sit in complete silence before a long sigh escapes Master's lips, and he begins to speak softly.

"I'm sorry. I didn't.... None of the other buyers have been like that. At least, I don't think any were. I never considered that someone like that would want a pony."

He rests his face in his hands, and continues. "I started doing this because I needed the money. I thought that as long as the ponies and the owners were happy together, what I was doing wasn't too terrible. Autumn was a freak accident, but you... Everything about you has gone wrong. I should have left you be. I should have left all of you be. What if I sold someone like you to a freak like that and didn't even realize it?"

He looks up at you, and while he's kept himself from tears, you're certain that you're looking at a man in the midst of a crisis. He reaches out from his chair and begins to softly stroke your mane, and you begin to crash from the fight-or-flight adrenalin rush, as sleep threatens to claim you, you murmur out a final response.

"Will you be here when I wake up?"

"Yes."

You manage a barely audible "Love you, Master." before sleep suddenly takes you.

# Zephyr's Tale





## Part 7

The ponies are back. Multiple pastel blurs running circles around you, calling to you, singing to you, all trying to get your attention at once. Just as before, it's very intense, but you're not reeling from the experience as you were the last time this dream came to you. You realize that you're no longer looking down on them, but rather you're at eye level with the others.

The songs and laughter are almost overpowering. You're tempted to join this merry band, when the circle breaks and the innumerable herd all take off in one direction. With no time wasted you find yourself running after them, but they get further and further away as you try in vain to catch up.

Soon you're alone, lost in seemingly infinite darkness. You call out in the hopes of finding someone, when a terrible fear begins to creep up your spine.

Something is coming.

You find yourself running in the direction the other ponies went, but without seeing or hearing anything you know you're being chased. Suddenly the world falls out from under you as a hand clenches down hard on one of your rear legs. You struggle in blind panic, but the unseen hand lifts you effortlessly, and soon you have no traction as you dangle in complete darkness. A look up reveals a hand extending from, and seemingly made from the darkness that surrounds you.

Before you have time to react you see more movement in the darkness that surrounds you. Dozens of hands emerge, taking hold of your legs and wings with large fingers, touching you all over. He's everywhere. His many grips begin to twist and pull, and you begin to scream.

"Zephyr!"

You're being rocked back and forth, and someone is crying. Autumn pulls

you into a tight foreleg hug once it's clear you're awake. In this moment, as your heart rate begins to settle down, you numbly put forth "Was I dreaming?". Somewhere behind you Master claims you were screaming, and Autumn settles for repeatedly telling you " it's okay."

Autumn continues to hold you, and you allow yourself to go limp in her embrace. This is all fucked up. You never wanted any of this. This afternoon you were helpless in the face of a madman, and now it's fucked you up in the head. All because of this stupid pony you've become. If you weren't like this he wouldn't want to hurt you. If you weren't beautiful, if your wings weren't amazing.

Autumn's hug gets tighter, and you feel teardrops land on your shoulder as you realize the depth of her concern for you. Autumn really, truly is your friend, even if it's only because you're one of Master's fellow playthings. Your hooves shakily rise to return her embrace. The rest of you feels just as violated and inherently wrong as the day you woke up downstairs, but Autumn's warmth is some small solace. Master's voice breaks the silence, causing you to jump a bit. You had nearly forgotten he was there.

"You can tell me about it when you're ready. In the meantime, I'm going to run a bath for you. Even getting that little bit of blood out of your fur is going to be a challenge. Does that sound like it would help?"

An affirmative nod is all you can muster, and Master moves to the stairs quickly. You recognize what he's doing: He's not sure what to do, but he's going to try his best at doing something. You turn your head towards the chair he'd been sitting in before your rude awakening, and notice a small glass and a bottle of what looks to be whiskey. He'd been sitting in a dark room with a drink while you slept. He kept his promise. And even if it was misguided, you understood the bottle had it's own significance. What happened to you really, really did bother him.

Autumn ends your embrace, and wordlessly stares at you for a few seconds. Sadness is etched onto her face, and it only seems to compound your own. All you can manage to say is "Thank you."

"You don't need to thank me. We're friends, aren't we?"

"Well.. yeah. We are friends."

"Well what kind of friend would I be if I weren't worried about you now?"

But she's not the only one worried. So is Master. He did this to you, though. All the responsibility for what's become of your life these past weeks rests squarely on him. If his mindfuck had worked, you might have already been sold...

He calls from upstairs, and you slowly work your way up the stairs. Rounding the corner into the bathroom, you find him waiting for you, kneeling next to a steaming bathtub. Neither of you say anything as you approach, but the silence is palpable.

Neither of you commits to breaking it, though, and he gently strokes your mane a few times before gently picking you up and slowly depositing you in the water.

The water is almost too warm, but as soon as you're submerged to the neck it begins to work its magic. You can feel your muscles slowly relaxing and various aching joints begin to protest, but it feels very nice. Master has sat down on the floor next to the tub, apparently content to let you relax for a few minutes. You worry about submerging your wings, but if Master hasn't said anything about it then you're probably okay, right?

With deep inhale you let yourself slide below the water, enjoying the muffled sounds of the world above. Your ear stings a bit where you were hurt earlier, but you endure for a moment longer before gradually exhaling and bringing your head back above water.

This time Master is paying attention, and the two of you lock eyes before he elects to speak.

"Alright, let me have a look at that ear."

You lean your head towards him, and he takes hold and begins to

examine the left side of your head. You feel a harsh sting and recoil, but he's seen what he needs to and lets go.

"He must've swung pretty hard. You're probably going to have this little notch on the base of the ear for the rest of your life."

Even if it was something minor, being permanently disfigured by someone is an icy feeling in your gut. You're exhausted and miserable, and the bad news keeps coming. You let yourself sigh out an exasperated response.

"Great, now I'm defective and damaged goods."

"Hey now, I think it'll give you character."

"I'm already a character!"

He fails to suppress a snort of laughter, and you honestly let a small giggle go. You're laughing about your near-miss with rape. Yeah, the both of you have clearly gone off the deep end this time. Master takes the time to scrub the small blood stain out of your fur, and then begins to shampoo your mane.

Master shampooing your fur and mane is just heavenly. Strong fingers slowly massaged the stuff onto your scalp and all over your body. There are still moments when his hand rubs the wrong way or he digs too deep and the primal fear sitting deep in the back of your mind worms its way up front, but you're able to stay in control of yourself. If it were anyone else, that probably wouldn't be possible.

But why do you trust him like this? All of your problems are his doing. Even if you get the sense that his conscience is starting to get the better of him, he said it best when he wondered if he might have unknowingly sold another pony to someone like your would-be owner! Even if he somehow means well, that's too horrific to be forgivable. The idea of some other poor lost soul in the hands of some pain freak is something you have to shut out of your mind. You can't deal with that right now. You can't. Can you even talk about this with him? The worst case scenario is some time downstairs or perhaps a quick sale to someone who

hopefully isn't a monster. Before you can begin, though, he speaks, seemingly having read your mind.

"I know there's a lot you want to talk about right now with me. Can I ask you to wait a couple of days? I promise we'll have this conversation, I just need some time to think about it."

You grudgingly agree, and soon he's using a warm towel to dry you off, a process which proves that your new body is a little more sensitive than you might have wanted it to be, based on the uncontrollable laughter the tickling of the towel induces. Master then sits behind you, slowly brushing your mane. You'd never had long hair prior to being ponified, and suddenly it all makes sense. You'd also love to get pampered like this all the time, but something tells you Master is doing this for you as a special occasion. Or at least as group therapy.

It takes some time for you to dry all the way off, and by the time you do you honestly feel a bit better. Master carries you into the bedroom, where he tucks you in alongside Autumn and then rolls onto the other side of the bed, leaving the two of you to cuddle alone. Something's definitely eating at him, and you hope for your sake he'll reconsider what he's been doing with his life. The question plaguing you is not whether he'll be sorry enough to turn you back, but rather if your constantly battling feelings will resolve themselves if he turns his life around.

Soon Autumn's sleepily cuddled her way over to you the way one might with a pillow or stuffed animal, but that's just fine by you. Maybe with her here, you'll be able to skip the nightmares, and get some real sleep.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 8

It all happens again. The ponies, the hands. This time you can feel hot breath on your neck before the hands begin to pull and twist.

You wake with a start, jerking around a bit before realizing that you're safely in bed. Your movement hasn't roused Autumn at all, and you realize that the breathing in your dream must have been Autumn's. Your movement did get someone's attention though, as a barely awake Master rolls over, flops an arm onto Autumn, and pulls the two of you over to him. Master murmurs out "s'okay" before falling back to sleep. Your eyes dart between the window and the door for a bit, feeding off irrational fear, until the shared warmth of your two bedmates calms you back down. Caught in the middle of a sandwich, there's nothing for you to do but relax and go back to sleep. This time there are no nightmares.

An intoxicating smell pulls you back into the waking world, though you're not entirely willing to give up on sleep at the moment. A single blearily open eye informs you that Master seems to have gotten up, but Autumn's still got both forehooves wrapped around you with her face buried in the pillows.

Taking a moment to admire exactly how goddamned cute Autumn is, you catch another whiff of what woke you up in the first place. It fills the air, sweet and hint of something fruity, and you know with absolute certainty what's happened.

Pancakes!

After gently nudging Autumn awake and letting her come to the same glorious realization you have, the two of you set off toward the kitchen with zeal approximating children on Christmas.

Master seems genuinely surprised at the two ponies scampering through the house, and the two of you hold nothing back. Stumbling on the stairs, sliding on hardwood floors, and finally coming to a dead stop on the

floor in front of him. He breaks out in an honest laugh, and serves up the food with a grin.

"If I'd known you'd be so excited, I'd have done this sooner. Dig in."

You do so with gusto, pausing to consider that you haven't eaten anything but fruits, veggies and grain since being changed. The blueberries add a pop your new tastebuds savor, and Master seems to be the type to put a little vanilla in the batter. They are delectable. As you chew, you contemplate the situation. You and Autumn are seated on the floor near Master's feet as he sits at the table, forming an idyllic vision of a master/pet relationship. Should this bother you, too? Except for yesterday's awfulness, your days have largely consisted of being fed well, treated well, and, ah, getting laid. Despite dehumanizing you at every possible turn, Master hasn't asked a thing of you except for obedience. Gizmo's words come back to you- "no more work, just a master to love and get loved by!".

That's the life he's trying to give you, and the life he hopes to have given to all the others he changed. But you didn't want this before he took you. It's a fair bet to say none of his ponies really did. If all of the buyers really were as nice as Jake, or Gizmo's owners, how ethically terrible were the things he'd done? This is just too difficult to wrap your head around.

Food eaten, the three of you lounge around for a few minutes as Master sips at his coffee. Autumn lays herself down on the floor perpendicular to you, and you let out a small "oomph" as her head flops onto your flank. You whip your head about to complain;

"Hey! Mind telling me why you're using my butt as a pillow?"

She gives you a cheeky grin before replying unapologetically; "I just wanna see what sleeping on a cloud feels like."

You're utterly baffled by what she said until you manage to put two and two together. Cloud... Zephyr... Cutie mark... Oh goddamnit.

You throw her an annoyed "Really funny.", but don't do anything about



kicking her off. Her head isn't that heavy and you've apparently got enough padding back there that it's no big deal. Did Master have to design the junk in your trunk?

You're about to ask him when he rises from his seat.

"You two feel like going outside?"

Autumn removes herself from you in a flash, and you're on your hooves in a few seconds. She's always excited to go out, and you're quickly developing a similar enthusiasm for stretching your legs. If there's one thing to be said about being a p0ny, it's that you have energy like never before. Maybe your metabolism is different now?

You do realize with some chagrin that going out isn't even about relieving yourself anymore. It's still a matter of substantial embarrassment, but you've been forced to use the litter boxes more than a few times by now. It's just... fun? That's all you've got.

Master and Autumn are way ahead of you. You resolve to at least go the rest of the morning without any more angst about the transformation. There's nothing you can do about it.

You stop at the door, expecting to be leashed before exiting, but Master just ruffles your mane and steps out. He's really going to trust you off a leash? If you run, he wont be able to sell you...

But you have no idea where to go from these woods, and being seen by any normal person is too risky. If you could get to Jake's place you'd be golden, but that may as well be another planet right now. Maybe he thinks you wouldn't run, but he has to know you can't run, unless you want to live in the woods like an animal for the rest of your life.

You cross the threshold and trot up behind Master. Autumn seems to be doing a lap of the yard, and you're about to join her when Master turns to face you.

"I know this has been hard for you, but you've been a very good girl in spite of it all. I'm going to let you try to fly, but I want you to promise me

you won't try to run off somewhere. These woods go on for miles, and you could get hurt out there by yourself."

He's going to let you try? Based on his last sentence, the logic is solid. He doesn't think you could get anywhere from here even if you could. The most he seems to think you could do is get lost or hurt in these mountains. He's probably right, too. You've never even been hiking for more than a few hours at a time.

"So you're not sure if I really can fly?"

"No. Most of the pegasi to come before you had wings just for show, but the... man... who ordered you seemed to have a real interest in a flying pony. Light bones, light musculature, large wings. If anyone could pull it off, it would be you."

Of course the bastard wanted you to be able to fly. What's the point in ruining your wings if they weren't good for anything to start? Light bones, light musculature... flight probably wasn't what he had in mind when he thought of those.

Eugh.

"So, are you gonna try or what?"

Master's input thankfully interrupts your train of thought, allowing you to focus on something besides snapping bones. You quickly scope out the yard, looking for a suitable launching point. The driveway is flat and runs a while, but the grass next to it has a gentle downward slope. You ponder for a few moments before recalling the Wright brother's first flight, and trot to the "top" of the slope.

You take a few moments to steel yourself with deep, steady breaths. You prime yourself into a good running position and extend your wings fully, when you realize you have no goddamned idea how to actually go about this. Start running, then flapping? Or the other way around? Should you hold your wings out until you've got speed?

You settle for a few experimental wing flaps to see how much force you

can get out of them. Repeating the motion fluidly is a bit tricky, but once you've got them going you do feel some lift. They're not enough to just take off whenever, but you might really be able to do this. You try to remember everything you can about how flight works, and decide to work your wings at an angle that should generate lift and thrust when you run. You get back into running position, and as Master and Autumn perk up to watch, you begin your sprint. You get good forward momentum from your snap, but your wings flap erratically and you begin to stumble as your coordination falls apart. It's like trying to do that stupid belly rub-pat yourself on the head thing from when you were a kid, only this could break your neck! You manage to avoid eating dirt, but this attempt ends unsuccessfully. Master looks like he's about to make a comment, but you're already on your way back to your starting point.

You're light, you're fast, and you've got big wings. All you need is the focus to pull it off.

You can do this.

It's been at least an hour. You've been through two dozen aborted attempts, and you've eaten dirt on half of those runs. Master's been asking if you want to try again tomorrow. If he orders you to pack it in, you'll do it, but until then you're going to keep going. You've never wanted anything more than this in your whole life. You've got the lift, you're sure of it. It's just getting the speed. You're going to fly, damn it!

You fall into your running position, muscles tense and wings flaring up, and take one heavy, deep breath.

Go.

You spring forward with everything you've got and take off running down the hill. Your wings pump furiously, scooping air and forcing it under you. Blood is pounding in your ears and your lungs are on fire, but you're so close! You let your eyes shut for a moment, whole body straining with effort as you approach the point where the slope levels off.

All of a sudden your forehooves find no purchase on the soil, and with a few more desperate wing strokes your rear legs are off the ground. You

try to extend them as straight as you can, and throw everything your back muscles can give you into your wings.

You hear Autumn cheering over the wind in your ears, and butterflies dance in your stomach when you open your eyes.

Your forelegs are stretched in front of you, and while your wings feel like they're going to fall off if you keep this up much longer a look down confirms it.

You're off the ground!

You can fly!

You're unstable in the air and struggling to stay up, but here you are, a couple yards off the ground. This is incredible! ...At this juncture it occurs to you that you have absolutely no idea how to land without hurting yourself. You fight panic for a second and decide you're going to need some help.

With titanic effort you manage to roll a bit to one side and turn yourself back around to face your audience. Your wings are going to hurt like hell later, but now you're gliding toward Master. The look on his face seems to be a mix of exuberance and surprise. You begin to rear up and flap straight down, in the hopes of coming in gently.

"Catch me!"

It takes him a second to process what you've asked and get himself ready, but you've slowed down enough that he only stumbles a bit when you hit his chest. His arms wrap around you, and you're laughing hysterically, high on adrenalin and the feeling of being airborne.

"I can FLY! Thankyouthankyouthankyou!"

You're wrapped him in another foreleg hug, nuzzling his shoulder all while teary-eyed and shouting with joy. He's laughing too, and Autumn's seems to be jumping up and down and shouting. Master is the first to regain control of himself.

"What are you thanking me for?"

For a second you're not really sure yourself. For a few perfect moments in the air, you couldn't have cared less about who you used to be or why this is all wrong. You can't be certain, but you're pretty sure you just thanked him for doing this to you.

He's been nothing but good to you.

He's a bad person.

He saved you from a man who wanted to mutilate you!

He was going to sell you to him in the first place!

Oh, the hell with it!

Even Master seems taken aback when you plant your lips firmly on his.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 9

For a moment his lips are still against yours, seemingly shocked to find you there, but soon Master offers a tender return. You're sure it only lasts a few seconds, but it feels like an eternity from your end.

Eventually your impulsiveness is overtaken by doubt. You're kissing him! And from the second you hit his chest up to now, you meant it!

You were a straight man, and now you're kissing him!

... Sure, up to now you'd sort of already felled him twice and had his fingers inside you, but this is somehow more intimate. This is butterflies in your stomach and natural impulse, not just lust.

He's... done terrible things. To you, to many others. Even Autumn is his victim. You fret and fret and fret but you're ultimately powerless to affect change on your situation. You are a pet, and he is your Master, regardless of how you feel. Is it really so wrong to enjoy it?

You break the kiss and as soon as his eyes flutter open you're looking away. You've never been this embarrassed and it must be showing even through your fur, because your face feels like it's on fire right now.

"Hey. Look at me."

You reluctantly force yourself to meet his eyes.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Zephyr."

"And who am I?"

"My Master."

"Kiss me again."

And you do. It's just as quick as the first, but this time he's leaning in to you, and something about being leaned back by his kiss makes your heart melt. Your heart and mind are racing and there's a fire in your loins kindled by the exertion and euphoria of flight and stoked by the electric feeling of the kiss.

Finally he breaks off, looking down at you and smiling.

"You're going to make a wonderful pet, Zephyr."

He says it with such sincerity and happiness that it's not so much what he says that makes you feel good, it's the tone of his voice. What he said... If it keeps you flying, you can deal.

Master puts you down onto the grass, and your legs feel like they're going to give out as soon as you put weight on them. All the sprinting to get in the air really took a lot out of you, you guess. Thankfully they don't have to support you for long, as Autumn throws herself at you for a hug. Before you fully understand what's happened you're beneath Autumn in the grass. The two of you share a long laugh before she calms down enough to form words.

"That was amazing, Zephyr! All of a sudden you were just up, it didn't even make sense!"

She rolls closer and her volume decreases.

"And you finally love Master the way I do. I'm so proud of you! Oooh, I hope you never get sold."

So now you're... like Autumn? That would have scared the hell out of you not more than one week ago, and while it was still slightly unsettling, the notion was not out of the realm of possibility.

Autumn interrupts your thoughts with a spirited kiss before getting up, and soon you've followed her back onto your hooves.



Master only needs to start walking, and without command the two of you are instantly trotting after him into the house.

You have to force yourself to keep pace with Master and Autumn as you trot behind them toward the house. Every muscle you have was utterly worn out by the effort of getting off the ground, and your wings are so sore it feels like they're going to fall off if you ever move them again.

But you can fly! An impossible dream realized right here in the front yard. You'll admit there were definitely some close calls during your brief adventure upwards, not least of which being the turn you had to take to get back to Master. Your wings are big, yes, but without tail feathers and with a body shape that wasn't meant to fly you'll have one hell of a time figuring out how to control yourself mid-air. How often will Master let you practice?

All that will have to come later, though. Once indoors, Master sets down a very large bowl of water in front of you, and you realize that you're parched after putting yourself through more physical exertion in a couple of hours than you had since becoming a pony. You begin to drink as though you'd just marched through the desert, feeling the coolness of the water work its way down your throat. You let yourself slump onto the kitchen tiles, and somewhere above you Master chuckles before speaking.

"All tuckered out, I take it? You can relax with Autumn while I go upstairs and get some work done. Will the two of you be alright for a few hours?"

Your exhausted groan doesn't harmonize well with Autumn's ever-chipper tone, but a dual assent of "Yes, Master." seems to satisfy him enough that he starts toward the stairs. He offers a final thought before ascending.

"I'm very, very proud of you, Zephyr. You should be proud, too."

Even as you rest your head on the floor, his praise douses you in satisfaction, and a smile dominates your face.

Oh yeah. Definitely worth the effort.

You could pass out then and there, but Autumn keeps poking you with a hoof and suggesting that you move to the couch. You'll admit that the notions of soft cushions and pillow for your head sound very, very enticing, but that's all the way in the living room!

"Come on Zephyr, you'll only be more sore if you sleep there! It's only a few feet around the corner."

You can only groan in reply, but her persistent jabbing eventually forces you onto your feet. You drag yourself into the living room, at one point leaning on Autumn for support because it turns out lazy shuffling is tricky with four legs. You do eventually manage to clamber up onto the couch, and the cushions are exactly as heavenly as you'd hoped. You're about to nod off as Autumn somehow manages to work a remote control with her hooves when a realization hits you. Master said he was going up to do work. Does that mean he's planning to abduct more people? Is that's how it's going to be, then? You'll either get sold to someone or join Autumn as one of Master's personal mares while other people end up in the basement? He seemed so bothered by the incident with your would-be-buyer that you'd dared to hope he would stop.

Do you try to talk him out of it? That kind of behavior might not go so well with him, but it would at least be doing something on behalf of whoever gets pushed next. You can't just play nice and let it happen, right? Master would certainly be pleased if you helped the newcomers adjust like Autumn seems to, and you would certainly be pleased if it earned you some more, ah, intimacy. No! You can't let yourself think like that. You remember how it felt to wake up in the wrong body in a dark hole. You owe it to yourself... or at least to your past life... to try.

It's time to see if Autumn will let some useful information slip. Your voice is still soft and slow with exhaustion, but now you're committed to soldiering through. Autumn seems to be a bit surprised at the sound of your voice, it's pretty clear she thought you'd be asleep by now.

"Master said he wanted to get some work done, right? What does that mean exactly?"

Autumn looks suspicious of you for about a third of a second, but by now she seems certain you wouldn't betray your shared Master, and gives you the reply you were looking for.

"Upstairs? He does research on people who've made up ponies for his files, talks to people who want one of us, he even hand-sews all the plushies he sends!"

"Really? So how often does he actually bring in new ponies?"

"Mmmm, Only about once a month, two or three new friends at a time. Master used to only bring back one of us at a time, but there are so many people who want a pony to love that he has to bring back more."

Interesting. So Gizmo and Evergreen must have been brought in with you. There's no way the three of you lived anywhere near one another when you were human. Is it possible that Master seriously goes on one enormous road trip a month to kidnap a few people and bring them all back here? That's ludicrous. None of that helps you come to any kind of conclusion about what you should say or do about the situation, though. You're about to ask another question when you feel Autumn settle herself next to you.

"Now now, sweetheart. You've simply got to relax after all that hard work. Why don't you let me help you?"

She immediately moves in for a kiss, and despite your misgivings about what's happening upstairs the warmth of Autumn's tongue dancing with yours is enough for you to put it aside for now. For a few minutes the two of you engage in a positively fierce make-out session, gradually pulling one another closer, holding one another tighter. Eventually she breaks the kiss, and breathing heavily lowers herself down to your nethers and attends to you in earnest. She works you slowly this round, every flick of the tongue and rub of the hoof slow and deliberate.

Pony or no, you most certainly enjoy being a girl.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 10

You did eventually manage to get some rest, but only after Autumn made sure that the both of you were thoroughly overstimulated beforehand. Autumn is... special to you. She's been emotional support for you this entire time, all while being a warning about what might happen if you let yourself go too deep into this rabbit hole. She's the closest thing you've got to a real friend right now, but her devotion to Master, once unsettling because it was incomprehensible, was now doubly unsettling because it makes sense. You get it, you really do, and that's what worries you.

You've been lying on the sofa lost in thought when a bright flash startles you into activity. You look wildly around the room, exclaiming a few half-formed expletives as you do, before you realize that Master is standing by the door, camera in hand, wearing the cheeky grin you've rapidly become accustomed to.

"Sorry, but I just had to get a picture of this." he says as he saunters past a still-sleeping autumn and shows you the picture he'd taken. Autumn's curled up on one end of the couch in a ball the way a cat would, while you're splayed out on your back, all four legs and two wings spread in every direction while your head hangs off the side, upside-down.

"See, it's the contrast that I love. You're both cute, but in very different ways."

"Now, I'd ask what the two of you were doing while I was upstairs, but Autumn only sleeps that heavily after sex. You must be exhausted. Why weren't you asleep?"

It's a totally innocent question, but you feel as though you've been caught red-handed. You can either play this off and become complicit in the next abductions, or you can try to talk to him. Now or never.

"I... um, I was thinking about..."

You're afraid this will somehow change things. What if he hates you for this? What if you get put in the hole? What if he sells you?  
No. Can't let fear get the better of you. Go for broke.

"Are you going to transform more people into ponies?"

He seems surprised at your forwardness, and with a small sigh he sits down next to you and begins to lightly stroke your mane.

"Well, yes, I suppose. There's not a whole lot else for me to do for a living now that I've invested so much in this. Can't exactly move back to the city and keep Autumn cooped up in an apartment all the time, can I? But no, that's not what I was working on just now, if that's what brought this on."

You hadn't considered the economic aspects of what he does. Giving up on selling ponies would mean finding new income, and with Autumn and yourself here he actually does have mouths to feed.

"Could I ask what you are working on, then?"

His hand moves further down and begins to scratch your back, and you let yourself lean into him and enjoy the sensation as he considers his reply.

"I was getting in touch with all of my previous buyers, actually. The man who commissioned you... I want to make sure all the ponies that came before you are safe and happy. A quick photo or video of each of their ponies should be a good indicator of their condition, and I'll dig a bit deeper for the ones who don't reply."

For a second you sit in numb silence. The feeling slowly begins to bubble up in your chest, and tears come to your eyes as you sit up and plant your lips on his for the third time today. He -is- the Master you hoped he was! Even if he still wants to take more people, at least he cares enough to worry about them.

You break the kiss and hug him wholeheartedly, and he seems to understand why you're so relieved.

"Did I really seem that heartless until now? I suppose how I acted when you were downstairs would be why, but that was all about me. I knew you were going to make life difficult, and I just wished that the suggestions had held and you'd be like the others. You aren't, but now I see that was a good thing, because you made me think about what I was doing."

He holds you out to arm's length and looks you in the eyes.

"For now, I'm not going to bring any new ponies in until I know how the others are doing. I've got my hands full enough with you as it is anyway, little miss Zephyr."

You lie in Master's lap for quite some time, as he repeatedly runs his fingers through your mane. You can't help but be happy right now. He's not a monster! He's going to make sure everyone else he took is safe with their owners, that no one else wound up at the mercy of some craven, beastly person.

What if he's manipulating you? Maybe this is all an extension of the games he played with you earlier. It's certainly working, if that's the case. You want this to be real, though. You want him to be the kind of man you should devote yourself to. Devote? The words just sort of sprung into your head to describe your feelings. The warm sensations when he praises you, and the electric thrills that run up your spine when he gives you a command... You enjoy these feelings more than you would have liked to admit. You aren't playing along anymore like you did at first. It's still very scary, but you want to obey his every little whim, you want his praise when you do what he wants. You -want- to be his pet. A devoted little mare ready to do anything her master asks.

In a lot of ways, you suppose that it's been this way for a while. If you weren't enjoying this, you wouldn't have been so happy about him having fingered you on this very couch. You certainly wouldn't have initiated sexual contact the next day. You wouldn't have flown into his arms and felt like you were born for this.

This is what he and Autumn were talking about, you realize. You do like this new life. The person you used to be is still in here, but now he is she,

and she's found contentment. So what do you do from here?

There is one nagging issue for you, though. Master said he wouldn't take any more people "for now" until he's done checking on all your predecessors. Meaning he intends to kidnap and transform more people for profit. Considering the obvious secrecy of this operation, he clearly can't put out a call for volunteers with any hope of having a stable supply.

So what should you do? This is what feeds you and Autumn, but there has to be a better way of doing it, right? Of course, you think it needs improvement because it didn't work well enough on you. But you're happy now, aren't you? Autumn's happy, Gizmo and Evergreen were happy. Maybe... Maybe being a pony isn't a bad thing, especially if Master's "suggestions" stick. You, Gizmo and Evergreen weren't really going anywhere in life, and you'd wager most if not all of the others would tell a similar tale.

Is it wrong to make a sad person happy against their will?

Master is spacing out on the sofa, but his hands continue to stroke and massage along your back. Your many aching muscles are beginning to fully relax under his careful touch, and sleep threatens to claim you at every moment. Your eyes shut and your breathing becomes slow and steady. You're crashing, even as you fight to figure out how you feel about so, so many things. You manage to mumble out your final thought for the night.

"Master?"

"Yes?"

"Thank you for making me yours."

-----

The next few days pass in absolute tranquility. Master lets you spend your mornings outdoors getting the hang of flying, to your delight. You've gradually learned how to use your legs and wings to control yourself in air, and you can do so at fairly impressive speeds, if you do



say so yourself. While your muscles ache from the daily efforts, you can feel your wings getting stronger every time you fly, supplemented by additional protein in your diet by Master in the form of mushrooms, legumes and, um, seed. You've never been this healthy before in your life, and it's a wonderful feeling.

After a daily post-flight nap, you and Autumn have the evenings to yourselves, as Master coops himself up by his computer, researching his previous sales just like he promised. The two of you pass the time with talk, play, television, and repeated acts of intimacy that have left you both with an intricate understanding of one another's bodies. When you first woke up downstairs as a pony, you thought you'd died and gone to hell. Now you are quite certain that this is heaven. You still have the nightmares, vivid and terrifying, but they all end the same way; waking up in the comfort and safety of Master's bed.

But no time to dwell on that. Today Master wants to bring you and Autumn on a hike!

You're honestly a bit surprised when Master produces a pair of dog harnesses lightly modified for you and Autumn to carry some supplies for yourselves, but you sit obligingly still as Master straps it onto you, taking the time to work a pair of cut holes over your wings.

"Just let me tighten this one last strap and you'll be good to go."

"I take it you couldn't find saddlebags in my size, then?"

"Keep up like that and I'll have you wearing a bridle."

Soon enough the three of you have trudged off into the woods, with you bringing up the rear behind Master and Autumn. You thought you'd fully acclimated to walking on four legs, but the uneven ground of the mountainside kept you stumbling over yourself. After a few minutes of scrambling to keep up, Autumn notices your difficulties and hangs back to coach you up the mountain. Here you are, falling up a mountain while Autumn tries to talk you through your own maladjusted hoofsteps, and all you can think is that this is probably an apt metaphor for your entire relationship with Autumn. She loves to play big sister for you, and you're

just consistently, hilariously inept enough at living in a pony's body that she gets to do it at least once a day.

"It's all in how you put your hooves down. You've got to stand a little straighter or you'll be too tired to keep going before long!"

You're already tired, but her advice seems to be working out alright, in as much as every third step doesn't threaten to topple you. You manage to trudge your way up, up and up some more until Master finally decides to take a break and you let yourself collapse onto a patch of grass.

Autumn appears above you in seconds, concern written all over her face, and Master appears moments later. As soon as you muster the energy to steal a kiss from her, though, both seem satisfied that you aren't dying and settle down beside you.

This is really, really embarrassing. You managed to remove the cap from a bottle of water with your teeth, but holding it in between your hooves is much more difficult than you'd hoped. You've only spilled a little, but it's becoming apparent that you won't be able to drink unassisted.

That means asking Master to hold the bottle for you as you sip. You're a pony, dammit, not an infant! Autumn's currently got his attention with some wildflowers she found, and while he has spared you the occasional glance he must not have seen your failures with the water, or he'd already be making jokes about it. You may be a pony pet, but you're not helpless! You steel yourself for one more try.

You slowly press your hooves against opposite sides of the plastic bottle, and press in gently. There's a little bit of give in the bottle that you're counting on as a substitute for grip, but the plastic is rigid enough that there's still a danger of it rolling between your hooves if you press too hard. You slowly begin to lift.

Steady.... Easy... Nice and slowly up to your mouth, and-  
A sudden twitch in one of your forelegs causes you to lose your concentration, and you're rewarded only by a splash of water on your shoulder as the bottle falls.

But you're just so thirsty...

After that last failed attempt, you've now wasted about a third of the bottle. You're absolutely parched, and you're quite sure you have no further recourse but to ask Master for his help if you want to get a drink. You grab the mouthpiece of the bottle between your teeth and, already stiff with embarrassment, approach him.

As soon as you put the bottle down and look up at him it's apparent by the look on his face that he knows what the problem is. If he knew, then why wait for you to come to him? Sarcasm colors his voice after a small chuckle.

"Is there something you need, Zephyr?"

He's playing another game with you? You shrink a bit under his gaze and evade eye contact as you try to stammer through explaining yourself.

"I'm really thirsty and I, um, can't really get this water bottle to my mouth. I can't really, y'know, lift it with my hooves. It keeps falling."

"And what exactly is it you need me to do for you?"

Dammit, he's really good at making you feel like an idiot sometimes.

"Well, um, I was hoping that maybe you'd.... ah, help me take a drink?"

"And what do we say when we want something?"

"Oh, um, please, Master?"

"Please what?"

"Please help me take a drink of water, Master!"

"Oh, well if that's all you want, then sure. You'll need to do something for me, first, though."

For a minute you freeze in shock. Considering your behavior lately, there weren't a lot of lines left to cross that he would need to barter for them

with you. You're suddenly very concerned that he might want actual sex. Sure, you've pleased him a few times and he's quite adept at reducing you to a moaning pile of wet arousal, but you haven't gone that far. You're not ready for that!

But how can you say "No" to him? He's your Master.

"Zephyr, Sit."

You're confused as to where this is going, but you comply without hesitation.

"Now lie down."

You feel your face flush as you get the joke. He's not really doing this to you right now, is he?

"Roll over, girl."

With care not to crush your wings, you present your belly to him, simultaneously ashamed of what you're doing but still awash in relief that the conclusions you jumped to were false.

"Now play dead."

This one gives you pause for a second as you think about what you should actually do for this. After a long blink, you close your eyes, let your legs and neck go limp, and let your tongue loll out of your mouth as your head rests on the ground. For a second or two everything's quiet, and you slowly open one eye to see Master and Autumn both doing their best not to laugh at your display. They finally break down and begin to laugh heartily, and you even find yourself joining in.

"Alright, you've definitely earned it."

You're still on your back when Master lifts you up and sits himself down on a nearby rock, with you now seated on his lap. Bottle in hand, he lifts it to your lips and you drink greedily. Cool water rushing down your throat feels heavenly, enough to forget the shame of being bottle-fed. It's

no time at all before you've managed to drink the entire thing.

"Wow, you really did want that bad enough to beg. See, you got what you wanted and all you had to do was ask."

"...Thank you, Master."

It's true, all you had to do -was- ask. And surrender another bit of pride to him. Even you ended up laughing at the ridiculousness of your display for him, and you don't think he wanted to shame you by it. Just another reminder that you're a pet, and needing him to provide the necessities of life isn't something to get worked up over. You give him a grateful kiss on the cheek before hopping off of his lap, and feeling refreshed and renewed the three of you carry on toward the peak.

It takes quite a great deal of effort and another break to get all the way up there, but when you see the view you understand why it was worth it. You're not on top of the tallest mountain in sight, but this one offers an excellent view of the others, and of the valleys between them. Off in the distance you think you can make out the shape of civilization in the form of town, but it must be miles from here.

A town. With people. With a running start here, you could probably glide most of the way there, and there's no way anyone could catch you. Only a few weeks ago there wouldn't have been a second thought in your mind. You'd be long gone. It's right there. All you need to do is go.

Go.

Go.

...

No.

Just like that, it's over. You trot over and nuzzle Master's leg, and he rewards you with a few long strokes of your mane. He sits down beside you, continually lavishing you with affection. You cast a wayward glance back to the town in the distance, before laying down beside him. He

seems to have taken note of your attention, though.

"You're not thinking of flying off on me, are you?"

"I thought about it."

"And?"

"What would Autumn do without me to keep her company? Besides, the food is great."

You're doing your best to replicate his own cheeky grin as you keep your voice totally deadpan. His smile, on the other hand, is genuine.

"I suppose I'll have to keep spoiling you rotten, then."

He lifts you up and sets you in his lap again, this time with your back leaning into his chest as his arms wrap around you. You melt into his embrace, now totally certain you made the right call.

"Good girl, Zephyr."

The trek down the mountain is much, much easier, and while you're physically exhausted by the time the three of you stumble into the yard and through the door to the house, you still couldn't possibly feel any better. Autumn's been telling you how happy she is for you, as she always is when you embrace being someone's pet, but the volume and frequency of her "squee" indicate a degree of enthusiasm you'd previously believed impossible. Even as you trudge through the doorway, she's still going a mile a minute with excited commentary.

"-And now we're home, and it really is home because you know that you belong here with Master! Aah! I can't believe it!"

While she's been prancing around in joy, you've been basking in her praise and the warm sense of relief that's come over you since turning away from your chance at escape. Somehow having both options presented to you and making a real decision to stay has washed away most of your remaining anxieties. You could have flown to a police

station, explained yourself, and maybe even taken your old body and life back. Shitty, infuriating job, Shitty, empty house, Shitty, lonely attitude.

Why did you ever think that would be worth it, again? You're Zephyr, and this is your life. You wouldn't have it any other way. Regardless, Autumn has spent the entire hike praising you for choosing Master and loving him, and that's not entirely fair.

"You know, Autumn, it wasn't just Master that made me want to stay. You've been really, incredibly good to me ever since you saw me in the cage. You're always there when I need help or support or a hug. Truth be told, I don't think I would have ever come around to any of this without you. You're my best friend."

For a moment, Autumn is completely, perfectly still, perhaps for the first and only time in memory. Small noises begin to escape her throat, and her eyes go all big and watery. You know what's coming and try to relax a bit. Sure enough, with a cry that may or may not have been the words "Oh, Zephyr", Autumn's flung herself at you, gripping you in a fierce hug, and letting the tears flow freely. Master pokes his head around the corner, and the two of you make eye contact even as you return Autumn's hug. Once he's determined that those are tears of joy, he simply offers a silent thumbs-up and disappears back into the kitchen. You close your eyes and let Autumn's declarations of undying friendship wash over you.

It takes Autumn a solid ten or fifteen minutes to get herself under control, but you don't really mind. After all, if she's this happy to hear you say those things, you've definitely made the right decision. Just as she's finished the ninth round of hugging and reduced her tears to sniffles and a bigger smile than you've ever seen, Master rounds the corner again, with a glass, two small bowls, and a dark green bottle. You don't realize it's wine until the cork comes off, but you're astonished to see him pouring you some.

"This is a special treat to celebrate. Drink up, girls."

Awww shit, it's time to get pony drunk.

# Zephyr's Tale





## Part 11

Autumn dives right in as Master pours himself a glass, but for for a minute or two you just kind of stare at it. The deep red pool sitting in the bowl in front of you is the harbinger of a terrible revelation. In all this time, even when Master was having a drink a few days ago, you never once thought about having a drink yourself. To the best of your recollection, the last time you thought about vice of any kind was your pining for a cigarette in the basement. You're not glad to be rid of nicotine, per se, but you couldn't open a pack or work a lighter to save your little pony life these days, so you guess that's gone for good. You idly wonder what you'd have to do for Master to earn yourself some weed. He might think a stoner pony is cute, right?

No use dwelling on things you probably can't have. You thank Master for the wine and then take an experimental sip. You're not familiar with the various kinds of red wine, but you know that whatever this is, it tastes great. Soon you're sipping frequently as you share jokes and stories with Master and Autumn. Your bowl is empty by the time Master finishes telling you about a funny near-miss involving law enforcement and a pair of new transformees hidden in the back of his truck, and you're already pretty tipsy. Autumn keeps to telling quick jokes, continuing to stoke your curiosity about how much she remembers from her old life.

Finally the time comes when you are put upon to entertain the other two, and you begin to slur out a tale of narrowly avoiding outing yourself as a brony to Jake while high on psychedelic mushrooms. The other two laugh along with you, and Master is openly shocked when you accidentally let slip that Jake was one of his most recent buyers.

"You're telling me I had someone you know from before coming here in the house and you didn't tell him anything?"

"I wann'ed to, but he was... too fasht. Wen' away 'fore I could tell 'im. s'why I was alone when tha.. that fucker showed up."

You're a little too drunk to gauge his reactions well, but he doesn't seem too upset with you. For your part, you've had your three bowls of wine much too fast, having failed to account for your substantially reduced mass. You belatedly realize he might be angry at you, and that puts you on the edge of tears instantly.

"S'okay, though! I don't wanna leave anymoore! I don't wanna live with Jaaake! His house is gross! I wanna... I wanna..."

The room is spinning a bit, and Master moves to your side and strokes your mane as you lay your head down on the sofa.

"I'm going to have to start cross-referencing this sort of thing now, but because you've been such a good girl, I'll let this slide as long as you don't throw up on me."

"I'm soorry! I just didn't wanna get sold..." you sniffle up at him. He lifts you up and carries you upstairs to the bed, cooing in your ear that he's not angry and that you should get some sleep. You whine and whimper your apologies for the next few minutes, all to his placid reassurances and light strokes of your mane. You're ashamed at being such a lightweight now. The sun only just went down! After a few minutes of determinedly ignoring the room's incessant spinning, a dreamless sleep takes you.

You have no idea how long you were asleep, but the hazy moments between being asleep and genuine wakefulness seem to be punctuated by loud noises. You're slow in acknowledging them, dealing with what is ultimately an extremely light hangover. If you're going to be a lightweight, you deserve to recover well, you suppose. Suddenly, though, the noise gets your attention. Is that Master yelling?

More rustling sounds come from downstairs as you jump into wakefulness, but you don't hear Master's voice anymore. Your first impulse is just to go downstairs and see for yourself, but the door is closed and you have no hands! It's still dark outside! What the hell is going on down there?!

"Master! Are you alright? Autumn? Guys?!"

There's no verbal response, but you can hear heavy footsteps begin to climb the stairs. Panic overtakes you as your mind comes up with a million possible explanations. Maybe they've had too much to drink? What if it's the cops?

But those are wishful thinking. The fear that's been ever-present in the back of your mind has returned to the forefront. Your heart is beating like gunfire as the footsteps get closer to the door. It's him. He heard you when you called out. He knows you're here. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

The footsteps stop.

No. Oh no. NononononoNO.

The door swings open too fast for you to react, and for a moment you're utterly silent. Your blood runs cold. Your skin crawls. He shouldn't be here. He shouldn't be in the doorway! Where is Master?! Where is Autumn?

...Oh god no.

"I told you no one could keep us apart, my precious little girl."

You scramble off the bed in an attempt to put distance between you and him as he advances slowly. With each thump of a footstep on the floor you're reminded of the nightmares, and it's everything you can do not to cower before him like a frightened child. Soon you're out of ground to cover, and the gap between you shrinks.

"S-Stay away from me!"

His only reply is another step forward. His face is twisted up in some sick facsimile of an ecstatic smile, but his eyes give it away. They're fixed right on you, cold and beady and hungry. Fear like none you've ever known washes out any notion of rational thought. Master. You need your Master.

"Master! Help!"

He's looming over you now, barely two steps away. You've got nowhere

to go.

"Shhhh, darling little Zephyr. Forget that interfering idiot. Now you can be with your real master forever."

Indignation wells up in your chest. This sicko is NOT your Master! You make a desperate gambit for escape and spring sideways, hoping to get around him and find Master, but thick fingers clamp down on one of your rear legs. You've only got a moment to kick at him before he swings you one-handed into the side of the bed.

You're lucky to only have collided with the sides of the mattress and box-spring, but the wind is knocked out of you all the same. You're still trying to flail and kick as he drags you back to him by one of your wings. He lifts you up, one hand across your chest while the other settles on your neck, ending your cries for help with a small squeeze of your windpipe.

"Be quiet... unless you want to start your homecoming celebration early?"

His voice promises only pain, even in his gleeful tone. Harsh, ragged sobs begin to escape from your throat as the hopelessness of the situation becomes apparent. He did something to your Master, it's the only way he could get to you. Oh god, please don't let Master be dead. What about Autumn? He'll do the same to Autumn as he will to you! As he carries you downstairs, he begins to whisper to you, just the way he did before.

"I haven't been able to stop thinking about you since our last meeting. Now that we're together, my beautiful little p0ny, I can finally give you all of my love, and I have just so much love to give you."

His hands tighten their grip as he speaks, and his voice finally loses the faux-gentle air they had when he arrived. There is only viciousness now. He's breathing heavily and describing how you'll learn to love him, and to accept his ways of showing love when a new voice greets the two of you at the landing. He has an accomplice!

"Did you get what you came for?"

The other intruder isn't what demands your attention though. He's a noise in the background when you see poor Autumn.

She's been bound and gagged with leather straps, but the pitch of her repeated screams is audible from across the room through the gag. It's hard to get a good look at her from where you are and with her constant, violent struggling, but her continually darting eyes don't seem to focus on much of anything, even you. She's having a panic attack.

They did this to her! The girl's been through hell and back with her transformation, and these two think they can treat her like this? You have to help her! She's having a full-blown panic attack in a situation she can't escape from, and the only person who can calm her down is Master. Where is he? He has to be around here somewhe-

You'd been glancing from side to side trying to find you Master, and that's when you noticed him in the kitchen. On the floor, with a distinct red gash on his head.

He's not moving.

No. Oh no. This can't be happening. He's your only way out of this. If... If he's... If they killed him then there's no hope. You'll be mangled, violated and broken beyond repair. And... And Autumn... They'll take her too...

Please, just get up. Get up and save your pets.

Your struggling becomes the same full-blown thrashing that Autumn is doing on the living room floor, and even with a hand instantly moving up to silence you your screams must be deafening. A sharp blow to the side of your head stuns you for a few seconds, and you're handed off to the accomplice.

"Get her bound while I load the other and start the van."

He's taking Autumn! Her tears are being thrown in all directions as she shakes her head in all directions. Her muffled screams are audible even as she's carried out of the room and house. In the final moment before

leaving the living room, the two of you lock eyes. The bubbly pony you know and love isn't in there right now. Pure, animal terror is behind those eyes, and with Master hurt, she knows there's no one to save her.

The sick fuck's accomplice has hold of you now, and with one arm wrapped firmly around your waist he's reaching out with the other toward a bag full of bondage gear. That's it. That's the end game. If he binds you then it's all over and you and Autumn will suffer a fate worse than death. You'll wish you just bashed your own head in when you were chained to the basement floor.

You have to save Autumn. You have to save Master. You have to get free.

The young man currently attempting to bind you is skinny to the point of being unsettling, but more importantly he seems nervous. There's no inhuman detachment in his eyes that makes the man who just took your best friend so frightening. You might be able to do this. You flail your limbs wildly, and he has a hard time keeping a hold on you. He keeps shouting for you to stop it, but all that gets from you are attempts to bite at his face.

You think you have him on the ropes until his free hand slams into your belly. You see stars for a few seconds, and the familiar feeling of being socked in the gut is rapidly overtaken by the feeling of rising bile. You can't help it, and release the still wine-red contents of your stomach all over your would-be captor.

It's a pure accident, but it works in your favor as he makes a disgusted sound and tries to hold you at arms length. This is it! You suddenly begin to flap your wings like mad, all while kicking towards his chest. You've managed to take him by surprise, and you're rewarded by him releasing his grip in a panic as he falls backwards.

You tumble to the floor, but you're on your hooves faster than he's on his feet. You make an attempt at bucking him in the face, but his scrambling to get up meant that all you did was kick the wind out of him.

He's on his feet in another couple of seconds and you're worried you might have blown your only chance. He's screaming about what a little

bitch you are when you see it, but he's facing you, so he most certainly doesn't. He swings a leg back as though to punt you when it happens.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a baseball bat swings hard from behind him, and catches your attacker square on the back of the head. He goes down like a ton of bricks.

Behind him, still bleeding from a head wound and with a face contorted in absolute, burning hatred is your Master, seemingly back from the dead. At least that's how it feels to you. He's not standing very steadily, but he's up, and his wild eyes make contact with yours for a moment. You're sure he'll be fine, though, when you hear his first question;

"Where's Autumn?"

As if in answer to his question, an engine roars to life outside. He's trying to get away!

# Zephyr's Tale





## Part 12

You can hear tires spinning in place on the dirt of the driveway even as you and Master race to the front door. Master's not in a good way himself, barely staying upright, staggering around the room, and seemingly propelled only by concern for Autumn and a whole lot of anger. You're the first to see a poorly cared for utility van trundle off down the dirt road away from the house. No!

"AUTUMN!"

"I'll get the car keys!"

Master dashes up the stairs, stumbling as he goes, to get the keys to his truck. This is going to take too long! He's going to get away!

This is it. You have to do something, or Autumn's going to suffer in your place. Before you have any kind of plan, you're at a full sprint down the driveway, eyes fixed only on the tail lights as they retreat into the dark. Your wings go to work, and a week of intense practice pays off as you take to the sky. At first the van only gets further away as you focus on gaining altitude.

Your wings pump furiously as you attempt to go higher than you ever have before, you crest the treeline and, still slowly climbing, roll in mid-air to give chase. Somewhere over the howling wind you can hear Master shouting your name, but you don't even look back. He can punish you later if he wants. You can't lose that van. You can't lose Autumn. Not to that pervert.

Okay, Zephyr, you need a plan. Think! From your height, you can see that the dirt road he's driving along goes for quite some distance without meeting any other paths. That'll make it easier to stay with him, and the roughness of the dirt road is forcing him to slow down.

Even if you can catch up, what are you going to do? You can't open the

doors to get Autumn out, and even if you could you'd still have to contend with your would-be rapist. You have to get to Autumn!

There's no way in!

Wait. Yes there is. From this height you could come straight down on the windshield, bust through it and slam right into that motherfucker's face. It's suicide, though. You're light and fragile. You could really die. If the van is still rolling it might kill Autumn too. You can't.

Your wings feel like they're on fire. You've never flown this fast for this long before, and you don't know how long you can keep it up. The exertion is taking its toll, and the taste of blood in the back of your mouth confirms that you're going to run out of steam very soon. Quickly glancing back, you can see the headlight's from Master's truck in the distance. You're not sure if he'll catch up before the van can turn onto another road, possibly encountering witnesses and making pursuit dangerous. This is hopeless! Whatever you're going to do, you have to do it soon.

A loud thump and the sound of spinning tires snaps you back into the present. The van is at a dead stop! The spinning rear tires make it evident that he's stuck in the dirt. This is your chance! You need to buy Master time to catch up. You know what that means doing.

You fly straight past the now stationary van and swing to the side, turning back toward it. No stopping now.

You're in a dive and building speed, headed directly toward the driver's side of the van from the front. You should stop- this could kill you!

You flash back to when you first met Autumn. From inside your cage, you wondered if you'd turn out like her; A faithful, willing pet. Is that what happened? Is that why you're about to risk life and limb for her?

No. That's not what this is about. This is about protecting an innocent person, your friend, from rape, torture, and in all likelihood death. You were a /co/mrade before MLP came around. You've spent a lifetime worshipping at the altar of the Batman, Superman and dozens of other

heroes. You can't do any less than this and live with yourself. If that also means you're exactly the pet Master wanted, then you suppose that's a silver lining.

You can see his pudgy, unshaven face now as you hurtle toward him with tremendous speed. He hasn't seen you yet, still focused on trying to drive the van out of the hole he's stuck in. You can't stop now, even if you wanted to.

You're only a few yards away now. Still getting closer. The wind stings your eyes and your lungs are burning, but you're there.

He looks up and sees you at the last second before you tuck your wings in and curl into the tightest ball you can. You shut your eyes as tight as you can and brace yourself for pain.

You really hope you live through this.

You really hope he doesn't.

You do feel the windshield breaking under the force of your impact, but the sudden stop a second later is the last thing you feel before being knocked unconscious.

The van's horn blasting into your ears brings you back into consciousness. Oh. Oh you really wish it hadn't.

Every bone and muscle in your body is screaming. Pain is not the right word for what you are experiencing. Every breath is labored and agonizing. You must have broken some ribs. You try to cry out through a mouthful of blood, but the noise is nothing but a small, choking gurgle. Involuntary, pitiful whines emerge after it. It hurts! You're really, really hurt. Oh god, you need help, you really really need help.

You've got to calm down. Master will be here soon. Just breathe. Don't think about how many teeth might be gone or if you just bit your tongue. Don't even look at your legs. Don't think about glass in your skin. Don't try to move your wings. Breathe.

Your breathing rapidly descends into rapid hyperventilating, and you can't stop yourself from crying. Fuck this, you'd rather have died!

The sound of an engine, oh thank god! You're momentarily blinded by headlights, but the sound of Master shouting for you and Autumn at the top of his lungs is the most beautiful thing you've heard in your life. The color draining from his face when he sees you is much less comforting.

"Zephyr! How did... Oh god. Where does it hurt?"

As much as you'd like to tell him "Everywhere" all you can manage is another gurgling moan. He's by your side in an instant. He gives you a quick once over before looking into the van.

"You're going to be okay, you hear me?! Just let me get Autumn into the truck, and I'll get you home, alright?"

It's only a few seconds before Master re-enters your vision, Autumn in his arms. She's completely quiet, just trembling. At least until she sees you. A small cry escapes her throat, and it rapidly elevates to full blown screaming. That's probably something to worry about... You can't be in a good way... You're just so sleepy.

Sudden movement behind you gets your attention, even if you can't summon the energy to do more than roll your head along the hood towards the noise.

He's moving! In your severely concussed state, you're almost as insulted as you are afraid. You just destroyed yourself, and he doesn't even have the courtesy to die. This time, there's fear written on his face, which is some small consolation to you. He falls out of the van and starts stumbling toward the treeline, but Master's seen him.

All that inhuman confidence is gone now, as he tries to drag himself away from an eerily silent Master. Master, for his part, is expressionless. Wordlessly stalking after the Sadist until he finally catches up. With a pained cry the freak trips on something, and it seems like he's about to beg for mercy...

Until Master swings the bat directly into his face. After taking the time to cuff him to a tree with some of his own fetish gear, you find yourself being gingerly lifted and carried, even as sleep threatens to take you.

"Hey! Don't fall asleep! Stay with me!"

You'd love to, but you're just... so...

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You swim through layers of sleep before surfacing to a blurry view of Master's living room. Wait... How did you get here? Everything starts to come back in flashes. Your would-be owner. His friend. Your kamikaze run.

Master giving you something to bite down on while he set your broken bones into place- Digging glass out of your skin. Waking up to Autumn crying beside you.

You're alive!

How long have you been out?

You're terrified to look down at yourself. What if the damage is permanent? What if your legs or wings don't work anymore? Okay, okay, just calm down. Getting Autumn away from that monster is worth any price and you know it. Start small. You slide your tongue around your mouth, feeling for missing teeth. Ach! The problem, it seems, was your tongue, but your teeth seem to be intact. You gingerly lift your head off the pillow and twist your neck a bit. It's sore, but you're relieved to find that it's fully functional once you work out the kinks. Okay. Just take a deep breath and look back.

You can't help but close your eyes as you turn, but when you open them things look much better than they could. Your right rear leg is in what looks like a home-made cast, and there are bandages criss-crossing the rest of you, including your wings. Large bruises are visible along your ribcage, but that comes as no surprise.

You're okay. Hurt, yes, but you're really okay.

You lay your head back down on the pillow and let relief wash over you. You're alive. Autumn is safe. A giddy laugh comes out involuntarily and doesn't stop. It's over! You never have to be afraid of him again! You're laughing so hard you're starting to cry.

The sound of footsteps approaching registers with you, but it doesn't do much to stop your giggles. Master rounds the corner, worry etched onto his face until he gets a good look at you. He cracks a smile, a real smile, and kneels next to the sofa. He's wearing a bandage on his forehead, but otherwise seems fine.

"Really awake this time? You've been in-and-out for four straight days, you know."

Four days? Seems plausible enough. You'd love to reply with a quip, but it's just... They hurt him to get to you. He hurt them to protect you. Sure, you divebombed the van, but you wouldn't have had the chance if he hadn't saved you. You were helpless, and he saved you. You felt warm inside as soon as he spoke to you.

This isn't... You shouldn't... You know this feeling. Awkward as it definitely is, there's no two ways about this. You're in love. With a man. Who kidnapped you. Changed you... aaaand did a bunch of other stuff with you. Is that okay?

Man, fuck it. Of course it's okay. He's leaning in close all of a sudden and you hope he's about to reciprocate.

Then he flicks you on the nose.

"You don't ever do something like that again, you understand me? You could have died out there."

"Autumn could have had worse. I had to."

This time he does kiss you. For a few seconds you let your mind go blank and just enjoy this feeling. After he breaks the kiss, though, it's back to

business.

"Autumn is okay, right? Where is she?"

"She's been having trouble sleeping for the past few days. When she's not down here waiting for you to wake up, she's upstairs having nightmares. I'm sure you can sympathize. Right now she's actually, finally asleep, though."

"And those two bastards?"

"Downstairs. I'm working on something special for them."

Well.... that's certainly chilling. Or rather it would be if you had any sympathy for either of them. Still, this does raise some questions.

"Unless you've got a buyer with oddly specific taste, I don't think the sadist pony is going to be an easy sale."

"You'll see. Now, pick anything you want to eat and it's yours."

Hmmm. You haven't had to think about what you were going to eat in weeks. Since waking up here, Master's been doing all that, and the food's good enough that you don't really mind at all... But now you can't think of anything.

"Whatever you think is best."

"I offer you literally whatever you want and you're leaving it up to me?"

"If your dog chases off a burglar, do you ask it what it wants?"

"Yeah, but you're -not- a dog."

"But I -am- your pet."

"...Good girl."

Once again your judgement - that is to say, trusting his judgement, pays

off in the form of a large bowl of raspberries. These. Are. INCREDIBLE. As much as you'd like to pace yourself, you're absolutely starving and the whole bowl is gone in mere minutes. It's only after you've finished gorging yourself, and inadvertently dyed your face red, that you feel any shame upon noticing that Master's been staring the entire time.

"I suppose four days without eating will do that. Now that that's covered, we need to talk."

"Master?"

"Autumn's been my only real companion for ten months now. She was my only mistake until you happened, and I tried my best to own that mistake. Literally, I guess, and she's become a lot more than that since. She's very, very important to me and I don't know what I would've done if you didn't step up."

"Have you ever told her all this?"

"I have, but that's not what this is about. I owe you, and I'm going to offer you a reward. Anything you want. Anything. I could call your friend and give you to him, or I could let you choose between people who want to buy you. I can't promise anything, but if you really wanted... I could try to undo all the changes. Make you human."

You can barely suppress your laughter.

"You're joking, right?"

"No, Zephyr, I'm being serious. Whatever you want."

Now you're really laughing, but it's a cover. You know where this is going and it makes you nervous. What if he says no?

"Why would I want any of that? You'll forgive me if I'm not a fan of strangers who want to take me home anymore. And I meant it when I said Jake's house is gross. Besides, I'd just be a third wheel with him and Evergreen...And I'd still take both of those over going back to my crummy house. And my terrible job... And being unhappy..."



"So what is it you want, then?"

Butterflies are dancing in your stomach and for a second your breath catches in your throat. This is it. End of the line. Are you really about to say this?

Yeah, there's no saving you. You're all the way gone.

"You win, you know that? You got exactly what you wanted from me. All the choices in the world, and there's only one thing I can think of. You want me to be happy?"

"Keep me."

You have no reason to be as scared of rejection as you are. He cares about you, you know he does!

"That's all?"

You can feel your ears droop as doubt begins to plague you.

"Please, I'll be good! I won't ever disobey, you know I won't! Don't send me away. I love Autumn. I... I love you."

A warm hand reaches out and tousles your mane a bit. You've shut your eyes in a mix of embarrassment at your confession and irrational fear of being turned down.

"Of course you'll be good. You're a fantastic pet, Zephyr. Here I was ready to set you free, and all you want is exactly what was going to happen anyway before you got to play hero?"

Before? He was already planning on it?! You open your eyes in time to see him lean down to hug you gently around the neck. This is perfect. You're the warm little center of the universe as long as this means what you think it means. That you're his. His possession, his pet, his mare.

"Who are you?"

"Z-Zephyr."

"And who am I?"

"My Master."

"And that's how it's going to stay."

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 13

His hug ends with a kiss on the forehead, and he immediately sets himself about whatever his next task involves all while talking to you. You're looking at him but not quite watching, still giddy with what's just happened. You're not getting sold! This is home now, for real and for good! You do stop for a moment and consider the "for good" portion of that. Yeah, no, you're still more excited than afraid. You internal dialogue, however, has drowned out what Master's been saying.

"-hink it's probably for the best, right?"

"I'm sorry Master, what did you say?"

"You weren't listening? Bad girl. I said we should keep this a surprise for Autumn. She'll probably be more excited about it than you are, she really loves having you here."

"You're in charge. When should we tell her?"

"I've got something in mind. Just keep quiet about it for now."

"Yes, Master."

Oooh, Autumn's gonna be so happy! With the whole foreseeable future available to you, you might even figure out what to call your messed-up relationship with her! Is she your friend, your lover, or the big sister you never had? As you ponder, Master seems to finish whatever he's been doing with his back turned, and wheels back around with a hypodermic needle in hand.

Maybe you have an infection and he's giving you medicine?

"W-what's in the needle?"

"Nanomachines."

He hasn't even finished the word and you're already trying to put distance between the two of you. Considering your enfeebled state, all that really means is pressing yourself against the back cushions of the couch. More machines?

"Why!?! I just said I love you! You don't need to mess with my head!"

He takes a second to chuckle to himself before putting his hands up in a "woah" gesture and explains himself. "Really? If you distrust me that much, I might argue otherwise. But no, these aren't going to mess with your head, we both know what happened last time I did that. They'll help that leg heal faster so you're only stuck on the couch for a few days, not a few months."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

You assent to the shot, and while the sensations coming from your leg are strange, your mind remains unmolested to the best of your knowledge. After a long session of quiet mane stroking and ear scratching, practically all the reward you could possibly need, Master vanishes off downstairs somewhere. It isn't long before a very strung out Autumn appears by the couch. She looks like she hasn't had more than a couple hours of sleep in days.

"Autumn! Are you okay?"

She's very quiet for a few seconds, but tiny, squeaking sobs begin to escape from her throat.

"I... I was asleep on the f-floor and -they- had me before I knew w-what was happening and they -hurt- Master and -he- was trying to take me away and.. and.. and.. you. You got h-hurt. For me."

The squeaks have ascended, she's bawling like a child now. You extend a forehoof and pull her closer, but it takes some coaxing to get her to join you on the couch. You hold her tight and whisper sweet nothings the way

Master did for you, eventually calming her down. Before you realize it she's fallen asleep while clinging to you, and you settle for enjoying her warmth and the serene view out the window.

The next few days were a slog of mind-numbing television, being spoiled rotten with junk food, and the return of your old friend shame as you now required major assistance every time you needed to go to the bathroom. Master spends his afternoons upstairs working on his "something special" for the men in the basement, but a quick yell brings him downstairs whenever you need him- he even thought you were pretty cute when you "needed" that kiss. Autumn is a more constant companion and attendant, and considering you're still too clumsy to operate the remote with the tip of your hoof the way she does, you end up needing her a lot.

Finally, five days after waking up, Master declares your leg to be healed and sets himself about cutting your makeshift cast off. You're twitchy for the entire cutting process, eager to be up and moving again, even if your wings wouldn't be in flight condition for a few more days.

"Aaaaalright, just another couple cuts, and you're all se- Hey!"

It takes all of three seconds before you're bounding around on the floor again... and all of three seconds for that to end with your face meeting the floor.

"I was going to say that nine days spent immobile on the couch is going to leave you pretty weak, but I think you've got that figured out, yeah?"

"Yes, Master" is all you can manage from your spot on the floor. You shakily rise back on to your hooves, at once furious at having lost muscle needed for takeoff and embarrassed at your trembling legs. A look down reveals slightly skinnier legs, and the one that just came out of the cast is... eww. Matted fur stained yellow, with small specks of blood visible. Just like the rest of you, it hasn't been washed in over a week.

"We'll get you into the bath later, right now I'm wondering if you'd like to see what I've been cooking up for our two guests downstairs?"

Autumn declines, saying she'd meet them once Master "made them

better", but you're on board if only for the chance to see the transformation from a different, unaffected perspective. Master seems proud of himself, you'd guess he knew Autumn would be out and you'd be in. He knows you both so well!

You start to trot after Master toward the basement, but your weakened legs coupled with your prior difficulties with stairs meant Master ended up carrying you down. Not that you mind being in his arms, anyway. You get set down beside the door to your old cell, and for a minute you freeze up. Your subconscious mind absolutely refuses to let you consider entering that room. You can't. You cannot go back in. You can't go in there you can't go in there you can't!

You have to take a minute to get yourself under control, but Master seems to understand the issue you're having. "As long as you're in the room, that door stays open. You can leave whenever you want. Are you ready?"

You give him a small nod, and he swings the door open. They both recoil from the light, but it gives you a good look. They're both in bad shape. Master didn't do much to treat the injuries from the bat, and the two of them are nude save for what look like towels draped over their laps for decency's sake and a gag apiece. They're strapped into chairs which have been affixed to the floor you were once chained to, which now has a pair of pans beneath the seats. Ugh, even with Master's concern for waste disposal, nine days down here did not do anything for their odor. You hope you didn't smell this bad when Master took you out.

They looked frightened from the moment you saw them. They looked terrified when Master spoke in a tone you've never heard him use. That mirth in his eyes seems to have a cruel edge to it now. Your Master is very, very angry.

"Well, gentlemen, it looks like it's finally time for you to be of any use to anyone. I'm sure you remember my pony, Zephyr? The one you came here to steal?"

The accomplice seems to be trying to beg through his gag. Master saunters over behind him, resting his hands on the accomplice's

shoulders.

"Now, now David, no need to be upset. You've done wrong by me, and now I need you to make it up to me. Zephyr, he'll be getting a similar treatment to you. Care to tell him what he's in for?"

You get it! Master wants to scare them first, and you're part of the act. Well, nothing's scarier than the truth. You throw on the happiest voice you can muster, and wear a big, big smile as you lean your forehooves against his thighs to get your face right up in his.

"It's going to hurt more than anything you've ever felt, so bad that you'll think you're going to die. It's worth it though, because when you come back around you're going to be a pretty little mare like me! Everyone loves pretty little mares, and I'm sure when Master's machines are done you'll love your new owner just as much as he'll love you!"

He begins to struggle as madly as you did when he had you, and the sound of water striking the pan below indicates that you're much, much better at this than you have any right to be.

"Well boys, now that my little Zephyr has given you some idea of what you're in for, let's get to details. For starters, knowing everything that tubby over here knows about me, why would you two bring your laptops along? You must have known I would look through them. David, did your fat fuck friend Charlie over here ask if you'd made a pony for shits and giggles?"

He's quick to give an affirmative nod.

"And what did you say?"

He gives an equally fast nod in the negative

"But that would make you a liar! I know it must have been embarrassing, but you really should have admitted to having your stories about a night guard mare. What did you call her, Opal?"

His face says it all. He knows exactly what's coming, and his eyes flit in



every direction as though he's looking for a way out.

"Now, I looked through more than your stories. I know you were in debt and this guy over here offered to pay it off if you helped him steal my treasured pets. You have poor judgement and lousy friends. Now, I've never made a night guard pony before. Those little bat wings, the different ears and eyes aren't much of a difference, but there's still a chance something could go wrong and hurt the pony-to-be. Now, David, can you think of any reason I should worry about hurting you?"

He's crying now. You feel bad for him, but there's no other way to end this without killing him. He'll be happy enough when this is over, anyway.

Master produces another hypodermic needle from a pocket, and you know what's about to happen.

"Shhhh, David. The person who'll buy you has been wanting a little bat-pony for the longest time. He's already got two other ponies who are extremely well cared for, spoiled even. More money than he knows what to do with, considering what he offered when I told him I -might- be able to make this happen. You'll never have to work another day in your life."

He still looks scared to death, but his tears have stopped.

"I'm going to remove your gag because I do feel a bit guilty about all this. If you have any questions or requests, I'll listen, but you're not going to talk your way out of this. Deal?"

His nod is slow now, and his voice is shaky and he's on the edge of hyperventilation once the gag comes out.

"I'm sorry! He didn't even tell me what we were going to take until we were outside your house! I-I panicked!"

His head swings back down to face you, and you're suddenly very uncomfortable. Somehow you felt less responsible for this man's anguish when you could pretend to be a fly on the wall.

"A-and I'm sorry I hit you! I'm sorry I said those things! Please believe me!"

There's not much you can do but gently lay a hoof on his leg and smile up at him. You turn to face Master, who gives you an exasperated look.

"I hope you're not about to ask me to let him go."

"No, but he seems like he's a victim of circumstance. The transformation is painful, and he doesn't need to suffer more than he already has. Could we put him under before it really kicks in?"

Master gives a soft sigh, the hard anger on his features long gone. Having been reminded that the man he was toying with mere moments ago is a person with feelings seems to have taken the fun out of it for him. You're a little disconcerted at his behavior in the first place, but it looks like he won't continue.

"That would be the humane thing to do. Is there anything else you'd like to ask, Dave?"

"Will I remember who I am?"

"Everything but your name. Opal will be much better off without it."

"W-When I'm... Like her... Please... You're not going to hurt me, are you?"

Master slides the needle into his arm, slowly working the plunger before replying.

"Never."

The needle removed, Master steps out to find something to put David under before the machines go to work. You sit with him, trying to calm him down as the initial numbness spreads over his body. He snaps out of it, just like you did, and starts to speak. At first it's just nonsensical panic speech, telling himself that it's going to be alright in between breaths. He seems to have forgotten you're there at all until you speak.

"It's okay, you know. You really are going to be alright."

"I'm not even going to be a person!"

You're trying to come up with a comforting reply, but Master returns with a familiar looking rag and an unlabeled bottle. It doesn't take any coaxing for David to breathe deep, and he's out like a light.

Master unstraps him from his chair and, hoisting him over a shoulder, carries him into the other room. The one for ponies. There wasn't any way to keep him alive and keep the secret but this. Just keep reminding yourself that, and hope that Opal, not David, forgives you.

Forgives you? No. Forgives him. You wheel around to face the still-gagged other occupant.

"Charlie? Was that it? I'm going to guess that a guy like you doesn't have many friends. Well, I hope you know that this is your fault. David, soon to be Opal, is only here because you brought him."

He's just staring at you. There's a dose of apprehension in his eyes, but behind them you can see that cold hunger still burning. Even now, he's thinking of all the ways he'd like to be able to break you. No remorse, no pity.

"You sick bastard. I don't know what my Master is going to do with you, but I hope it gives you some fucking empathy."

"Leave him, Zephyr. We'll make sure his friend turns out alright before starting on this one."

You do as you're told, of course, but after Master helps you back up the stairs all you want to do is flop back down on the couch and feel shitty. You just helped scare a person out of his wits before putting him through something that was already horrendously traumatic! Master, however, carries you up the next flight of stairs as well, before setting you down and running a bath. While the tub fills, you decide to voice your concerns.

"Master... Did we have to be so mean?"

"I was angry. Autumn was traumatized, I was concussed, and you almost died. I just assumed they were both equally horrendous. I'll apologize to Opal when she wakes up. Is alright to be mad at the fat one?"

"Absolutely."

"So, um, Opal... is she going to be alright?"

"I triple-checked everything, she should be fine. Gave her the regular mental package as well. She'll have her moments of confusion or sadness, every one of them does, but she'll be prepared to accept it."

"And that's the only difference between me and your usual ponies?"

"Are you still worried about that? You're amazing because you came around to this on your own, with only my rules to follow. If I thought they'd all be like you I wouldn't bother with the subconscious suggestions."

Your conversation takes a pause while he hoists you into the tub, which is a blessing in disguise. You're distracted by a sudden rush of warm feelings; no one has ever called you "amazing" before.

"I... um, thank you."

"For what"

"Being so nice to me."

"You're my pet pony. Of course I'm nice to you."

For the rest of the bath you allow him to pamper you in comfortable silence. Getting your recently healed leg clean again takes quite some doing, and the two of share a few good jokes about how inconvenient your color selection was. His hands scrub every last bit of you, and you're feeling quite frisky as his hands rub your flank. The notion of really, well and truly being his returns in force, and despite some residual male ego rallying against the idea, you find yourself wondering when he'll decide

to, ah, "consummate" your relationship. You arch your back a bit and stick your rump out, and the sound of a small chuckle indicates that he's noticed.

"In the mood, I take it?" He jabs at you, even as his fingers begin to massage more aggressively.

"Well, I'm sorry to say that we don't really have time. In a few minutes those machines will properly kick in, and I need to be watching for trouble when they do."

Even as he turns you down his fingers continue and assault, beginning to rub against your crotch.

"But you know me, I love to keep you waiting."

His hands are suddenly gone, and you try to contain the burning in your nethers...

Until a sudden, hard spank to your rear end takes you by complete surprise. Your sharp inhale of surprise is followed quickly by a loud moan, and you bite your lower lip while being forced to admit to yourself that you enjoyed that. A lot. You offer a passing thought to the shame that should probably still be here, but it's long gone. You're a horny mare, why wouldn't you enjoy it?

You spend the rest of your time in the bathroom trying to entice him to change his mind, but he's terribly efficient about drying you off and brushing your mane and tail. It's only a matter of minutes before everything but your still yearning marehood is dry and brushed, and the two of you return to the basement.

He seems to have become a bit paler since last you saw him, but it also looks like a five o'clock shadow is slowly spreading across his torso. Wait, night guard, of course the fur is going to be dark. Does that mean your extreme paleness was actually the beginning of your fur? Interesting.

Master pulls up a seat nearby the sleeping transformee and you set

yourself down on your haunches next to him. Neither of you looks away from David-who-is-becoming-Opal, but his hand automatically settles on your head and starts petting.

"Master? Do you do this for all of your ponies?"

"Sit and watch them? I check on them, but this kind of attention is reserved for when I'm trying something new."

"Can I ask... How did you know I wasn't, um, mentally changed?"

"You were, a little. Your name changed just fine. I knew there was a problem when you tried to call for help once the changes really started."

"I wasn't supposed to do that?"

"Nope. The first thing you're supposed to feel is an overwhelming sense of calm. You were terrified. I didn't know what did or didn't work until you woke up."

"So when she wakes up?"

"If everything goes as planned? She won't have a panic attack like you did. She'll need a little time to come to terms with it, but she'll come around before long."

So they don't just wake up ecstatic about having been transformed? You suppose that makes more sense than what you thought.

"Could I be here when she wakes up?"

"I usually watch from outside and wait for the right moment, but this is a special case and I think it would help if you were. Which means we're both not going anywhere for a while. I'll get some coffee."

It occurs to you at this point that you had a full night's sleep before the changes came in force. You're gonna have to wait -how- long?

Several hours later you've learned quite a lot. First and foremost; Coffee

is a lot stronger than it was before you had hooves. It's taken a while just for you to stop being so damn twitchy. Master thought it was pretty funny to see you wired, and he seemed to think it was even more funny once you were all strung out and crawling all over him until he gave in and started petting you.

In the same time span the two of you have relocated to the same floor cushions Evergreen and Gizmo had been sitting on when you first saw them, with the television playing softly, mostly for the benefit of background noise, and David-who-is-now-mostly-Opal off to the side. Watching this transformation take place has been absolutely fascinating in spite of how long it's taking. The five-o'clock shadow from before has blossomed into a shiny-looking dark grey coat of fur all over her body, which seems to shimmer different colors as she writhes about on the floor. Considering the lack of clothing, you're now quite certain you're looking at a mare. Watching that particular section of anatomy rearrange itself gave you sympathy pains. Watching her fingers and toes merge into digitless stumps which eventually became hooves was absolutely fascinating. What's happening now is really the wild part, though.

It looks like steam is rising from every part of her body, which Master explained as the machines shedding excess mass. Her frame is steadily shrinking, and small popping sounds can be heard as her joints are reconfigured to suit an equine shape. Muscles twitch and ripple and the sickly-looking bulges you had are just now breaking open on her back, revealing full-blown bat wings, covered in some gross-looking fluid.

Eugh. The sheets you had on your bed at home must have been covered in it. You wonder who would have found them by now. What did they think happened? Master's voice breaks a long silent streak, drawing your focus away from the mare-to-be on the ground.

"She'll be finished soon, and the changes that could have gone wrong have all gone off without a hitch. She'll be asleep for another few hours after this, how about we take a quick walk and then you can stay with her."

You're pretty exhausted, but lingering caffeine in your system means you're probably not sleeping any time soon no matter how bad you might

want to. After quickly checking in on a sleeping Autumn, the two of you enjoy a brisk walk through the yard in the chilly twilight hours of the early morning. You really wish you could fly right now, but with one wing still bandaged and healing you absolutely can't. Master seems to notice your lack of enthusiasm for the exercise, though.

"You need to run around more if you're going to get your strength back."

"I know, it's just hard to get excited about much besides flying these days."

He responds by cracking a stick off of a nearby tree, and holding it in front of you.

"See the stick, girl?"

"I thought we established that I'm -not- a dog?"

"And I thought we established that you -are- my pet. Now go get it!"

He tosses it several yards away, and in spite of yourself you do take off after it, if only to humor him. Certainly not so he'll scratch behind your ears when you bring it back. That would be silly.

A few more rounds of this take place, each returned stick meriting more of the ear-scratching attention you so crave.

Your game of fetch ends right around when you tried to catch it with your mouth mid-air, but mostly just hit yourself in the throat with an airborne piece of wood. It didn't do any real harm, but you'd had enough by then and Master seemed satisfied that you'd had a decent enough workout, so the two of you turn back toward the house.

"I'm still not a dog, you know."

"What does that have to do with anything? I once had a cat that would fetch. Now I've got a pony that does."

You know he's making fun of you, but you still find yourself nuzzling his



leg. He can make as many jokes as he wants as long as he loves you.

You return to the basement to find a nearly fully-formed pony, devoid of any of the traits you saw on David a few hours ago save for the remaining patches of dark hair which are gradually becoming a deep violet hue. Master double-checks her vitals, then points out an intercom button by the door with instructions to press it once she's awake and ready to move on, or if you need anything.

Now you're alone with sleeping beauty, watching and waiting to meet the new mare. You recall your first moments of conscious habitation of your new body. The terror, the disgust, the anger.

You really hope she's happy.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 14

You've been doing your best not to fall asleep for a few hours now, but it's an uphill battle in spite of the continually amazing things happening to Opal. It's like fighting to stay awake during a late-night movie or television show you actually want to watch, only if you pass out here instead of waking up to an infomercial you might find a pony in the midst of a complete breakdown. Gotta stay awake.

Opal, for her part, is almost 100% pony now. She's down to the right size and shape, with that brilliant, shimmering fur covering every inch of her body, and a brilliant violet tail which emerged from her abdomen like a plant growing in fast-motion. Her limbs have finished reforming themselves into four hooved legs, a process more violent-looking than even you had thought based on first-hand, er, hoof, experience. Only the finer details are still a work in progress. You can't be totally sure without touching her, but it seems like her face is still the final throes of being rearranged. A fully formed muzzle sticks out, but you can't tell if your eyes are playing tricks on you or if her eyes are literally getting bigger underneath their lids.

After a few minutes of pacing about the room in an attempt to get some energy back, you flop down on the cushion nearest Opal and set yourself about operating a remote control with hooves. It takes some doing, but you're eventually channel flipping with only occasional mistakes. You settle for a 24 hour news network, everything else on at this time of night is terrible anyway, and also because you've had absolutely no idea what's been going on in the world since you were brought here. You wonder if there were any news reports about your sudden disappearance? Was there a search for you? Your parents would certainly have tried, but it would have taken a few days without a returned phone call for them to even start worrying.

... Yeeaaaah, you were kind of a lousy son. There certainly weren't any reports about you on now, but it's been weeks and news cycles would have definitely have forgotten you considering you weren't a child or a

teenage white girl. "Weren't". Not "Aren't"? Your first instinct is no longer to consider yourself a person? That's... odd. Certainly something that would have frightened you to the point of tears a few weeks ago. That gut reaction just isn't there anymore, though. You're a pet, a possession, a pretty little thing Master dotes on. All things considered you're a lot better at this than you were at person-hood. Oh well.

You're brought back to reality by shifting noises outside your field of vision. A small groan causes you to snap to attention, slamming a hoof down on the remote's power button repeatedly until the device dutifully shuts the hell up. By the time you wheel around to face her, the newly minted pony is weakly lifting her head and blearily opening one vertically slit eye. She's still slogging her way into consciousness, she probably hasn't remembered what's happened yet.

But she's awake.

She hasn't seen you yet, and her still-unfocused eyes indicate that she also hasn't fully woken up yet. You open your mouth as if to say something and then freeze. What if she's like you? What if she's angry and afraid and she blames it all on you? What did you hope to do down here?

You're paralyzed by anxious indecision. Do you get her attention, or let her figure out what's going on for herself? What if she blames you for this?

Your pause, however, has given her time to come around. You watch in a kind of abject horror as her vertically scored pupils shrink to tiny slits when she sees the hoof outstretched in front of her. She's trembling just a bit as she touches the hoof against the carpet beneath her. This was the moment right before you freaked out, it's time to step in. Get it together, Zephyr!

"It's okay. You're going to be alright."

She's jumped about a solid foot in surprise by the time you've finished speaking. Maybe you should have let her notice you? "Jumped" may not be accurate here, it was more like throwing herself into the wall. She

recoils away from it at once, wincing from having pressed a still unfamiliar wing between herself and it. Her head snaps around to source of her pain, and her expression changes to one of pure shock. Her nostrils begin to flair rapidly with hurried breaths. If you don't calm her down now she's going to panic.

"Look at me. I know what this is like. Just lie down for a minute and breathe deep, okay?"

He trembling has become a full blown case of the shakes, but she did make eye contact when you asked. She's still in fight or flight mode, so you try lying down where you are, keeping eye contact the entire time. That seems to relax her a bit, and she very awkwardly sits back on her haunches and attempts to fold her forelegs under her like you have, slipping a bit as she shifts her weight. Those beautiful pale yellow cat eyes vanish as she closes her eyes and begins to take slower breaths. Crisis averted?

"Okay, that helps, right?"

She's still holding her eyes shut, but a soft reply comes forth from an unsteady voice. Even in her distress, it's nasal-y but not an unattractive tone, and suits her body perfectly.

"I-I think s- Ah!"

She's noticed the sound of her own voice, a hoof flying to an unfamiliar throat. No wonder Master chuckled when you did that, we must all do that! Shit, this could put her right back into a panic!

"I know this is all new and scary, but I want to help you. Just keep breathing and take things one at a time."

"I... I'm a pony?"

"Yes."

"Then how can you help?! I'm not even me anymore!"

"Shhhhh. Listen. Do you remember everything before waking up here?"

"Yeah."

"Then you're still you, just in a different package."

She slowly looks back and forth between her hooves and you, seemingly trying to take in what you've said.

She hasn't said anything in a couple of minutes, preoccupied entirely with slowly inspecting her new form. Individual joints are bent and muscles flexed one at a time, all under a still incredulous gaze. You relax a bit, she's definitely taking this better than you did. Master's machines, perhaps?

"This isn't possible. How can this be real?"

"You saw me and Autumn before being turned. You know it's real."

"B-but..." She averts her eyes from you and casts a sorrowful gaze to the floor. "But I was a man."

"So was I, and I'm happier like this. Look over there" You say, pointing a hoof towards the mirror.

Her eyes follow your hoof over to the mirror, and her jaw drops when she sees her reflection. She's up on the hooves for the first time, and with stumbling, unsteady steps she makes a beeline for it, with you right behind her.

"Is... Is that me? I- I'm..."

"Beautiful? No sweetie, you're gorgeous."

You pause for a moment, having not really intended on calling her "sweetie". You remember hating it at first when Master called you pet names, but that just kind of slipped out. It just kind of suits her, she's really, really cute.

Rather than being offended by your comment, she seems a bit flustered by it. You're going to guess David didn't get complimented a lot, but that's okay- Opal's going to be adored by whoever she meets. Even the little embarrassed hoof-shuffle she's doing is cute!

"You really think I'm... pretty?"

"Of course I do! Now, we were never really introduced. I'm Zephyr."

"I'm O... No, I'm Op..."

She looks shocked again, but you were leading her into this one. Better, you think, to get it all out of her system at once than draw this out any longer than it has to be.

For a few moments she's completely still, as though her brain has simply turned off. This has all gone so well that for a second you dare to hope she'll get through this without major issue.

"I... I'm n-not... THAT'S NOT MY NAME!"

Her scream catches in her throat a moment later, and she breaks down into tears with loud, wailing cries that tug at something in your chest. You knew how this felt, and you led her right to it. She... She must hate you right now, and the sinking feeling in your gut makes it seem like you deserve it. Your mind races to find a solution, you just desperately want to make it better. To feel like less of a monster. Your hoof moves to her shoulder in what you hope is a comforting gesture.

You know you've made a mistake as she recoils in disgust, scrambling on unsteady hooves to get away from you.

"Don't touch me!"

Her reaction feels like a knife in the chest. All you wanted to do was help her, and now she must hate you as much as you hated Master. Hot tears roll down your cheeks as you fall back onto your haunches, trying your best to contain yourself. God, you really are like Autumn now. That thought rips into you, putting you over the edge as you realize just how

much you've changed in so little time. Your own sobs join hers, and when you finally open your eyes you're startled to find Opal staring at you, a muted fury smoldering behind her eyes.

"Why are you crying? I can't hate you if you're crying. You can't tell me what my real name is if you're crying! Stop it!"

"I'm sorry! I'm so sorry about all of this, I just wanted to help. I didn't want you to feel like you do now... Like I did."

"Why wouldn't I be angry! He took my entire life!"

You've done some small retreating yourself over the course of the conversation. Your head hangs low and your ears are pulled back in response to the volume of her shouting. You perk up a bit when you realize that she's stopped. She's gone totally silent, until a small whisper escapes her lips.

"My... entire... life..."

She suddenly plops down into a sitting position, and you can't help but wear your confusion plainly as a roiling knot of fear and hope twists around your stomach. Do you dare try to get her talking again?

"Listen, I'm sorry, I really am, but haven't you ever wanted to start over?"

"Yeah, but not like... this." She motions to her reflection in the mirror.

"I'm not even human anymore! That man out there wants to treat me like an animal!"

"So what were you thinking of when you stopped yelling?"

She pauses for a moment, shame crossing her features and she shuffles her new hooves around a bit.

"...That I wasn't going to be in debt anymore."

"Right! Did you like your job? Were you close to anyone besides,



y'know, the guy that got you into this mess? Did you have a big plan for what to do once you were out of debt?"

"Well... No. I wasn't really in a good place."

"It's going to be a big adjustment, but listen to me. Money is never going to be your problem again. You'll be taken care of."

"By someone who wants to own me!"

"And all you have to do is keep being a cute pony and follow their rules. Doesn't that sound easy?"

She balks at your statement, sitting in a stunned silence as you slowly close the gap between the two of you.

"That... That does sound kind of nice..."

"There you go. Now let's try that again. I'm Zephyr, and I want to be your friend."

She's very hesitant, and you're sure she's blushing somewhere under that dark fur.

"I'm... I'm Opal"

"Good girl."

She seems even more ashamed than she did before, but you've got a decent guess as to why.

"Feels good, right?"

"Y-yeah. Really good. Why does it feel this good?"

You're right next to her now, able to take in all of her facial expressions as she tries to cope with what you assume to be Master's machines. The minute darting of her eyes and an audible gulp make it plain; She's losing this battle.

"That's just what being one of us feels like, sweetie. I realize you just woke up, but you look a little flustered. How about you rest on a cushion and I'll see about getting you something to eat?"

"Y-yeah. That sounds like a good idea."

She's already stumbling over towards the cushions by the time you go to hit the intercom, but you do pause for one more thing.

"Oh, one more thing, Opal."

"Um, yes?"

"Why'd you pick the same name as Rarity's cat?"

She goes all wide-eyed, embarrassment seeping out of every little facial twitch.

"Ugh! When I picked the name I forgot about the stupid cat! Besides, see how my coat reflects light? That's what actual opal looks like, not some white cat! It suited her better so I kept it."

She's so visibly peeved about it that you can't help but laugh.

"Shut up! Even EqD commenters made fun of me! Do you know how embarrassing that was?"

"I can't imagine. I do know that you just referred to that coat as being yours, though."

She's finally had enough, and elects to huffily bury her face in the cushions. Oh yeah, she'll be just fine.

Should you think that's a good thing?

You use a hoof to tap at the intercom, mulling over what's just transpired as you wait for Master to reply.

You didn't tell her about the machines in her head, and they're definitely working considering the brevity of her outburst. You spent weeks coping with the constant, nagging thought that maybe what you think and feel is artificial and your horror at being transformed was a brief moment of clarity- a lucky fluke. It was agonizing not to know if you were acting of your own free will, but you'd more or less laid it to rest following your and Autumn's near pony-napping. Now that little voice in the back of your head is making itself known, wondering if you should be as cooperative as you are now. Was omitting that crucial knowledge meant to spare her this anxiety? Even if you're doing it for her sake, it's exactly what Master would want. Would telling her really serve a purpose? With or without the knowledge she'll succumb to the pleasure and relative luxury of her new body and life before long. Just like you did.

A small beeping sound gets your attention, and a very sleepy-sounding Master is on the line.

"How is she?"

"She's awake, Master. I don't think she's quite ready to have a talk with you, but I think a decent meal would probably help her a lot."

"So she calmed down?"

This confirms it. If he's asking that specific question then her short freak-out is the norm, as opposed to your spirit-crushing trip to edges of sanity. The machines work.

"Y-yes."

"I'll be right down."

The speaker shuts off with a clicking sound, and you turn back to find Opal looking right at you, with both ears turned to face straight forward. She heard the whole thing.

"He's going to come here?"

"Well, yes. I can't even open this door, let alone carry food down to you."

"That doesn't bother you at all? You can't even feed yourself without him."

"It's inconvenient, I'll give you that, but trust me, for every little hardship there are ample perks you'll figure out in time."

She doesn't respond, instead looking contemplatively down at her hooves again, occasionally glancing up at the mirror. Turning her head this way and that, even flexing those little bat wings poking out of her back. You can't help but recognize your own first few days of p0nydom in her actions, just with less despair, and a small smile graces your lips. Maybe this is going to turn out alright. At least for her. You don't know what Master's got in store for the other one, but you're far less concerned for his well being than you are for Opal's. A calm silence occupies the room as Opal continues to acquaint herself with her new form, until you hear the lock to the door turning. Even as Opal goes stiff with that mix of fear and shame that once accompanied all your interactions with Master, the door swings open.

Of course, you're right by the door and sitting before him like a good pet, but even that won't get you a reward when his hands are full. He wordlessly walks across the room and sets the tray down in front of the cushion Opal is lying on. Heaped on it are two bowls of food and two bowls of water, a fact you're grateful for, you were beginning to get hungry.

Opal seems to be making small motions away from Master, but with a constant, wide-eyed stare directly at him.

"I, uh... I..."

Master lifts his head and makes eye contact with her, and she stops moving as words fail her utterly. She stares unblinking for a few seconds, seemingly lost in his eyes. Slowly, and with unbroken eye contact, Master's hand finds its way to the top of her head, massaging her scalp. Opal's eyes shut involuntarily and he neck cranes a bit to allow her to indulge more. She certainly enjoys this. She rapidly snaps out of it, shame etched onto her features, when Master breaks the silence in the

room.

"Good girl. Zephyr here will look after you for now. I'll talk with you later."

Opal only manages to stammer out small "ah" sounds that don't even begin to form words, and Master quietly makes his way out of the room, giving you a pat on the head and a wink once his back is turned to her. Seconds later the door closes again and the two of you are left alone. A look at Opal reveals that she didn't actually watch him leave the room, with her eyes still locked onto the place where Master's face had been as she sits catatonically still.

You're now quite certain that Master's been practicing that introduction for quite some time. It's honed to perfection. He keeps his usual air of control, but he comes off as so... suave? You know better, of course, but you can't help but be impressed. After about a minute of quietly spacing out, Opal finally speaks up.

"Wha... What the hell was that?"

"That was my Master, silly."

"No, I mean why did I feel so strange when he touched me and looked at me? Why did I enjoy it? That's not normal."

"It will be now. Welcome to a lifetime of warm feelings and pleasant sensations. Speaking of pleasant, try a bite of that apple."

She's slow and hesitant to try, especially about eating off of a tray on the floor with her face, but once she's had her nibble she assaults the bowl of oats and positively decimates the leafy greens. The two of you eat together, sharing simple jokes for the sake of making her laugh. Nothing helps emotional crises like good food and bad jokes, right?

The food seems to have done Opal a world of good. She's lying contentedly on one side with her legs outstretched. Small hints of discomfort cross her features every now and again, giving you some insight as to what's going on in her head. If she's going to stew in her

own anxieties you might as well get her talking about them.

"Alright, let's play a game. You tell me something that worries you about being a pony, or just ask me a question, and I'll answer as best I can. Maybe I'll even ask a few myself. Would you like that?"

"Well... To start, I don't suppose you'd tell me my real name if I ask?"

"I'm afraid it will only make things more difficult for you if I do. So no."

"But it's -my- name. You've got no right to keep it from me."

You're a little surprised by this. She asked an obvious question, but her tone of voice is very level. It's as though she's thinking of this in an intellectual, philosophical way rather than emotionally.

"I know that, and I'm sorry"

She releases a gusty sigh and stays silent for a second or two before speaking again.

"I'm going to be sold to a stranger, aren't I?"

Guilt creeps back into your mind as you respond with a simple "Yes".

"Are they... The people who buy ponies... they're not all like Charlie, right?"

"What? No! Your friend wanted to hurt me, it's what got him off or something. Master doesn't want to put any of us through that!"

"But this person who buys me, they're going to want to 'get off' or something with me regardless, right?"

"Well... not necessarily?"

"Does yours?"

Embarrassment surges through you as you realize you're about to admit

to having relations with Master to a relative stranger. A stranger who still identifies as male, and knows you used to.

"Um, yeah. He kinda does."

"Meaning that I'm literally fucked."

"No! ...At least not how you're thinking. I, er, we haven't, um, gone all the way. And he's not forcing me when we do stuff..."

She lifts her head to look at you, looking a little incredulous as you squirm under her gaze, now somehow in fear of her judging you. Her directness about this entire topic is all a little off-putting for you, since it wasn't something you even wanted to think of when you woke up female for the first time. Your mind races to find to reasonable explanation that doesn't involve telling her about the bondage and denial game that broke you in. Wait!

"You know how that quick pat on the head felt really, unnaturally good?"

"Yeah. It's still kind of freaking me out."

"Well, imagine how other stuff feels in these bodies."

Her face goes a bit blank and she only mutters a small "oh" as she realizes that you're telling her the truth. There's that adorable little flustered face she makes for a second or two before she can put another sentence together.

"I'm... going to end up wanting it, aren't I?"

"Like you wouldn't even believe."

The silence that follows is so tangibly awkward that the two of you can't even look at each other. You don't really know where to go from here, and apparently neither does she. You think back to your first meeting with Autumn, and while her cunnilingus based solution might have worked then, it probably won't help now. Drat. Still, changing the game a bit probably wouldn't hurt.

You've crossed the gap between the two of you in no time flat, all while she's looking the other way, so you've got the element of surprise when you lay down beside her in as chaste a manner as you can with your bodies still lightly touching. Getting her to look embarrassed is rapidly becoming your favorite game. No wonder Master loves doing it to you.

"What are you doing?"

"Just getting comfy. Now, I'm sure you've got more questions?"

"So my friend was supposed to buy you?"

"Ayyyyyyyyeah, Until he showed up uninvited, felt me up and told me how much he wanted to break all of my limbs."

Opal clearly didn't know that had happened, betrayed by her alarmed look at you.

"And then he brought you back here a couple weeks later so he could follow through on that threat, and here you are."

"I'm still sorry, you know."

"I know you are, but there's no going back."



# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 15

Your last sentence seems to have wounded her a bit, as her ears droop along with her neck right down into the cushions. It takes you a few seconds to realize that you've misspoke. "There's no going back" must sound so frightening to someone in her place. It would've scared the hell out of you if anyone had said it when you first woke up. You just goofed, hard. She doesn't cry, but the silence is just as awkward as it was before. You can't think of anything to say, so you quietly nuzzle her neck. She doesn't shy away from you, and after a few minutes she starts talking again.

"I wanted a fresh start. But this is just... I don't know if I can live like this."

"Oh, Opal, it's not as bad as it seems. I'm sorry for saying what I did, but please believe me when I say I'm not trying to make you unhappy."

"Zephyr?"

"Yes?"

"C-could we just watch some t.v. or something? I'd rather not have to think about any of this."

You suppose a distraction wouldn't hurt, and the two of you end up watching comedies. It takes quite some time before she starts laughing, but humor is irresistible. The lull in action, though, means your long, long night of waiting up beside her is finally catching up to you, and you struggle to stay awake until you notice Opal herself has dozed off beside you. As the longest day in your recent memory crashes down on you, you find yourself idly wondering if maybe Master designed you to sleep more than a human would. Like a house...

cat...

You allow yourself to lean against opal slightly, and drape one wing over her, a gesture you hope will offer comfort as she sleeps. You're out the moment your head hits the cushion, though.

The sound of hoofsteps on the floor rouses you back into the waking world far, far earlier than you would've liked. You're still sleep deprived, but you still force yourself up to survey the room.

Opal's pacing back and forth in small circles in the middle of the room, a worried expression etched into her face as she glances toward the door and mirror. Her field of vision must pass over you half a dozen times before she seems to actually notice that you're also awake.

She stops suddenly upon eye contact with you, still mid-trot. What is this mare doing?

"You, uh, in the middle of something over there?"

"I, well, I was... thinking..."

"And do you always pace when you're thinking?"

"Well, no. That's more of a nervous thing, actually."

"And you're nervous about what?"

"I, um... I was looking for a way out."

"To do what, exactly?"

"... I keep thinking that I should be trying to escape."

Troubling, but not totally unexpected. You can't let this keep happening, though. You decide to push her to talk more in that jittery tone.

"Should be trying to, or wanting to?"

"What?"

"Do you really desperately want to run off into the woods looking like you do, or is it something you think you should do because that's

what's normal?"

"I don't know!"

"Right, you don't. It can't be that important to you if you couldn't make up your mind, right?"

"That's just it! I should be able to! He's done something to my head! Yours too, I bet! This isn't right!"

Crap. You guess David used to be the clever sort of guy.

"Calm down Opal, of course he's in your head. How else do you think your name changed?"

"Y-yeah, but-"

"But nothing. You're having a few bad days in a row, and the stress is starting to mess with you. I'll call Master."

There's an audible gulp from her after you say that, but for now you've avoided the topic entirely.

Hopefully Master can answer those questions better than you could, because your answers probably would have only made her angrier.

Opal's nervously fretting about the room as you tap the intercom and explain that she could use a talk to Master, but once the speaker clicks off she's talking to you again, her speech quick and frenzied. Poor thing's mind must be racing.

"No no no, he can't come down here. If I see him, I'll feel... I can't let it happen again! That fuzzy feeling from before is unnatural, something he did do me! Something he must have done to you!"

"Calm down, Opal. You're going to be okay, just wait for Master to get

here."

She goes stone still in her spot by the mirror, face wrenched into a sneer of indignation even as the rest of her becomes a jittery ball of panic. Her voice is steadily rising as fear gets the better of her. This is going to be a problem.

"That's the problem! You won't listen to me! I can't stay here. If I stay he'll make me want to stay! I can't! I can't and I won't!

At that perfect height of hysteria, the lock turns and the door swings open, Master stepping in a bit more languidly than he perhaps should have. You see her move before he does, a sudden bolt along the wall while his eyes are facing you and the rest of the room, with Opal only on his peripherals. She's making a break for it!

She's halfway out the doorframe before Master knows what's happening, but he wheels around on the spot in time for both of you to see a terrified pony stumble up a few stairs before Master loops his arms around her waist and hoists her up. Opal's screaming and flailing her limbs from the second he touches her, and carries on even as he carries her back into the room, unperturbed by her thrashing.

"Lemme go! I don't want to be pony! I don't wanna be a pet! Please, I just wanna go home! Please, PLEASE!"

All her begging gets her is an unceremonious drop onto some cushions in a corner, a small "Oof" noise escaping her lips as she lands on her haunches. Her wild-eyed panic quickly becomes a paralyzed terror as she realizes she has nowhere to go with a cross looking Master blocking any way past. Tiny, frightened squeaks escape her muzzle and for a moment you're gripped by fear as Master reaches a hand towards her. He wouldn't hit her, right?

Relief washes over you as Master gives her a soft two-fingered swat on the nose. Opal jerks away, in surprise more than pain by the look of it, and goes crosseyed when Master points a finger directly at her face.

"Bad girl! You absolutely don't ever try to go anywhere without your

owner's permission! You're only eating unsweetened oats until further notice, got that?!"

"Th.. That's it? I try to escape and you... you'll just treat me like an animal?" Despair laces every word. She seems to understand now that the game she's trying to play is unwinnable. Even when she rises in open rebellion all she's going to get is the same treatment as a poorly behaved puppy. Master doesn't even respond, electing instead to scoop her back up and then settle himself down on the cushion, leaning against the wall, holding Opal close to him.

She starts struggling, with little noises of protest and grunts of effort but even her most determined efforts are futile against his grip, only moving her centimeters out of contact before being pulled back in. Master begins to softly coo to her, one of his hands petting along her mane, and Opal's eyes meet yours as she realizes that she's going to get cuddled whether she likes it or not. Those involuntary little shudders give her away as Master's hands slowly strokes her mane, occasionally scritchng behind her ears; She's enjoying the attention, even though it's exactly what she was afraid of, with tears welling up in her eyes.

"It's too good. It's unnatural. Why are you doing this to me?"

"Have you seen yourself in the mirror? Of course I'm petting you, you're an adorable little pony."

"Please don't do this. I don't wanna be a pony. I wanna go home."

She's crying now, still half-struggling to get away from him even as he lavishes her with attention. You settle yourself down on an adjacent cushion as Opal's struggling ends, now fully committed to sobbing into Master's chest. Master whispers sweet words to her and goes right on petting, and it seems as though now you can finally get the rest you've been in desperate need of.

You wake up feeling rested and refreshed, though you do realize that between staying up for hours on end in a room with no windows and then napping before finally getting real sleep has thrown off all sense of what time or day it is. Not that you'd really cared about what day it was for a

while, anyway. What did the date matter to someone whose only job is to be pretty and obedient? It takes a few seconds of satisfied stretching to notice that you're under a blanket, and after throwing it off with a hurried jerk upright you catch sight of a full moon through the windows of Master's bedroom. He must have carried you up here after you fell asleep, and he got done letting Opal get it all out of her system. At least you assume that's what he was doing.

You trot out of the bedroom and give yourself a quick once-over in the bathroom mirror before going downstairs. Your mane's a bit of a mess, but then again so is Autumn's most of the time. You wonder if you could get Master to cut it short for you, that much hair must produce a lot of drag in flight. After taking a moment to enjoy a bit of narcissism regarding your own shapely flank and rump, you set off downstairs while wondering if that minute of concern for your appearance or pride about your feminine rear is the sort of thing Opal's so afraid of. It would have bothered you at first, too, if you'd ever thought about it. After shakily taking the stairs one at a time, you're enthusiastically greeted by Autumn, sharing an affectionate nuzzle of one another's necks. A mirthful snort catches your attention, and the both of you turn to see Master leaning in the kitchen doorway.

"Y'know, I never even tried to make any of you act like ponies from the show, but you do anyway. Must come naturally."

At first you don't even know what he's talking about until you really, really think about what you just did. Why would you ever think to do that? Autumn speaks up first, though.

"That's what we're supposed to be, so that's what I do!"

It's not surprising in the least that Autumn would be purposely emulating the show, but it's a little embarrassing to realize you've been unknowingly doing the same the whole time. What else have you picked up from her?

"I, uh, I think I started doing it because she did."

"See, girls? Here in my home we have the beginnings of a pony culture. Adorable."

He seems to think he's pretty funny, and with another small chuckle he returns to cooking whatever it is that smells so good. Autumn gets your attention almost at once, though.

"So, c'mon, what's she like?"

"You mean Opal? She's very pretty, but she's not too happy about all this."

"Neither were you, silly filly. You learned, so will she."

"Right you are, my stalwart little companion." Cheers an upbeat looking Master as he pokes his head back into the hallway. "The food's ready."

You're delighted to find a stir-fry waiting for you in a dish on the floor near his seat, and while Autumn seats herself next to Master's chair, you notice the floor tiles are a little cold and your Master is barefoot. That simply won't do, so you carefully set yourself down with your abdomen resting atop his chilly toes. Just as you anticipated, his feet are uncomfortably cold, but that just means you feel comfortably warm on them. He's made a small grunt of surprise and is leaning below the table to take a good look at you. You respond without words, only your biggest smile, which he returns in kind. You both return to eating wordlessly, you satisfied with having made him happy, him seemingly satisfied with your desire to please him in the first place and probably also with having his feet warmed by your fur. The stir-fry is excellent, and though you still think it could use a bit of chicken, the salty, savory flavors added to the crisp vegetables are something you haven't had in quite a while. You'll worry about Opal later, right now everything's just... perfect.

After a meal eaten in comfortable silence, the three of you retire to the living room to enjoy a quiet cuddle pile on the couch while watching nature documentaries. The channel gets changed after watching a lion take down a young zebra gives you the creeps, and while a competitive cooking show drones on you decide to ask Master about Opal.

"Did anything happen with Opal after I fell asleep?"



"She had her good long cry, she's not the first to need it. Asked to go home, begged to know her old name."

"What did you say to that?"

"Nothing. Well, nothing of substance. There's no answer to those that would calm her down, so I just kept reassuring her that it's going to be okay."

"And cuddled her into submission?"

"Everybody wants to be loved, and you know better than I do how sensitive your bodies are."

"So she calmed down?"

"It took quite some time, but yes."

"Then fell asleep?"

"Not every pony is like you, you narcoleptic little pegasus. She asked about her friend there. How all this happened, what I was going to do to him, whether she could see him again. Telling her exactly what he wanted you for pretty much killed her desire to see him again."

"Out of disgust or fear?"

"Fear, by the look of it."

"That's good."

"How is that good?"

"She's worried he'd want to do the same to her. Meaning she thinks of herself as a pony."

"Maybe. It's really cute how worried you are about her, you know. Such a caring little pet I've got for myself."

You can think of a few snarky replies, but choose instead to nuzzle at his waist and knead at his chest with your outstretched hooves, his little complements and sweet nothings are a constant source of happiness to you now, one of the many little things that continue to make being a part of his life preferable to being in charge of your own. He seems happy too, splitting his attention between you and Autumn as the two of you compete to see who can make the cutest face. She seems to be winning, but your open adoration is still enough of a novelty to him that you're still getting enough love to feel satisfied. Well, almost satisfied; You haven't been intimate with either of them in over a week! Some wriggling of the hips and pokes of the hoof later and Master understands full well what you want. Even though you've only just woken up, you quickly find yourself back in bed, with two partners committed to tiring you out before the night is through.

Definitely one hell of a way to reset your sleep schedule. While there are some near misses, you still haven't found the right time to "all the way" quite yet, but occasional little breathless whispers from Autumn mid-coitus make it plain that even she knows it's coming sooner or later.

There's always a small seed of doubt in the back of your mind as that final frontier of your body looms large, a deathblow to any remaining notions of masculinity hiding out in your subconscious. It's easy to ignore these days, though. There's no use in thinking like Opal does, after all, what could be wrong about feelings like these?

Master rouses you early in the interest of getting you onto an ordinary sleep schedule again, offering a small bowl of coffee after laughing at the sleepy pony shuffling around his kitchen. Autumn's still chipper as ever, and while you don't begrudge her that you certainly can't be bothered to keep up with what she's saying until after you finish the drink. The heady jolt of caffeine entering your system was enough to get you outside for some morning exercise at Master's insistence that you work to get your strength back, because "I keep my ponies healthy". Jeez, you didn't realize having a Master meant having a personal trainer. Autumn manages to goad you into a two pony game of tag and while fun is had you're exhausted well before you usually would be. Grudgingly, you admit that your Master has a point as the three of you head in.

You sit patiently with Autumn as Master fills a bowl full of oats alongside a bowl of water before following him downstairs to see Opal. For a moment when Master opens the door you wonder if you're going to find her huddled in a ball having another anxiety attack, but instead she's sitting on a cushion and turned rather excitedly toward the door. Oh, good.

Wait, what?

What happened down here?

"Good morning!"

She sounds like she might even be in a good mood?!

"Someone's happy to see us."

"Happy to see anyone. Sitting down here by myself is so boring I'm going to lose my mind... Assuming I haven't already."

"Well, that's a start. Girls, keep Opal company for a while so I can get some work done."

Opal looks a little perturbed when the two of you reply "Yes, Master" in near-perfect stereo, the odd expression still on her face even after Master sets down her food, ruffles her mane and leaves the room. You've had your eye on her the entire time, still trying to grasp how someone goes from a desperate escape attempt to cheerful greetings in one day.

"Something on your mind?" you throw out as innocently as possible.

"It's... he just tells you you're staying down here, or doing something else, and that's it? You live every day of your lives like this and it doesn't bother you?"

"Nnnnnope. Trust me, it's absolutely worth our while. You already know he's not much for punishment. But enough of that, this is Autumn.

Autumn, this is Opal."

"Hi pretty!"

"Um, hi. I'm really sorry about tying you up and that... whole thing?"  
She's direct about it but there's definite shame in her voice. To her credit Autumn doesn't miss a beat, breaking into a mischievous grin before replying.

"How can I stay mad at a face like that? I'll forgive you, but you'll need to do something for me."

"I'm not going to like this, am I?"

You can't help but laugh at the whole exchange, Opal's a bit nervous, but Autumn's playing a game with her and they both know it. This is fantastic, but you're still enormously curious about how Opal feels after Master's cuddle session with her. For now, though, you want to see what Autumn's playing at.

"Call him Master."

Opal sputters for a moment, taking a step or two back before raising a forehoof defensively.

"What? No!"

"Oh, come on. You've got to call him something, he'll reward you for it, and I'll forget you ripping out part of my mane while you gagged me."

"Well, I, uh..."

"I'm not asking you to sleep with him! Unless you'd rather...?"

"No!"

"Well then next time you see him, I want to hear you call him Master. Or sleep with him."

"B-but I..."

This is all a bit odd for you. You know what Autumn's playing at here and so does Opal, but you're not particularly opposed to Autumn's demand. The first one anyway. If Master's sleeping with anyone it had better be you first... Oh god, did you really just think that? You lost your junk less than two months ago and you're already clamoring for someone else's? It's not the ugly, sick feeling that thoughts like these would have provoked a few weeks ago, sure, but it's still a little uncomfortable. It's no longer a matter of overcoming revulsion, but a matter of admitting to yourself that you want it and trying to accept it as part of who you are.

If you're still having this much trouble with it, how can you take Autumn's game with Opal so lightly? You know full well that even the first demand is the beginning of a slippery slope. You're still torn between rooting for Opal's resistance out of sympathy and the "get-it-over-with" attitude inspired by your knowledge that her domestication is probably inevitable, and ultimately beneficial. It's probably best just to see how she feels about it and quit worrying about yourself.

"So how are you feeling? You were in a pretty bad way the last time I saw you."

"I think I'm better? It's weird."

"Go on."

"I, uhm, I feel different. I'm not afraid of him. I want to be, I should be, but I'm not. I... I think it's still something he did to my head." She slumps down and presses her hooves to her head. "What's happening to me?"

"Didn't he make you feel better yesterday?"

"Yeah, he did, but-"

"So why does it have to be something he did to you? You're not afraid of him because you know he's not going to hurt you. You know he cares."

"Because he's going to sell me!"

This is astonishing. In two days she's come around to a point that took you more than a week. You don't have anything to say in answer to her complaint, you never really got over it yourself. Instead you elect to nuzzle at her neck as affectionately as you can, eliciting a soft gasp from her as the new sensations run along her newly-sensitive neck before you start speaking.

"Oh, sweet thing, don't you worry about that. We're here for you, and if Master thinks you won't be treated well he won't send you with someone."

You set yourself down beside her, continuing to nuzzle at her neck. Opening one eye reveals Autumn setting herself down on Opal's other side, the playful look in her eyes from before still fixed on Opal.

"Poor thing! Isn't there anything the two of us can do for you? Something to make you feel better?"

Opal stiffens a bit at the last sentence due to the sound of Autumn's voice dropping a few octaves, with a breathy tone full of sultry promise. Oh dear, what is Autumn getting you into? Moreover, between this and what she did with you less than an hour after your first meeting, you have to wonder if Autumn doesn't have a go at every new pony Master leaves her alone with. You suppose it fits for her, but the idea of Autumn's cheerful, immature behavior hiding a predator of sorts was very, exceedingly strange.

"No! I mean, uh, no thank you. I'm fine."

"Ooooooh, someone's shy! You're just the cutest! That's okay though, you'll come around."

"Th... Thank you? Can I eat my breakfast now?"

All that said, she pushes out of the pony sandwich you and Autumn created on either side of her and makes it over to her food with minimal stumbling. Her ears fold back and a look of tremendous annoyance crosses her features when she gets a look at it, though.

"He really wasn't kidding. Dry oats and water."

"You did try to run away." You hope the mirthful tone behind it will soften the blow.

"Don't say it like I'm some dog! I tried to escape from a kidnapper!" She replies, already on the defensive.

"Whose house you broke into."

"Who made me inhuman!"

"Whose head you clubbed."

"Who wants to sell me as some fucked-up pet!"

"Whose loving, willing pets you tried to kidnap."

"B-but..."

"Kidnapped, mind you, so your friend could rape and torture Autumn and myself. I know you don't deserve the blame for all of it, but don't act like he took you from your home and did this to you." Your voice has a cool edge to it you hadn't planned on, and the sudden droop of her ears and neck means she heard it too.

"I... I'm sorry..."

"I forgive you. Please understand, he couldn't let you leave here. Would you rather he killed you?"

There's a long moment of silence, and while you're peripherally aware of Autumn looking back and forth between the two of you, you keep focused on Opal. Sure enough, she looks back up at you with what seems like a small hint of confidence behind those enchanting slit eyes "... No."

"It's not what you wanted, but you're alive. You're debt free and you'll never have to worry about money again."

"Because someone wants to own me."

"Because someone wants to love you, give you food and shelter and affection and all you have to be is yourself. When I first told you this you said it sounded kind of nice. Why don't you think about it while you eat, Autumn and I will find something for us to watch until you're done."

"Yeah, okay."

You should have known what leaving Autumn in command of the remote would mean, but you were busy trying to watch Opal through the corner of your eye rather than what was happening on the television. You didn't really notice until Opal's expression changed, and your focus rapidly shifted to the television in time to hear an all-too-familiar theme song.

... Of course Autumn would put Friendship is Magic on. For a minute you're seized by awkward tension as you worry about how Opal will react to this, until the music fades out and Opal simply says "Oh man, this is one of my favorites!". Apparently the only one who thinks ponies watching ponies seems odd is you, which at the moment is quite a relief. With the hypothetical crisis averted you take a second to actually watch what's happening on screen, and are a bit surprised at what you see. Perhaps a bit predictably, one of Opal's favorite episodes is Luna Eclipsed. Not like you hated it, but you'd think someone who just became a very specific kind of pony featured in this specific episode would see the irony. Oh well.

It's a bit odd to think that the whole time you've been living here and interacting with all these other ponies, people specifically taken by Master because they'd gone to the trouble of coming up with original characters, you'd only very rarely thought of them as being other fans of the show itself, or at least you didn't identify with them because of it. As soon as the other two start pointing out certain background ponies and other references you catch yourself joining in. This is sort of fun, and very new to you as you wouldn't have been caught dead discussing ponies with anyone you knew before all this. The knowledge that you have something in common with both of them besides a collar is reassuring to you, and hopefully does the same for Opal.



What was supposed to be a distraction while Opal ate ends up going on for a couple of hours as additional episodes follow afterwards. The familiar, "safe" distraction seem to have put Opal at ease in a way no amount of talking could and once it's over she seems to be in a legitimate good mood. When the credits roll on the last episode this morning, you decide to capitalize on her happiness.

"Feel better now?"

"Yeah, I guess. I do feel a lot better."

"See? It's different, yes, but the world hasn't ended. You can still enjoy all the same things."

"Yeah, I'm sure having no fingers will work out great for gaming. Or playing music. Nevermind the things I'll have to do to 'earn' the equipment for either."

"Hush, I'm sure you can adapt. I'm also sure you can clean floors or something if you plan on celibacy."

"Ooooh, maybe she could get little mop-booties for her hooves!"

There are traces of annoyance on her features, but she still seems more amused than anything. The mirth in her voice is comforting; even when she's cynical about her future, she seems to be retaining her sense of humor.

"So, I've eaten and watched TV. Unless the two of you know something I don't, that seems to be just about all there is to do around here."

Autumns face lights up and you find yourself desperately trying to choke out a suggestion before she can say something that will weird Opal out again. Comeoncomeoncomeon- think!

Aha!

"Catch!"

...Maybe you should have picked a better word, because now they're both staring at you. Without any context, you could have just as well shouted "potato" and it would have made as much sense.

"Um, Zephyr, take pity on the new, um... girl... and explain how you expect us to play catch?" She asks, waving her forehooves in front of her face for a few seconds. "No hands, remember?"

"No, I meant you've gonna have to catch Autumn and I."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because if you don't I'm going to make cat jokes about your name at every possible opportunity."

"You... you wouldn't!"

"Awww, is poor little Opal cranky because she got dry food? I think I've got a can of the wet stuff tucked away somewhere."

She doesn't even reply, opting instead to charge directly at you while Autumn scrambles clear, laughing all the way. You're a little slow in reacting, having expected to goad her a bit more before she relented, and for a second it really looks like she's going to catch you on her first try...

...until she trips on her own hooves and lands on the carpet a foot in front of you. With that stroke of luck in your favor you bolt for the other end of the room where Autumn is, and the three of you spend what feels like hours on this game. Your weakened endurance means you're easier prey than Autumn even with Opal's occasional misstep or stumble, and one bad turn towards a corner ends with you sprawled out on the ground after a rough tackle from Opal. Her triumphant "Ha!" is met only with a smile on your end, and she returns it with a look of such sincerity that you almost feel guilty for tricking her into having fun. After Autumn blows a raspberry at her and the chase begins anew you elect to watch from your vantage point in a corner, and you're noticing something interesting. As Autumn runs away, you occasionally catch Opal's eyes begin to wander. You'd like to justify it as her keeping "eyes on the prize" so to speak, but every now and again her eyes focus on Autumn's rear end, usually

preceding a stumble or poorly executed turn.

And here you were thinking she wasn't ready yet. Maybe a bit shy, but if she's checking the two of you out... hmmm.. maybe you should be playing Autumn's kind of game after all. A shriek from the other end of the room brings you back to reality in time to see Opal pin Autumn beneath her, both of them smiling from ear to ear as Opal basks in her victory. High on positive emotions and endorphins? Time to strike while the iron is hot.

You creep up behind Opal as carefully as you can. If she stops focusing on Autumn you won't be able to get away with what you've got in mind. They're in the middle of laughing at something when you make your move. A somewhat 'soft' tackle, just enough to put Opal on the floor between you and Autumn as the two of you flop down in a tangle of limbs. Her initial response is simply "Hey, no fair!"... and no, you're not going to play fair right now, but that's because the game is different. Opal figures out that you're up to something pretty quickly, though that probably has something to do with to your slow kisses up her neck.

"W-w-w-what're you doing?! Stop!"

You do stop, but only to put your snout right against hers and make eye contact, doing your absolute best to look seductive. "It's okay, Opal. I saw where you were looking while you chased Autumn. It's completely okay, but if you repress it you're only going to get more wound up than you are now. Do you find me attractive?"

"I, uh, I... yes. But we're men!"

Your hoof guides one of hers to the gap between your rear legs, and you allow yourself a small gasp at the pleasant foreign contact.

Opal's flustered stammering increases in volume and frequency but stops entirely once you speak again.

"Do I feel like a man to you?"

There aren't any real words coming out of her mouth any more, just small

stuttering squeaks that only get louder when Autumn appears behind her and picks up where you left off, lightly kissing and nibbling on her neck. You gently move your own hoof and brush at the gap between Opal's haunches and she does her best to suppress a moan, but you know better.

"If you tell me to stop, I will. But come on now, don't you want me?" You're doing your best to be invitingly feminine in the hopes that it will stop Opal's male ego from slamming the brakes, and it really seems to be working. Opal's soft panting certainly doesn't sound like a refusal, so you advance a bit further with a direct kiss on the mouth. She moans heavily mid-kiss as you begin to rub her still-untested sex in small circular motions with the tip of your hoof. The faint sensation of wetness rewards your efforts and you're now certain she won't want you to stop. You give Autumn a knowing wink as she nibbles on Opal's adorably pointed ears, and break the kiss before giving Opal a breathy whisper.

"Now now little Opal, lie back and let Zephyr show you one of the best things about being one of us."

You ignore Autumn's little giggle at your plagiarizing her words to you and slide yourself down along Opal's abdomen, lightly kissing as go until you're ready to welcome the new mare to the fairer sex the best way you know how. Small flicks of your tongue cause Opal's breath to catch in her throat before Autumn begins to kiss her directly. Not the chaste, vaguely romantic kisses you offered, either, but full-on making out that stifles Opal's moaning. The stage perfectly set, you descend on Opal's marehood with gusto, working your tongue in small circles over her clit, stopping only to tease it along her outer folds. Opal's pitched moaning is music to your ears, and a glance up reveals her eyes are shut tight and her forehooves pressed against her chest as she tries, and fails, to cope with the new sensations you've been overwhelming her with. The poor thing probably wouldn't be too pleased if she saw herself in the mirror right now, squealing like a schoolgirl and unabashedly feminine in posture.

Her moans ascend as your attentions become focused and aggressive, and it's no time at all before her cries become halting and breathless as her entire body tenses up in anticipation. Autumn's hoof pushes your head back, ending your attentions and you're almost as confused as the grey mare you've been eating out, whose frenzied mewling and desperate hip

thrusts tell the whole story; She's so close it hurts.

"You want Zephyr here to finish?"

A fierce head shake and pleading expression are all she can muster in between pitched breaths. You know what's happening now, flashing back to your own first time with Autumn.

"Repeat after me; I'm Opal, and I love my master."

The poor thing gazes incredulously at Autumn, looking so pitifully desperate that you've about to finish her off without waiting for Autumn to play her little submission game until a solitary tear rolls down her cheek.

"I-I'm Opal and I l-l-love my M-master!"

"Again."

"I'm Opal and I love my Master!"

Autumn kisses her sloppily again and you redouble your efforts with a frenzy to match Opal's spasming muscles. Autumn has her recite the mantra two more times before Opal's haunches clamp down on the sides of your head and her moan becomes a prolonged cry. Her entire body shakes as you're rewarded with more of her sweetness before she goes limp on the floor, panting heavily.

You slide yourself along the floor to be level with her before wrapping your limbs around her, holding her close as she trembles and takes gasping breaths.

"So how did you like it, sweetie?"

"In... credible..."

You kiss her forehead and lie with her for a few minutes, enjoying her body heat and mulling over Autumn's apparently methodical submission games. Does she do this for the stallions, too? She better not expect you

to help with those.

A soft clicking noise behind you gets your attention, and the door opens to reveal your Master, whose face adopts its usual wry smile when he gets a good look at the three of you. Opal's trembling returns in force, as she realizes exactly what just happened... exactly what she said.

"I thought I heard something going on down here, and that was from the top floor."

Opal is out of your embrace in seconds, headed for a corner of the room before being intercepted and lifted up by your Master. There's no screaming this time, but she still makes weak, exhausted attempts at struggling as he sits down with her on his lap. Autumn's by their side in the blink of an eye, but you decide to sit at a small distance, suddenly feeling very guilty.

"Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Y-yes... Ah!"

The both of them turn to look at Autumn, who just poked Opal right in the gut with a forehoof, glowering intensely. Opal grimaces, and speaks again.

"Yes... Master."

Autumn's expression brightens instantly and she makes a giddy noise of approval before sitting back down. Master's still wearing that grin, even as he begins to pet her mane and she does her best not to look anyone in the eye, until he gently grabs her muzzle and turns her head to face him.

"Do you know what calling me 'Master' means?"

"I, um, I d-d-don't really... it means I'm a pet."

He chuckles a bit before replying "I'm not sure you fully grasp what that entails quite yet, but you're making progress. How would you like to come outside with us for a while?"

Her face lights up, thrilled with the prospect of leaving this room even for a short while.

"Yes!"

He gives her the faintest hint of an annoyed stare for a few seconds until she realizes what she did wrong.

"Yes, Master..."

Her face doesn't show it, but the small flicks of her tail and raising of her ears when he calls her a "Good girl" tell you enough about how it makes her feel. She'll be smiling for him in no time, you're sure. Her good mood falters when he pulls a collar out of his pocket.

"Alright, if you want to go out, you'll need this, because I'm definitely not taking you out unrestrained after yesterday's bad behavior. Once this goes on you, though, it's not coming back off unless your owner gets you a new one. Are you ready to be a good pet pony, or do I have to rescind my offer?"

Opal turns to look straight at you, and you wish there were some way of letting her get outside without it. If you had to guess, you'd say the real issue she's having is with the symbolism of the collar. A clear indicator of her status right there on her body, that she'll be unable to remove without someone else's help... her owner's help. You also realize that you never went through this, having been collared before you'd woken up as a purely practical measure. She frets about it for a minute or so, with an expectant Master staring at her the entire time before she relents.

"... I'll be good."

"I'm sure you will be. Now hold still." She sticks her neck out and remains obligingly still, save for the soft sniffing sounds escaping her muzzle. This must be so hard for her. When you get a good look at her face there aren't any tears, and you're not sure if that's good or not as Master sets her on the floor and goes in search of a leash.

She doesn't speak, but rather touches a hoof to her new collar and stares at herself in the mirror. She twists her neck from side to side a bit, but she looks just so unhappy as she does that you can't stand it. You make a point of approaching slowly from an angle she can see, and nuzzle at the still-uncovered portions of her neck. You're surprised when she nuzzles back, the two of you sharing a moment of real intimacy that makes the previous carnal adventures seem cheap. After a few seconds of comfortable, if somber, silence she speaks very softly to you.

"Thank you for before. The game, I mean. I felt normal, even a bit happy."

"Hmphf. I go down on you and you're saying you had more fun chasing me around?"

"That was... fun, too, I guess. I'm still trying to deal with all of that. It felt amazing- thank you, really, but the things Autumn made me say and all these new feelings..."

"You're still going to be okay, you know, Autumn pulled the same trick on me. The feelings never stop being amazing, and trust me, you'll never get tired of those."

"And now there's a collar on my neck, like I'm someone's dog."

"I've got one too and I don't even notice it anymore. Though it looks like we all get the same kind of collar though. It's a shame, you'd really look better with a white one."

"If I have to wear one, I'll take this mismatched leather, I guess."

"What, you're going to be deliberately unstylish?"

"It's all I've got left at this point, so yes."

"Don't forget jokes about your name. I'm pretty sure you'll always have those."

There's that smile again. You're getting quite good at making her laugh



despite her situation.

"Please don't make me hit you, you're my only friend."

She's distracted enough by the conversation that Master's attached a leash to her collar before she even knew he was there. There's another forlorn glance toward the mirror, her gaze slowly following the leash up to his reflection, taking in an incontrovertible demonstration of her new position in life. his hand extends to her ears, gently scratching behind them as even her offers some gentle comfort.

"Hey now, The past couple of days haven't been so bad, have they?"

"Having no control over my life isn't new... I suppose at least you give up on the illusion that I'm in charge. Debt collectors don't really concern themselves with making sure you've been fed recently."

"So it's preferable to being a debt slave? That's a start. Let's get going."

The small tug on the leash gives her momentary pause, and her head hangs a bit as she follows him. She seems happy enough after conquering her life's latest difficulty, the stairs, and once the four of you are outside she's got energy to spare. You slow yourself down to trot alongside the two of them as Autumn bounds around the yard, but eventually even you leave Opal to adjust and start doing small sprints up and down your little hill, flapping your wings as you go. You're not in flight condition yet, but you'll be damned if you're going to stay grounded just because Charlie's a monster.

It's odd to think of him as having a name, but it seems to rob him of any power he once had to frighten you. Before he was the scariest thing you could ever imagine; A monster lurking in the dark, waiting to snatch you up and subject you to horrors beyond your worst nightmares. Now he's just a fat man, newly friendless and chained to a chair in the basement, waiting to get what's coming to him. It's not like your Master, whose power over you was in no way diminished by checking the name on one of his magazines rather than face the embarrassment of asking.

A quick glance to the opposite end of the yard reveals Master and Opal

coming around on the other side of the house, strolling by the treeline and seemingly chatting to one another. You like Opal, and based on your last conversation, she seems to like you. You'd even like to imagine the two of you could have been friends even when you both had hands. You only want this unlucky person-made-pony to be happy, but that means subverting her attempts to resist every time you make her smile or laugh. You suppose helping her resist would make her happy, but that's a lost cause for a multitude of reasons, first among them being your own willing submission. He's given you happiness, and you dare to hope he can do the same for her.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 16

It's barely an hour before Master leads the three of you indoors, but the exercise has done you good. It'll be a few days yet, but you're going to be flight-capable soon, and you can't wait to get back in the air. It's a shame, but you don't think Opal's wings are big or sturdy enough to get airborne. Her frame is similar to yours, the both of you looking downright dainty compared to Autumn's full figure and larger muscles, but those little bat wings just aren't going to cut it. You should probably tell Master he's making a big mistake- every single pegasus he creates would jump through hoops on command if it meant getting to fly afterwards. You know you would, though you probably shouldn't tell him that lest he start demanding you do tricks.

What's incredible is how good Opal seems to feel after going out. On the way back in she and Master were chatting about what she used to do for work before all of this. Apparently David had been working night shifts at a convenience store- Pretty much the only people you'd felt sorry for in comparison to your crappy job.

"Yeah, it was just me and all of the oddest people you'd ever met. The average night owl type, y'know, just there for coffee or a soda, were fine, but then there's the total nuts and the hobos buying cigarettes."

"So would you call yourself a night owl?"

"Yeah, I guess. I took the night shift job because during the worst of my unemployment I'd been staying up so late that by the time I woke up it was already afternoon, it made wandering into places with normal business hours and looking for work really difficult."

"A little bat-pony who likes to stay up all night? It's just perfect, I'm sure your owner will think it's adorable."

"I dunno, what fun is a pet that's always asleep while you're awake?"

"That's up to him, but I think he'll like it when she makes jokes about her little pony self."

Her face falls when he calls attention to it, that sad look crossing her features again as she realizes what she just said. You're closing the distance between the two of you in an instant, completely set on keeping her spirits up as best you can. Problem is, you're not even halfway there when Master kneels to her level with a handful of grapes.

"Hey, I meant it, it's pretty cute. There's nothing wrong with making jokes about it. If you can laugh at it, you can live with it, right?"

"I guess so... This guy who wants to, uhm, own me. What if he doesn't like me?"

"Not gonna happen."

"B-but..."

"Trust me, I know this guy pretty well and you're going to be one of the most treasured parts of his life."

"One of?"

"I told you already, he's already got two ponies, you'll never hurt for company. Now are you gonna eat these so I can get some for Zephyr and Autumn?"

It looks like she didn't notice the grapes until now, and for a minute she's utterly flabbergasted.

"F-f-from your hand? You can't really..."

Master's face is still completely serious, and Opal sighs gustily before muttering "Never mind." and gingerly eating her treat from his cupped palm. She emerges with a look of such horrified embarrassment that even Master patting her on the head seems to go by unnoticed. You'll comfort her later, now there's a handful of grapes and maybe even a scratch behind the ears waiting for you.

After getting your treat and receiving his affection Master leads the three of you, including a now leashless Opal, into the living room. You and Autumn clamber onto the couch automatically, but Opal hesitates long enough that Master scoops her up from behind before sitting down with her on his lap. She manages to look profoundly uncomfortable for a grand total of ten seconds before he starts petting her, using both hands to gently scratch at her mane. After that she just melts a bit as her forelegs start to tremble, eventually deciding on leaning back into his chest until she's belly-up. You've just settled yourself on the other end of the couch to watch these proceedings, but Autumn can't resist a chance to comment.

"Well someone got nice and comfy. Not so bad now, is it?"

"Please don't ruin this for me." She manages to groan out, even as small satisfied sigh follows. Master snorts, literally snorts, in amusement, before speaking.

"Autumn, I don't think she'll care what you say pretty soon."

Opal's eyes snap open and that shaky tone of voice returns "Wh-what do you mean by that?"

"I mean, my sweet little Opal, belly rub."

She almost manages to complete a sentence before Master's hands start their work. "Belly rub? I don't see ho-ooooohmyyyygaaaawd."

You and Autumn share a laugh as Master rubs up and down the length of Opal's upturned abdomen, listening to her little squeals of delight as her legs twitch, occasionally pawing (hoofing?) the air above her. Autumn cuddles herself up to you while Master lavishes Opal with attention for about twenty minutes, alternating between belly rubbing, mane stroking and back massaging. For the last few minutes of the petting session Opal is putty in his hands, totally limp as she offers no resistance to Master's magic hands, even as he rolls her over or re-positions her. You're honestly starting to get a little jealous by the time he stops petting her, suddenly understanding why your childhood dog was so upset and needy after your family got a new puppy. Opal's eyes flutter open, with a brief look of

disappointment etched into her face as she realizes it's over for now. You privately admonish yourself for such selfish thoughts when you realize that Opal looks more comfortable and relaxed right now than she has since you first met. You can get that kind of attention from Master later, right now the important thing is that the scared little mare you've been trying to coax into pethood finally seems happy.

Master motions for the two of you to move as he turns to lie down with Opal resting on his stomach, and a rush of gratitude flows through you as Autumn hops down onto the floor and lies down within petting range of Master's free hand. You know for a fact there's room for two ponies to lie down with Master on the couch, and Autumn's letting you have some! Gently pushing your way between Opal and the back of the sofa, Master's smile is warm and welcoming even when you occasionally put too much of your weight on him. Finally, the four of you are acceptably settled, and after a quick few presses of the remote, Master begins to idly pet the three of you, two at a time with each hand while watching a football game. first thing's first, get Opal talking.

"Somehow I don't think Autumn ruined that for you."

"I don't think anything could have ruined that. I know you told me things would feel good, but I don't think I understood that until, mmmmh, the belly rub." The look on her face is dreamy, and she's acting so cuddly with you and Master you can scarcely believe this is the same pony who threw a screaming fit little more than a day ago. She nods off pretty quickly with Autumn following suit, but you do manage to hold your own in a conversation with Master about the game on the television until it becomes apparent that weeks without any kind of sports news has left you ignorant of all goings-on this season. Eventually even you give in and lay your head down on his shoulder, falling asleep shortly after being kissed on the forehead. You hope Opal loves the person she ends up with as much as you love yours.

You spend your first few minutes of consciousness fighting to get back to sleep. It's so cold all of a sudden! In desperation to get back to warm sleepyp time you begin to pretty much burrow between Master and the side of the couch, until a cold breeze catches on your feathers and you experience something akin to spinal brainfreeze. Augh! You force

yourself upright and open your eyes, intent on doing whatever is necessary to continue your nap.

"If I were Master, where would I keep the spare blankets? Hmmmm." It's kind of a silly thing to mutter to yourself, you couldn't possibly be Master! Doing all the cooking, cleaning, and decision making for the lot of you? You doubt you could even get used to looking after yourself again anymore. For a minute you worry about thoughts like those being the machines talking, but in all honesty you've just become accustomed to being a spoiled pet. No work and all play makes Zephyr a happy girl, you suppose.

When the breeze comes by a second time you can hardly stand it. How are the other three still asleep? Especially O-

Where's Opal?

Another icy gust forces you to look toward the direction of the offending airflow, only to see an... open... window...

"Shit!"

Master jumps into wakefulness beneath you, and Autumn's head appears over the side of the couch, looking wildly around the room.

"I don't know where Opal is and that window wasn't open before!"

You're grateful that Master takes the time to make sure you're not thrown from the couch as he leaps to his feet and dashes off in search of his keys and a flashlight. The three of you begin hurriedly chattering to one another about how best to locate your runaway pony, wishing that you were airworthy. You're all so frantic in your haste to get out the door and start the search that you nearly miss the small noise coming from the corner next to the window. In fact, the small noise gets a lot louder before a shouted "GUYS!" finally stops the collective mental breakdown the three of you are having.

"I'm... uh, right over here."



Sure enough, Opal's right beside the window, apparently having been in the little room behind the corner that Master used as storage space. The three of you couldn't have had more different reactions if you'd planned it. All you can do is let out an enormous sigh of relief and sit back on your haunches, already feeling as though you are in dire need of another nap. Autumn has never looked happier to see anypony before in her life, bounding across the room and practically tackling the poor thing.

"Oh thank goodness, we thought you ran away! Do you know how sad that would be? You'd be out there all alone and Zephyr and I would be so sad and I don't think Master would ever stop looking. "

Is that really what Autumn thinks of life here? Yes, you would definitely have been sad if Opal ran off towards a fate unknown, especially if the cops didn't turn up to arrest Master, because that would probably mean she'd died out there somewhere. But the notion that Master would never stop looking, while comforting to Autumn, and to you to a lesser extent, must seem like a veiled threat to her. As far as your Master goes, he stomps over to the window, slamming it shut before turning to face Opal.

"I'm going to need a really good explanation for this."

Opal hangs her head, looking not so much ashamed or upset as... defeated? When she starts speaking to Master there is sadness, but it's eclipsed by the tone of resignation. What did she do while you were sleeping?

"When I woke up I was just so comfortable... I f-felt so happy, and then I looked at you a-and I just felt..."

"So you did try to escape?"

"I panicked. I thought that if I didn't get out of here I was gonna lose myself to all of this... to you."

"So you got the window open and then couldn't climb out?"

"...No. I was halfway out and then I stopped."

"And why did you do that?"

"I... I realized that I didn't have anywhere to go. I'll have been evicted from my apartment by now... My parents are long gone... Charlie was the only person I knew who would have taken me in..."

"I can't see that ending well for you. Why not try the police?"

"Even if they could fix me, I'd still be homeless and broke."

"So you just came back in and waited for me to wake up and hear all of this? Why not close the window and keep it secret?"

"I wanted you to see that I could get away if I wanted to. I don't have to be anyone's pet."

Now she's got his attention. He's gone from looking upset to just plain curious. You don't think anyone's ever done this to him before. And how is Opal the one doing it? She's been dosed on nanomachines, and Master said they didn't work right on you. She's been putting up a much better fight than you ever did. Maybe you're weak willed... Maybe this is something you wanted. You should ask Master about it later.

"And what did you hope to get from showing me that, aside from making sure I'll never give you a chance like that again?"

"I want a promise from you."

"Oh? Make it quick, otherwise you're going back downstairs until you're ready to be good."

"You say this person who wants me is nice and all, but... if I'm unhappy there, if he's not right for me... will you take me back?"

"You're asking me to undo a done deal?"

"I just want a home I know I can be happy in. If this doesn't work out I don't want to be stuck there forever. I'll be a pretty pony, I'll be a good pet. I'm sorry about trying to escape, please, just this one thing and I'm

yours."

"I'll call him and see what he thinks about coming to an arrangement, - but- you have to promise me that you'll be a good girl for him, no matter what. No escape attempts, no disobedience, even if you're worried about something."

"I'll be good. So you promise?"

"If you're unhappy I'll return his money, bring you back, and see about finding an owner you'll want. I promise. Zephyr here will hold me to it, I'm sure."

She's actually smiling now, her chest swelling with pride at her accomplishment. You have a feeling none of his ponies have ever negotiated with Master before.

"Then I'll be good. I won't run, and I won't argue or disobey."

"So you swear to me that you'll be a good pet pony, for me or anyone I choose to give you to? Loyal and obedient for the rest of your days, like Autumn and Zephyr?"

You probably shouldn't be so happy about being included in that sentence, but you can't help but take it as a compliment. Opal takes a quick look at you and Autumn, and while Autumn's shaking her head 'yes' repeatedly, all you have is a soft smile that she returns. You're so proud of her!

"Yes, Master."

Ooooh, you and Autumn are gonna hug the living daylights out of her later!

"Good girl. I'll talk to your buyer in the morning and see about a 'trial period' for you. I'm sure he'll think it's cute, anyway. But you'd better keep your word, or else you'll need to be trained to be good. Neither of us will enjoy that."

If she had a lighter shade of fur you're sure she'd be a bit paler after he said that, her smile faltering a bit at the notion of being 'trained'. He reaches a hand out and scratches behind her ears, and she manages to remain apprehensive until he tells her that "I don't think you'll need it, just never pull a stunt like this again."

Master exits the room, having decided to cook something special, and this time you're the one leaping onto Opal in a frenzy of affection.

"I'm so proud of you! You did mean what you said, right? You think you can be a happy pet?"

"Like I said, I've got nowhere else to go. And all things considered today was really nice until I freaked out and almost ran into the woods."

"You don't sound too sad about any of it."

"Well, actually, I sort of hung halfway out the window and thought about things for awhile. Then I heard something howling in the woods and realized that I'd look awfully appetizing to a wolf or a mountain lion. I don't think I want to be outside without him, er, Master with me."

You start to laugh at her, but then you realize that Autumn hasn't said anything, or laughed with you, since Master left. You're startled to discover Autumn glaring daggers at Opal, the anger in her face completely alien to you now. She hasn't been angry at anyone or anything since your first meeting, and you'd pretty much forgotten she could even have negative emotions. Maybe all that hugging will have to wait a bit. Opal notices too, shrinking before the oncoming storm of Autumn's fury at full force.

"How dare you! You came here to hurt my Master and take my friend away, and he's nice enough, kind enough to make you pretty and give you everything you could need! And you still want to leave, like you don't even care about us!"

"No! I decided to stay! I'm going to be good. I'm sorry for trying to leave, really!"

"Really, so when my Master asked why you didn't go to the police, what did you say?"

"That even if they could fix me, I'd end up broke and homeless?"

"Yes! Not that you didn't want him to get us taken away from him! They'd lock him up and I'd be alone! I'll never ever ever be alone again, understand! He's mine! He loves me and I love him and if you ever put us in danger again I'll... I'll..."

She's sobbing softly now, and the two of you are too stunned to say anything. You knew Autumn had issues, but this was... frightful. You love him, and need him, but Autumn's level of emotional dependency on your Master seems much, much worse than you thought it was. There's no rage left in her voice as she starts talking again through her little sniffles.

"Don't say that they'll 'fix' you either. I don't need fixing, and neither do you. It's all perfect for us if you'd just let Master show you."

You're a bit overwhelmed by all this at once. Autumn's been something of an enigma this entire time, but this sheds some new light on her as a pers... pony. Opal is actually the first to move, giving Autumn a great big hug, and murmuring how sorry she is for trying to leave. Well, that's one way to guilt-trip a mare into staying you guess. Autumn seems to accept Opal's apologies, or at least that's what you assume all the hugging back means. You're not a part of these proceedings, not really, until Master quietly strolls up behind you, placing a hand on your mane and watching the other two get it all out in the open.

"Y'know Master, I'd hate to see what would happen if one of the other ponies like, bit you or something. She might actually hurt them."

"Like I said. For better or worse, she only wants me."

It takes ages before Master gets around to finishing dinner or for any of you to be interested in eating, but once you've all calmed down enough for food, and gone out for another walk the entire matter is settled. Master leaves the three of you in the basement while he does some more

work, and after a long night of talk and play, the three of you sleep in a cuddly pony-pile. Life is good, even for Opal.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 17

From then on your days pass in almost carefree happiness. Every now and again Master plays his little submission games with Opal, but the knowledge that she has some control over her future seems to have empowered her to deal with them in stride. From rolling over on command and at one point being made to 'beg' for an orange, up on her haunches with her hooves pressed against her chest, the only response she ever has is mild annoyance, and even then she's smiling by the time she's done with his silliness. Otherwise it's play, play, play and you've never been so happy.

All seems to have been forgiven following Autumn's sudden mood swing and outburst, but Opal still seems a bit nervous around Autumn from time to time, as though she's going to snap at the slightest provocation. You explained what little you know about how Autumn got to be so... well, Autumn, but all that did was make it worse. Now Opal jumps a bit whenever Autumn turns up behind her, a fact the tan pony has been playing for laughs ever since. You're much less concerned about it, because by now you think you've figured out what sets her off. You mentioned getting Master arrested before she snapped at you on your first day out of the basement, and Opal decided not to go to the police for the 'wrong' reasons. Autumn is deathly afraid that someone will take her away from Master, and the police would be the most likely candidate if anypony ran away. Maybe that's why she's so aggressive about winning over newcomers? You can't decide if Autumn is more or less innocently naive than you first thought.

You haven't worked up the courage to ask, but as far as you can tell Autumn's recollection of her life prior to Master is incomplete at best. If someone turned her back into... whoever she was, would she even remember having lived in that body? Or would it be more like your first moments as Zephyr? The poor thing would be completely lost without Master, and she knows that enough to become angry when something could threaten the life she has here. It's a little childish, but you get it.



Watching Opal adjust to Master outside the realm of his little games has been something special, though. Like introducing two friends and watching them hit it off, you've got front-row seats to a budding and wonderful relationship. Nothing romantic that you can discern, but rather a kind of barter system between them now that Opal is thoroughly addicted to petting of all kinds. Unlike Master's tokens of submission Opal usually initiates these, at first noticing the transfixed expression on Master's face during a soda commercial and then excusing herself to the litterbox. Master had Autumn asleep next to him in such a way that getting up would wake her, and stayed down, even when the two of you heard some unusual sounds from the kitchen. You did get up to investigate, but that was only seconds before Opal returned with the neck of a soda bottle clenched in her mouth, causing her head to tilt as she marched directly back to him, depositing the bottle in his lap.

A frankly stunned looking Master held the bottle in his hand for a moment before looking back down at the little bat-mare, still not sure what to make of the gesture.

"Uh, thank you, Opal."

She didn't even reply to him, instead clambering up onto his lap without a word and eyeing him expectantly until he began to scratch behind her ears. You couldn't help but giggle, they both had the same smug look about them as he petted and she enjoyed. Clearly, this was going to be a mutually beneficial relationship.

Unfortunately, time flies when you're having fun. Your carefree days stretched into two wonderful weeks, until Master's phone rang one night as the four of you were eating. You're honestly surprised by the sudden sound intruding on your quiet "family" dinner since Master's phone barely ever rings, but Opal trots off after him, her attention fixed on the half of the conversation she can hear.

"So I should expect you before noon? Yeah, sounds good. You're leaving them behind, right? She's right here. I wouldn't say she's excited, but it certainly looks like she'll give you a chance. You're still alright with her arrangement? Drive safe."

He hangs up and kneels down, petting Opal with both hands as he breaks the news. "Well little cutie, it looks like our time together is at an end. Your owner is getting on the road tonight, and you'll be leaving with him in the morning."

This... well, this sucks! You knew Opal would leave eventually, Master made it clear she had a buyer from the start, but that didn't stop you from getting attached to her. Autumn's great, but you and Opal have a lot in common, and a strong bond thanks to your time together when she first woke up. Opal's a really good friend and now she's getting taken away! It's worse than your friend moving away, you're both just pets! It's not like she can come back to visit a few times a year. Even if she hates living with this guy, she'll only be back until Master finds an owner she'll stay with. There's this knot in your chest now, threatening to burst at any moment. You don't want to lose your friend! Is this what it's going to feel like every time Master sells a pony?

... No wonder Autumn said she doesn't usually get to play with the others. Opal looks apprehensive at best as she tries to formulate a reply.

"H-he's gonna drive all night? Just to get me?"

"Like I said, he's very excited to meet you. Plus, he's made this trip twice before, by now he knows the best way to do it."

"He must live pretty far away, I mean."

"Oh yeah, miles and miles. I could sedate you if you're worried about being bored during the trip, and you will be bored since you are not, I repeat, not to look out any windows. Can't risk getting pulled over unless you feel like riding in an animal control van."

"No, no I'll just w-wait it out."

"Are you nervous? I hit you in the head with a bat and locked you in a closet for more than a week, and you're worried staying with him?"

"I-it's really just the devil I know or the devil I don't, I guess..."

"Trust me, he's hardly a devil like me. Just give it a try, okay?"

"If you say so..."

"Good girl. Now go finish your dinner."

"Yes, Master."

Opal doesn't look terribly hungry when she drags herself back towards her food. She lies down beside you and stares at her food, lost in thought until you decide to speak.

"So... tomorrow's the big day. How do you feel?"

"Like I'm about to get thrown off a cliff."

"You'd better hope not, those wings look like they're just for show."

There's the smile you're looking for.

"Yeah, maybe it'd be better if I get tossed into the sea. We can swim, right?"

"I'm honestly not sure. But really, are you gonna be okay?"

"... We'll see."

Autumn's been paying just as much attention as you have, but she seems to have a different take on things; "You should be excited! A whole new home and a new Master to love and even new ponies to play with! You've got it made, Opal!"

"Y-yeah, Autumn, it sounds great."

The tone of her voice makes it plain: It most certainly doesn't sound great to her. You hope it's all just nerves and that this person will be good to her, even if it means never getting her back. After finishing your meal there's a quiet night in the living room as Master and Autumn watch another old movie, while you and Opal cuddle together on the other end

of the couch. In the whole two hours, neither one of you said a word, Opal silently lost in thought while you try your best to enjoy your last night with her. It's just not happening though, as the knot of anxiety and sadness sits in your chest, feeling as heavy as a brick, dragging you down into a malaise of depression. You've been getting progressively closer to Opal and while you definitely love Master, you're still a little confused as to what you feel for her. Is this sisterly affection, or is this a kind of romance that is simply alien to you?

The movie draws to a close, and Master tidies up for a moment before telling you and Autumn to go to the bedroom while he brought Opal downstairs. You began to obey almost automatically, something you've been noticing a lot lately, as though taking his commands is now a natural compulsion of your brain. That is, until Opal interrupts.

"Um, since it's my last night and all... I don't wanna be alone. If it's alright with you, Master..." She turns to look you in the eyes, stammering for a bit before finally spitting it out.

"If Master says yes... Will you stay with me?"

You don't reply verbally, but offer Master your best pleading expression until he relents and brings the both of you downstairs. Despite Master's instruction to rest up, the two of you spent most of the night talking and playing and laughing as though you wanted a lifetime's worth of friendship in one night. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, you find yourself lying on your side facing Opal as she does the same, wrapping your limbs around one another before sleep begins to claim you.

"Zephyr?"

"Mm?"

"I'm gonna miss you."

"I'm gonna miss you too. So, so much."

You cling to Opal as tight as you can, and wait for the morning to take

your friend from you.

The next morning finds the four of you assembled in living room, awaiting the day's guest with varying emotions. Master and Autumn seem perfectly calm, but they've been through this dozens of times before, while your mopey depression contrasts nicely with Opal's anxious fidgeting. There's something on the tv but you can't muster the energy to care, instead resolving to never forget Opal, and never get emotionally attached to another pony. It seems a bit callous, but if this hurts as much as you think it will then you'll have no choice lest you become a gibbering wreck every time Master sells a pony.

Finally, after what feels like days, the sound of tires on dirt calls the undivided attention of everyone in the room. Master rises to his feet and heads for the door while Autumn rears up on two legs to look out the window. Opal doesn't rise from her spot on the floor, looking like she'll either run or faint depending on how this goes and you halfheartedly trot to the door after your Master. As Master strides out of the house to meet the newcomer, you sit in the doorway and spy a very, very expensive looking SUV pulling to a stop in the driveway.

You guess Master wasn't kidding when he said this guy was loaded. The man who emerges is well-dressed and bit on the larger side, though not unattractively so. Wait, 'unattractive'? Why would he be attractive in the first place? You're not attracted to men... except for Master. Or maybe you are, another one of Master's little tweaks to your mind and body he neglected to mention. Ugh, this is too confusing.

Master greets him with an enthusiastic handshake, and the jovial tone of his voice seems unusual to you. He'd been all business with the other buyers. Is it possible that he actually has a human friend? It's not really that hard to imagine, you suppose, just a bit unusual considering how isolated his home, your home, is from the rest of the world. You just sort of assumed he wasn't big on people he hadn't put a collar on. But while you've been musing, they've been exchanging pleasantries, and now they're both approaching the door. You can see the wide, sincere looking smile on the stranger's face as he draws near and there's a kindness in his eyes as he kneels to greet you, of all ponies.

"Oh my, you're quite the pretty one. I'm Eli."

"T-thank you. I'm Zephyr. Nice to meet you."

"Well mannered, too. Or is he training you for that?"

"No, he thinks it's pretty cute when I'm just as much of a jerk as he is."

"Sounds about right, you know what they say about pets and their owners." His laughter seems sincere, and you're right behind him as he heads inside behind Master, who gives you a smile and a light flick on the ear for your insolence. You'd have a few good jokes lined up at his expense, but you're too busy keeping your eyes on this Mr. Eli. He seems like a nice sort of guy, oddly nice considering he and Master seem to be well acquainted with one another, but you can't help but hold a small grudge against him simply for wanting to take Opal away. So there you are, right behind him, when he and Master round the corner to the living room to find...

Autumn, with both forelegs wrapped around one of Opal's rear ones as the poor thing attempts to hide behind the couch. Neither of them seem to have noticed the three of you yet, as Autumn pleads with Opal to just be friendly while Opal hisses for her to get away. Oh yeah, this is the best possible first impression she could have made. Master clears his throat and the two of them fall silent, Autumn happily trotting over to meet the newcomer while Opal continues to occupy her poor choice of a hiding spot.

"Hi Mister! Opal is being a very silly filly right now, but I'm sure she'll come around before too long!"

"Silly is just fine by me. My name's Eli, what's yours?"

"Autumn!"

"A pretty name for a pretty pony. Would you mind if I tried talking to her?"

"No sir! She's gonna be yours, isn't she?"

"Only if she wants to."

He spoke to you with a polite respectfulness, but he treats Autumn a little differently, like a child in need of nurturing. If they'd met before he wouldn't have introduced himself, even if Autumn didn't remember. Maybe he and Master swap pony stories or something? Or maybe he's just good at getting a read on people?

Gah, pay attention! You can have your internal monologue later, he's going to talk to Opal!

The three of you stand aside in rapt attention as Eli approaches the side of the Sofa before sitting cross legged on the floor next to it.

"You know, for a pony with confidence enough to demand concessions from my domineering friend over here you seem awfully shy."

Opal remains perfectly quiet, but there's a sound of fur rubbing on fabric as half her face reappears from behind the corner, a single vertically-scored eye and a few locks of her violet mane peeking out at him with more than just a hint of fear evident.

"I'm not going to force you out of there, but am I that frightening?"

Opal's face disappears around the corner again, but a tiny voice responds.

"N-no. You're not scary. It's just all overwhelming."

"And what makes you say that?"

"I'm supposed to meet you right now and then go be yours? I-it just feels like... I don't know, like an arranged marriage or something."

"Well I'm not going to make you wear a dress, if that's the issue."

Her face peeks out from behind again, this time all of it, with a small chuckle.

"We're agreed on that, at least."

"So are you going to take a chance and come out here so I can see you, or are you going to hide from dresses all day?"

Oh thank god, he's got a sense of humor. That's going to make life exponentially easier for both of them. Sure enough, Opal cracks the tiniest smile and works her way out of her hidey-hole, head lowered and a bashful look on her face. Eli can't quite stop himself from eliciting a low whistle before turning to Master.

"You've really outdone yourself, you know that? She's even more beautiful than I thought she'd be."

Master doesn't say anything, simply cracking into a satisfied smile. How odd, you think, that he has such professional pride in a business he himself has admitted is... distasteful? Yes, you're satisfied here and so are the others who came before you, but to any outside observer, and even to yourself at first, he seems like absolute monster. Come to think of it, what's a nice guy like Eli doing around here, buying kidnapping victims for pleasure and befriending the mad scientist responsible? Either there's a story here or he isn't as nice as he seems. Gotta stay vigilant, this might be a ruse. Unless you just can't trust people anymore thanks to the fatass in the basement. Though after a couple weeks of being fed whatever Master's willing to give him, he might not be quite so heavy anymore.

Eli's praise appears to have short-circuited Opal, though. She's sitting on her haunches in front of him, but by the look on her face you think she might retreat if anyone else calls her beautiful again. Eli seems to have noticed the same, though.

"Oh come on now, you must know how good you look. If you can't handle a complement from me you're not going to fare well when you meet your new housemates. Snap out of it you pretty little mare, I'm Eli. Nice to meet you."

"Well... I'm Opal a-and I'm not... really used to being called p-pretty or beautiful or anything like that. Before all this I wasn't... uh..."



"Oh, I get it. I'd think any girl would be a bit more receptive, I'd say... You used to be a boy, didn't you?"

You really do feel bad now. Her fur coat is so dark no one can see all the color drain from her face, but you're completely sure it's happening under there. She starts to twitch a bit, and you already know she's going to bolt again, probably back behind the couch. The front door got shut, right? Otherwise she looks like she'll just run until she collapses. Can a pony die from embarrassment?

"A-and that doesn't bother you at all?! You think I'm all pretty and cute but I used to be a guy! Doesn't anyone else think this is weird?"

"First of all, one of the ponies I have now used to be a guy, and that doesn't bother either of us. Second off, if you're ready to deal with it, why wouldn't I be?"

"B-b-because you're gonna wanna p-pet me and c-cuddle me just like that guy does!", while leveling an accusing hoof at Master, "And do other stuff too, I bet! With a guy!"

He reaches out and grabs her in a sudden lunge, eliciting a squeal of surprise from the poor nervous mare as he pulls her into a hug, resting her on his lap.

"Well, I certainly want to pet you and cuddle you, so I think I'm gonna do that right about now. Something he and I have in common, I'm afraid. As for the 'other stuff'... well, what did you have in mind, my little Opal?"

No, seriously, can a pony die from embarrassment?

Opal's squirming a bit in his grasp, even as he starts giving long strokes of her mane while the little nightguard seated in his lap

desperately tries to stammer out a reply to his declaration. Eli wastes no time in following up, though.

"But honestly, while I certainly wouldn't be opposed to a little intimacy with such a wonderful little pony, that's all up to you. I'm a horsefucker,

yes, not a horse-rapist. You want to just be a live-in friend that I happen to have paid for? That's just fine, too. I'd be perfectly happy just having you around for companionship. Is that all right?"

"Y-yes, but I thought that's what Master's ponies are for?"

"Mm, yes and no. He certainly enjoys it, that much I'm sure of, and I do too, but we know someone who just keeps her ponies for companionship. Crippling social anxieties apparently don't count when the people you're talking to are three feet tall and on all fours. Be honest, though, is it something you're just not interested in at all or is it something you're just not ready for?"

She's visibly relaxing under his careful petting, leaning into his chest and shifting her weight a bit in his lap to get comfortable. Hm, you bet that's going to seem like an answer all on it's own.

"I... I don't know. This is all so new and I'm not sure what I want anymore..."

"We'll take it slow, I promise. Can you promise me you'll be a good girl, though? He says you're kind of a flighty type, and it's okay if that's limited to hiding behind furniture, I just don't want you running out on me in the middle of the night. Honestly, if anyone else were going to take you home I think he'd still be trying to rid you of that."

"I'll be a good pony. I'll obey you, and I won't run, I promise. I'll be cute and I'll be pretty and I'll let you laugh at me when I'm dumb. If I don't want to stay... you will give me back to him, won't you?"

"I made a deal, didn't I? If you don't want to be mine I'll be so very disappointed, but I'm not going to force misery on such a sweet little thing. If you tell me you want to leave, he'll get a call. But he's going to come pick you up, that drive is murder. It's why we don't hang out very much, he just loves being a crazy hermit." They're making eye contact now, Opal's nervous embarrassment reduced to the occasional fidget or ear flick. Her eyes press themselves shut when he leans in and kisses her on the forehead, and they stay shut as he continues to speak.

"And no, I don't particularly mind that you used to be a man. Do you still feel like a man?"

"No..."

"I've got two questions for you before I run off to use the bathroom. Why'd you hide behind the sofa in the first place?"

"I j-just got so nervous. I kept worrying that you wouldn't like me or that you'd like me too much and it'd be creepy or that you'd be a domination freak or something. I panicked... like Master told you I do..."

"Hah! Well I'm not going to insist you grovel for your food or anything like that. The other two canter around my house like they own the place and I'm fine with that as long as they listen when I talk. So does it seem like I like you too much? Am I creepy?"

"You're buying me, a person made to resemble a character from a little girls' cartoon, so you can watch me 'canter' around your house, eat your food from a bowl on the floor and sleep on all of your furniture. This is still creepy no matter what, but you don't seem like you're going to make me call you 'daddy' or something gross like that, so that's a start."

"Oh man, I never thought to ask my ponies what they thought of My Little Dashie... We're gonna do that later."

"And the second thing?"

"Why on earth would you pick the same name as Rarity's cat?"

She doesn't even bother with the defensive explanation you got. Instead she lets out the most adorable warcry you've ever heard and throws herself at him. The tackle lays him out on the floor, and for a moment you're alarmed as she starts hitting him in the chest with her forehooves. Alarmed until you hear them him laughing and it becomes clear that either Opal isn't trying to hurt him or she's far too weak to actually accomplish it. Then her higher notes of laughter join his, and suddenly it's all okay. It really is all okay, you reflect, watching Opal bond with the man she's going to end up loving.



# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 18

Eli did eventually get an honest answer about Opal's name, but only after locking her in a hug so tight she couldn't play-hit him anymore.

Even though you're a very pretty pony yourself, there's still some inner nerd losing his shit over how adorable all this is. The small, giggling bat-pony wrapped in Eli's arms is breathtakingly cute, so much so that it's hard to imagine her so unhappy with her situation that she'd weep, even though you've seen it with your own eyes. Eventually Opal does get put back on the floor as Eli excuses himself to the restroom, and you're by her side in an instant.

"You hid behind the couch from -him-? He's about as harmless as one of Master's customers could ever be."

"You try meeting someone who is literally going to own you for the first time!"

"I did. He slapped me around a bit."

"So I guess I win?"

"I really think you do. So you like him?"

"I... I think I do. Oh god, what happened to me? His hug felt so... safe."

"Nuh-uh. You do not freak out about him being nice to you."

"B-b-but I shouldn-"

"No, you're over-thinking it again. He's willing to let you decide if you're going to get frisky with him, he's patient with your little anxiety attacks, and he'll let you decide if you want to leave him or not. How is he not perfect for you?"

"Okay, so he seems like he'll be nice to me."

"He even took it well when you got violent. I told you you'd always have jokes about your name."

"You're really lucky we're friends, you know that?"

"Because I treasure your company?"

"Because otherwise I'd bite you."

The both of you start laughing, but it gets cut short when Eli speaks up from behind you.

"So you bite, too? I'm going to need you to save that for the bedroom, darling."

Opal still doesn't take jokes like that particularly well, fixing her eyes on the floor and stammering while Eli saunters over to you and kneels down. The look on his eyes is contemplative, and he glances back and forth between the two of you for a bit.

"So let me get this straight; You're funny enough to snark back at my friend over there, beautifully slender, and just talked my new pet into liking me... your color schemes even complement each other pretty well. You know, pretty little girl, if you want to stay with Opal I could probably outbid whoever wants to buy you. So come on, whad'dya say?"

You're a fraction of a second from freaking out, but you stuff it back down. You're trying to keep Opal calm, and freaking out yourself would make you a hypocrite... but you can't go with him! You belong to Master, no one else! Autumn seems to have a similar opinion, considering how quickly she latches on to you with her forehooves, giving Eli a childish expression that can only be summarized as "Mine". While Autumn glares daggers you try to talk your way out of the situation.

"I'm really flattered by your offer, but-"

"But I'm afraid this one is mine, Eli."

The sound of his voice is enough to relax you, and Master's arms scoop you off the floor into a warm embrace, and there's this tremendous flood of emotion as he does. He's claiming you for himself in front of another man who wants you! You feel tiny and objectified, but by now that's a warm feeling to you, one that means safety and love. Ooooh, you're his! His! His! His! As you kiss his cheek and nuzzle his chest, you become vaguely aware of Autumn hopping around the room in joy. Oh yeah, he was going to surprise her with that, wasn't he?

"And to think, a few months ago you mocked me for wanting more than one. I seem to recall you claiming that I was building a 'harem', was it?"

"I know, I know, but she and I have been through a lot. This is my pony."

Eeeeeee! His pony! You love it! Your lips slam into his for a full-blown kiss.

You're almost too busy showering Master in your affection to hear Eli audibly "D'awww" at your display.

"What a shame. Something that cuddly is wasted on you. How you got two of anything to enjoy living with you, I'll never know."

"For better or worse, they only want me for a Master."

"Their loss. You've got them wearing the same raggedy collars Seafoam and Orchid had when I picked them up. What, did you buy in bulk?"

"And I suppose you bought new ones?"

"Among other things. I'm sure you've figured out how much more work it is to clean up after two of them, but you've still got litterboxes everywhere."

THAT gets your attention. You're a willing, happy pet, totally content to be collared and leashed and made to prance or roll over on command, but damned if you don't still dread that godawful litterbox.



"See, she perked right up. I'll bet they hate it too."

"So what's your alternative?"

"Japanese squatting toilet in the bathroom."

"Oh yeah, uncle moneybags. Did you buy them a bidet while you were at it?"

"No, that's going to be a gift for the holidays."

Master's annoyed expression only gets worse when he sees the excited look on your face. He stares back at you, as though he expects the pleading, hopeful look in your eyes to go away.

"And now she's never going to stop wanting one. You see what you did?"

"Clearly you'll just have to buy one. I'm sure she'll remind you."

Master sighs and puts you back down, stroking your mane before giving in just a bit.

"I'd say you'll need to be good for me to consider it, but you're never anything but good. We'll see."

Opal's been quiet for all of this, but the look on her face is absolutely ecstatic. Even Eli seems genuinely surprised to find Opal take a small lick of his hand before nuzzling it.

"It's disgusting to think of how happy I am to be able to use a simple toilet, but thank you."

"It's more for my comfort than your dignity, but you're welcome sweetheart."

Master seems awfully pleased with all this, face softening for a smile before offering Eli lunch. Soon enough the two of them are seated in the kitchen while You, Autumn and Opal crowd around their feet. Master had

been checking in on the kitchen all day, and you're delighted to find pasta with alfredo sauce and a ton of the cherry tomatoes you've recently grown to love.

For most of the meal proper you enjoy sitting beside Opal while Master and Eli- No, your Masters, exchange small talk about politics or the economy or somesuch. Not the kind of things a pony needs to worry about. Over the post-meal coffee, though, Eli turns the conversation towards something of interest.

"So I heard from Ann last week. She said you called her about her request?"

"I called her with a compromise. Can't do what she asked, but I wanted to do something for her."

"How do you meet her halfway on that?"

"Adoption."

WHAT. This has gotta be about Charlie. You take a quick glance at Opal and Autumn, who seem to be playing a game with the cherry tomatoes, rolling them back at forth at each other.

Naaah, you'd rather learn more.

"So, two requests you didn't think you could fill, for your only two friends, at the same time? Ann's new addition has something to do with my perfect little bat-pony, doesn't it?"

He has TWO whole friends? You'd never have guessed!

"Trust me, you don't want to know."

"Aaand something to do with that mark on your head, I'd bet."

"Opal's going to be your new pet, and Ann and her ponies will get what they want. Leave it be."

"Jeez, I haven't seen you this edgy about something since you went to get Seafoam."

"Oh god, I had no idea what I was doing."

Your mind is racing with the implications of all this. You've been playing an observation game to try to piece together Master's story this whole time, born out of your early fears that too much initiative would get you punished. But that's stupid! You're staying here, submitting to his every little whim, and completely in love with it. He's not going to punish you for asking questions, especially if you just want to know more about him.

"Master? Excuse me, but I've got to know the whole story here."

Master starts a bit, apparently not expecting his pony to butt into 'people talk', but his hesitant look fades away when you rest your head on this thigh, looking up at him with your big sky blues as wide as you can make them. A hand descends to scratch behind your ears, and it's almost a struggle to focus on his words, not his fingers.

"Well, it's not that much to tell, really. He and I were friends in college, spending time with the massive nerd brigade, including this girl Ann who never talked much."

"To you, maybe. Ann has some issues with... well, people. She thought he was intimidating, even before he doped himself on nanomachines-" Eli jokes, before throwing a hand exasperatedly into the air, "-and did that to himself. He used to look like me, just less charming."

Aha! You knew his muscle couldn't have been natural, you've never once seen a weight or exercise equipment around here! He doesn't even lift! Sure, he gets plenty of cardio, but unless you and Autumn are a lot heavier than you think there's just no way for him to stay like that except machines.

"Shut up. Anyway, after college we went into our respective fields and were both pretty successful, him more so than me, until I got fired."

"Until he used company property to make himself look how he does

now- dumb as hell- and someone checked all his notes. Turns out you can only be so strange and still be allowed to work there."

"How about you let me tell it?"

"How about you develop a sense of humor about it? Meanwhile I was off making my fortune, so you can guess who he hung out with a lot during all of that."

"Yes, and you were the one who insisted I watch a little girl's cartoon."

"As if you didn't enjoy it! So anyway he, Ann and I fall in love with the show, and at one point in idle conversation I mentioned how much I wanted one. A pony, I mean. Then he gets this look in his eyes and leaves in a rush."

"A week later I told him and Ann that I could do it."

"We didn't believe him at first, or rather I needed him to remind me what it was he could do, but he was so sure he could do it that I ended up believing him."

"So... you helped my Master make his first pony?"

"I footed the bill for my first pony and then some. I was loaning him money to pay his bills, and he still had an RnD process and somebody had to pay for all that. I didn't pay for either of Opal's new compatriots."

"You started him on this? How did you... y'know, pick your first uh, target?"

"Ah. We found a girl online who seemed like she wanted it. I'm not sure how he went about 'acquiring' her specifically, but after her first day or two of adjustment she was, well, my wonderful Seafoam."

The smile on his face, the wistful joy in his eyes... Even if he had her kidnapped for it, you're quite certain he loves her, and she must love him. Better still, even distant friends were bound to get together some time, you might see Opal again after she leaves!

Eli sets his coffee mug down before clearing his throat and rising to his feet.

"Well, the drive back is long and boring, I think it might be time to get underway. We should get together for the holidays with Ann, maybe bring all the pets out here for it?"

"You realize that's seven, if not eight, ponies all in my house at once?"

"You'd better buy that toilet, then. I'll go grab your cash."

Opal emerges from under the kitchen table, with her anxious fidgeting back in full force. As her eyes flicker between him and you, Eli leans in close with the warm confidence that seems to just flow out of him to put her at ease.

"Alright sweetie, it's time to get moving. I'll take a minute to get ready, but you're going to have to say goodbye to our friends for now. Are you ready to go?"

She relaxes as he talks, seemingly under the same spell Master's eyes cast on you. You knew she'd fall for him in no time!

"Yes... Master."

Oh. That's new. She shudders for a second after saying it, but the smile on her face makes it plain that she's far from disgusted with the notion. It seems to have affected Eli far more severely, as his face lights up before he pulls her into an embrace. They both look so happy, it's at least a tiny silver lining to having Opal carried off far away. The flood of emotions surging through you is equal parts grief and relief, and you allow yourself a deep breath to calm back down as Eli strides off to conclude the day's business.

You and Opal stare at each other for a moment before she lets out a small sigh and begins to speak. This is it, and there's no way you're going to get through this without tears.

"Well Zephyr, you really did it."

"Did what?"

"Subdued me? Tamed me? I don't know. You've been with me since he injected me, and somehow you made it all seem alright. I'm about to get carted off to be someone's full-time plaything and sex toy, and the thing that bothers me most is how much I'll miss you."

"It's not going to be the same around here without you. I'll miss you too, but didn't he just say you didn't have to sleep with him?"

"I'm not stupid. I did my best to keep a lid on them when it was Master touching me, mostly by remembering my time in the basement, but these feelings aren't going away. Eli... my new Master... I don't have that defense against him, and if he keeps being this nice to me..."

"Does that bother you?"

"N-not like it should. I'm not going to run or anything. I'm just still trying to reconcile going from a skinny, awkward virgin to this little hooved thing that'll present herself and beg him to be gentle."

She doesn't look too happy with you when you start laughing, but her glower only makes you laugh harder before explaining yourself.

"I'm pretty sure you've already reconciled it if you know how you'll seduce him, sweetie."

"Hey! That's not how I'm gonna seduce him! I-I m-mean... damn it."

"Well, for pillow talk don't forget to badger him about that get-together he mentioned, that way we can see each other in a couple of months."

"You do the same and I'm sure one of them will make it happen. How does gift-giving work in these relationships anyway?"

"I have a suspicion that instead of stocking stuffers we just get stockings to wear."

"As long as wearing them is my gift to him. I'd hate having to try and make him something with hooves."

The two of you laugh together for quite a while, before she takes you into a hug.

"But really, thank you. If you weren't there for me I'd probably still be downstairs crying."

You don't have words to reply, instead you just hug back as hard as you can. You're doing your best not to cry yourself, but you're really going to miss this mare! Opal hugs even tighter in response to your little sniffles, and a single warm tear escapes down your cheek.

The two of you stay there for a while relishing the last hug, until Master and Eli return. They both stop for a moment to admire the scene in front of them, Eli audibly touched by what he sees. The clunk of something heavy on the table draws Opal's attention at once, and your gaze follows hers to Master, staring in shock at an open briefcase.

"Eli, buddy, this is more than we agreed on."

"A bonus. Consider it a token of gratitude. You gave me the only two friends I trust more than you, and now I think you've done it again. I'm glad I did, seeing as you've got two ponies to look after these days. Put it toward the toilet for them and save yourself a lot of cleanup."

Master makes no objection as you rear up onto your hind legs and lean against the table for a better look at how much Eli thinks a pony as fantastic as your friend is worth. Opal follows your example when she hears you gasp, and once she sees it for herself she definitely knows why.

"T-that's too much!"

Too much, indeed. You weren't in such bad financial straits as Opal was while she was human, but you were by no means wealthy, or even middle-class. The sight of a briefcase literally filled with cash is enough to make you green with envy, despite a pet like you having no practical

use for money at all. Eli's chuckling strikes you as condescending until you realize that Opal is, in her usual fashion, freaking out over nothing.

"No, really, you can't pay that much for me!"

"Trust me, I can afford it."

"That's not it! I just... that's a lot of pressure, you know?"

"I'm afraid I don't follow."

"You're paying all this money because you think I'm, like, perfect or something. What if I'm not? I'm not much... of anything, really. You're going to have buyers remorse once you get to know me and then you'll hate me an-"

She doesn't get to finish expressing the full extent of her low self esteem, as it would appear Eli won't have another word of it. Her self admonishment turns into a surprised yelp when he scoops her up into his arms and holds her at eye level.

"Listen to me. All I expect is that you, my sweet little worrywart, are going to live in my house, eat my food, play nice with my other ponies, and then do whatever else you want. While you're doing all this, without even trying, you will be cute as the dickens and I will adore you. Don't stress, all I want is a happy Opal, and that's worth every penny. Now, are you just about ready to go?"

"Y-yes, Master."

Returned to the floor, Opal is ambushed by Autumn's goodbye hug while Eli shares a few parting pleasantries with Master. Finally, as Eli starts toward the door, Opal addresses your Master.

"You could have killed me. In your place, knowing what I know now, I probably would have. This isn't what I wanted, but I'd rather end up napping on his couch for the rest of my days than get buried in the woods. Thank you for being merciful... and thank you for giving me to someone you trust."



"You're quite welcome."

"One more thing. Charlie... always had demons, and he did try to ditch me here and save himself, but he was the only person who ever tried to help me get by. I know what he did was unforgivable, what he wanted to do... what I nearly helped him do, was atrocious. What's going to happen to him?"

"He'll end up happily collared, like you."

"To get a person like him to submit... You're going to have to do something much worse than you did to me, aren't you?"

"Are you sure you want to know?"

"I suppose not. Before you inject him, though... Tell him I said goodbye. Tell him I forgive him."

"Of course. Now run along, you little scamp. Be good for my friend."

Eli is waiting by the door, but Opal turns to you one last time and cracks a grin.

"Well, I'll be off now, so, uh, 'Live long and prosper'?"

"We can't even do the salute to go with that, but good luck."

"You too."

And with that Opal does indeed scamper off to her new owner, who offers a parting wave and leads her to his car. Just like that, she's gone, and even though she tried her best to leave you with a smile, you still find yourself sniffing a bit and fighting back tears as the SUV turns out of sight. This still sucks. Somewhere behind you Master sighs, and then a pair of warm hands descend to carry you to the sofa.

"Come on, silly pony."

"It's not silly, I'm gonna miss her."

You're sure he's got a comment for that, too, but instead you find yourself in his lap as he takes a seat, and some gentle prodding gets you on your back. A single hand caresses your exposed abdomen, and you squeak out a giggle when you figure out how he's gonna make you feel better. Soon enough both hands are gently rubbing up and down the length of you, and you're damned close to squealing in delight. Life got you down, but thankfully you have the best Master a pony could ever want. Ticklish in places, pleasantly sensual in others, and relaxing in ways you can't begin to describe, your Master gives the best belly rubs ever, and you're just too overwhelmed in pleasure to worry even one bit about Opal.

After what feels like an eternity of warm, happy petting by your one and only Master you end up curled into his lap, utterly content with your place in life. Still, you didn't want to discuss anything about the transformations with Opal around, so you've been holding your questions in for weeks now.

"Master? Was Opal normal? I mean in terms of how long it took to get her to accept it and submit."

"No, not really. Like I said, she's kind of a special case. I think the shock of waking up in a new body with no warning helps, somehow. David knew what was coming, and that probably played into Opal's resistance. Others have made those panicked escape attempts and the like before, but only on the first day. Opal's the only one to bargain with me so far."

"So what constitutes normal?"

"A rough first day, then they're usually saleable in two weeks. Opal didn't take too much longer."

"No mere pony can resist your cuddling."

"Least of all you."

"So... In a lot of ways she acted like I did."

"Yes?"

"But you said the machines didn't work on my head."

"Didn't work completely? Listen, something, and I don't know what, didn't go as planned with you and I reacted poorly. That fluke probably saved your life, too. If I hadn't delayed selling you, well, you know. Does not knowing about that bother you?"

"Not really, it's just curiosity at this point. Besides, I got the best result!"

"Which is?"

"Walking on a leash you hold. Eating treats out of the palm of your hand. Resting my head on your shoulder at night before falling asleep. Getting petted on the couch. Playing with Autumn while you're working. That's the best result, and there's honestly nowhere I'd rather be."

"Well I'm glad you're happy. Lord knows I've put you through enough. Do you really want a leash for your walks?"

"Every now and again. It's... well, kinda hot."

"I knew keeping you was the right choice."

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 19

For the next few minutes you and Autumn bask in Master's affections, resting your heads on either of his thighs and very nearly dozing off as he devotes a hand to each of you. Opal's got an owner she's sure to love, and you've got one you already do. Perfect. Simply perfect. In all the ups and downs of the past few weeks, especially with Opal always being the center of attention, you'd missed these quiet moments where you can just let your mind go blank. Laid against him, eyes shut and totally relaxed, you can't help but wonder how you ever got by in life all wound up and stressed over stupid, silly things like rent and work. You went home to nothing, nobody, and even in your closest relationships you still held so much back, worried so much about being in control...

You can just lie here, eyes shut and zoned out for as long as he'll let you. No worries about being in control, or holding back, or getting hurt. You love your Master, you know he loves you, and that knowledge is the basis of complete trust. You wish there were some way to convey the depth of your affection, but nothing seems adequate. Sometime soon you know you're going to offer yourself to him completely, your body given over to match the mind that's totally his. Still, you want to pick the right time. It's embarrassingly girly, even though you've embraced your new gender quite thoroughly, but you want it to be special... romantic even. You're sure about it, and the only question is when...

Autumn moves around a bit, breaking the otherwise complete silence in the room and derailing your train of thought. Not a moment too soon, either, any more time spent fantasizing about being pinned beneath him... in the bed... moaning...

Gah! Bad pony! Any more of that and you'll stain the couch.

Autumn's rolled herself upright, with an odd expression on her face as she gets Master's attention with a hoof.

"Master? Did you mean what you said before? Is Zephyr yours?"

"I wanted it to be a surprise for you, but yes honey, Zephyr's staying."

"Just like me? Forever and ever?"

"Forever and ever, darling."

For a moment you brace yourself for an onslaught of joyous affection, but instead Autumn crawls across Master's lap with a look of absolute serenity. There's no squealing or cheering, but when she gets you in her embrace there's no mercy. For a few seconds you think she's going to squeeze the air right out of you. Her lips meet yours for an enthusiastic kiss before she breaks off.

"When he left to pick you and the others up, I begged him to bring me back a present. I think I like you better than my favorite candy."

"Well I promise to be the gift that keeps on giving."

That's what finally breaks Autumn's record-setting period of self control ends and the unfiltered noises of pure happiness begin. Master wanders off somewhere while Autumn play-bites at your ears, with you desperately trying to shake off the odd tickling sensation it creates. For a few minutes the two of you roll around the couch, shrieking and laughing until Master returns with his hands behind his back.

"Eli did nothing but steal my thunder while he was here, but these are for the two of you."

Out from behind his back come two new collars, one in green to match Autumn's eyes, and blue for yours. More attention grabbing, though, was the sound they made when he pulled them out. The light jingling sound only made sense once you and Autumn got up for a closer look. Nestled on the front of either collar is a small metal bell. A small rush of annoyance comes over you at exactly how patronizing this is, but there's an odd excitement accompanying it. Think of how cute you'll look! He got you something! A new collar to make you his! A new collar because he means to keep you! A marvelous little token of his affection.

It's that idea that sits at the forefront of your mind as he removes your old collar and attaches the new one. It feels a little odd compared to your old one, much lighter and even seems to breathe a bit more. While you considered the practical properties of your new, and only, piece of clothing, Autumn became immediately obsessed with the bell now affixed to her neck. Master seems to realize his mistake as Autumn hops around the room jangling all the way, and the two of you share a knowing look. Still, her enthusiasm is coupled with gratitude, and there's nothing to be done about it now.

"Thanks! It's so pretty!"

"Thank you, Master!"

"You're both very welcome. Never forget that you're mine, and I love you both."

He. Said. Love. He loves you! You've reared up on your hind legs in an effort to kiss him, but you still need to paw desperately at his shirt for a second before he leans down a bit and gives you what you want, then taking the time to give Autumn the same.

"That'll make keeping track of you two a bit easier, I hope. Now play for a bit, I've got a little more work to do before we can finish the job with Charlie."

And play you do. Life is so good, but you still can't wait to see what's in store for Charlie.

It took nearly all of the next day before Master is done with the rest of his work, save for a hearty breakfast of oatmeal and apple slices all around and the usual mid morning walk. You're so close to be able to fly again you can practically taste it, with your wings totally healed and your muscles gradually regaining strength and coordination. It'll be soon, very soon, and you can hardly wait.

Still, you and Autumn found plenty of good ways to pass the time. Past the usual games, Autumn had a stroke of brilliance. It would involve messing with Master while he was working, usually not the kind of thing

you would consider, but this was too good. You follow her lead in slinking up the stairs as quietly as possible, taking extra effort to keep the bell on your collar from sounding the alarm too soon. After taking a moment to collect yourselves on the upper landing and go over the plan once more, Autumn leads you to a door you've never been through before.

Master's "workshop"... This is something you've been wanting to see for a long time. He always told you to occupy yourself while he went in there, though, and you weren't sure if it was safe to go exploring in. After all, the machines that made you what you are came from in there, who knows what else your Master's gross misuse of technology might yield if you were to knock something over? You've already relayed these concerns to Autumn, but she insists that it's safe and that she's been in there before, and so with no small amount of trepidation you follow her lead in gently pushing the ajar door open just enough to slip in undetected. The room is large, but you'd expected as much, considering it takes up most of the upper floor save for the bedroom and bathroom.

What's striking is how little it resembles the mad scientist's lair you had envisioned. There are a number of odd devices on a few plain looking work tables, but it mostly just looks like any of the lab rooms at a university. Dang. You knew it was probably more low-key than your visions of Tesla coils and maniacal laughter, but this is a little insulting. The stuff produced here took your hands away and made you a girl, and it looks completely harmless! You figured it'd at least resemble a meth lab or something.

Peering out from behind your cover, you see things looking a bit stranger on the far end, where there's a couple of computers and a box made of clear glass with built-in gloves. Some kind of vacuum chamber or sterile space? At any rate it looks unused. Beside that sits your Master, with his back turned to you, hunched over the desk and typing something. To his right, on a smaller desk, is a pink sewing machine? Autumn said he made all the plush toys for his victims himself, but you've got to assume he picked that up secondhand. Pink really isn't his color. You also never took him for much of an arts-and-crafts type, but time spent curled up on the couch or sweating on the bed with him has taught you that his hands are supernaturally dexterous.



Autumn motions you forward, and then goes around one of the other tables to split up. The objective devised by Autumn is quite simple: The first one to come into contact with Master without being noticed beforehand wins. This would have been difficult before, but now there's a tiny metal thing hanging off your neck that threatens to reveal your location with even the tiniest bump. Still, the game is on, so you begin to creep forward, keeping under the tables for cover as you advance on him. Walking, even very slowly, while keeping your neck and barrel as still as possible was already getting old fast, but you're making headway until the sound of a bell chimes from the other side of the room.

Shit, Autumn made noise! Master freezes in his seat as you slide behind some boxes and hope he doesn't inspect too carefully. You can hear his chair swivel, but it doesn't sound like he got up to look around. After an agonizingly long few seconds you hear the chair swivel again. Maybe he thought it was his imagination? At any rate the coast is clear, and you start progressing towards him with renewed caution. You're getting close enough to see what's laid out on the table Master's using as work space, focusing heavily on a huge, ominous-looking needle. It's at least three times the size of the one that made Opal! What on Earth is Master planning to do here?

For a few seconds you let your imagination run wild with the possibilities. What's so radically different that he needs so much more of that stuff than he did for Opal? At this point you're creeping closer to him mostly for a better look at what he's up to, Autumn's prank all but forgotten until you hear a bell chime elsewhere in the room.

This time he knows something's up, as he stands up and wanders toward the origin of the sound. Once he's up, though, something far more interesting than the needle is visible. As he begins to hunt for Autumn, you feel your jaw drop at the wall above his work desk.

The entire wall is covered in photographs of ponies! Not ponies from the show or fan-art, but pictures of what looks to be every single pony he's ever made. A whole array of sizes and bright colors are on display in an enormous collage of Master's handiwork, some with little notes attached. There are at least two dozen different ponies in separate pictures, some

smiling for the camera, others sleeping, even a bunch of activity photos, including a pegasus doing a much better job of catching a stick mid-air than you did. There's like fifty pictures of Autumn up there, in all manner of- oh hey, it's Gizmo! The little unicorn you spent a night playing soccer with is smiling for the camera, wrapped up in the sleeping arms of the woman who came to pick her up. She looks happy, and that warms your heart in ways you didn't know it could.

There's Jake and Evergreen! It's one of those high-angle self photos, and it's mostly obscured by the man-and-stallion cuddle session, but you know exactly what couch they're on in his place. You spent far too many drunk nights passed out on that thing not to know. Still, it's good to know Jake's getting on well with his pet stallion, though you still wonder why he never told you he was into that sort of thing. Oh well...

You very nearly moved on with your hide-and-seek game before you noticed the corner of the board with three pictures of a white pegasus mare and suddenly fixated on them. There's the one he took of you and Autumn on the couch way back when! The other two... both seem to have been taken while you were sleeping. Even though Autumn's got you massively outnumbered on his memento board, being included in this makes you feel so, so happy. Hell, even the fact that it exists makes you happy. All of these ponies, and not a single one of them looks unhappy! Maybe he used some technical tricks to make it so, but it's good to know how much he cares. Wait! There's a little note under one of your pictures!

Your excited squeal is involuntary. You just have to know what it says! Sadly, this gets Master's attention and he's found you before you even realized your mistake. You really wish you could hide from him when his shadow falls on you, with a look of real annoyance on his features. The notion that you might have actually made him angry terrifies you! You're a good pony! You want him to know how good you are! Your head and ears are hung low by the time he starts to speak in a tone that's much too serious.

"Zephyr, my work space is not a place for little ponies. There's a lot of stuff in here that could be dangerous. What are you doing?"

"I'm s-sorry. It was part of game we were playing, an-"

"It was my idea!"

You've never been so grateful to Autumn for her sudden interruption. Her honesty at least means the two of you will be punished together. She's emerged from her hiding place to face Master, whose expression is now one of pure exasperation.

"And just what were you two trying to accomplish by sneaking around in here?"

"We were gonna sneak up and surprise you! First one to do it wins!"

"That's very cute, really, but you shouldn't come in here without me knowing. We've discussed this before, remember?"

"I know... I'm sorry. Zephyr didn't wanna do it at first, this is my fault."

"No harm, no foul. Just please, don't do it again. If either of you want to see how I work I'll show you, but you've got to ask. Now go downstairs and entertain yourselves like the good girls you are, I'll make lunch in a couple hours."

Autumn turns to leave at once, but you stay by his side for a moment until his gaze turns to you.

"Did you want something?"

"I saw the pictures on your wall, Master."

"Oh, yeah, those are all the other ponies. Some of them are the ones I asked for after your first... incident with tubby, but a lot were sent by happy owners and happy ponies. It helps me focus on the positive aspects of what I do in here."

"Could I please take a closer look? I won't touch anything."

He smiles again, and you don't feel quite so bad about bothering him once he's scooped you up into his arms and carried you to his work table.

You find yourself set down on it, for the first time coming to real terms with how small you are now. Sure, doors were a problem and everything was bigger, but something about being put on the table and still being shorter than him really drove it home. But enough with that, the pictures!

You take a better look at your many predecessors, marveling at the variety of colors and body types Master can create, before focusing on the items of greatest interest to you. The first unfamiliar photo of you is actually from your time in the cage. It was hard to see from a distance, but you're asleep in that big fluffy dog bed and half-covered with a blanket. Heh, that sleeping little mare has no idea what she's gotten into. The second photo is far less pleasant to look at. You're unconscious in it, but your battered and bloody form means this could only have been taken after your dive-bomb of Charlie's van. You only remember brief flashes of that night past being carried to the truck, but it looked just as awful as you feared. The bandages wrapping your wounds were already soaking through, Master's makeshift cast looks as though it was still drying at the time, and large portions of your fur are stained black with dried blood. He must have washed you while you were out.

But the thing that really gets you, the thing that is bringing tears to your eyes, is the note pinned beneath it.

"SHE BLED FOR YOU. MAKE SURE YOU DESERVE IT."

Master seems a bit surprised when his curious pony has thrown herself at him, sobbing and wailing half-formed gibberish that eventually coalesces into repetition of the phrase "I love you."

"Shh, honey, what's wrong?"

"Nothing! That picture and your note, though. I'm so happy I lived! I'm so happy you love me!"

He holds you for quite some time, and even though no more words are exchanged you feel as though the bond between you is getting deeper as minutes creep by. You are eventually put back down on the table, and quietly watch him finish his work before lunch. You feel great, and you feel even better knowing that everything's ready to go.

It's time to go solve the Charlie problem. Right after lunch. God, these fritters are fucking delicious.

Y'know, it's funny. Charlie is, in very real terms, the most terrible person you've ever met. He wanted to break your bones, make you bleed, and enjoy your screams. Even now that he's held captive just beyond the door you're sitting next to, it just creeps you right the hell out. Did he fantasize about you? The thought makes you feel like you're going to lose those fritters.

On the other hand, his specific request for a white pegasus with a green mane is what landed you here in the first place. There was a time earlier in your captivity when that would have been two strikes against him, but now it's quite the opposite. If it weren't for him you might be at work right now, telling yourself that it will all be better tomorrow. Bah! This is paradise and the damn shame of it is that Charlie was probably the thing that made you see it. The frightened, near-instinctual flight from the scary rape monster to hide behind Master really was a watershed moment. Maybe it could have been anybody, and if Gizmo's owners had been the ones to save you and scare him off you would have loved them, and begged to be theirs.

But as your Master comes down the stairs and your eyes meet his, you know that wasn't the case. Sure, the way you met was pretty lousy but this is your one-and-only, your beloved Master. His endless reserves of kindness for you and Autumn don't seem to extend to Charlie though, as the needle hanging from his belt and the grin on his face attest.

"I hope you don't expect me to be nice to this one."

"David deserved better than what he got until yesterday. Not this one. Can I ask what's going to happen?"

"That's... difficult." he mutters with a grimace. "This might not end well."

That's... deeply troubling. The forces at work when Master transforms someone are still very much beyond your comprehension, but you know enough to respect them. What does a bad ending to the transformation

process entail? Autumn went nuts, you freaked out, but the uncertainty in his voice conjures visions of a half-human abomination in the playroom. Oh god, now you're afraid. Maybe not afraid for Charlie, but afraid of an uglier Charlie for certain. The knot in your stomach, though, that's fear of what your Master will do in that case. Does a good pet have to help hide a body?

His eyes meet yours, and with a small nod the two of you steel your resolve and open the door. For a second you wish you'd stayed upstairs and joined Autumn's reading. A little over three weeks downstairs has not treated him well. The ugly patchwork bruises on his face from the bat impact have mostly healed, but the rest of him...

He's dropped a lot... Quite a lot of his bulk. Small folds of excess skin hang from his limbs, creating a ghastly appearance. His neckbeard has aged into a full-blown hobo beard, which matches nicely with the most godawful smell you've ever been exposed to. It's just too much, you feel like you really are gonna hurl now. UGH! You know he can get a hose in here, why the hell didn't he?!

You're honestly too busy recoiling from his frightful physical state to evaluate his mental state, until you realize he's struggling madly against his bonds, a frenzied, pleading panic in his eyes. This is the monster you were so scared of? He's a beast, beasts don't break down like this!

... But it occurs to you now that since David became Opal, he's been down here alone. For over two weeks. Two. Long. Weeks. In the hole. You hate the rush of empathy you feel, but it's just that... you've slowly been coming to realization that Master doesn't understand what this place does to a mind. In total darkness, the brain gets active, trying to impose order, discernible shapes, on the blank pitch around you. Sure, once your eyes adjusted you could make out some basic shapes, like hooves right in front of your face, or wings fluttering in the dark, but beyond that, your imagination started to fill in the blanks. Shifting shapes in the corners of your vision, sometimes even faces. There were sounds, toward the end.

"Master? How long was I down here?"

"Four days."

Oh good heavens.

"D-did you feed him at all?"

"Enough to keep him going."

"Do you feel bad about this at all?"

"I really would, but then I remember sedating Autumn because she wouldn't stop screaming while I was trying to keep you alive. All through the daze of a concussion."

"I can see how that would happen."

Once Master undoes the gag it's clear how bad things got down here. Barely intelligible begging and sobs emerge, and you're actively trying to crush down tidal waves of sympathy. This isn't right. He's terrible, awful, a frenzied animal that wanted to tear you pieces. Master seems less sympathetic, even when faced with unmistakably human suffering.

"Alright Chuck- Hey! Charlie! Look at me! Alright Chuck, it's go time."

He seems to sober a bit when he hears it, focusing on Master as requested. At first you dare to think he's calmed down. That was a mistake.

"FUCK YOU! WE HAD A DEAL!"

Your ears had already folded back under Charlie's verbal assault, but they swivel back to attention following the loud slap that follows. Yeah, Master doesn't seem to take yelling very kindly.

"The deal was I would sell you a pony and you would keep her in health and love for the rest of your lives. Now you're going to shut the hell up and listen to me. I found your little stories, too."

"Y-you said you couldn't do that!"

"Yeah, more like I 'wouldn't' do that. It's a little creepy, even for me. Hey, it could be worse. I'm not using your fluffy stories."

"Y-you said you wouldn't hurt Dave when you took him!"

"You're properly afraid now. Good. No, I won't abuse you. None of the awful things that happen in your story will happen to you. Your family, if you have any, will survive. You won't go hungry. No one's going to cut on you daily for a few months. You really are sick, you know that?"

"W-where's Dave! I want to see Dave!"

"You mean Opal? She got carried off in the arms of a kind, loving man she'll spend the rest of her days in hopeless love with. She said she forgives you. She said to tell you 'Goodbye'."

He's almost in tears now. He opens his mouth to speak, but Master cuts him off."

"And now I think I'll say goodbye, Chuck."

His needle slips into Charlie's arm before he even knew it was coming. Charlie's eyes bug out when he sees the plunger in the enormous needle begin to sink.

"And it is goodbye, Charlie, because either you'll come out of this as Sunflower, or I'll have to put you out of your misery."

He's just screaming now, without words. Your Master unbuckles him from the chair he's in, and half carries, half drags his latest transformee to the playroom. Charlie's atrophied limbs leave him ill equipped to resist, and he collapses in a heap when Master unceremoniously drops him on the floor.

"Well, have fun."

"You put Dave under! Put me under!"

"Where was that mercy when my pets were screaming while you tried to



kidnap them? No, you're gonna feel it. See you when you're done."

You didn't even go into the playroom. You just sort of sat by the door, incapable of going any further, or looking away. Master scoops you up without a word, locking the door behind him after ascending the stairs.

"Master? Who is Sunflower?"

"The sweetest little filly I've ever read about. Of course, Charlie wrote about it, so she ends up dead. Of course, because Charlie wrote it, death is a mercy."

"You're going to have tiny filly that wants to break my wings?"

"We'll worry about that when she lives through it, because I have no idea what's about to happen down there."

The two of you make your way to the couch, where Autumn is curled up with a book leaned against the armrest. You've made a mental note to find a cerebral hobby, something to occupy your time besides flying and being petted that will hopefully keep your wits sharp. You would take up reading, but most of the books around here are dense technical tomes belonging to Master or Autumn's young adult selection. You need history! You need science fiction! Perhaps you can ask Master for something next time he goes out somewhere. As far as you can tell he only leaves for groceries and kidnappings, and he tends to stock up on both, so it may be a while. Still, you're sure a pony as good as you can beg herself a present.

Rather than sitting down as you'd expected, Master rouses Autumn for an evening walk. The two of you wait by the door for a moment, but when Master comes back to the hallway you're a little surprised and Autumn is simply floored to see two leashes in his hand.

"Master? D-did Zephyr and I do something wrong?"

"Besides sneaking into my lab? No honey, you've done nothing wrong, and I'm not punishing you. Would you be willing to humor me, sweetheart?"

"Of course!"

"Good girl. I'll let you run around on your own in a bit."

You had no qualms about it whatsoever, and he had a real problem getting the leash latched to your collar through the flurry of small kisses you can't help but douse him with. It's only moments before the three of you are out in a tight-knit group, taking a few seconds to re-learn walking on a leash. Once you and Autumn have the rhythm down Master begins to pick up the pace, and soon you're forced into a light gallop as he breaks into a run. Something about running in unison with the two of them makes you happy in a strange way. You hate to use the word "herd" to describe anything about yourself given your hooves, but there's a sense of unity and belonging in breathlessly following his lead around the yard. Before long you can predict his turns with near perfect accuracy, and Autumn seems to move in even better sync with him than you do!

The three of you end up sprawled out under one of the trees at the edge of the yard, sweaty and panting. You had fun, but that may have gone on a few minutes longer than it should have. A hand finds its way to your mane, and for a moment you share a smile with your Master and Autumn before he can muster the energy to speak between breaths.

"Is this what you had in mind with the occasional leashing?"

"I was thinking more like long walks, but that was good, yeah."

He offered to let you and Autumn run around free, but he'd worn the both of you out far too thoroughly for that. That run was just what you needed to clear your head, and thinking about it, it was probably the same thing for him. You feel really, truly good, and your compatriots seem just as exuberant as you re-enter the house...

Until Charlie's screaming wafts up from the basement. Through three doors meant to hold it all in. That can't be a good sign. Master grudgingly goes down to check in on him while you and Autumn wait at the top of the basement stairs, both fidgeting pretty nervously as the continuing shrieks of agony pierce the air.

Master's look of calm and relative relief is exactly what you were hoping for, as opposed to the visions of screaming and violent bludgeoning your imagination had conjured.

"He's actually in better shape than I thought. For a guy who loves handing out pain, he sure doesn't take it particularly well."

"So it's like when I changed?"

"With all the screaming, yes. The actual change is far more intense."

"More intense?"

"Making you a pony is already quite the rearrangement process. Making him a filly is that, but taken much further."

"We're getting a filly?! Oh yesyesyes!" Cries a thoroughly enthused Autumn.

"You're excited about it?"

"Well yeah! I can't wait to play with her!"

"That might be a while, Sweetie, but we'll see."

Autumn hops off in her excitement, already assembling things for playtime with a particularly small pony, leaving you and Master in the living room. After plopping your head down on his lap, you begin your usual game of twenty questions with your Master.

"So, why a filly?"

"My friend Ann asked for one."

"But isn't that a little creepy? Even if there's an adult mind in there and it consents, he'll look like a child."

"Why would that be creepy?"

"You... you know what these bodies want. It's weird."

"That's actually why I haven't done it yet. Plenty of people wanted a filly, but most of them... it's just too strange."

"You've got some oddly particular scruples for a guy who kidnaps people."

"Hush, you. Ann called me a couple months ago, asking if her two ponies could get pregnant. She's got a stallion and a mare, you see. All three were terribly disappointed when I said it couldn't be done, so I'm going to offer them an adopted filly and see how that goes over."

"Your ponies can't have babies?"

"Nope. I'm making pets, not a new species. I'm sorry to say that even if I left you with a stallion in rut, you'll never have foals."

"That's just fine, there's no stallion whose foals I'd ever want to have. I've got a stallion, and we're already not having kids."

"I'm going to take stallion as a complement, but I do think the look on your face when something starts suckling your little teats would be worth a million."

The face you make at the mere idea seems to be enough, if his minutes of laughter are any indication.

The rest of the day passes in comfort and idleness, with particularly loud action films meant to cover the occasional scream from downstairs.

"You figure by now he'd have just passed out, y'know?"

"I may or may not have thrown a stimulant into the needle."

"Master! That's horrible."

"No, horrible is watching you wake up in terror, even getting hit by the

odd flapping wing, every night for a week and a half."

You would apologize, but you honestly don't feel like you're at fault there. You do nuzzle his leg a bit, and shivers run up your spine as his fingers delicately run up the back of your neck and ear. Somewhere in the sleepy daze of a quiet evening of cuddling you even worked up the nerve to ask him for something to occupy you while he worked, and he even seemed receptive! At some point after sharing your likes and dislikes you noticed something quite odd.

The movie's been done for about twenty minutes now, and you haven't heard anything from downstairs. Your fully perked ears and raised head get Master's attention, and it only takes a moment of eye contact for him to understand what you're getting at. Without any prompting or a word exchanged, you remove yourself from his lap, Autumn following suit so he can rise to his feet and lead the way. Autumn stalls at the top of the basement stairs, choosing to wait for you there instead, but you're in one hundred percent. Part of you wants to stop outside and collect yourself, but Master throws the door to the playroom open without even checking the...

No, he did look at the two-way mirror... it's just fogged over?

Sure enough, there's a healthy wave of steam flowing out the open door to the playroom and for a moment you're at a loss to explain it. But there was steam rising from Opal during her change, wasn't there? Your Master doesn't seem to pause for any of this and heads right into the cloud, and despite your misgivings you're hot on his heels a second later, if only out of concern for him. Not all that logical, considering you're ill equipped to deal with any problem that doesn't need eating or cuddling, but it's your first instinct. You can hear vaguely human noises somewhere in here, but you can't see a thing! Master seems to be having some trouble locating tubby, but then it dawns on you that you can actually help for once!

Master seems a little surprised to hear you flapping your wings like mad, but when the swirling steam cloud begins to dissipate under your crude, pokemon-esque gust attack you can see him smiling at you.

"Very clever, Zephyr. Who's my good pony?"

"I am!"

Oh god, did you really just say that? Yeah, you definitely need some kind of intellectual challenge before you're, well... Autumn. You love her, you just don't want to be her. Small, labored moans catch your attention, and a few more stiff flaps of your best feature finally draw back the curtain over tonight's big show.

The steam is rolling off of him in waves, to the point that the plush carpet around him is soaked, and he's already lost a substantial amount of overall mass. Sadly, his shrinking and rearranging limbs are a bit smaller than his still rounded, flabby torso, giving him the appearance of a particularly unpleasant tortoise. It's even highlighted by the yellow-brown coat beginning to grow in! You giggle a bit, still enjoying the novelty of being unafraid of him, but another soft moaning sound stifles your laughter. The wrinkly, halfway-rearranged head and neck roll a bit toward the two of you.

Oh sweet pony jeebus, he's still conscious. Master's quick in checking his pulse, and then really grosses you out by forcing his eyes open to check his response. They're... freakishly, horrifically large, but his irises and pupils are still human looking, leaving this enormous sea of reddened eye around those tiny islands. They even seem... oh no, they're even pulsing and twitching as Master's toys do their thing. That might give you nightmares.

"M-m-m-master? Opal didn't look like this." You can't contain the worry in your voice. Just killing Charlie would have been one thing, but now you're worried the little filly might come out wrong. Malformed, maybe even handicapped. Eugh, wait! No, it's still gonna be Charlie in there, not some innocent child. If you're still the same jerk you have been and Opal's still a panicky worrywart, then this will still, still, be a bastard wearing different skin. Won't he?

"I knew this was going to be bad going in. I'm going to have to stay down here and keep him from going into shock. You should go back upstairs and stay with Autumn."

"B-but Master-"

"No. This is going to be long, difficult and disgusting and you're going to be sick if you stay down here."

"No I won't!"

"The steam you were breathing? That's all over both of us?"

"Yeah?"

"That's Charlie. You were breathing Charlie. You're covered in Charlie."

Your gag reflex is sudden and violent. Oh god, little bits of him are inside you now! Gross! Gross! Gross!

"I saw that. Go upstairs and be good with Autumn and I'll give you a bath later."

You don't think you've moved so quickly since falling toward the van. Sadly, your panicked leaps over multiple stairs at a time put poor Autumn in a frenzy until you convinced her that nothing was wrong and Master was fine. Even she looked a little grossed out when you told her what Master said to get you out of the room, but she also took the time to comfort you as only Autumn could. A nest made of every blanket and pillow in the living room all in a pile on the floor, some fruit pilfered from the fridge, and some very, very interesting applications of them once you'd moved past cuddling. Even though you're infected with Lard-o, Autumn still thinks you're sexy, and for now that's enough.

# Zephyr's Tale





## Part 20

You're honestly a little surprised to find yourself still curled up with Autumn on the living room floor when you wake up the next morning. You figured Master would've been done by now, but a quick check of the rest of the house confirms that he's still down in the basement. There's a rush of guilt along with this realization, because while you and Autumn were up here fooling around he's been down there keeping someone he hates alive. Okay, little pony, what's something nice you can do for him?

Making anything but a dry breakfast is out from the word go, and even then you'd be hard pressed to carry it down to him if you did. As happy as you are with the life he's given you, hands were so goddamned convenient to have had. Still, the motivation to do something nice for him is there if you can just find an application for your clumsy hooves and mouth.

A solid fifteen minutes of climbing, leaning, straining and nearly dousing yourself in hot water later and you've managed to put on a pot of coffee without making a mess. Well, you did make a mess, but wiping up spills is the only housechore that comes naturally with this body, so Master should be none the wiser. From your seat on the kitchen counter you're able to pull a thermos out of a cabinet, and once it's been filled and securely closed you make your way to the basement stairs, occasionally stopping to rest your poor neck. This thermos is heavy!

It takes some doing to work the door to the playroom open with your hooves, but the look on Master's face as you trot in and set the coffee down in front of him is absolutely worth your while. He's sitting against the far wall of the playroom, looking totally wiped out and surrounded by a small pile of medical refuse. Used needles, an IV setup... he wasn't kidding when he said last night was going to be difficult. Still, he looks happy despite being so worn out, and that gives you hope that maybe this will all turn out okay.

"You made me coffee? That might have been a mistake."

"What?! Why? I didn't mean to mess up- I'm sorry!"

"Zephyr, shush. I mean that now I know you can make me coffee, so expect me to ask for more."

"Oh! Of course, anything you want!"

"Good pony. You'll be my number one assistant, if you will."

Hah! Show reference aside the idea of having a specific task from time to time wasn't totally objectionable. No videogames and no reading material as of yet will eventually make Zephyr a dull girl. TV is just a time-killer, you're not airborne again yet, and Master can't pet you all the time. Autumn most certainly could play with you all the time, but you don't quite have her energy level. You could probably do some other stuff to be helpful, too. It feels nice to be valuable to him in day-to-day ways, too. The look of satisfaction as he sips the thermos gives you a real sense of accomplishment, one that's enhanced when he looks to you again with a smile and changes the topic.

"So I'd imagine you'd like to see what all this was for, eh? Well, I laid her down in those blankets over there about an hour ago. I think she's still sleeping."

"You're calling him 'she' now... so it worked?"

"Better than I'd hoped once the complications proved manageable and temporary. Don't know if I'll ever try that again, but damn am I good at this. Go take a look."

He doesn't need to tell you twice, though a sense of trepidation about whatever is in that bundle of blankets causes you to move more slowly or carefully than made sense. Even if it's still Charlie stuck in there, what's a little filly going to do to you? Unless you can actually die from something being cute, that is. There's occasional movement under one part of the bundle, the rhythmic fashion of steady breathing letting you know where he... ah, she is and that she's probably still asleep. You're a little worried you might disturb her slumber and start the 'Oh god, what

the fuck' party a little early, but curiosity gets the better of you. You've gotta know what a real live filly looks like, especially if it's Charlie getting his comeuppance. You rest a hoof on the edge of the blanket and slowly pull back.

Oh.

This...

You were not prepared for the likes of this.

She's... small. tiny. Her proportions are all appropriate and everything seems to be in working order. But to have taken the bulbous, flabby enormity of Charlie and produced this little thing... it's just beyond comprehension. Curled up in a blanket that positively dwarfs her is a little yellow filly, with a wavy brown mane. Yellow is not usually a color you liked, especially on OC ponies, but here in front of you it kinda works. Both fur and mane are matted with dried sweat, the ongoing humidity in the room attesting to exactly how much bulk the nanomachines had stripped from Charlie-boy to get to this agonizingly cute center.

On her flank is an appropriate pictogram for a pony named Sunflower, and you're suddenly fixated on the idea of this little thing gardening flowers several times her own height. Oh god, if you don't focus on who this used to be you're going to die of a heart attack. At first you're a little disappointed that she's already got her mark, until you force yourself to remember that magic isn't real and the thing on your flank, like hers, is the super-science equivalent of a branding. Still, all things told she's about as adorable as you'd imagined, and holding a hoof over one of hers you really develop a sense of how much bigger you are compared to her.

HA! Try pushing you around now, will she? Even if the scary talk about breaking you in sticks around, it's all a useless gesture coming from something scarcely two feet tall. A fit of the giggles overtakes you when you think of how those frightful heavy footfalls coming toward you will have been reduced to barely audible little hoofsteps. From her teensy little hoovsies! Oh, this is rich!

"So, how does she look?"

"Master, she's absolutely adorable. To have sculpted this from such poor clay... You, my beloved Master, are an artist of unsurpassed skill."

"Flattery isn't going to earn you much from me, but I appreciate it."

Drat.

Even while you're trying to come up with a better line to make him happy, because happy Master rewards the good pony, the noise of your brief exchange seems to be stirring the poor little thing. You can feel excitement oozing from yourself as a pair of lovely, deep green eyes flutter open, complementing her color theme nicely. For a moment she looks around the room in wild-eyed confusion, before settling on your face, now barely a few inches from her.

"Hey there sleepyhead. How're you feeling?"

You didn't mean to sound so jovial. This is still someone you despise, but the face she's wearing is so cute that treating her like a actual child comes naturally. For a second the filly stares at you with a totally blank expression, before straining a bit as though she can't quite place you. You wait as patiently as possible for her to come around fully to the land of the waking, or at least until she starts speaking, until finally an expression of horrified realization comes over her face.

"Well, there you go. Remember me now, dont'cha? Well I ho-"

That expression of horror barely had time to contort into anger before she lunged at your too-close face. The next few seconds are a mire of confusion, loud noises, and pain on your part, as Master shoots to his feet to intervene you find yourself holding your neck and head low to the ground, with -sweet- little sunflower biting down hard on one of your ears and otherwise going limp save for the odd, painful tug.

"Getheroffme! Getteroffame!"

"Calm down and try not to move. Sunflower, you stop that this instant."

The filly shakes her head no rather emphatically, eliciting another whine of pain from you.

No amount of vocal commands from Master can convince the little bundle of hatred to let go, and in the end Master ended up having to pull her jaw open with his hands in a gentle grip around her muzzle. With the pressure on your delicate little ear gone you waste no time in putting more distance between you and her, rubbing your sore spot with a hoof while Master begins to scold.

"Bad! Bad pony! You don't ever bite, least of all do you bite her, understand?"

Sunflower, for her part, remains defiantly silent.

"Fine, if you wanna be that way."

What follows is perhaps the single funniest moment of your entire day, as the once frightful Charlie, struggling and whining all the way as tiny little Sunflower gets shoved into a cat carrier and hauled upstairs.

Well, that wasn't an inspiring start at all, now was it?

You're hot on Master's heels up the stairs, expecting him to do more punishing or at least make a big show of it, but he keeps quiet and still save for his strides up the stairs and down the short hallway. To your immense disappointment he just drops the cat carrier down on the kitchen table, works a lock into the latch, grabs something from the fridge and orders you and Autumn to stay out of the kitchen and leave her be. As much as you want to observe her, direct disobedience is simply not an option, so you only catch a glimpse of her face, focused on you, as you turn to follow him into the yard.

Those pretty green eyes look awfully confused.

Maybe she's still not fully awake? Lord knows you swam through a few layers of confusion on your way out of the process, and Opal seemed groggier than you. Of course, if she knew enough to want to inflict harm

on you, she must have been fully awake, right? There's no way Charlie would do that on instinct... Right?

As unhappy as you are to see Master contain himself so while your ear is still hurting, you realize that's mostly a desire for childish revenge on your part. More importantly, you've seen, heard, and been through enough around here to know why he's not being harsher. His ethics are fucked sideways, but by now you've come to an understanding on them and the manner in which he handles himself. He simply will not harm one of his ponies. The worst he did to you, by far the second worst you know he's ever done, was solitary confinement and a splash of a hose to snap you out of a screaming fit. Autumn had it worse, but you know he didn't meant to do her any harm. Even then, he took responsibility for his mistake and seems resolved to look after her always and forever. Looking back on it now, in light of his little note under that picture of you, it would appear he's done the same for you after nearly dooming you to a horror-movie ending. His odd sense of responsibility will overcrowd this house quickly if he doesn't stop screwing up.

Even Opal's attempted escape was only met with a light swat on the nose, which was more of an insult to her pride than any real punishment. How very strange that kidnapping people, mutating them, and taking active steps to break their will to resist are all on the table, but apparently once someone's become a little pony he can't bring himself to hit them. And to think, in the beginning you'd been afraid of painful reprisal should you have defied him!

Funny thing, that. if you'd known that physically hurting you was anathema to him from the beginning you probably would have tried a little harder to escape. Now it just makes your world a little brighter to know that there's a little bit of love and compassion for every abductee he sells, even if it is a little warped. Maybe it helps him sleep at night, or maybe he really thinks he's doing the right thing and you're hopelessly in love with a crazy person. That would make you crazy too, but for all you know that might be why he's taken you for his own.

Your favorite crazy person scratches your ears a bit as the three of you munch on some pears he thought to grab as he left the kitchen. And a good thing he did, too! None of you had eaten yet today, and punishing

Char- er, Sunflower meant staying out of the kitchen then he very nearly punished the lot of you for her misbehavior.

Today's walk is more of a loose amble around the yard, and even some of the woods surrounding it as Autumn makes a game out of pulling your tail if she can get close enough for it. You run laps around trees and Master's feet in your effort to keep away, but on uneven ground your dainty pegasus build isn't much against Autumn's sturdy muscles and she's getting closer every time you turn.

You go for broke and dash out from the treeline into the yard at a dead sprint. Autumn's laughter means she thinks she's won, but you've still got one ace left to play. A few experimental wing flaps is enough to let you know the plan should work, and before Autumn knows what you're doing her triumphant cries are washed out amid the sound of racing wind and your own triumphant laughter. Oh, how you've missed this weightless feeling in your chest, and the wind blowing your mane as you turn. By the time you complete a long loop around the yard the game's clearly over and won, and the icing on the cake is that you've remembered how to stick the landing in spite of yourself. A few frenzied wingflaps and a sudden drop onto your hooves complete the act, and Autumn's on top of you in seconds, thrilled to have lost in such spectacular fashion. You're happy for her affection, as always, but you look to Master at once as he saunters over, a smile on his face almost as big as yours.

"I'll never really believe I made something that can do that. You really are a special one, you know that?"

"Of course Zephyr's special! She's yours, isn't she?"

Master does murmur out agreement with Autumn, but all while picking you up of the grass with that mischievous spark in his eyes. You've been deprived of the sky far too long, and your usual reward for an impressive airborne display is something you're very eager to get.

You very willingly melt into his embrace as you're pulled in close, his head leaning down to close the distance between you. They can tell you that you're special as much as they want, but you'll never feel it the way you do in this one moment, lips mere centimeters apart with his breath

tickling you. That electric tingle floods your body when he finally closes the gap, and once again you're the warm little center of the universe. Your bliss is interrupted by a pressure on your puckered lips, and you're all too eager to yield when you belatedly realize that he's trying to slip you the tongue. The sensation of a french kiss is nothing new to you, but he's never kissed you like this before and it's just... so...

Your tongues dance along one another for a few glorious moments as he explores your mouth to the best of his ability, and the prolonged intimacy heralds the return of a familiar itch in your nethers. Oh yes, Master, yes!

Desire nearly overwhelms you as he pulls back, but his smile is one meant to tease you even as you try your best to smolder at him enough to earn more. The disappointment when you're set back down on the grass is crushing, even as he lifts Autumn up and gives her much the same treatment. Damn! You know he's just being fair and Autumn was his pet long before you were here, but flying and then th-that kiss... It's too much for you to take any more! You don't want to be fair! You want him to lay you down right here on the grass ride you like it's a fucking rodeo!

You reluctantly follow Master inside, though not without getting ahead of him and raising your tail as conspicuously as possible. Come on, man! Take a hint!

Master settling himself on the couch with a book and presenting Autumn with the remote was not the result you were looking for, and you let yourself sulk in the hallway for a moment before he calls you over. Before you obey, though, you do catch a glimpse of green eyes fixed on you from behind a set of bars.

They look... sad?

Those eyes just stick in your head the whole time you sit in the living room, cuddled up with Autumn while Master enjoys his reading. The first thing she did was bite you, and that seemed in-character enough, but where's the yelling? Where's the panic and the horror and what she's become? Charlie didn't make much sense to you before, but now it's just throwing you for a loop. Is this some kind of plan she's come up with? Why did she look so confused when you left earlier? What was with



those sad eyes just now? You're trying to watch whatever it is Autumn put on, but it's not distracting enough to get Sunflower out of your mind for more than a few minutes at a time.

Oh, the hell with it. Autumn doesn't even look away from the screen as you untangle yourself from her, though she does give you a quick peck on the cheek, eyes still fixed on the screen. Master seems rather engrossed in his book, and his ability to simply not worry about things once again has you in awe. There's nothing quite like being able to kick back and relax while you've got a sadist-turned-filly in your kitchen. Of course, this is a guy who usually keeps kidnapped nerds in the basement, so you suppose tuning things out must be part of the job. He's really good at it too, considering that you've got to nudge him rather insistently with a forehoof before he looks at you over the top of the still-open book.

"Hungry?"

"No, Master."

"Wanna cuddle?"

"Always, but no, Master."

"Horny?"

"What? No. Well, I was earlier, but my Master seems to like books more than poor, pent-up little ponies. Can I go talk to Sunflower? I promise not to let her out or anything like that."

"Not like you could without the key to the lock. Why?"

"She's not taking this like I expected her to. I wanna know why."

"Alright, don't get her too riled up before lunch."

"Yes, Master."

You decide to move in as quietly as possible and maybe see if she's putting on an act when she knows she's not alone. It doesn't take much to

keep the bell on your collar silent, it would appear that your sneaking game with Autumn was useful after all. You enter the kitchen crawling on the floor, and are rather displeased to find that the fur on your chest does a pretty good job of dusting the floor. Well, Master did promise you a bath soon, right? Your low shimmy has kept you out of her limited field of vision from the top of the table, compounded by the plastic walls on all but the front of her little cage. It's odd to you that such a light cage can hold her. A few bucks from within would probably put it over the edge of the table, maybe break the whole thing open and give her a shot at escape. Maybe you built Charlie up too much in your head and she's not actually that clever?

You're at the table now, and your ears perk up at small... squeaking sounds? At a loss to explain them at at wit's end with trying to figure this out, you rear up and lean on the table to get a look at what she's up to. She's huddled in the back of her tiny prison, and for a moment you suspect some kind of escape plan...

But that's not it at all. From under the table all you heard were small squeaks, but from up here that's just the high notes of soft but wracking sobs. She's not planning an escape back there, she's huddled up and crying. As much as you want to sneer and leave her to it, because you know that's really Charlie in there... She sounds like a child. Something deep down refuses to let you ignore a crying child.

God. Dammit.

"H-hey. Why're you crying?"

The reaction you get would be funny if it didn't raise so many questions or challenge nearly all of your assumptions about how this was going to be. The tiny little pony's reaction to suddenly hearing your voice was to panic and bolt directly into the side of her cage. From there she just starts crying all over again.

"Wait, c'mon, stop crying. I didn't mean to startle you. Jeez, I didn't really take you for the scaredy-type before this."

She looks up at you through those big green eyes of hers without any

malice or even annoyance, and when you finally do hear her voice you think the sweetness of it is going to kill you dead on the spot. What she says, on the other hand, only adds to your considerable confusion.

"Help-" she squeaks out, sniffing on the edge of tears. "I can't get out."

"Well of course you can't get out. It's a cage."

"B-but why am I in here? I don't remember what I did!"

Uh-oh.

"Hang on. What's the first thing you remember?"

"I don't know! I was in here!"

"You don't remember me at all?"

"No! Something's wrong!"

"It's okay, just calm down. My name is Zephyr, what's yours?"

"Sunflower."

"Okay Sunflower. Take a really good look at me. See my mane, it's green!"

You're giving her the gentlest tone of voice possible, because unless this is a convincing act you might actually be dealing with a child of sorts here. But you've got to be sure. The filly in the cage laughs as you shake your mane around a bit for her benefit.

"Okay, now take a good look. See my wings flapping?"

"Wow lady, they're really pretty!"

Having a child call you 'lady' is actually a stranger feeling than you thought it would be. You might be getting somewhere here, though.

"You don't remember these? Nothing at all?"

"Kinda. I feel like I saw them before."

"Do you know where?"

"I dunno. Just before."

"Were you and I together?"

"It's... really hazy"

The poor thing puts both hooves to her head, a pained expression crossing her features.

"My head hurts!"

"It's okay, Sunflower, just calm dow-"

"That's not... not my name. You took it from me!"

Suddenly the crying child is gone, and the face behind the bars takes on a sullen expression.

"What... what did you do to me? I was in here waiting for your idiot owner to screw up so I could get loose and... and I... I don't remember any of it. How long have you been here? How long was I out?"

"We were just talking."

"No we weren't!"

"Yes, we were. You didn't remember me at all."

"This is another way to mess with me, isn't it? How did you make me black out?"

"I don't know!"

"Tell me, you lying bitch!"

The freak out you expected just came on full force, as the little thing proceeds to hurl herself at you repeatedly, bouncing off the bars each time but still nudging the little cage further forward. You know she might get loose if it falls, but that's not what sends you running back to Master for help. Your conversation was enlightening, to say the least:

You don't know what's happening in there, but it can't be good.

The look Master gives you as you come barreling back into the living room, with the sounds of a screaming filly wafting in from the other room, is one of supreme annoyance. Your ears droop reflexively when faced with his scorn, but he needs to know how important this is, so you put off grovelling for forgiveness for a few minutes.

"You riled her up, didn't you?"

"No! Well, Yes! But not how you think! Something's gone wrong!"

You've seen him do it before, but there's just something so odd about the transition between the relaxed Master you spend so much time with and the serious professional who turns up when there's kidnapping or mad science to be done. His book flops onto the sofa unceremoniously and he's on his feet before another word can be exchanged. The neutral face that asks you to elaborate used to scare you because you couldn't read his intentions from it. Now, after spending nearly all your time in his company you've learned to mimic his grim sort of determination when times like this come.

"When I first spoke with her she didn't remember me! She didn't even remember how she got in that cage to start."

"Odd, but I wonder Why that isn't a good thing?"

"Because it didn't last! I tried to jog her memory and suddenly she said her head was hurting... Then she remembered me. But then she didn't remember any of what just happened!"

"I'm sorry, I really don't follow you."

"It was... Like someone flipped a switch. There was someone who didn't know me, and then there was someone who did."

He seems far less concerned than you thought he'd be, but the curious look on his face as he heads for the kitchen is enough to calm you down. If he's intrigued, he'll at least be able to make sense of this for you. You're a few seconds behind him in turning the corner, and as you thought the little ball of hate has managed to bump her cage to the edge of the table. For a brief moment fright takes you when it begins to topple over the edge, but Master catches it before it travels more than an inch or two. A good thing he did, too! You think you're a full-grown adult... pony, at least as much of an adult as a thing who doesn't provide for herself in any way shape or form can be, and you're still pretty fragile! Who knows how bad that kind of fall would hurt her.

Autumn has a seat on the floor next to you as Master opens the cage and pulls out the squirming, struggling filly with both hands. You're not that big yourself, and Master can certainly pick you up easily, but his hands seem to wrap around the whole of her abdomen between her flailing little legs, and Sunflower seems to realize this herself as her cries of protest end along with her physical resistance. Her face seems to be caught somewhere between fear and astonishment, and it's plain that up until now she hadn't come to terms with the scope of her changes, or her greatly diminished size. Aside from the noises of barely contained adoration coming from Autumn as she gets her first good look at Master's latest product the room has gone totally silent, until Master decides to fill the void.

"Are you done trying to headbutt through metal or should I let you keep trying to give yourself brain damage?"

"Don't mock me! Change me back right now!"

"I'm afraid I can't do either, shortstack. You barely survived last night. Another go-round would probably kill you, and painfully."

"Fine! I'd rather die!"

"Well that's just not gonna happen, little miss."

Sunflower still firmly in his grasp, your Master kneels to the floor and turns her to face you and Autumn.

"Come closer, you two. See these two, Sunflower? You know them because you tried to take them away and do awful things to them, but it's important that you get a good look. See how they obeyed without a second thought? See how much bigger than you they are? You're gonna grow up to be just like them."

"Like hell I am! I'm already grown up you idiot!"

You know she's trying to be serious, but you can't help but giggle when she says it. There might be an adult mind in there, but a little girl's voice can't quite convey the tone the mind would like. In contrast, Autumn doesn't take it very lightly at all, closing what little distance there is between them and taking an authoritative tone you've never heard from her before.

"You will watch your language missy, or I'll wash that dirty mouth out!"

Woooah. Where's this coming from all of a sudden? She does know that isn't really a kid in there, right? You're about to correct her assumption on the matter, but Sunflower cuts that short by biting at Autumn's nose. She doesn't quite connect, but it's aggressive enough that Master pulls her away in a hurry while Autumn recoils just as quickly. Master starts scolding the little hate-thing, but you're already busy with Autumn.

Sure enough her eyes have begun to water in mere moments, a wounded look on her face and ears drooping as little Sunflower's attitude blasts her earlier hopes for playtime with a little filly clear out of the water. You throw yourself into damage control mode at once, putting yourself between Autumn and the object of her dashed aspirations.

"Hey, don't be sad. This is all new and she hasn't come around yet."

"K-kids shouldn't say things like that, Zephy..."

"I know, honey, I know. Just give her some time."

A loud cry of indignation comes from somewhere behind you, and you've both stopped short to refocus on it in time to see the little thing kicking like mad as Master holds her one handed and wraps a wide rubber band around her muzzle with the other. Her struggling doesn't stop, but all vocalizations beyond murmurs cease as she finds her mouth held shut like a lobster's claw.

"That'll come off for food and water only until you're ready to behave yourself, you little wretch."

Her eyes cross a bit as she focuses on the offending rubber band, and her forehooves rub uselessly on it as she tries and fails to free herself and resume insulting the three of you. Autumn seems a little disturbed by all this, but you think it's still pretty damned funny watching someone so obsessed with power, or at least the power to hurt, find themselves helpless. The poor little thing is going to have one hell of a time coping with all this, but you're still at something of a loss as to what Master plans on doing to make her worth adopting. And what the hell was happening earlier, when she didn't remember you? Before Charlie came back, she seemed... nice.

Master tucks Sunflower in one arm like a football and strides back into the living room, and as soon as he's down on the couch you know where this is going. Sunflowers muted but audible cries lose their angry edge as she finds herself held in his lap while his free hand begins to slowly pet her. The look of disgust on her face says it all, and you can't help but relish the first moments of awkward pleasure she feels at being treated like a housepet. Soon her plaintive mewling is drowned out by the sounds of you and Autumn play-wrestling on the floor. It's enough just to brighten Autumn's mood with a little play, but the occasional glance at Sunflower makes it all the more satisfying. You've dealt the former monster's ego the worst possible blow: Being ignored.

Finally, after a few hours of lighthearted play with Autumn you look back over to the sofa to find your Master reading his book again, and Sunflower asleep in his lap. Now Autumn moves in for a closer look, and



for a little while you both just marvel at how cute the little thing is when she's not actively hating you. Eventually hunger gets the better of all three of you, though, and Master looks unhappy as he contemplates waking her up again.

Bratty, violent little shit or no, the filly's gotta eat.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 21

"There's not going to be a good way to feed her, is there?"

"Honestly Zephyr, I think it's going to be a lot like feeding an actual toddler."

"So, food everywhere?"

"Provided she misses us, yes."

Master's apprehension at allowing such a mess to happen in his kitchen doesn't slow him down terribly much. Long, firm strokes along Sunflower's back elicit a tiny groan. As her pretty little eyes flutter open for the second time today, the three of you wait with baited breath for the struggles and anger to begin anew.

Only they don't.

Well, not right away, and not how you'd expect. At first she just seems to push herself against the hand that's petting her without much thought, but when her eyes open the confusion evident on her face worries you. A strange feeling settles into the pit of your stomach as her confusion turns to fright and panic when she sees the band holding her mouth shut as if for the first time.

Her struggles have a harsh edge on them as she tries to remove her makeshift muzzle, but it becomes much worse when Master tries to intervene. The look on her face when he touches her has none of the contempt it did earlier, only animal terror at this giant stranger grabbing at her. Master's grip is firm, but even he seems surprised when the squirming and struggling from before becomes tearful, wild thrashing. A terrible realization lurches into place within your mind as the piercing shrieks of a frightened child penetrate her closed muzzle and fill the room.

"Stop! Put her down!"

"Why?"

"Because she doesn't remember you!"

For perhaps the only time since meeting the man you've well and truly stunned him, his hands instantly, reflexively dropping the tiny little thing onto the couch without so much as an "are you sure?". An ungraceful landing is followed by tiny legs kicking wildly, as though she's trying to escape without righting herself first. Your Master removes himself from the couch at once, and it's with no small amount of trepidation that you realize he expects you to deal with it. Your improving coordination allows you to make a small jump onto the couch before sitting on your haunches, and the sudden motion gives the little filly pause enough to recognize you. You can't make out any words with the band still clamping her mouth shut, but words aren't really that important when she throws herself at you, latching onto your abdomen and cowering in the limited shelter your body offers.

This isn't the monster you're all angry at. As soon as she tried to wrap her forelegs around you soft cooing noises began to spring out of you with a gentleness you weren't quite sure you had. It isn't terribly hard to scoop her up between your forelegs and chest, along with a stream of reassurances that no one is trying to hurt her. Acting so... motherly makes you more than a little uncomfortable, but that's not her fault. For the next few minutes you keep doing what you can for her until the trembling and little sobs stop, until finally you think you can get her to listen to reason.

It takes an inordinate amount of coaxing to convince the little thing that your Master doesn't mean her any harm (any more, at least), and more than a few false starts before she finally lets him remove the rubber band forcing her silence. She still screws her eyes shut and does more than a bit of frightened squirming, but ultimately gives him the time he needs to get at the damn thing and free her. The next moment or two pass in almost complete silence until all three of you are rewarded by a voice devoid of any hatred or ill will.

"Zephyr, what happened? We were talkin' and then I was here."

Ahh... shit. If this is real, and you're dealing with some kind of temporary amnesia or something, telling this "blank slate" the truth would be horrifying. Still, even this... something... like a child is going to need an explanation of what's going on, so you've got to tell her something. Lies are never a good thing, so it's time to default to your old plan B: Carefully worded truth.

"Sunflower, honey, don't be scared" You lead in as gently as you can, "but you're very, very sick right now and we are trying to make you better."

"But I don't feel sick." Those big doe eyes look up at you in even deeper confusion than before.

"It's in your head, sweetie. You started saying terrible things, and tried to hurt us."

It's true enough, you suppose. A look of absolute panicked horror falls over Sunflower's diminutive features and she's already sniffing by the time she speaks.

"B-but I don't remember... I didn't mean it! Please don't be mad!"

"No one is mad at you, Sunflower. We know you don't mean any of it, and we're trying to make it go away forever."

Making it go away, in this context, involves flushing an adult human mind clean out of a mutated body and letting something new develop in it's place. More than anything else you've run into since coming here, this is confusing and troubling on about a dozen levels. Is it the same as killing Charlie?

Should you feel bad about "killing" Charlie?

"You're gonna help me?"

Keeping this sweet thing occupied while she's around isn't going to leave you with time to figure this thing out. You'll need to talk to Master about

it before too long though. Even when his answers are self-serving, they're at least well-rationalized enough to be fairly convincing even without the simple fact that his word amounts to law in your life, so his answer is pretty much the only answer.

"Of course we're going to help. We'll figure it out and you'll be all better."

There's a cry of "thank you" from her, but it's muffled by her face digging into your abdomen as she seizes you in another too-small hug. You share a quick look with Master and Autumn while she's got her eyes shut and pressed against your fur, Master's heavy confusion contrasted powerfully by the near-tearful smile on Autumn's face as she realizes that she might get her wish after all. Well, if she's going to be around at least half of the time, you might as well get the ground rules out of the way now.

"Okay Sun, call you tell me who that is?" leveling a hoof squarely at your Master to get your point across.

"I-it's the big scary man you said wouldn't hurt me."

"He's our Master, sweetie. Master feeds us, and this is his house. It's very, very important that you always do as he says, do you understand?"

"Yeah!" She calls back, with a certain proud tone in her voice, as though she was simply pleased to have given a "correct" answer.

"Good, just keep that in mind. Little pet ponies like us need our Master. Now, this over here is-"

"My name's Autumn!" she interrupts, thrilled that he long-awaited playdate may finally have come. "Wanna be friends?"

Autumn, to her credit, gave the little thing an offer she simply couldn't refuse and before too long the two of them are rolling about on the floor in peals of laughter over some very silly game Autumn had invented for them. This is good, and moreover it's the single most heartwarming thing you've ever seen. You can scarcely pry your eyes from the scene in front of you long enough to slip a question along to your Master.

"Do you know what's happening to her?"

"Zephyr, to be perfectly honest, I have absolutely no idea."

Oh. Crap.

The joyous cries coming from the little thing as Autumn, rolled onto her back, balances her on all four hooves is nothing but white noise as that nasty, sinking feeling returns to your stomach.

"Y-you don't know? Look at her, she's a whole different person right now." Your whisper becomes a more agitated hiss than you'd intended, and the look on his face makes it clear that he heard it too.

"I know it's confusing" He leads in with that tone of domineering authority that brings your head low on reflex "But you're never to take that tone with me again. Bad girl."

You've endured it before, but there's no feeling in the world quite as awful as being told you've been bad. Ears pressed flat against your head and eyes screwed shut, you draw your legs in close and bury your face in your forehooves, satisfying an inexplicable drive to curl up as tight as you can and stay that way forever. In your head it's worse than all your breakups and shameful memories, a single monolithic sense of rejection that overrides all other thought to drown you in your misery.

It's everything you can do just to roll back upright, forehooves splayed out in front of you and your head hung low to the couch, looking up at him and holding back your tears long enough to start apologizing. For a second his face is unreadably neutral, and your mental anguish becomes acutely focused on doing something, anything, to let him know how sorry you are.

The hand that tousles your mane is therefore a bit of a surprise, bringing an abrupt halt to your brilliant plan to hop on the floor and literally lick his boot as a gesture of submission. Thank goodness for that, too. You know where those boots have been.

"Just don't do it again, alright?" His voice has those subtle tender notes

you've learned to look for, giving you good reason to scoot closer as he continues. "You did a great job calming her down, you know. It's alright to get a bit frustrated with whatever is going on here, but we'll figure it out, so relax."

Obeying his command to relax is much, much easier once you've worked your way onto his lap, facing forward and putting your forehooves around his chest for a little hug. You know it's something he put into you, machine or otherwise, but you still feel awful and desperately need the reassurance that comes when he wraps his arms around you and returns the hug in kind. After a minute or two of listening to him breathe through the light din of Autumn and Sunflower scampering around the house in top form a small chuckle starts the conversation back up.

"Sunflower is gonna be quite a lot of work, y'know. In retrospect taming Opal is gonna look like a breeze."

"Have you heard anything about how she's doing?" There's a little more hope in your voice than you're sure he wants to hear. It'd be inconvenient for him and disappointing to Eli, but you can't help but want your friend back.

"Just a text message that they got home safe, and then a phone call last night."

"A call? About what?"

"A problem that occasionally crops up in new ponies, but he can coach her through it."

"Problem?"

"It's all in her head, she's fine."

"I miss her."

"I know you do. You know, if you hadn't wanted to stay with me Eli probably would have been the one to take you in."



"Really?"

"Yes. He would have been plenty capable of looking after you and he'd definitely appreciate your sense of humor. Among other things."

"Like what?" You prod, at this point unabashedly fishing for compliments.

"Well, for one, that eager little mouth." He flourishes that with an accusatory finger pointed at you while you suppress the most interesting mix of embarrassment and disgust. He could buy you anything on this earth, but no way no how would you do stuff like that for Eli! Ugh, fine, time to one-up him in whatever stupid game this is. It's not terribly hard to surprise him, leaning forward quickly and taking the offending digit in your mouth. In the best facsimile of the real thing you can do, you work slowly back up from the base, flickering your tongue across it as you go, and never once break eye contact. The raise of his eyebrows when you kiss the tip is all you need. Now the ball is in your court as you re-close the distance between you, putting your face, and lips, tantalizingly close to his.

"It's only eager for you. Anyone could put a leash on this collar and think they own me, but you're my Master. One and only."

His smile is every bit as satisfying as you hoped it would be, as his hands rise to either side of your face.

"I really, really fucked you up, didn't I?"

All he gets for that is a lazy "Mhmm" as you press your lips against his, perhaps pushing a bit too far in slipping him the tongue considering that Autumn and Sunflower are still dashing about the house in some kind of "chase" game. He doesn't seem to mind all that much, returning your gesture in kind, and your body is already throwing itself into overdrive. He's into it, you're ready, willing, burning up, waiting-for-weeks-now and ready to blow. There's no good reason this can't end with him flipping you ass over hooves and doing every glorious, depraved kind of thing he can think o-

"Master! Sunflower says she's hungry, can we have lunch now?"

The kiss ended at the first sound of Autumn's voice, and by the time you manage to turn your head with barely contained frustration both of "the kids" are sitting in the doorway with big, doofy smiles. Autumn's look of supreme satisfaction with how her day has turned out is, at this moment, the single most infuriating thing you've ever seen. Goddamnit, you want-no, need some satisfaction for yourself and this. isn't. helping.

"Go settle down in the kitchen, I'll whip something up for us."

There's nothing to do but sigh gustily as they vanish from the doorway, turning back to find your Master gazing at you with a sardonic grin but apologetic eyes. Of course there's a reason that couldn't end the way you wanted it to, there's a child in the house and you were about to start grinding yourself against him on the couch. You're just too horny these days, it's beginning to cloud your judgement even worse than usual. Still, with Autumn being Autumn and this whole big Sunflower deal... you may have to go a while yet pining after someone you spend about nine tenths of any given day around.

If you're gonna jump his bones before going crazy, you'll need help. Autumn's help, specifically, and it'll be difficult enough to get her away from Sunflower long enough to ask.

Right now all your big plans count for nothing, as your one and only sets you onto the floor with a pat on the head. He looks almost as pent up as you right now, but unlike you, he's in control. He huffs for a moment, before offering you a simple "No rest for the wicked." before leading the way towards the kitchen. You're still a little lost in your own head when you enter behind him, but a glance up stops you dead in your tracks. Sunflower, as precious as any living thing could be, tucked carefully in the space between Autumn's resting forelegs and head. You can't really be mad at these two for interrupting, and you've never seen Autumn look so happy, or so focused, since meeting her. You felt strange acting a little motherly earlier, but that's nothing compared to watching Autumn play the part to perfection. It's too strange to fully accept, but too sweet to interrupt, and you honestly spend the duration of your lunch trying to reconcile these new developments.

They don't quite ever seem to reconcile, though. The most terrifying man you've ever met is currently playing surrogate daughter for your mentally unbalanced friend, and no one else seems to grasp the profound weirdness of the moment. Watching her now, Autumn doesn't seem half as nutty as she usually does, and Sunflower seems to absolutely adore her. You barely even taste your food during all of this, just watching and listening as a scene too sweet for this earth plays out in front of you. The little thing is all questions, as though seeing the world with fresh eyes, and Autumn seems delighted to answer. Well, except for "How old are you?" and "how old am I?", both of which Autumn covered with little white lies. There's something very odd about watching her try to internalize the "fact" that she's "7", an almost adorable eye-crossing moment of internal dialogue she seems to have. Almost adorable, except that there should be someone in there protesting that, claiming to be twenty-something, or thirty-something, whatever.

You vague unease with the situation is something your compatriots don't seem to have, but then again they didn't see her "change" last time. You'd like to think it's over, that she's already been through the worst of it and she'll be fine, but by now you've learned a thing or two about life around here and that nagging voice in the back of your head is probably right. It takes ten more minutes of saccharine question and answer until finally the bomb drops.

"Autumn? Do I have a family?"

"Of course you do, Sweetie!"

"I-is it you? Are you all my family?"

The room is very, very quiet, and the look on Autumn's face feels like someone's pulling your heart out. You know what she wants to say, more than anything. But Autumn is good, and Master has a plan, so now you have to sit and watch her face contort in suppressed agony at having to tell her "no". Thankfully, the responsible party steps in and it's your Master who fields this one.

"No, Sun, we're not your family. We're going to make sure you're all

better, and then you'll be able to go home with a new Mom and Dad. Doesn't that sound nice?"

You can't help but audibly sigh in relief, still keeping an eye on Autumn, who looks like she's still holding back tears. How must that feel, wanting a child and having one so close? It'll never happen to you, that much is certain, but you can't help but feel bad for her. You let your vision wander back over to Sunflower, strangely enough she hasn't replied to Master at all. In fact, she's got a forehoof pressed to her head, with a sort of pained expressio-

Oh no.

"Y-yeah... New Mom and Dad... Dad... No, that's not... that's not right."

Perhaps rising to your hooves with eyes locked onto her as though she were a venomous snake was not the right move, as both of your life mates turn to see what you're doing, not the filly. Her eyes are shut tight and her head is shaking back and forth in a long "no" motion, reminding you quite viscerally of a drunk person about to vomit.

"Sunflower, are you alright?"

"N-no... don't want to go with Daddy..."

"Sun?"

"Daddy hurts! He yells and hits!"

There's some small reassurance in the color draining from your Master's face, it's rather nice to know someone else thinks that's the creepiest thing ever said.

"He's gonna hit me! Daddy hurts!"

Your Master makes one final, grievous error, in trying to pick her up. Now those same shrieks, "Daddy hurts!" ascend in pitch and frequency as the little thing in his hands begins to thrash around in his hands as though she's having some kind of seizure. With that he's up and heading for the

stairs with the little thing in tow. You try to follow, but he's apparently not in the mood for any of your help.

"Stay down here."

"But Mas-"

"Zephyr. Stay."

Reflex does most of the work from there, as your rear plants itself on the floor and you can only watch as your Master vanishes towards his workshop with the still-screaming Sunflower in tow. You feel ill, this is just too much to take. Autumn looks no better than you, crying silently in the same place on the floor she had been sitting, otherwise motionless. There aren't any words to fix what you just saw, or make this seem any better, so it's all you can do just to lay down beside her, nuzzle her neck, and extend a wing across her back. You end up staying there with her until nightfall.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 22

Eventually waiting in a miserable ball on the floor wasn't enough for Autumn, though she's certainly not going to disobey Master herself and go up there. You spend the next couple of hours watching Autumn pace around the house, sometimes with an agitated quickstep, sometimes drifting between rooms in a hopeless depression. As much as you'd like to help her feel better, it's entirely out of your hooves as long as Sunflower is up there getting poked and prodded and hopefully "fixed" by your Master.

Those cries, though. "Daddy hurts! He yells and hits!"... It still sends shivers down your spine to think about. At some point before being the heinous thing you'd lived in fear of, there must have been a little boy in a very, very bad situation. You suppose monsters have to be made, not born... Another series of involuntary shudders run down your spine you when you wonder if what he planned on doing to you was anything like what happened to him. Disgust overtakes you and it takes everything you have to stuff it back down and try to keep your composure. Opal said that Charlie "had demons", but you're willing to bet good money she didn't know the full extent of it or surely she would have told you.

Still, the horrors that Sunflower was remembering, the problem Master is trying to fix... That's Charlie. Making sure the sweet little thing can live in peace with an owner and two adoptive parents, none of whom would ever hurt her, "Fixing" the problem literally entails making sure no portion of Charlie's memories survive. It's death, in a much more perverse form that you're not comfortable with at all. I mean, sure, everyone who ends up in Master's basement gets a new body and a new life, that's a given, but you know about who you were, even if your name is long gone. Your childhood, education, botched romances, they're all still there. Hell, you can even remember your social security number despite having no idea what the name above it on the card actually read.

Wiping out Charlie so utterly, using him up so completely that the finished pony doesn't remember a thing is just... just wrong. Not that

there's anything you can do about it now, even if defying Master were an option at all, but it's unsettling to the extreme. Honestly, you'd be much more comfortable with everything if your Master had actually killed him, and that's really saying something.

All these conflicting thoughts and feelings and difficult ethical problems are so not what you signed up for when you agreed to be a good little pet. Your own domestication was difficult enough to rationalize, and then getting poor Opal through hers, but this really takes the cake. Still, after Sunflower is dealt with and sent off you can't imagine there will be a more difficult situation to think through when the time comes for more people to end up downstairs, aside from maybe law enforcement paying your happy home a visit. Still, the knowledge that with just a bit more patience you'll really have nothing to worry about besides bedding your Master as often as you're sure you'll want to is exciting, to say the least. And if all you have to put up with in the meantime is the occasional violent, screaming episode from an otherwise pleasant, adorable filly you suppose you can get by just fine.

The sound of approaching hoofsteps pulls you back out of your thoughts, and just the look on Autumn's face is enough for you to scoot over and embrace her with a whole lot of nuzzling when she climbs up. She looks exhausted, and you can feel the tension in her muscles when you do your best to offer simple contact and comfort to your friend. Master may love you, but no one will ever need you the way Autumn needs you and that's even more reassuring.

Not that your warm, caring friendship stops her from bolting off the couch so fast you tumble off of it yourself when footsteps can be heard on the staircase. By the time you've pulled your face off the floor and rolled onto your hooves he's reached the bottom, cradling a very still Sunflower in his arms. For a moment her lack of motion is alarming, to the point that your breath catches in your throat, but once Master kneels down and sets the little brown-and-blond bundle down with Autumn you can see she's just sleeping. Autumn doesn't bother moving Sunflower for the sake of her own comfort and at once curls herself up around the sleeping little filly, looking every bit the relieved mother as she does. No one speaks, lest you wake her, but the look of gratitude in her eyes seems to be enough for him before he pantomimes "eating" with his hands and



mouth and heads for the kitchen. You're hardly able to contain your curiosity about what went on up there, giving Autumn a quick smile before following him so you can get some answers.

The snort of a chuckle when you turn up in the kitchen as he raids the fridge is a little unexpected until you realize he's just laughing at your curiosity.

"You want to hear about what is up with Sunflower, right? If I'd known you would be so interested in how I work I might have considered hiring you rather than turning you."

"Eugh!" You lead in, helpless to contain your displeasure at the notion, "If I were just some dude you paid for help you wouldn't wanna cuddle me at all!"

"If you were just some guy I paid for help you probably wouldn't want me to cuddle you, honey."

It's a simple, obvious statement, and completely factual, but no idea has ever seemed so profoundly strange to you as not wanting him to hold you or stroke your mane or rub your back. You know you went through your whole life before him without it, but... man, what kind of miserable life was that? It's just hellish to imagine...

Your face must have said it all when he'd finally got everything he needs to make dinner, because pauses with a soft "D'aww" noise before kneeling to take you in a hug. You're only too happy to be in his embrace, but the jokes he was making nag at you something fierce.

"It really doesn't bother you at all that I used to be a guy, does it?"

"Not really. You're not a guy now, I made sure of that, and you certainly don't act like one."

Besides sometimes admiring yourself in a mirror and craving his attentions... carnal and otherwise, that doesn't seem right at all.

"I think I act pretty much like I used to... don't I?"

His brows furrow for a moment while he mulls it over, clearly trying to think of the right words.

"It's not a personality thing, there's just a point where every pony 'clicks' with it. You act like frightened people trying to work a body you don't know for a while, and at some point or another you cross a threshold. There's a point where you started moving differently, eating differently, sitting differently, and that's when I knew you'd accepted it. Maybe not intellectually or emotionally, but you adapted. Unicorns learn to account for their horn when they move their head, pegasi learn not to crush their wings. You stop making a mess every time you eat and drink. Mares who used to be guys stop awkwardly tromping around and learn to use the hips they've been given and move naturally. You, by the way, have the best hip sway I've ever seen. I'm sure you don't mean to, but I swear it's like you're trying to sashay down a catwalk or something. Very graceful from the side... very enticing from behind."

He finishes with an unexpected, firm grope of your rear, at first getting only a sharp inhale out of you until his fingers, digging greedily, just barely brush at your sensitive areas draw a soft moan out of you. He lets go after that, apparently still content to fire you up without actually going all that much further, but such aggressive, assertive behavior is the absolute best! You already know he thinks you're sexy, of course, but getting complimented like this is still a wonderful rush of happy warmth. He makes a sincere effort to put you down and get back to cooking, but that's simply not going to do after a moment like that, and you spring back up to cuddle more before he has time to rise back onto his feet. You were perhaps a bit more forceful than you needed to be, but apparently causing him to fall back onto his butt is a forgivable offense if it's because you're nuzzling his chest and giggling like a stoned little idiot. You're able to parley your inherent pony cuteness into several long minutes of petting before his stomach growling finally forces him to cut you off and get back to preparing dinner. In all the pleasant rubbing and mane-stroking you'd forgotten about the original discussion topic entirely until he brought it back up.

"So before you ask, I don't fully get what is going on in Sunflower's head."

"Y-you don't?"

"Not really, no. I took what little data I could, but all that told me is that there's nothing physically wrong with her or her brain."

"So what have you been doing up there for all this time?"

"I tried triggering another episode after she woke up from being sedated the first time, but no mention of parents or fathers did anything, and neither did a bunch of names and places I got from Charlie's laptop. We're going to have to pay close attention to her, but if they aren't repeatable then I'm hoping we'll be able to just let her get them out of her system before sending her off."

"So, that's it? We just let her scream her little head off every couple of days until there's nothing left to scream about?"

"It's all I've got, Zephyr. We'll have to tell Ann and her ponies what to do if she has another episode after they take her, but I'm hoping we can take care of it here."

You've still got a host of concerns about what is being done here, but there's nothing to be done for them now, so you're content to accept his non-answer uncritically and take a pat on the head with it before settling down and waiting for dinner. The happy voices coming from the other room seem to indicate that Sunflower is awake at last, but for now you're quite alright sitting in the corner of the kitchen and admiring your Master's muscled back and shoulders with no small amount of excitement for what they'll be able to do when you're rolling around the bed with him. Your physical impulses around him started as a selfish thing... he could make you feel good, and you wanted him to. That lusty, carnal desire is still there, of course, you've been doped up on extreme sensitivity in your pretty little pony body and that's never ever going away. Now, though... and for a while now... he looks good. You find yourself is admiring him every now and again, or comparing things you like about his face and body to the guys in movies and tv...

Sure, his body is an elaborate cheat, a thing he did to himself with

machines, but then again you got yours the same way and you admire it just fine. You had a small moment of crisis when you looked at Eli and thought he was less attractive than your Master... and realized that you do, in fact, find your Master attractive the same way you enjoy catching a peek at Autumn's shapely rump. Considering how long you've been here and how much debauchery you've managed to get up to in that time it was sort of a given... but you guess it never occurred to you? You love him, of course, but loving him and thinking he looks pretty fuckin' fine are different things. His crotch smelled spectacular the first time you ever pleased him... was becoming a bisexual something he did to you? Or is it something you did yourself?

Difficult to make sense of, not terribly logical... eh, you've had enough of those things lately. Thinking the big guy who feeds you and loves you is handsome is just icing on the cake that is your life these days, nothing to worry about! You guess there's still a guy somewhere in your head after all, worrying about such silly things. You're Zephyr, and Zephyr loves Master, so Zephyr had best just deal with whatever that implies.

Your reverie ends abruptly when you spot a small brown blur approaching at high speed in the corner of your vision. By the time you've realized it's a tiny little bundle of joy named Sunflower she's already latched her forehooves around the trunk of your neck in a hug, which you try to return as convincingly as possible. It's not that you don't like her, because she's just heart-tormentingly sweet, but you're still not entirely comfortable with what's happening in her head. Autumn enters the kitchen looking as relieved as she could be about the day's unpleasantness as Sunflower greets Master with a hug around one of his shins. Your wonderful makeshift family settles down for dinner amid Sunflower's happy babbling, and once again you're at peace with everything. For these peaceful moments you couldn't care less about Charlie's desperately struggling psyche trying to survive, Sunflower brightens the room up to the point that you're prepared to let the scary rape dude go.

That's how things stay for a little over a week. Sure, Sunflower has the occasional episode, but by now you've all developed a response to them. When the screaming and crying starts up Autumn latches on to the little thing with a fierce hug, repeatedly trying to shush a mad-pony and

seemingly trying to love the crazy out. Still, it serves a purpose in buying Master time to respond from wherever he happens to be to rush her off for more testing. Beyond this admittedly stressful cycle life is actually pretty great. The three of you take tremendous pleasure in introducing Sunflower to everything she "forgot", to the point that Master, with a twinkle in his eyes, left the three of you alone in the house long enough for him to drive to town and return with not just the usual groceries, but also a tremendous selection of sweets and a take-out pizza. It was lukewarm at best by the time he got home with it, but it was totally new to Sunflower and you've been removed from that delicious oily, cheesy goodness for long enough that you would have eaten it cold at the time. Even better, while Sunflower and Autumn assaulted a small plate of candies Master gives you something even better: An old e-reader! Well, not all that old, per say, but this one uses buttons instead of a touchscreen, making it far more hoof-friendly. There are rules that come with it of course, like sharing it equally with Autumn and asking his permission before buying any new stuff on it, but neither of those should be a problem. Autumn reads maybe twice a week at most and "having to ask" for new books is just another little submission game he'll want to play. You'll sit or roll over or stand up on your hind legs or whatever he wants even without the promise of new reading material- You're his to command, after all.

Your walks are far longer with the filly in tow, though since she couldn't be outdoors without a leash lest an episode send her darting off into the woods all three of you end up leashed for fairness' sake. It honestly grates a bit, having to pace yourself constantly after getting used to running around as you saw fit. Still, there's something to be said for making him keep up with all three of you darting around, occasionally tangling leashes and making him put up with it. You occasionally catch yourself wishing that the world were ready for the likes of you, if only so passerby in the park could envy him for his lovely pets.

Master does let you get some flight-time in at night after Sunflower and Autumn have gone to sleep in the cage you got kept in at first, Sunflower as a matter of necessity and Autumn to keep her company. Night-flying might be the best kind, especially when you've got Master's undivided attention as you swoop around the yard. Having alone time with him is a joy all it's own, though Autumn has become so attached to giving you a

special first time with Master that she made you promise not to rut him in the yard and stick to "the plan". You're able to keep your word, but only because cuddling up to him and staring at the stars is downright magical, though he seems to enjoy you lying on top of him more than the spectacle of the heavens.

Days follow days as pleasantly as they ever could, and it's hardly a big deal when Autumn asks you to look after Sunflower yourself while she goes to "ask Master about something", though considering the look in her eyes and how much time she's been spending looking after Sunflower to the exclusion of all else you'd say she's pining for some affection, chaste or otherwise. It's no problem at all when the little thing sets herself down beside you and settles in for a small nap while you continue to read. She's asleep in no time, and sleeps pretty soundly while you put another couple of chapters under your (figurative) belt.

Then the noises start.

Tiny, pained moans grab your attention, and as your head snaps around to see what's the matter with your little friend she begins to twitch and squirm. If this is an episode, there's not much to do but help her through it.

"Sunflower, are you alright?"

Her eyes open with a pained expression, but one that seems to be regaining focus. The low croak of her voice sounds downright unnatural after all the happy near-chirping the little thing has been doing all week.

"That's... I'm not..."

That's evidence enough for you to wrap her in your forelegs and hold her close to you, pinning her between your chest and the couch cushions without crushing her. At first you just fold your ears down and shut your eyes tight in anticipation of screaming and kicking to follow, but when none comes you open your eyes in curious surprise to find her staring right back. The look on her face is one of a wounded, desperate animal, and it's heartbreaking to see on such a little thing... but her eyes betray her. This isn't Sunflower.

"Please... please make it stop." she squeaks out, pleading with her eyes.

"You know I can't." Is all you can muster in reply, at once feeling guilty for having ignored your fears about this.

"Y-you don't know what it's like... I wake up and know what she's been doing... but I'm losing things..."

"Losing things?"

"More and more, every time! Where I lived! A-a-and how I met Dave! I can't remember my mother's face! The sound of her voice! Please, just help me..."

There's nothing you can do, even if you wanted to... but the horror of it all is turning your stomach. Thinking of what Master would do is all that helps you keep your composure.

"I'm sorry. I really am. There's nothing anyone can do, though. I know you're scared, but if you just relax, let it happen, it can all be over. A fresh start is waiting for her, but you can't be part of it."

Something that sounds like "Please" escapes her lips before she breaks down into hysterical sobbing. There's nothing to be done now except to make "Charlie" comfortable on his way out... As terrible as you feel for thinking it. You hug her a bit more firmly to counteract increased struggling, and try your best to shush a coo her into silence. Her tears don't stop though, not that you would blame someone so thoroughly doomed for crying, and as your brain desperately tries to think of something to do to offer some small comfort a voice rises out of your throat that you've never really heard before.

"Hush now, quiet now

It's time to lay your sleepy head..."

An hour later the sun has set and your tears have finally dried when Master and Autumn emerge from upstairs. You are the last person on

earth who should ever have wept for Charlie, but empathy got the better of you. The fear that you were losing your mind was once the most paramount and terrifying concern you had in this very house... but getting washed away like that must have been so much worse. Looking down at the now sleeping filly there's no sign of anguish or terror, just a sleeping little angel, so you suppose singing must have been the right move. All the same, you don't think you want to spend much more time bonding with Sunflower...

Master knows something is wrong as soon as you make eye contact, though even he seems to grasp at straws in trying to console you. He does resolve to have you sing something for him when there isn't a sleeping filly at your side... though maybe not that song. Not that song ever.

Good going, Charlie, your final act was to make Fluttershy's lullaby hair-raisingly creepy, balls-to-the-wall disturbing. You've never been happier to let Autumn take over doting on Sunflower while Master scoops you up and starts petting. Emotional exhaustion is far more compelling than you could give it credit, and as your eyes droop you mumble out one more thought.

"Master?"

"Hm?"

"No more fillies, please. They're fuckin' creepy."

"... Agreed."



# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 23

Sunflower hasn't had an episode since you sang Charlie off. Or at least no episodes anyone has noticed, since you've been very pointedly not spending too much time alone with her. She's very nice and you're sure the ponies who wanted a child will be thrilled to have her... But she just makes you uncomfortable now. She plays in the living room and you have to wonder if there's someone else still stuck in that head of hers desperately trying to scream. Not that any of it is her fault, of course. You make a point of being as nice as you can when speaking to her, and as far as Sunflower knows "Auntie Zephyr" loves her just as much as anyone else. It's a shame you can't shake that lingering unease with her, she really is the nicest little thing. Autumn doesn't seem to begrudge you your discomfort, though, and seems quite mindful not to leave you alone with your shared "niece" for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Master, for his part, has never seemed more committed to his product. Besides doting on Sunflower with a mix of the same odd kindness he has for all of his ponies once they embrace it and the same attitude adults give particularly cute kids, you can tell that he's always got an eye on her a bit more pointedly when they're in the same room. Perhaps he's concerned for her well being, or perhaps he still worries it might be an extremely well-played act, but you're convinced he doesn't want to give an unstable pet to one of his supposedly good friends. Never mind that odd professional pride he has in his human mutation and trafficking business, but if Opal had been half as fucking crazy as Sunflower she'd have never left here at all, and that's with a pony who could reasonably have been returned to him as too much of a handful. If Sunflower proves to be majorly problematic for her owner and adoptive pet-parents, as much as you hate thinking of them as such for the uncomfortable thoughts regarding hereditary slavery they bring up, taking her back would be heartbreaking for absolutely everyone involved.

It very quickly became a nightly ritual of him retreating upstairs with Sunflower for an hour or so a night to give her a thorough checkup of the same kind as her first major incident. You watched him give one

yourself, mesmerized as he stuck her with a small needle after bribing her with a piece of hard candy and watching the array of machines thus deployed feed information wirelessly to his laptop. You had wondered how he was able to confirm that there was nothing physically wrong with her brain, and now you knew that he didn't need some enormous imaging device like a hospital would have to do so. The answer, as you should have guessed, was more tiny robots. After she'd been allowed to scamper back off to Autumn you tried to ask why Master hadn't shared the nanomachines with the world, now more than ever convinced that they could change modern medicine, but his only reply was a cryptic comment about his former employers. You suppose it's for the best as far as you're concerned, a wealthy hero of modern science probably wouldn't be able to keep the likes of you and Autumn secret for very long.

Still, after a week and a half of this routine Master seems satisfied enough that the problem is in recession and she's weathered the storm intact. You know something is up as soon as Master sends you off to keep an eye on Sunflower and holds Autumn back for a moment on the way in from a morning walk, but a command is a command so you end up playing "pattycake" with your forehooves for a bit while they have a talk. The look on her face when she follows him into the living room is just as devastated as it was during Sunflower's biggest episode, with your Master looking downright guilty as he starts assembling lunch. Sunflower dashes off to Autumn's side at once, and you feel pangs of empathy as you watch your friend struggle to bury whatever's plaguing her and put on a smile for her favorite friend. You're pretty sure you know what's happening, but for sureness' sake you slip off to ask Master while Autumn strains her face to produce a not-smile while she hugs the living daylights outta Sunflower.

"Ah, Master? Is Autumn okay?"

"Not really, sweetheart. I knew letting her get so attached wasn't a good idea, but neither of us would have been so good with her, right?"

"So Sunflower is leaving?"

"Ann doesn't want to wait any longer, and I can't think of a good reason to keep her here. Even if she has the occasional little outburst, Ann's

almost as much of a recluse as I am and she's got a fenced yard."

"When is she coming?"

"The day after tomorrow. She was willing to come tomorrow, but I think Autumn might need the time. We'll tell Sunflower after dinner."

The lunch in question is very powerfully uncomfortable for just about everyone. Autumn is still visibly morose, your Master seems to actually be nervous for once, and you're not quite sure where you stand on this. Sunflower seems to understand that something is wrong, the same tiny frown and downcast gaze you recall having every time your parents had a fight. The lot of you get through about half of your meal like that, everyone just quietly, dutifully munching away at the salad and refusing to make eye contact. Master being this uncomfortable really bothers you, it's just so unlike him. Then again, he's worried about hurting Autumn, his rock in an otherwise very, very insane life. You suppose you might occupy a similar place in his heart someday, but Autumn came first, something you've accepted as part of the status quo from here on. Still, you can take this as further proof, more than all his actions up to now that he really does love her. At least enough to worry about somehow damaging the relationship.

The awkwardness rolls right on when you hear him clear his throat from above you and announce in as gentle a voice as possible that Sunflower's family will be coming to take her home very soon. You expect tears, tears above all else from the little thing, but the whoops of excitement are stunning enough to give you a kind of emotional whiplash. Sure enough, the little thing is jumping up and down on her hooves asking if he really means it. Autumn, sitting just behind her, seems to have gone catatonic save for her eyes, still locked on Sunflower and threatening to burst at any moment with visibly accumulating tears. Master seems floored, Autumn seems like she might have died inside... necessity forces your voice into a low croak.

"Sunflower, sweetie, do you know what that means?"

"Yeah! That I get a mom and a dad and a new lady's gonna take care of us!"

"Y-yeah, Sun, but just you and your new family."

"Huh?"

"Autumn and I aren't coming with you. You'll leave and we'll stay."

"B-but... But you're the ones I met first!"

There's not much left that you really think you can say to her to make it any better for her now that you've reminded her of the obvious truth, especially after a weak nod from your Master confirms your dire revelation. The tears you had been ready for finally make their appearance, coupled with half-intelligible complaints about leaving here. Before you or Master can muster up the resolve to step and comfort her Autumn moves in for it, out of her little misery-coma with a vengeance as soon as Sunflower needs her to be. All motherly comfort, all assurances that her new family will take good care of her, and even all assurances that they'll meet again someday don't quite seem to be enough to calm her down.

Eventually, tearfully, the whole thing gets worked out between the two of them, with you and Master squarely on the sidelines for the whole affair. You're quite content with that arrangement, being Sunflower's second-favorite aunt out of two is a far less demanding position. When all is said and done and Sunflower is set down on a pillow for a late afternoon nap Autumn actually seems much better for having been through the whole thing, still a little unhappy but by no means despondent over the latest turn of events. You suppose it must help to know she'll be missed, but in the end you and Autumn only have a couple of options for emotional support when times are tough, so it is no surprise when Autumn flops her head down on Master's lap. There's even a frustrated little nuzzle into his belly when no hand is immediately forthcoming to pet her, and while you can hear Master mutter "brat" under his breath in a less-than-serious tone he still dutifully starts petting your very worn-out life mate. You scoot your way over the couch to her, intending to comfort her as best you can, but once you're within hoof range it's her who latches on to you, pulling you in for use as a kind of teddy bear. You do a bit of nuzzling, but she seems primarily focused on having someone to hug for a while, so you

set your head down beside hers on Master's thigh and zone out for a bit. You, and Master, for that matter, had been afraid that Autumn would begrudge him for doing what he'd already agreed to do, but thankfully it seems she's applying a year of experience in letting other ponies go along elsewhere. The reassurance that maybe you'll all come out of this just fine is enough to let you drift off to sleep in Autumn's embrace.

You wake up to a hoof tapping your side repeatedly, blearily opening an eye to find Autumn very excitedly trying to wake you up. It takes a few embarrassing seconds of sleep-muddled thinking to work out that Autumn is off the couch, you're lightly tangled in a blanket and that Master and Sunflower are nowhere to be found. Your processing power seems to be at an all-time low just now, so your cheery, inquisitive "What's going on?" really comes out more like "Whas hap?"

"C'mon, get up! Master's upstairs with Sunflower so we've gotta get a move on!"

"Move on...? For what, Autumn?"

"The plan sweetie! I begged Master to let me spend tonight downstairs with Sunflower, so you two will be all alone up in the bed! We've got to get you ready, though."

"Ready? Autumn, ready how?"

"C'mon, you'll see when we're upstairs!"

The thought of what "the plan" actually entails is enough to get you off the sofa, and Autumn's enthusiasm is downright contagious as you plod your way up the stairs and begin to shake off the lingering sleepy confusion. Slow, careful steps carry you by the door to Master's work space, Sunflower's laughter audible from within as you pass, and once you're safely in the bedroom Autumn starts talking so fast you can't fully comprehend what's being said. On sight of the bed, though, you lose track of everything else in the room for a second, Autumn included, as the reality of the situation catches up to you.

You're gonna give yourself to him right there. On that bed you'll be

moaning and squirming and begging him for more. Right there, tonight. He's... gonna want to, right? He hasn't initiated anything... what if he rejects you?

Pffffffhahaha, yeah right! If he didn't want you, he certainly wouldn't have kept you unless he were particularly cruel. Still, the first time you got put down on this bed it was so he could explain that he was gonna break you and sell you... now he's gonna put the final nail in the coffin for your masculinity, or ever letting go of you, in the same place. Not that you'd like to preserve either thing in favor of finally getting your cherry popped. Female cherry, at least, and you suppose this'll be new enough in your experience to count as a "first time". Still, this whole time you've been pondering Autumn's been talking.

"So come on, I've got everything right here, just hop on up!"

"I'm sorry, you're got everything...?"

"Were you even listening?"

"Kinda... having a daydream about later tonight. Sorry." You reply as sheepishly as possible. You don't think Autumn would ever really lose patience with you, but damned if you weren't pushing it.

"I know you're excited, Zephyr, and you've got plenty of really, really good reasons to be, but we don't have much time before he gets done giving Sunflower her checkup. Just hop on up and I'll explain as we go, okay?" Her reply is fraught with little, knowing giggles, so you don't feel too bad about daydreaming earlier, but you do wish you'd paid attention when she slides a small box out from under the bed and slowly heaves it up onto the bed with both hooves. You didn't realize Autumn had such an elaborate production in mind that supplies were important, but you were too busy spacing out to listen when she was trying to explain the plan, and now you're going into this blind.

Oh well, It's not like Autumn could go anywhere particularly weird with this, right?

You let yourself be guided to the center of the bed and made to roll over

in the center, belly up and splayed out with pillows holding you just slightly upright, the clearest visual invitation you can possibly offer provided your tail isn't being used as cover. Autumn begins rooting through the box in question, and you're surprised when she empties the whole thing on to the edge of the bed for easier access. It looks to be strips of colored fabric... and a really large bow?

"Extra ribbons from Master's sewing supplies. Sometimes the ponies Master gives his toys to have their manes tied back or something, so he keeps a lot of them."

"You're sure he won't mind?"

"Not when he sees you, that's for sure."

You're still not quite sure what the plan is when Autumn starts awkwardly looping some of the lace and ribbons into shapes, but you're happy to lend her a hoof, or your mouth, to get the job done. Once she's got them the way she wants them it starts to make more sense, as one of the loops is gently pulled taut around one of your rear hooves, and the remaining length wrapped in a parted spiral the whole way up your rear leg, the stark bands of lacy blue ribbon looking crisp against the white of your fur, eventually being tied off near your hips. You get it now, you're being gift-wrapped like a present! Autumn's an absolute genius, using what little she could get her hooves on without being noticed to make you a lovely kind of makeshift lingerie. Your gratitude compels you to kiss her, and while she returns it in kind there is an impatient little noise coming from her throat reminding you that she'd like to keep wrapping you up.

And so Autumn does, painstakingly wrapping all four of your legs and running a lovely criss-cross pattern up your abdomen that gets tied off on your collar. You'd think that Autumn's work would be done by now, you're wonderfully trussed up and just about at the limit for knot-tying with hooves and teeth, but there's still a ton of ribbon and lace left and Autumn is still busying herself about.

"Okay, hold your forehooves together behind your head for a second."



"Didn't we already wrap my forehooves up?" You query, complying all the same pointing your forelegs toward the headboard, itself just a set of horizontal steel bars. It would be seriously uncomfortable if not for the support the pillows offer your neck, and you've no desire to hold this pose for long as Autumn awkwardly climbs over you to get to your forehooves, positioned squarely over you with her neck taking up most of your field of vision, with one of the loops you made clutched between her teeth.

At first you're a bit surprised to feel the loop draw itself taut over the "knuckle" area just above your hooves, not quite comprehending where Autumn aims to go with this until your attempt to pull them back and get a good look is stopped by Autumn tugging the end around one of the bars on the headstand.

"W-wait, Autumn, what's going on?"

Your friend and chief role model only giggles in response, letting her legs relax and pinning you beneath her lest you struggle and ruin her efforts. You can see her neck moving and feel her forehoof movement rocking the bed slightly, but it isn't until she makes a satisfied humming noise and leans back to inspect her work that you're able to confirm that she's tied the other end of the loop to the bedframe, leaving your forehooves uselessly strapped behind your head.

"A-autumn, I don't really know if this is necessary... Won't he be happy enough with what we already did?" Your voice is audibly nervous, bondage certainly wasn't what you'd envisioned when you imagined your first night with him.

"Oh hush you." Autumn chirps in reply "What better way to flatter our Master than for you to offer yourself up totally helpless? Ooh, it's gonna be so steamy I wish I'd thought of it for my first time!"

"Wait! Autumn, I really don't think we need to do thi-MMMPH!" Your complaint is stuffed back down by the over sized gift bow from the box being jammed into your muzzle by Autumn's forehooves as she pins you back down with her body and quickly works the hanging ends of it around your head to tie them off at one side. You're not completely

gagged, but your shouts are certainly muffled enough that short of an outright scream you're not getting anyone's attention from outside of the room.

"Shhhh, Zephyr! Shout now and you could spoil the surprise!" He voice is as chipper as ever, but Autumn's got that same half-wild look she had when she "helped" you in the cage all those months ago. Autumn plants a tender kiss on your forehead, completely ignoring the pleading look you're trying to give her, and gets back up to finish the task of gift-wrapping a helpless little mare for her owner. You don't realize she's going to give your hind legs the same treatment until one of them is already strung taut toward the right corner of the bed, but when she appears beside lefty you start kicking like a madwoman and jerkily flapping your wings about in the hope of getting her to relent a bit and compromise with you, but Autumn's indignant expression when you resist doesn't give you a whole lot of hope.

There certainly isn't much left when she practically sings about "calming you down" and lays a hoof on your very exposed marehood. Your kicking ends abruptly, more out of a creeping sense of dread about what you're sure is coming next than any kind of calm, and sure enough Autumn starts rubbing in small circles, visibly enjoying herself as you try to wiggle your way out of the bonds around your forehooves.

Autumn is nothing if not skilled, however, and before long a familiar itch begins to develop in your nethers, accompanied by a small sensation of wetness.

"See, Zephyr, nothing to worry about. If you're already having a good time with me, just imagine what he can do for you."

The mere mention of your impending encounter with your Master's best feature is enough that you moan softly into the bow still occupying your mouth, and Autumn takes that as her cue to loop and tie your left hind leg, leaving you completely helpless. Knowing that you're now completely at the mercy of your Master, whenever he happens to arrive is hardly the source of anxiety Autumn tying you up was, the heat she helped to kick-start in your loins now thoroughly self-sustaining. You're very acutely aware of Autumn repeatedly looping a long piece of ribbon

around the base of your tail until she's rigidly tied off the first two or three inches into a long tube of fabric before looping the loose end around the foot of the bed just like your hind legs, robbing you even of the ability to hide your thoroughly wet femininity.

It certainly isn't what you had in mind when you asked Autumn for help, but it feels quite right from here. Another long, low moan catches on your makeshift gag, and Autumn giggles at you as though you've told a funny joke.

"I knew you'd love it! Not that I blame you for worrying, of course, but you should really keep in mind that your big sister Autumn always knows best! Hmm... You know, Master shouldn't be done for another few minutes... How about I warm you up?"

As much as you'd like to keep chastising yourself for forgetting how strange Autumn gets about submission, that sounds heavenly. Without words, free limbs or even a lip to bite down on, you do your best to give her a "come hither" look with only your eyes, though should that hint fail you'd hope that rolling your hips toward her for easy access would get the message across.

She seems rather pleased with herself at your reaction, and the energy behind her eyes, while hardly her usual seductive glance, prove just as erotic as any half-lidded look of love when her tongue meets your slit. She dives in with an enthusiasm you've never felt before, running her tongue up and down your nethers lightning quick. Moans try desperately to break through your gag, only ascending further in pitch as Autumn works you over faster and harder than anyone else ever has before, repeated quick shots of electric pleasure as she licks in and out and up and down and round and round and round! Oh, god, she's been h-holding out on you this whole time, those heavy syrupy s-sweet play sessions were her going e-e-easy, ah, on the new girl!

You've been through it so many times up to now that when her tongue stops and you feel her sit back up there's no confusion, only desperate, panicked mewling for her not to do what you know she's about to do. Your muffled begging and pleading eyes don't get her back down to finish you off, though, instead getting a laugh and a smile as you begin to

thrash about against your bonds.

"Oh, sweetie, I thought you'd like that, too. Now, I know you're probably pretty upset with me right now, but please remember how much I love you. I promise that by the time Master is done with you tonight, you'll want to thank me. You wanted a special first time, remember?"

She crawls back over you, a big, big smile on her face as she kisses you on the forehead, the aroma of your own privates still on her breath, and then clambers down off the bed with the now empty box in tow. Amid a chorus of pleading moans and twitchy struggling you hear Autumn's final thought for the night as she stands by the door.

"If you're still mad afterwards, I promise to let you do the same to me... though I think that'll happen soon enough anyway, once you're part of our games. It's going to be amazing for you, though. Master is -very- generous, you know, and that certainly doesn't stop between the sheets. See you tomorrow!"

With that, you're alone in the bedroom, trembling against surprisingly firm bonds and on the verge of a titanic orgasm. A severe haze of arousal clouds most of your thoughts beyond impatiently wondering what was taking your Master so long to get in here and fuck you brainless, but you do find yourself reminiscing about the denial game that broke you in for him in the first place. You were in a cage then, tied up with simple rope and still desperately ashamed of all the new feelings this body came with. Now here you are, gift-wrapped for your Master to come and play with at his leisure. How long has it been? How long will it take for him to get here?

Sure, you're plenty embarrassed to be in this situation, but at this rate you'll accept any level of humiliation if someone will just do something about this godawful itch you just can't scratch! For such a quick, powerful rush to arousal under Autumn's practiced touch it sure isn't relenting nearly as quickly, and you're quite sure there will be a stain on the bedsheets before he even gets up here. You spend what feels like hours spread-eagled on the bed, letting cool air and lingering arousal tease at you while you listen to muffled voices and sounds elsewhere in the house. It's maddening, knowing that he could be up here right this

second if you could only spoil the surprise. Soon, though, Zephyr, just be patient. He'll get up here, hands and all, and give you the best ride of your entire life.

Soon you're lost in elaborate fantasies about what exactly is going to happen when he walks through that door. Will he untie you, or will he leave you all trussed up and just use you as-is? Will he bother with foreplay? Maybe he'll just get right down to fucking you without any preamble, like you're just his little sex toy. Ooh, you're not sure what would be better! Will he play rough or will... or will he be gentle?

This... this is really about to happen, isn't it? He's gonna get up here, see his little pet all laid out and ready for him and then join you in bed. Master came into your home and kidnapped you, and now you're excited for a good, hard fucking from him to consummate your relationship and be his forever... this is not how you ever would have guessed life would turn out when you found that package in your mailbox. What's bad, though, is how much he's gonna make fun of you for letting yourself end up like this, and it's not even what you wanted at all. You wanted to be proactive, to shake your stuff for him and convince him it's time to go, not to get laid out like a buffet and left for him whenever he happens on by... as hot as this really is...

Are you really gonna do this?

You're still feeling quite hot and bothered when your ears perk up to detect approaching footsteps on the stairs, but the feeling that overtakes you is one of sheer panic. You're not ready for this! Christ on a cracker, it's only been like three months with him you can't possibly be ready to go all the way-

"Zephyr?"

You freeze the second you hear his voice, at once embarrassed, ashamed, and aroused by being found like this. Lifting your head as slowly as you can to take a look, your embarrassment surges as you realize he's starting, mouth agape, at your exposed slit. You're still embarrassed, but his mouth bending up into a smile and his eyes traveling oh-so-slowly up your bound form sends the most wonderful shivers down your spine. When his

eyes meet yours, though... he's happy, you can tell that, but there's no small amount of hunger there either. He wants you! You strain your neck a bit to peek further down, and upon discovering that the bulge in his pants is already evident let your head fall back onto the pillows amid a rush of equal parts embarrassment and giddy joy. You almost thought this was a mistake? Bad Girl! Letting your nerves get the better of you like that is hardly the smart thing to do, especially when you're still trying to assert masculinity at this late stage in the game and in such a compromising position. You're Master's fun little pegasus mare, just the way you and he like it, and it's definitely been long enough to go all the way as far as you're concerned.

"Well, looks like someone left me a present... just what I wanted, too."

The thrilled little squeal you make is involuntary, and you're quite certain he heard it through your gag. You can't stop yourself from wiggling around on the bed, though now breaking your bonds is hardly the first thing on your mind; You just hope it looks as sexy to him as it feels to you. His look of approval touches you in ways you didn't know were possible, your eyes close as you enjoy a brilliant shudder and gasping moan. Your eyes reopen hurriedly when a sudden flash is visible even through your closed lids, and embarrassment surges back to the fore when you find your Master at the foot of the bed, camera in hand.

"That one probably won't be going up on my wall, I'd never get anything done."

Oh god, you're just like one of those little amateur tarts all over the internet... though if these "private" pictures happened to get out they would only appeal to a very particular audience. Granted, the idea of bronies beating it to pictures of you is tremendously unsettling, but you do stifle a giggle at the thought of being mistaken for a particularly good photoshop. A couple more photos have you blushing so hard you're sure it's visible through your fur. Your eyes are locked on his hands as they gently put the camera down on the nightstand, then you slowly look up to his face, taking a nervous gulp as you realize he's already done a bit of joking at your expense and even took a photo left to remember the occasion by... nothing left now but the, uh, 'main event'.

"Aw, someone's feeling bashful." He says in mock concern, still wearing a very genuine looking smile and resting a hand on one of your rear hooves. "Now what could my sweet little thing be feeling so embarrassed about?" He queries, still leaning over you as he stands astride the bed, even as his fingers begin to slowly follow the curve of your leg down towards that most important meeting place. He doesn't crack any more jokes at you, leaning in close to look you in the eyes when his hand brushes your soaked, sensitive nethers and forcing another shuddering moan out through your gag. He doesn't probe your slit even a little, instead grinding his cupped hand over it in small circular motions and visibly trying to hide a small grin as you squeal and squirm, otherwise helpless.

"You're making the cutest little faces right now... It's gonna be hard to stop myself." he murmurs, sliding his other hand behind your head and renewing his attentions at a higher tempo, his face seemingly caught between adoration for the noises and expressions you're making and outright lust for your little pony body, his to claim whenever he chooses. Wracking spasms and heaving breaths stretch your bonds to their absolute limit as you approach a long-awaited climax under his touch. Finally getting near to release, getting off is all you can focus on, with occasional thoughts spared to the debauchery to follow afterwards. You're sure he thinks he's being funny, maybe even asserting control when he suddenly stops, grinning at you like he just made some terrible pun.

He has no way of knowing how your day has gone, but the sense of frustrated agony that overtakes you when he stops to play another denial game is just too much. No no no no no! You've had enough of this, you're here to get screwed, not screwed around with! You've been on edge so long it's started to ache and your just can't take it anymore! That smile of his falters when he sees actual tears run down your face, and hears the pained, pitiful noises you force through your gag. You've never seen him look so openly apologetic for anything before now, a hurried "Okay, okay!" before his hand returns in force with a vigorous, high-tempo version of the same assault as before. Finally, the pleasure you've been looking for! He keeps at it without any attempt at further shenanigans until finally, as you moans ascend and you approach climax his thumb works it's way in and rubs your slippery pearl just so, the straw

that finally breaks the pony's back and sends you over the edge.

It's hardly Earth-shattering, in fact the long wait and repeated teasing have somewhat reduced the force behind your orgasm as opposed to building it up, but then again, this is just an appetizer for the both of you, the main course still looming on the horizon. Still, your satisfied sigh is his cue to tug loose the knot holding your gag in place, chuckling to himself at how thoroughly soaked the bow is before dropping it in a wastebasket while you work out the kinks in your jaw. He inspects your bonds at various points while his free hand begins to idly, perhaps automatically massage your scalp, though your giggling and nuzzling his hand draws his attention back to you, with the biggest smile you've seen him wear since you woke up on the sofa after your close encounter with the van.

"You couldn't have tied these by yourself. Did you get Autumn's help?"

"H-help isn't the word I would've picked... being tied up wasn't my idea."

"Autumn managed to tie you up against your will? How the hell did that happen?" He forces out between laughter at your expense.

"She... well, she had me tie off the loops, but by the time I knew what they were for she already had my forelegs like this! She's bigger than me, you know! Stronger too!" You groan, now doubly ashamed of yourself for having let this happen in the first place. You're so busy feeling dumb that you don't really follow when he chuckles "Silly pony" and leans in close, but his lips meeting yours certainly get the message across. At first it's chaste, but you find yourself pushing up to take it deeper, the first sign of the wonderful romance you'd pictured finally happening as his lips part and you begin to dance your tongue across his. You're still bound, so it's all you can do to kiss back as hard as you can and hope he gets the message. Shifting weight on the bed is a welcome sign, and suddenly he's no longer leaning over you but rather laying with you, using an arm to prop himself up enough not to crush you.

He's in the bed! You're in bed together! Not like that hasn't happened almost every night for months now, but not like this! The hand not currently holding him up begins to roam to and fro, sometimes rubbing



your neck, sometimes your belly, sometimes stray fingers run up and down the inside of your thighs, all while the two of you continue a fierce makeout. Suddenly being pinched on one of your weird little horse nipples causes you to break the kiss with a high-pitched squeaking sound, recoiling a bit at the new but not-entirely-unpleasant sensation coming from one of the the least explored chunks of your anatomy. It certainly isn't a fluke when it happens again to the other nub, your Master grinning from ear to ear at the discovery that his little pet pony doubles as a squeaky toy. The teasing continues for a bit, to the point that he leans back a bit and employs both hands to the task of cupping, squeezing and pinching a part of you that you'd largely ignored up to now. The pain is nothing compared to tiny electric sensation of his squeezing, and for a few seconds you lie back, bite your lip, and enjoy.

Still, this fun bit of foreplay is just that - only foreplay- and he's far too clothed for your liking. His teasing stops as soon as you've got your teeth clenched on the collar of his shirt, tugging insistently until he puts his arms up and lets you disrobe his upper body, flinging the offending cloth off the bed with gusto before kissing him again, the excitement of the moment and his prior attentions already rekindling the fire in your loins. You break the kiss only to move your mouth elsewhere, making your way across his cheek, down his neck, gradually arriving at his chest before starting to work your way back up. He's here, he wants you, he's gonna make you his and you just wanna kiss him all over!

"As hot as having you all tied up is, I don't think I wanna restrain your enthusiasm." Your Master says with a chuckle before extending a hand to the loop holding your forelegs in place and tugging it loose. Your giddy noises elevate in volume when you realize that he's willing to forgoe the ultimate submission game because you're already such a good girl, ignoring the soreness in your forelegs as you wrap them around him as quickly as you can, bring you closer, closer, closer still to your beloved. This moment is so perfect, so lovely, that it's simply beyond your power to do anything but close your eyes and focus only on the motion of your tongue as it interacts with his. Just his tongue, his body touching yours, and the sound of your own breathing. Heavenly. You only hope your Master is enjoying this as much as you are.

As if in answer to your question his lips move elsewhere, at first to your

snout, then forehead, but then down to your neck after a detour to nibble on the tip of your left ear. Every little touch feels magnificent, but his breath is nothing if not ticklish, so you find yourself giggling and squirming as he continues down to... to...

Wait, where is he going?

You peek up at his receding head as he works his way down your abdomen, but flinging your head back into the pillows is pretty much involuntary when he gently presses his teeth down onto one of your nipples. It seems as though that was a deliberate move on his part, too, because it means you're unsuspecting and defenseless when his tongue meets your folds.

"Ma-master!"

He doesn't stop, of course, but he does look back up at you to make eye contact. His tongue feels and moves differently than Autumn's, but you're almost too busy reeling from the surprise of having him down there at all to notice the subtle differences. You're certainly very happy that he is, but it just didn't seem very... dom-y, so you never thought he'd actually service you himself! It's new and definitely unexpected but you could really get used to this! His tongue moves much more slowly and firmly than Autumn's practiced quicksilver licks, but pleasure is pleasure all the same, nevermind the erotic thrill of being serviced by your Master, his breath tickling you in places you never imagined, his stubble rubbing against your inner thighs as he goes to work with gusto. Your arousal begins to boil over as he works his tongue laboriously over the insides of your snatch, your moans and soft grunts occurring more frequently as he tastes you inside and out. This pleasure could go on for ages, and you know it, but the sensations between your legs are making it plain; foreplay just isn't going to cut it anymore.

You need him inside of you. Right this instant.

You never thought you'd be so assertive as to place your forehooves on either side of his head to tug him up toward you, but he goes right along without missing a beat, instead letting momentum carry him back to your mouth, where you experience the taste of your own slick arousal on his

tongue. The taste and the thoughts that come with it drive you wild, and you pull yourself against him, grinding your marehood against his still-clothed crotch, enjoying his grunt of approval as you locate and begin to tease at the obvious, hefty bulge beneath. Undoing the leg and tail straps that still held you in place on the bed is a prelude to him kissing harder and elevating your own grinding motions to a mutual affair, with his hips moving with yours and, to your distinct pleasure, his arms moving you around as you grind. You're grinding, and kissing, of course, but the idea worms its way into your head that even if you weren't, he could still derive pleasure just by rubbing you back and forth like now with his arms, as though you were a living, breathing, thinking sex toy. It's, it's just... oooh, that's quite an interesting feeling all by itself. A-ah. This is new!

You fight to compose yourself, even just a little, before swallowing your pride one last time and whispering in his ear.

"P-please, Master... I... I want it."

The first thing he does is plant a hand firmly on one of your buttocks and give a firm squeeze, but after you've had your second to gasp and shudder, he's right back into it.

"I'm sorry, you'll have to be a little clearer, pet. I want you to say it."

The grope was just him getting you off balance for this, you're sure of it, but there's no alternative to playing his games now, not when you're so close, and not if it's as good as you think it will be. All the same, though... are you really about to do this?

"Please... my wonderful Master, I want you to make me yours... I want you inside of me! Please!"

Well, there it is. You've gone and begged him to seal the deal. Memories of your old life crash down on you in a sudden torrent. Your first time with a girl, that satisfied, conquering feeling it gave you... is that what you'll give him? You used to kinda cool in a dickish sort of way, you'll never be cool again! Just cute and sweet and stuffed to bursting with his di-

Your flashback ends pretty abruptly when a pair of pants being tossed directly into as wall catches your attention. Your nervousness increases about tenfold as you watch them flop uselessly to floor and realize that when you look back at him there's only gonna be a pair o-

Nope, there those go too.

His hands settle on either side of your face and slowly turn you back to face him, now totally naked and kneeling on the bed if front of you. A quick glance down gives you an eyeful, and you're caught between visible excitement and nervous jitters when you realize that his member, already standing at full attention, is only inches away from touching you... there. This is really gonna happen. His hands guide your gaze back up to his eyes, And there's this fondness in them and that wonderful smile that just makes you wanna melt.

"Are you okay? We don't have to do this if you're not sure, you know."

"I'm s-sure... Just a little nervous, Master."

"And what is there to be nervous about, Zephyr?" He chides, moving in close to kiss you on the forehead. If he notices that leaning in to be that close to you had left his manhood rubbing your slick pussy lengthwise he certainly doesn't show it as he resumes speaking. "I promise I'll take it easy on you..."

No, no he definitely knew what he was doing by leaning in so close, as he begins to move his hips back and forth just enough that his package moves with it, sliding up and down your folds. You can't properly contain yourself, biting down on your lower lip as your wings twitch involuntarily. You swear you can feel the blood pumping through his cock as he moves, and it's intoxicating in ways you would never have expected. He's messing with you, and you know it, but it always feels so good when he has his fun! All the playing around in the world won't get you off, though. He is very, very surprised when you buck your hips just so, moving yourself up a few inches and positioning him exactly where you'd like him to be- pressing very lightly on your slit, not enough to part your lips and enter but just enough to for you, and him, to feel the

pressure.

Now you've got his attention quite completely. "Please, Master... I'm yours to enjoy."

He leans in close once again, laying you back onto the bed. Safely beneath him and just the tiniest push away from being penetrated, your Master whispers "Good girl", before roughly, passionately kissing you. As your tongues dance, though, you feel the pressure building on your nethers as your lips part and he begins to push himself inside. This man... this man spied on you, and... and kidnapped you. He changed your body and imprisoned you. You were tormented and frightened and... and... This man changed your mind. He gave you such wonderful pleasure with just a simple scratch on the head and fed you good meals and... and... held you in his arms at night when you were scared.

This man loves you. You're sure of it. It's love that feels so impossibly good when he pushes just a bit more, even through the pain as your body tries to accommodate his girth. You're forced to break the kiss and instead latch onto him with your forehooves, burying your face in his shoulder as you desperately try to spread your hind legs further still. Every centimeter he moves is another wracking wave of unfamiliar pleasure, and as much as you'd love to tell him as much you're currently only capable of choking gasps for air and occasional high-pitched yelps as he reaches new depths within you. Good god, when does he end?! He just keeps pushing and pushing and probing until finally, after what could have been hours for all you'd know, he stops pushing to ask if you're alright.

You're still reeling from the sensations coming from between your legs, but this reprieve from any new assault gives you a second to flop back onto the bed and catch your breath. You take an excited peek down and stare enraptured at the sight of your snatch being stuffed full of him. You're also somewhat baffled to find a full inch and a half of his cock is still not inside of you yet. All the effort of squeezing him into yourself and he hasn't even hilted yet! Ugh, you'd think that if a guy used crazed super-science to design you a vagina and rebuild himself, cock included, you'll assume, that at least he'd design them to go together!

He's still waiting on your reply, though, and with a tiny nod of the head and a firm kiss on his lips you give him the go-ahead. Your Master is gentle, at first, working in and out very slowly and by the look of things delighting in your moans. Unbelievable! incredible! Every nerve in your body is singing in joy as it finally fulfills it's purpose as you get fucked. After a minute or two he picks up the pace, leaving you squirming and squealing beneath him as your pussy loosens up to accommodate more and more of him.

Now he's really into it and you're... you're... you're absolutely loving it! He's inside you! He's grunting and even starting to sweat just a bit, he must be enjoying it too! Oh, he'd better like it! More than like it, even, he needs to think you're the best lay he's ever kidnapped! It's those thoughts that push you into more active participation, rather than lying there and taking it like some crude plush facsimile of the real thing. Pressing your hind legs into his sides to keep him close and raising your forehooves back above your head to brace yourself against the headboard gives him some much needed leverage to begin really using those muscles to the fullest, now pumping in and out of you at full speed. You try to call out "Master" but you and he both break into giggles at how silly it sounds, your voice audibly rising and falling with every thrust. The usual rush of embarrassment every time he laughs at you isn't there now. So you're a bit silly, whatever, if you're comfortable with him inside you being comfortable with the odd laugh at your expense shouldn't be a problem.

It's a joyous, exhilarating moment when a new thought crosses your mind, an urge you're hardly able to understand or resist, but he seems quite enthused when you lean up to whisper into his ear:

"I... I want you to mount me... from behind..."

The growl that emanates from his throat is exhilarating, to say the least, and he approves by way of kissing you fiercely while enjoying a few hard strokes into you, with long pauses in between to enjoy your moans. It's with a pleased groan that he slides his way out of you, more erect than ever before, as you learn to abhor the feeling of emptiness that it leaves you with. You're quick to roll over, but rising to your hooves is more of a challenge than you thought it would be, your rear legs simply won't stop trembling as you push yourself up onto them.

"Having fun, little Zephyr?"

"M-more than I ever thought I would... this little pony is very grateful for your love, sir."

"No need to be so formal, pet." He coos, "But I'm glad you like it.", as he runs his hands up and down your back while you finally manage to stretch your hind legs out, spreading them into a V-shape and giving him an eyeful of your gaping, soaked hole as you flick your tail from side to side, spreading your wings halfway open and looking back at him sideways, hoping you look half as sexy as you feel right this second. With as much

It's sultriest, neediest tone voice you can possibly muster, feminine in ways you still weren't sure you could be, that comes out of your mouth as you beg him. "Come on, stallion, this mare needs a good fucking!"

The look in his eyes when you said that is enough to send shivers down your spine again, as he leans over you, rubbing your slit with the throbbing head of his cock as he does, to whisper into your ear. "You little minx. Every second of waiting was worth it, you've aged like fine wine!"

You swear you were about to retort when he entered you, this time much more easily and much more forcefully. The sudden bump took you by surprise, your moan harsh and sudden, and quickly followed up by another. His voice rings in your ears on his next thrust, simply the word "Tight!". Your forelegs give out as you spread your hind ones as far as you can, loving the feeling of his hands gripping your hips as he continues to long-cock you, hard and deep. Another major impact, another moan, another cry from your Master, this time "Hot!" It's practically reflex when your hips start moving in time with his, and word's fail you utterly when your rythms match just so that he finally hilt in you, filling you up completely and drawing a harsh, ragged moan. You draw the first real moan out of him at the same instant, your vaginal walls clenching down on his member as you both take on a new ferocity in your lovemaking. A final call of "Eager!" is the last discernible word you get out of him, but knowing that he's praising your performance

gives you all the more reason to keep going. Your moans ascend to a fevered pitch as he continues to stuff you full of cock, but you're driven to a new height when one of his hands runs up the length of your spine all the way to your mane, grabbing a handful near the base of your scalp and using it as leverage to keep fucking. The tugging sensation, though deliberately spread across a lot of hair and still very soft relative to the treatment you're getting downstairs, is more than you'd bargained for, your cries now simple "Ah!"s on indefinite repeat as the building pressure of your own approaching orgasm becomes absolutely titanic.

For a second, the constant, hard penetration you'd been enjoying softens just a bit as his free hand leaves your hips to your dismay. Until your ears detect the sound of whooshing air and then, suddenly, impact.

The "Crack!" sound of his hand spanking your rear barely even registers to you over the sound of your loud, long cry of "Master!" as the rush overwhelms every fiber of you. Still moving, still fucking, still reaming you for all you're worth, his hand descends for another before you've even had time to catch your breath from the first one.

\*Crack!\*

Oh god, this is it! Every muscle in your body begins to spasm with a force you'd never imagined as your breath catches in your throat and a strangled squeal escapes your throat.

\*Crack!\*

For a second you swear the world goes black as your rear legs give out, dropping you onto the bed as the built-up pressure of arousal finally explodes into orgasm. You're dimly aware of your strange little squealing noise building up into a full-blown scream, but the only thing you're sure of is your vag clenching down onto his member so hard you swear you can feel every throbbing vein and fold of skin. You honestly didn't believe that any single thing would ever feel as good as that first fingering on the sofa, with Autumn using you for her own satisfaction, but now you understand that was nothing. Foreplay at best, a simple, pleasant exchange between the three of you at least. The feeling of emptiness when you feel him pull out is still there, but it's hardly the



problem that it was previously. Not when your body is still convulsing in the aftershocks of that glorious event.

His hand touching your face is the first thing to pull you out of an outright catatonic bliss on the bed, his face swimming into view through somewhat unfocused eyes in a mixture of amusement, concern, and no small amount of pride.

"Zephyr? Zephyr sweetie, are you okay? Was that too much?"

"In... credible..."

"Thank you. You're not so bad yourself, my little pet."

Suddenly he's lying beside you, pulling you in close for a long hug while you gasp for air. You're almost ready to call it a wonderful night when you realize that you're being poked in the abdomen by...

Oh no way...

"Y-you didn't finish?"

"Oh, not quite yet, little Zephyr, but I thought it might be best if I gave you a minute or two after that."

"N-no! No fair! My Master deserves his pleasure too! Come on, I can keep going!"

"Well, I'm awfully tired from all that, Zephyr. I'll leave the rest up to you then."

For a second you're not quite sure what he means at all until he rolls onto his back, lifting you with both arms before setting you down atop him, sitting only an inch or two further up his abdomen than his still-throbbing erection. Oh! Ohh! Looks like he wants you to be the one riding him this time 'round. There's no hesitation this time, your own embarrassment long since washed out by sheer, overwhelming pleasure and the desire to please him overriding any residual concerns you might have. Your limbs are still pretty shaky, your entire body still trying to recover from the

force or your orgasm, but you manage to prop yourself up just a bit, forehooves resting on his chest and your hind legs just barely upright. Still, it's enough to lift your rump over him just barely, his member brushing between your buttocks and nearly coming into contact with a hole you'd rather he didn't explore for a while longer yet. A soft "Eep" from you and a grin from him is all that is exchanged when he nearly probes your little pucker, both of you far too consumed with the task at hand to bother pushing boundaries, it seems.

Still quivering but having regained your breath, you do your best to tease him, running the outermost folds of your pussy very lightly across his tip before putting on the most innocent expression you can and asking him with all the sweetness you can muster:

"Master, may I?"

His smile is sardonic at best, he certainly seems to get that you're trying to mess with him, but the seriousness in his eyes a second later captivates you and wipes the smile from your face preemptively, you know what's next.

"Ride it, pet."

You can hardly contain yourself, months of day-to-day conditioning coming to the fore as you immediately lower yourself just a bit, letting his head part your folds as you reply with a low, giggling "Mmhmm, Yes Master". Even though he was just inside you minutes ago it still takes a bit of doing to start actually working him into you, slowly savoring the feeling of him filling you up as gravity impales you on him little by little. Suitably situated and encouraged by both his expression and the delicious sensation of being penetrated, you start by simply rocking your hips just a bit, quickly building up a steady tempo and managing to work him even deeper inside. It's not the slow, hard reaming he gave- when you're in command of the pace it seems that speed is the key, as your hips begin to work overtime and you hooves find new purchase on the bed, and his chest, as working yourself up and down on top of him at the same time rewards you with open, uncontrolled moaning from your Master on the bed. You're doing it! You're really gonna make him come if you can keep it up!

His hands finding their way to your sides is actually something of a shock. Enough of one that your rear hooves recoil in surprise, bringing your full body weight down on a single point- his cock. You let out a sudden cry as his manhood strikes deeper than it ever has before, your upper body hunching over for a second as he finally reaches the utmost depth of you. Your motions stop as a spasm overtakes you, a wave of pleasure rippling over every inch of your body, but your Master apparently isn't content to wait, those same hands now begin to lift and lower you on their own. You want to feel insulted by the urgency of his pleasure, but there's an erotic thrill in this that you just can't deny. Being held in both hands and "operated" like some breathing sex toy is honestly a little hot in it's own right, and let's be honest; you pretty much are a breathing sex toy at this point. You are a bit unwieldy for this to be a permanent solution, though, so your hip-shaking, booty-quaking human ride begins anew, your own arousal soaring as every little hip bump now fills you all the way back up, his head bumping a point so deep inside you you're surprised you can't taste it.

Now his pleasure is all but forgotten, your own arousal hitting a fever pitch and a familiar pressure developing in your abdomen as you build up again. He seems to be close, though, and you're squeezing his cock for everything it's worth downstairs as you ride. New throbbing sensations finally rise up from him, and you put on a final, frenzied bit of effort as you realize he's going to finish.

"Please.... Master.... Do it, make me yours! Come inside me!"

You assume that's what he wanted to hear, as mere seconds later an alien, fluid warmth races up into your innermost depths as your Master's face becomes one of supreme satisfaction. Your efforts haven't stopped either, though, quite determined to milk every drop from him, like a good pet would, and to desperately race against the clock and finish yourself off again before he goes flaccid. Your Master seems to have considered your needs here as well, running a thumb along his tongue before mashing into your clit, rubbing in furious circles as you continue to fuck him as fast as you can. The sudden rush of new stimulation is like being struck by lightning, your body at once seizing up as a mind-numbing bliss washes over you for the second time tonight. There is no scream or cry for this

one, the noise you make is an indescribable, many-pitched exclamation before your forehooves give out and you find yourself splayed out atop him, his mostly firm member still inside you.

The two of you stay there like that for quite awhile. Quiet, deep breathing is the most either of you can muster the energy to do, short of one of your Master's hands settling in your mane as he pronounces "Good girl" between heaving breaths. You... you really did it! He's exhausted, totally wiped out! You gave him pleasure, he made you his! Ooh, Autumn's gonna be so proud of you when she hears about this. You're exhausted too, but absolutely satisfied with how your night went, and in a larger scale what your life has become. You could get this treatment a few times a week, you know! Still, you do pause for a second and think through a quick apology letter to the old, male you, as you're certain he's well and truly gone now. You remember being very, very angry with your Master when you met him first, glaring out of your cell at him as he taunted you about your wonderful new body...

How things change.

Sometime after his member unceremoniously slides out of you with a small, wet popping sound and you feel giddy at the sensation of his seed leaking out of you you're able to muster enough energy to tell him you love him once more before passing out. There's no vocal reply, but you do find his other arm suddenly around your waist, holding you tight against him as the two of you fall asleep thoroughly entangled in one another.

# Zephyr's Tale



## Part 24

A hand moving through your mane wakes you, Master idly entertaining himself in the late morning rather than getting up. He's clearly just as tired as you are, and that's normal considering this is the third.... or maybe fourth time you've woken up since passing out the first time he finished in you. Moving closer to him through the soreness in all your limbs you begin to pepper him with tiny kisses, continuing even as he rolls toward you to pull you into an embrace. Sadly, being pulled close proves that he's well and truly spent this time, as though riding him again and again and again every time your body was rested enough for it all night last night was not enough. Still, even though your little kisses aren't going to earn you a fourth fucking(or is it fifth? Last night's all a bit blurred together by now), you're certainly still happy to give them. The warm feelings that flood your body when he's close to you are on overdrive right now, your affection and cuddliness at all-time peak to the point that you're reminded of an ecstasy high. You look at him and just get so excited about everything! You did it, you had sex as a girl and it was great! Better than great! Hooves-down the best sex of your life! No wonder Autumn thought you wouldn't still be upset with her once he was done with you, everything prior to last night seems sorta... unimportant. You're not angry or feeling betrayed any more, but you are going to get her back for that before too long, if only for the sport of it.

Hands lightly stroke your wings while he breathes deeply and takes the time to plant a number of kisses on your forehead. Neither of you has terribly much to say right now, aside from your little happy squeaks as you continually try to cuddle deeper with him, as though any space being left between your bodies were unacceptable. Finally, though, his lips trace a path of small kisses from your forehead, to your eyelids, down your snout, to the tip of your nose, and finally to your lips, where the two of you stay in bliss for a few precious moments.

Ah, it's just so nice! You're so happy and he's so happy and you're so close it's like being on your honeymoon! Granted, you never once imagined being the "bride" when you pictured your honeymoon, but all

things considered this is just really, really nice all around. He's the one who finally breaks the long, tender cuddle session, a low sigh escaping his lips as he hauls himself upright, holding you to his chest as he rises up and pads toward the bathroom still fully nude.

"I think we both need a bath before anything else" he chuckles, running the tub and checking the temperature every now and again while stroking your mane. Once it's full to satisfaction he hoists himself in before lifting you up to pull you in after him, lathering you in shampoo and brushing it into your matted, disarrayed fur. Even now his movements are slow and reserved, the hot water clearly just as relaxing to him as it is to you. It's slow, plodding work, but you manage to soap up a loofah and set about scrubbing him, though you're not terribly good at it considering you can't use your mouth- the taste would be foul- but the irresistible perk of the corners of his mouth as you press it into him with your hooves is enough for you. The man in control can just barely control himself, overtaken by exactly how cute you can be, and that's a reward all by itself.

Scrubbing, brushing, and rinsing, all in near-constant contact, proximity being your new drug of choice for the foreseeable future. He seems to understand exactly what's going through your head, though, a free hand always stroking or rubbing somewhere, keeping you at least partially sated while he finishes cleaning the both of you off. You're just about done, feeling refreshed and even more relaxed than before, when a buzzer goes off somewhere in Master's bedroom. You're left to drip-dry on the bathmat while he goes off to check what seems to be the intercom you've used the other end of, returning a few seconds later with a sigh and a smile.

"Autumn is happy we've had a late morning, but she thinks Sunflower is going to cry if we make her wait any longer for breakfast. You're mostly dry, right?"

"Dry enough! I know how the little one feels, though, I'm starving!"

"Well, we got an awful lot of exercise last night, pet."

The sound you make is more of a soft purr than any specific reply, nuzzling his thigh before the two of you set off to breakfast. It's not a

totally conscious thing, but the degree of separation between you and your Master even as you walk through the house is never more than an inch or two, frequently brushing against one another as you move. You just... never want to be apart from him again. It's an irresistible sort of impulse, this closeness, and you don't think it will be going away any time soon. You make yourself comfortable on the kitchen floor while Master goes down to the basement to release Autumn and Sunflower, who emerge behind him a few seconds later. Apparently being two or three hours behind schedule is an eternity to Sunflower, the little thing chattering relentlessly about her hunger while Master sets himself about cooking. If hunger is an issue for Autumn she certainly doesn't show it, approaching you at once with a grin bigger than any you've seen before and a knowing look in her eyes. For decency's sake, considering Sunflower is scant feet away, she leans in to whisper, hushed tones still enthusiastic beyond compare.

"I'd ask how it went, but I think I can guess. Was it as good as you wanted?"

"Better, Autumn. Better than I'd ever dreamed. I'm still going to get you back for the stunt you pulled, you know."

"Oh, sweetie, it's hardly going to be revenge if I enjoy it." she coos, nuzzling into your neck and giggling at the thought. You nuzzle back, pouncing on her just a bit to hold her in a hug while you both lie on the floor.

"Not enough intimacy last night, Zephy?"

"Are you kidding? I'm sore all over. Just lemme hug you until the food is ready."

Getting Autumn to cuddle is hardly a challenge, and she's even more intense than usual, clearly just as happy as you that Master has well and truly taken you, a sure sign that you're staying here. Soon Sunflower's plaintive mewling is silenced by a veggie omelet, your own arriving minutes later along with Autumn's. The focus today is on Sunflower, of course, with her adoptive family coming tomorrow, so you're quite content to follow along, walking somewhat awkwardly, while she and



Autumn squeeze their last afternoon for all the fun it can give. You participate as best you can, but it's much easier to just stick close to your Master and cuddle wherever possible.

Autumn, for her part, doesn't seem as distraught as you thought she'd be. Maybe she'd burying it well to keep Sunflower happy, or maybe the knowledge that at least you're not going anywhere is keeping her spirits up, but her smiles seem pretty genuine, and save for the extra second or two when she hugs Sunflower today could just pass for a particularly intense playdate. After a long afternoon outdoors she does end up cuddling the little one double-hard, though, and you get the feeling that the tears will flow at the slightest provocation. The day goes on without incident, though, and as evening closes in on an almost underwhelmingly quiet day you briefly dare to believe you can pass through without emotional incident. There was also a point earlier in your life when you believed a sick day off from work would pass without incident.

As usual, your Master refuses to allow such a thing. At least not directly. As the waning sunset filters in through the living room window, your master, subtly, quietly brings the word "Present" into play while playing with Sunflower, eliciting more excitement than even Autumn could ever fit into one sound. You and Autumn perk up quite a bit at this, watching with piqued interest as your Master picks something off the top of a shelf that's invisible to anyone who barely scrapes three feet tall. Holding the mystery item in question behind his back becomes a game in and of itself, as he is forced to rotate in time with Sunflower as she dashes around him in an effort to get a peek. It's the absolute goofiest you've ever seen him look, usually even his silliest moments are subtle facial expressions or just words in response to something ridiculous you or Autumn are doing around him.

Eventually he resumes his usual act, though, giving a half-stern look while demanding Sunflower sit still. She complies quickly, though still seconds later than you or Autumn might - still a child, you have to remind yourself, not disobedient - and Master enjoys her antsy discomfort at being made to remain still, the occasional twitch of a muscle simply beyond her control. The long pause in activity is agonizing for everyone involved but Master, but finally his arms swing out from behind his back, soft-looking bundles in either hand.

It takes a moment to register what exactly he's holding, but you're on your hooves as soon as it registers. In either hand sits a plush toy, one tan-and-black, the other white-and-green, and your alarm is enough that a cry is strangled in your throat.

It's the Zephyr plush! Your plush! He must have taken it along with you after putting you under!

As much as you approve of his commitment to recovering any evidence that could somehow lead to him, you're in a nearly blind panic when the little thing rears back as if to tackle the two toys, only slightly smaller than her, crying her thanks. She can't touch them! Dosing ponies twice is dangerous, Autumn told you so!

"STOP!"

The whole room does at once, though your owner and life-mate look almost as alarmed as you feel when you end up doing the tackling yourself, separating an infinitely displeased filly from her toys in a swift motion. Your confused, squirming "niece" wants nothing to do with your rescue, and the tiny hoof smacking your muzzle repeatedly makes it plain she's actually rather frightened by this turn of events.

Still, clutching her between your forehooves and chest is enough to keep her hooves away from your face as she descends into an uncharacteristic tantrum. Autumn's on her hooves, mouth agape, while Master has a stern gaze fixed straight on you.

This... probably looks bad, doesn't it?

"Zephyr! I know I didn't ask about giving your plush away, but laying a hoof on her over it is not how I expect you to protest."

"N-no, Master, that's not... Aren't they dangerous?"

He stares at you for a few seconds, utterly dumbfounded by your question, his lack of comprehension extending into a long and awkward pause across the entire room. Sunflower's kicking and flailing ends

abruptly, as Autumn's head rotates just a bit to one side in your peripherals, confusion written across her features. Well, it's looking like you've gone and made an ass of yourself, Zephyr. Clearly you panicked where you oughtn't have, and now, heaven help you, you're going to have to explain yourself. Before your mouth opens to begin a cycle of apologies and explanations, your Master finally comprehends your intentions, his eyes lighting up suddenly.

"Oh! Ohhhhh, the nanomachines!" He calls out, before his brow furrows, "Did you really think I wouldn't make sure they were inert as soon as I took you? Don't wanna risk someone stumbling on one and matching one of my pets. I mean, I'm immune anyhow, but it's still not a risk worth taking."

Embarrassment overcomes you. Clearly a mindful pet would've known that his careful planning and attention to detail should have made it obvious that he would have considered any potential dangers. Your hooves slump, letting Sunflower wiggle her way back out onto the floor, her own face still mired in confusion. A hand arrives atop your head, ruffling your mane as his fingers scratch just a bit. Your pleased murr is a question all by itself, and soon you're rubbing yourself against his legs like an affectionate housecat after he responds simply that "Your heart was in the right place, I suppose. Good girl."

Master and Autumn's concerns having been dealt with made explaining to Sun that you were worried there might be "something wrong" with the plush toys far, far easier, though she's clearly far less interested in listening and far more interested in playing with her "stuffies!". Soon the filly has the plush you and plush Autumn climbing a mountain that resembles an armchair while Master wanders off and Autumn playfully bumps your side with a hoof.

"Awfully motherly there, Zephyr."

Your scoff could not be more flippant in response. "I hope you're not suggesting we get one."

Her weight arrives on your side at once as she leans against you, nuzzling affectionately in a way you can't help but smile at. "Oh, come now, you

don't think it'd be nice to have a little colt to look after?"

"Eugh, no. Explaining anything at all about how our lives work would be awful. "Yeah, you're sapient, and mommy used to be people, but now we wear collars and fetch on command." Too strange, I don't wanna deal with it."

You can feel her giggling, a soft "Well, if that's how you feel about it..." wafting past your ears. You feel a bit guilty already for shooting down Autumn's suggestion so firmly but truthfully you weren't interested in being a parent before being taken here, and that's something you haven't changed your mind on at all. Her little sigh sounds less disappointed than you would've thought, and a tender kiss touches your lips before Autumn trots over to join Sunflower in her play. Without much of anything to do until your guests arrive tomorrow, you find a spot on the couch beside Master settle in for a bit of warmth and relaxation. The day just kind of slips away from you there, not one member of the household made it to bed, instead sleeping in the living room.

It isn't terribly long before you're pulled back into wakefulness by the sound of footsteps and scampering hooves and excited chattering. Your spot on the couch is no longer bathed in afternoon sunlight, and a glance back at the rest of the sofa finds the light further along, revealing that it's been at least a couple of hours. A look out the window reveals a small blue minivan pulling up to the front of the house, giving an oddly appropriate soccer-mom vibe considering who the yet-unseen driver is here to pick up. More importantly, a pair of new ponies to meet! Granted, they'll probably be preoccupied with their new daughter, but you're hoping to spend at least a little time talking to them. Your excited bounce off the couch is dampened by Sunflower dashing through the room and around the corner, with Autumn following in pursuit, a worried expression on her face.

You're prepared to chalk it up to pre-meeting jitters and leave it to Autumn to handle, trotting off to find Master standing by an open door, looking oddly relaxed as he leans against the door frame, hands halfway in his pockets. One descends to scratch behind an ear when you nuzzle his leg as a greeting. Your attention locks back onto the van as a woman emerges, seeming too small for even her own car, before sliding open the

passenger door. A unicorn mare emerges first, a braided sandy blonde mane drawing the eye at once, contrasting against a light cerulean coat. She hops out lightly, immediately trotting to the grass beside the van to relieve herself. You politely glance away, finding a pegasus stallion already out of the van and seated beside his owner. He's visibly not as large as the Big Mac-equivalent Evergreen, the only stallion you've met up to now, instead looking far less buff, wearing a brown coat with a short-cropped maroon mane and tail. A bit of white peeks out in his feathers, and you're already quite excited to meet another pegasus, even if they end up jealous that your wings aren't just for show.

The unicorn mare re-emerges from the grass a few seconds later, and the troupe approaches the door as a unit, the ponies visibly perking up as you wave to them. They look to their owner, and after she nods they both dash ahead of her to make it to the door first. You don't think you would have thought twice about galloping ahead of your Master if the circumstances were reversed. Should you be in awe of their obedience, or frightened of the owner that demands it? She doesn't look like she'd be so strict, though, with loose-fitting clothes around a tiny frame, her auburn hair in a bob-cut. The newcomers skid to a stop just short of the door, both sitting before your own Master with big smiles. Your owner speaks first, spreading his arms in a welcoming gesture.

"Hello again, you two! It's been quite a long time since I saw either of you."

The two new ponies forego words at first, nuzzling his legs at once, to which your Master responds by kneeling to hug and pet the two of them. Clearly, these two are grateful for their captivity. A series of happy words follow until the woman your Master said was named "Ann" finally arrives at the door, wearing a large smile and squeaking out a small "Hello". her voice is soft, and you've already got her pegged as impossibly meek. If she and your Master didn't go way back you're almost certain she'd have become a particularly wonderful fluttershy facsimile in the basement downstairs, to the delight of some other owner.

Oh good heavens, you're sizing up humans as prospective ponies now... you're really pretty fucked up, aren't you?

"Ann. It's wonderful to see you again." Your Master says with a softness usually reserved for you and Autumn. "Have these two been treating you well?"

"Oh, they're just wonderful. Mindful, polite, and cuddly? How could I complain?"

"Good points. If you like mindful and polite pets, though, why am I giving you a rambunctious little filly?"

She giggles, high and a bit squeaky, while the ponies both snap to attention, petting forgotten at the mention of their daughter-to-be. Your Master notices, laughing at once. Ann sneaks a quick rub of either pet's ear before replying.

"Oh, children are wonderful. Besides, these two would deserve the family they want even if I were going to be uncomfortable."

A raspy voice follows, the unicorn mare speaking up suddenly. "But she's here, right? Y-you have a little gi-, er, filly?" Her expression is hopeful to the verge of tears, the stallion's hoof arriving at her shoulder with a comforting pat. Your Master smiles, booping her nose with a hoof. "Of course she's here, sweetie. I wouldn't bring you all the way out here just because I haven't seen your owner in ages. Her name is Sunflower, and she's inside with my other pet."

The stallion speaks next, voice a bit higher than a human male's but still masculine, with a chuckle. "Other pet, eh? And I haven't even learned this one's name." he gestures toward you with a hoof, smiling toward you all the same. His eyes are kind, and you find yourself just a bit flattered by his gaze. Oh jeez, maybe you were wrong about not helping Autumn with the stallions. Your Master looks to you expectantly, and it takes you a moment to put two and two together to introduce yourself.

"O-oh! I'm Zephyr, nice to meet you! I hope you've got a lot of energy for play, Sunflower's a little fireball." you nearly blurt, ending with a big smile. You had simply been expecting introductions in turn, but a dainty hand arrives on top of your head as the two other ponies are in contact with you at once, hugging and nuzzling. The unicorn responds first, with

a high laugh.

"Oh, we'll have plenty for her. Nice to meet you too, Zephyr. Thank you for helping him look after our little girl. I'm True North, and the stallion sniffing your mane is Trade Winds. Yes dear, I saw you."

The stallion recoils a bit, clearly embarrassed. "Sorry hon... we don't meet other ponies very often. Hiya Zephyr, like my captain over here said, I'm Trade Winds, call me what you like."

The hand scritching your mane pauses, and Ann introduces herself with a smile. "And if you haven't heard, I'm Ann. I have to say, I didn't think he'd ever keep a pony for himself. You must be quite the little charmer."

Your pride at her statement is evident, and she just smiles to herself and lets Master lead her in. The ponies are hot on her heels and you follow along last, taking the time to close Master's front door before following along to the living room. Trade Winds and True North can't seem to sit still for more than a few seconds, either looking around excitedly or nuzzling one another, and Master and Ann wander off to locate Autumn and, presumably, Sunflower. You find yourself with an opportune couple of moments to strike up a conversation, and after hearing their names you've got one that's just burning you up.

"So, Trade and True... if you don't mind my asking, aren't your names a bit... thematic? Master usually prioritizes color requests. How did you two end up paired off so well?"

They share a look, smiling at one another, and while the Trade smiles with the confidence of someone who had won a medal, True lets out a giddy laugh as her stallion starts to speak.

"Well, that's no accident. You see, True and I knew each other before Mistress took us."

"You... you what?"

"It's true! We were in a long-distance relationship. We designed these ponies as a little inside joke, and she drew a bunch of both."

"So you got taken together?"

The stallion gently nuzzles the mare, a wing extending over her and pulling her close to his side, before proceeding. "No, actually. I got abducted first, since Mistress just wanted a stallion for company at first. But as sad as it must sound, I missed a person I had only ever seen through a webcam, and even though Mistress Ann is very kind and I tried my best to be happy for her, I couldn't help but get down sometimes. She noticed, of course, and eventually just couldn't take it any longer. So she called your Master and they planned to take her..."

"So then you were together?"

"Well, at first I didn't want them to abduct Trade... after all, who was I to steal her life away? But Mistress is clever, so she had me write a message and sent it by a disposable email address."

"A message?" You chirp, still barely able to keep up with how all this happened. The mare takes over from her mate, speaking with a bit of an embarrassed stutter.

"A m-message. More of a love note, really. It started with some stuff only s-she would know, and then asked if I would be willing to give everything up so we could be together... I said yes. The next day there was a stuffed pony in my mailbox, and then I woke up to discover that my online girlfriend stole my gender and gave me hooves."

"Wait, you were the guy?"

"Y-yes. We thought giving her the stallion and me the mare was cute... they were sailors, you see. He's my navigator, I'm the captain."

"So you ended up as his marefriend when you just wanted your human girl to come back?"

"I missed her, what can I say? We still get along, and once I got used to this relentless horndog making sure I knew what being a girl felt like, I kinda started liking it. I love this pony, and Mistress was kind enough to



bring us together because she loves him too."

You're honestly touched. How wonderful of Trade, to have demanded that they at least ask before making him a mare to play with.

"S-so, even though you two... swapped, you were still trying to conceive?"

Now you've got her embarrassed. the unicorn stares at the floor intently, her horn leveled at you as if in defense. The pegasus to her right just pulls her a little closer with his wing and laughs. "We both had wanted to be parents someday, and I'd already made peace with the new body."

True speaks very softly, still facing the floor. "A-and... I wanted it. To give him children."

You don't laugh at that one, instead just booping her nose with a hoof. "Of course. You're in love, after all."

The two of them simply start cuddling, and you elect to let them share a moment while footsteps descend the stairs behind you. Sure enough, Master's hand rubs your ear from behind, and as you turn you find Ann approaching her pets, and Autumn, wearing as big a smile as she ever has. True North and Trade Winds are both rapt in attention, eyes locked on a certain little filly in their Mistress' hands. Sunflower seems nervous, to say the least, but as she gets put down on the floor before two smiling ponies, the fear doesn't seem to get the better of her. For a few seconds, the room remains completely silent, as you and the other audience members hold their breath in anticipation.

True's raspy voice comes out as gently as it possibly could. "Hello, Sweetie. I'm True North, and this is Trade Winds. It's your decision, but we would be very happy if you would join our family."

Sunflower looks to both of them, Trade smiling reassuringly while True seems to tremble just a bit. "You would be my Mommy?"

"Yes, Darling."

"...And you would be my Daddy?"

"You got it, kiddo."

"And we would live with you?"

Ann just smiles. "Yes."

There's no declaration from the little thing, she just slowly totters over and hugs her would-be mother, who reacts with a noise of supreme joy, a pair of tears staining her fur. Soon she and Trade are showering the filly in an endless stream of affection, nuzzling and hugging as she shrieks with laughter. Autumn, to her credit, doesn't cry even though you know she must want to, and you and Master do your best to quietly comfort her while Ann's family has their joy.

# Zephyr's Tale

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## Zephilogue

The house is too quiet.

It's funny, missing a generally quiet sort of guy has made the place almost unbearably quiet. God love her, Autumn's been trying her hardest to keep you occupied these last few days as you got antsy and antsy in his absence, no longer content with books or TV or the limited uses you have for Charlie's old laptop. But in the absence of your Master, your appetite for chase and wrestling and sapphic orgasm has finally outstripped Autumn's. Your sister-pet has dozed off on the sofa after another agonizingly long day, both of you only half-heartedly involved in whatever was passing the time, both waiting for the sound of tires rolling up the driveway.

How did she ever get through this alone before he brought you here? No wonder she was particularly unhinged when you first met, she'd been alone for however long it took your owner to abduct you and the others. Without Autumn here you'd be a bawling wreck by now.

But with Autumn tucked out and you still awake and pining after him your night has descended into restless wanderings through the house. He should be home by now! Today is supposed to be his return date, and you've less than an hour left before it passes. Though you're confident it's just traffic or a minor holdup, you still catch yourself worrying that he might have finally had a run-in with the police, and each time your mind flits to a phone sitting on the living room coffee table with both Master and Mr. Eli on speed dial. Your instructions are clear, though, and you're only to call in case of an emergency, falling back on Mr. Eli should Master not respond or if he has not returned or called 48 hours beyond

his due date.

It's a grim prospect, though you were touched to learn that Eli had gladly agreed to take the two of you in were anything to happen. It didn't need to be said that the street went both ways there, but you've got a hunch that he'd take back any of his "product" without a second thought, that strange paternal attachment probably just as powerful as the need to maintain secrecy for as long as possible.

Another few minutes of idle clicking with the trackball Master attached to Charlie's laptop does nothing to relieve you of your desperate longing for a hand atop your head, your wallpaper - a photo of Opal asleep in her owner's lap - vanishing as you close the lid in frustration. Another hopeful glance out the window is met only with an empty, moon-lit driveway, and not so much as distant headlights to give you hope. You can't help but whine, low and desperate, before sulking your way up the stairs. It's idiotic, how much you miss someone that's barely been gone for a week, even under the circumstances. You can't even point to a particular moment when it happened, either! All the other little victories he's won over you stick out clearly, fondly, in your mind, but the point at which you became this devastatingly dependent eludes you. It must have been a slow thing, each little touch and kiss gradually making you... this.

You should've expected as much, you happy little love-pet. Almost every waking moment spent in his company for these past few months was bound to leave a mark on you, but you never thought it would be so bad when he finally did go out on another "acquisition run."

You can't help but swallow your nervousness at the thought. All that time you spent trying to talk him out of being what he is and doing what he does and here you are, anxious to greet him by the door even though you know full well he'll have new victims in tow. New ponies, plucked from homes and lives in the middle of the night and brought here, where he'll want them to emulate you. When you imagined this day on the horizon, you always figured you'd at least be the voice of reason, but since he gave you the laptop and the voice-to-text software to make typing easier...

You terrible creature, you sang a siren's song and now it's leading

wayward souls to doom.

Happy, cuddly, warm, obedient doom.

Another heaving sigh escapes your lips as you trot past the door to his "workshop", which has been largely tinkering space for him during his little hiatus. He's still tweaking the process, working in refinements here and there. Apparently his next "Batch" may involve a zebra on special request from the client, which isn't terribly far off the mark from making someone look the way you do now, you suppose.

You made him promise there would be no forced rhyming, nanotech or training induced.

He just laughed. A good sign, you suppose, that he followed up with a joke about it getting on the customer's nerves eventually. You're just happy he doesn't plan on making someone so compulsive that every sentence would be so colored by it. Maybe it's a little presumptive, but you've got a notion that you've mellowed him out a little. Maybe having a pool of at least marginally interested candidates to pull from lets him feel a bit better about everything, enough that he's not convinced he needs to be a proper villian to keep doing this.

Pulling yourself up to the bed and flopping over onto it in a single motion leaves you sprawled, wiggling your hooves in the wrinkled blanket as you try to get comfortable. It your fitful wiggings you bury your face in a pillow and suddenly go perfectly still. Another long, slow inhale lets you savor the smell of his shampoo on the pillow, briefly helping you set aside your anxieties.

If shampoo smell is this comforting by association, surely you can do better, right? In fact, the other day you'd come in here and found Autumn sticking her head into his laundry hamper, which she played off with a hug and a laugh. Now, though, you think you get it.

A more reasonable pony would listen to the voice begging you not to stoop so low in the name of dignity, and maybe a day or two ago you might have been so level-headed. Tonight, though, desperate and lonely, there's only a split second of trepidation before you're off the bed and

nudging the lid to his dirty laundry open with your nose. No sooner have you wedged your nose into the gap than you're rewarded with the scent of stale sweat. Perhaps another time, this won't smell so perfect.

But right now it smells like him, and that's almost enough to make you feel better.

It was your intention to just pull one of his shirts out and take it to bed with you. But no amount of gentle tugging at the sleeve held firmly between your teeth seems to pull the offending sweatrag clear of the bundle. A moment of whining frustration and short-sightedness leads you to drop back onto all fours from your "standing" position beside the hamper, and while the shirt doesn't come loose it certainly moves, bringing the whole shebang down with it.

Literally covered in your owner's dirty laundry, you can't help but breathe deep, letting some stupid part of your brain convince itself that his scent means everything is just fine, and as much as you know you should be cleaning up the mess, you just can't bring yourself to do it. It takes only a bit of wiggling and rolling around to work the mess into a loose pile, and as dumb as you know it is, you still find yourself cooing happily in a nest of your Master's clothes as your subconscious tricks itself into thinking he's back. Warmth rises in your loins as if to be "ready" for him, but the will to touch yourself just isn't there when you're this relaxed. Breathing deep and still trying your damndest to cuddle a T-shirt, sleep rises up on you before long.

A strange patchwork of light rouses you come morning, sunlight piercing through what you shamefully realize is a pair of boxers on your face. The man-scented cocoon you'd taken for refuge last night has become stuffy come morning, you can't help but nudge and wiggle your nose out of the pile to get a bit of fresh air. Your whole head follows, though you're still too sleepy to go much further than that, settling your head down on top of the pile to doze for a while longer. The morning air in the house is still and quiet, save for the sound of birds outside. Autumn must not be up yet, you muse, or surely she'd have found you in here.

After a bit more dozing, though, something changes. Your ears twitch subtly as the soft rumble of an engine and wheels rolling over dirt

becomes noticeable in the distance.

CAR!

"Truck", to be precise, but that's hardly at the forefront of your mind as you scramble out from the pile of laundry, all thoughts toward cleaning it up forgotten, and barreling downstairs as fast as your little pony butt can gallop short of using your wings indoors. Somewhere in your peripherals Autumn startles awake on the sofa when you dash into the living room, but you're much too busy heading for the window for any kind of greeting.

Rearing onto your hind legs and leaning against the wall gives you leeway enough to stretch your neck to see through the window, and you're quite certain Autumn understands what your giddy squeal means when you spot that familiar grey kidnap-mobile at the far end of the drive. Your fellow pet is by your side in seconds, happy nuzzles being shared as you fidget and whine impatiently while the truck pulls in and your Master, seriously be-stubbled even at this distance, sets himself about removing his latest haul from the back. You know you really ought to be interested in the two sleeping ponies your owner has over either shoulder, but in all honesty your top priority is putting as much of your body in contact with his as soon as you possibly can. He disappears from your field of view as he approaches the door, your and Autumn's cue to sprint for the entryway to greet him as he enters.

Now, he'd been out on grocery runs before. You know full well that if you're to greet him at the door he wants you sitting. Off to your right Autumn is clearly trying to remind you about that as the door swings open, but you just can't help yourself. If nothing else, he certainly looks surprised when one of his ponies is up on her hind legs and latched onto his waist before he knows she's there. He grunts softly at your impact, but keeps his balance as you throw yourself onto him, rubbing your face against his stomach in unrestrained affection.

"Someone missed me, I think."

You look up to find him looking to Autumn with a smile.

"She certainly did, Master. I tried to remind her..."

"No no, it's fine. You used to be the same way, remember?"

Finally, he turns to meet your gaze, still chuckling to himself at the sight of you. "I missed you too, Zephyr, but I need to put down these two-" he shrugs his shoulders for emphasis, a pair of pony rumps jiggling just a bit to either side of his face while their hind legs dangle down "-and grab the others. Down, girl."

You comply, with an embarrassed blush and a hurried apology while he takes a few steps and puts down his unconscious merchandise by the doorway to the basement. "Now, you two keep an eye on them while I get the other two, okay?"

"Yes, Master" comes without thought, as it always does, and a hand gently brushes over your mane as he heads back out to the truck. You and Autumn, meanwhile, eagerly move in for a look at the new pets. A pair of unicorns lay on the ground in front of you, horns visibly poking out from either mane. The mare has pulled her hooves in reflexively, sleepily curling up with a visibly furrowed brow. A rose-red mane nicely complements a cream colored coat, clashing quite powerfully with the blue maned, orange stallion sprawled out on the floor beside her. Still, you find the poor fella wearing a look of distress as he sleeps, matching the mare beside him. It's not much, but you find yourself laying a gentle peck of a kiss on both foreheads, taking care not to poke yourself on their horns. The stallion doesn't seem particularly comforted by the gesture, but the mare seems to relax just a bit. You can't help but smile, feeling genuinely optimistic about greeting these ponies.

Heavy footfalls from behind catch your attention, and you turn to see your Master struggling a bit with the next two. A blue pony is slung over his shoulder like the others, but your Master's upper body is visibly tilted to one side, his other arm slung around the chest of a substantial thestral, wedged between your owner's arm and his side.

"You know, this is the first time I've ever had a majority-male group coming back here. It's good to have something for that clientele, but you do know the market is mostly for mares, right?"



"Of course, Sir."

He strains just a bit as he leans to deposit the large bat-pony near the sleeping unicorns, a long white mane hanging over the stallion's face, looking near-luminescent against the darkness of his grey coat. Someone clearly had one of Luna's guards in mind making this large fellow, he's the size of Evergreen and heavily built all around! Well, that "someone" had better appreciate the changes, or else all your efforts will be for nothing. Beside the titan of a pony your owner sets down his other cargo, now easily identified as a pegasus. An azure coat plays nicely with a blonde mane that sticks out in all directions as he squirms restlessly on the ground.

Your stewardship of the sleeping pets-to-be continues as your owner carries them downstairs to the basement one by one, and as he lugs the large thestral down you follow along, catching a glimpse of him setting the pony down on one of the large pillows downstairs, lined up in a row beside the others, each covered with a light blanket. It's downright adorable watching him tuck each one in, though to your mind the picture isn't quite complete. If only he were so doting as to give them back their stuffed lookalikes, then the scene would be perfect. Still, they look downright snuggly for the moment, a far cry from how you stayed when you were down here. Perhaps you have softened him up, just a bit.

A warm smile goes your way, and it's only a few confident strides for him before he's scooped you up to head back upstairs. You catch a last glimpse of those sleeping faces as the door swings shut behind him, and your latest nagging worry returns.

"Wont they be mad at me?"

"Why, sweetie? All you did was tell the truth as best you remember it. Even the bad stuff, and they still wanted it."

"I don't think they ever imagined it'd really happen, though."

"Well then they're in for one hell of a surprise. Now come on, silly pony, the couch is calling our names."

They deserve a longer conversation about this, just like the dozen or so that preceded his leaving to collect them. Or the innumerable talks that came before and during your writing process. Still, as fiendish as his smile might've been when the voice-to-text software worked like a charm, allowing you to dictate an only marginally edited version of your life to this point, your joy at his rewards for your writing was too much to pass up. Sugar cubes, "toys" for you and Autumn, and sexual favors, all just for talking into a microphone and letting him edit things a bit in the name of secrecy afterwards. As if things weren't good enough around here already!

Soon the three of you are settled on the sofa, one of your owner's hands rubbing and scratching along your back, neck and head while the other does the same for Autumn. You're barely cognizant enough to speak, nuzzling aggressively and rubbing yourself against him, an addict finally getting her fix. Autumn doesn't seem to be much more in control of herself at this point, her breathing becoming quite heavy as she starts to rock her hips suggestively. He doesn't bother playing coy or cracking a joke, his strokes and cuddles transitioning into squeezes and gentle pinches with only a smirk as he watches the two of you go wild. Fingers arrive at your nethers, and a gentle kiss is placed on your nose.

"Good Girls."

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Relief, comfort, happiness. Autumn gently nibbling on one of your ears as you both rest your heads on his bare chest, the rhythmic rise and fall lulling you into a post-coitus daze. Your owner looks supremely pleased with himself as surveys the room, couch cushions arrayed wherever they happened to land, one resting atop the overturned coffee table.

"I'm beginning to think we went a bit overboard, Girls."

"Never, Sir. The table was in the way, it simply had to go."

A finger gently loops under your collar and tugs.

"Pet raises an excellent point. What would you say to a nice walk before we check on your recruits?"

Cool evening air wafts around you as a leash clips on, and your Master leads on toward the treeline, and all is as it should be. You're Zephyr, and this collar is your life's greatest blessing.

# Zephyr's Tale

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## Eight-year Anniversary Drabble

A stray sunbeam is pointing quite insistently at your eyes. Worse, the breeze coming through the window means the curtain blocks it only intermittently. A strobelight is no way to wake up but given the absolute warmth, the complete softness of your present position you can only sigh gently and peek an eye open to take stock of things.

Opal lays on Master's chest beside you, as it was when you fell asleep, and her unicorn sister's tail sits beside his head as she lays on his arm, facing the foot of the bed, using your butt as a pillow. Soft snoring coming from opposite Opal suggests that Autumn and Seafoam are in a similar configuration on Master's left side. Hm. No wonder you felt as good as you did. Nestled into the crook of his shoulder with a mare on either side of you is pretty much the best possible way to start your day, especially when one of them is your Opal.

That she wound up sleeping on his chest is no real surprise, given the duration of her stay here. At first everyone had tried to pretend that your guests would be sleeping downstairs on the couch, or in the pretty little beds Eli brought along when he dropped them off. But given the absolute convulsion the outside world had gone through when the news broke, their stay had blown away the expected two week sleepover into a lovely couple of months. Once the three-week threshold had been crossed your guests had become needy enough that Eli's rules about what your owner was and was NOT allowed to do with "his girls" had to be brought up more than once. Still, some snuggling and a bit of heavy petting from a man, coupled with all the attention little ponies could pay to one another, was proving enough to keep every pet sane and your Master more than a little satisfied with life.

... You're honestly beginning to worry he might want to keep a stable of this size after Eli takes Opal and company home. That would be...

Well, not that you're the jealous type, but that would simply be too much competition for too few digits, too few smiles, too few kisses and too few earnest beddings.

Not that you're the jealous type.

... Though you would essentially be the head of the harem... Keep the others, beside Autumn of course, in line... that's a little hot.

Musing on your hypotheticals you almost miss Opal yawning softly.

"Mornin' Zeph. What time is it?"

"Sometime after 10. I can't see the rest of the clock over Orchid's butt."

You feel the named unicorn stir, her chin still resting on your flank.

"You know you love it, birdbrain"

You sigh aloud, taking a small nip at the offending rump before conceding

"The butt? Yeah, I do. Unicorn butts have an elegance to them."

A soft chuckle reverberates through your owner's chest, as he lifts his head off the pillow.

"Do you have any idea how much it took to craft something like "elegance" into her? I spent so much time looking for inspiration that my browser history was pretty much just butts for a week.

"Wait, what kind of butts?" Orchid asks. "If I find out you copied my rear end from some deviantart plot closeup I swear I'm gouging you with my ho- EEEP"

Master firmly pinching her rear is not much of a surprise. He's softened

up a lot in your time together, but Orchid's, er, fearlessness is proving that for all his gentleness of late the man who'd brook no backtalk is still in there.

"First of all, Eli's insolent little flower, you'll do no such thing. Second of all, no, I had to work in three dimensions. So mostly human references. And a palomino, if I'm recalling correctly. If you really want to know I probably have them in your files."

"Uh... No thank you, Sir. I feel like that's maybe knowing too much. This is my butt. There are many like it, but this one is mine."

"I'd argue it belongs to Eli" Opal interjects, standing and moving to hop off the bed. "Speaking of, any word from him?"

Master frees his arm by depositing Orchid where Opal had been before grabbing his phone. "Look at you, little miss. I seem to recall a time when you'd have had a panic attack if someone talked about your butt as a piece of property. Your butt's owner sent an email a few hours ago that he thinks the coast is clear. He's on his way."

"Good. And listen, a couple years of eating from the palm of his hand and letting him play dress-up with me drove it home pretty well. All of this-" She laughs, gesturing with a hoof " - is pretty much his. Hard to dispute the truth when I know full well I'll be in garters and lace once we get home. Harder to dispute that when I'm looking forward to it. So I guess that's mission accomplished for you."

Autumn, apparently awake and thrilled, hops off the bed to greet your best friend with a morning kiss. "You finally got it! I thought you'd understood for a while now, but it's nice to hear. I forgot how difficult non-volunteers could be about accepting the gift."

"In my defense I did last over a year"

Seafoam, apparently roused by Autumn moving, pokes her head up. "Oh please. It would have been less than a year if he hadn't caught her "practicing" with her tongue on one of my toys. She was so embarrassed about the "little Eli" incident that she didn't speak to any of us for a week.

Also, even as an almost-volunteer I find the term "non-volunteer" a little upsetting."

Your warm pillow shifts out from under you as your Master rises and starts to get out of bed. "Instead of re-treading the degree to which I am or am not the villian of your life stories, how about breakfast?"

That's all you needed to hear. Breakfast certainly beats having the same round-table discussion you used to have by yourself again. Especially when someone eventually thinks to ask how culpable you are for writing basically his recruitment pamphlet... and helping new ponies with the adjustment... and pitching upgrade ideas.

Hm. You might be a bad person. Good pet though!

Five ponies, bumping, pushing and stumbling their way downstairs to reach the front door is still quite an experience. Master's joke about needing a herding dog rings somewhat true, though frankly you'd be loathe to share the home with a nonsapient the same size as you. You had a hard enough time getting the family dog to stop humping things when you were human...

Eugh. No, thank you.

Still, the morning outing happens just the same. Master leaves the front door open and seems to head in to start breakfast while you all do your morning business. Initially you'd all attempted to form orderly morning queue for the bathroom but frankly one pony-use toilet and five of you waiting made things pretty needlessly... competitive.

Master's rules for this were simple. Out and back in, no roughhousing, no flight sessions. Orchid is technically pushing boundaries by romping after some butterflies but Opal insists she be allowed to. So the two of you wait by the door for her to come inside before shutting it behind you and getting in on some french toast.

"Oh man!" Opal chirps when she sees her bowl. "Not to complain but this beats the pants off oats and fruit. If you -can- cook this well how come you don't do it more often?"

"Because, wiseass, treats aren't treats if you indulge constantly. Plus I can't have you horses getting pudgy."

"Master, pardon if I'm speaking out of turn, but, uh, don't you literally control our metabolisms?" you grin, knowing that a formal opening excuses most insolence. He likes the game more than the authority, you think.

"Pardoned. Listen, is it possible for me to tinker with every process that turns food into you remaining alive? Yes. Is that bound to be incredibly complex and require a certain degree of vigilance and fine tuning? Also yes. I'd hate to miss something and find out that one of you can't feel sated after eating, or that someone's pet is having a nutrient deficiency because I wanted to be able to feed you an all-cake diet."

"That's... uh... actually worse than I'd imagined."

"See? Despite how it looks I tried my best to do the bare minimum to make a pony a pony. Hell, I wasn't sure it was safe to do the wings and horns until after the first dozen Earth ponies went off without a hitch."

At that he squats beside Seafoam and begins scratching behind her ears. "Isn't that right, my pretty little prototype?"

Seafoam, for all her open lamentations that she's "out-of-date" and less attractive than newer ponies, certainly doesn't voice those concerns now. She basically pushes him over in her haste to cuddle.

"Easy, girl. What's gotten into you?"

"I like it when you say it like I'm special. Please, continue, my gracious creator."

Your Master spends the rest of breakfast on the floor, alternating his free hand between sips of his coffee and feeding Seafoam bites of french toast. You've developed the distinct impression that he'd honestly have wanted her for himself if she hadn't been meant for Eli.



You'd feel jealous, but then again you derive quite a lot of pleasure from how much Eli likes you whenever you're together. His offer to buy you at your first meeting seemed like a silly dalliance at the time, an impulsive decision from a guy with too much money and a serious love of ponies. Having spent more time together, especially with Seafoam and Orchid around, you've learned that you're pretty squarely his type. So, Seafoam loves Master's sentimental attachment to her, and you love the look in Eli's eyes when you flirt with him before going to sit on Master's lap instead. Fair trade.

The afternoon passes peacefully from there. Master has been taking a break from his work while things settle out, so there's not much to do besides your usual flight session and some lounging. He's especially doting on your guests today, and you get why. Two months is a long time for him to be housing ponies, truthfully he's never had anypony but you and Autumn here for more than a week or two at a time. Sometimes ponies with newer features spend a few extra days here so he can be double-sure he didn't mess anything up, but that's purely professional. Sometimes unnecessary, like the Zebra he insisted needed a ton of diagnostics despite being functionally a different-color pony. Not that you minded having Kipenzi around, she was funny.

Still, Eli's ponies were more than a little restless by the evening. The only thing that pulled them away from the window looking toward the driveway the entire time was occasional snippets of news as Sir deigned to check it between channels.

"-derstand the implications of this. These patents, and the press releases surrounding them, change everythi-"

\*click\*

"-ansisco based biohackers claim to have already replicated the technique, with one member showing off goat-like pupils and claiming to be able to see in colors not perceptible to the unaltered human eye"

\*click\*

"The danger here, Tim, is that the fundamentals of the tech are simple enough that it could be accessible to a wide range of state and private actors. Hell, with enough education and funding even a hobbyist could-"

\*click\*

"Cancer, even aging, could be a thing of the past, but I think you're not

grasping that we'll have to redefine "humanity" into something far more broad-"

\*click\*

"We're here tonight with a panel of current and retired Department of Defense personnel to discuss the potential for bioterror-"

\*click\*

"-li Brooks, secretive investor magnate whose holding company filed the patents, has not responded to any requests for comment."

"This is really happening, isn't it?" Orchid asks, looking back toward your Master. "You and Eli opened Pandora's box."

"Well, we had to, Honey. It was stupid of me to assume the secret would keep forever. One of the pets I'd sold getting injured really clinched it. I was able to talk their owner out of trying to bring them to a hospital, but honestly if they didn't happen to live close enough for me to make it in time the pony might've died. Poor little guy was in pain the whole time too. Next time we might not be that lucky."

"But the talking heads are talking about bioterror. People are already recreating your work!"

"Someone would have eventually. My colleagues at my last job might even have had everything they needed to piece it together, or at least understand it was possible."

"So now the world knows."

"Yep. The first patents are on the basic principles, and on a version that fights other nanomachines. A vaccine of sorts."

"And you think someday we'll be able to go out in public?"

"Maybe. A lot to think about there. The world isn't ready for you yet, hence Eli waiting for the news to stop camping outside his property line, but once a few people go and turn themselves into even stranger stuff, well, you might even be seen as mundane."

Wheels trundle up toward the house and suddenly Opal, Orchid and

Seafoam are at the door, practically bouncing on their hooves. It's not unfamiliar to you, given how bad you've got it when Sir leaves for a few days, but boy is it cute to watch.

Master chuckles to himself and after waiting by the window for a few seconds opens the door for them, with Eli just beginning to make his way up the steps to the house. Three ponies knock his friend clean over, the wealthiest man you've ever known expressing first joy, then shock, then resignation as Seafoam collides with his chest and topples him. For a few minutes Eli isn't good for much besides greeting his pets, all kisses and hugs, before eventually his face emerges from the pony-pile.

"Couldn't have have held them back at all, buddy?"

"And miss seeing that? Fat chance."

"Real nice o- yes, hello Opal, I love you too - Real nice of you."

For a few more minutes, Eli tries to extricate himself enough to carry on a proper conversation, but two months without one's Sir does some odd things to a pony. Sea, Orchid and Opal keep escalating things until eventually Eli looks desperately towards your Master, who has been watching, beer in hand, barely suppressing his laughter.

"Uh, buddy, I know I was gonna spend the night anyway, but would you mind if-"

"There's a guest bed inflated downstairs. You will launder the bedding yourself afterwards."

Opal dashes past you toward the basement stairs, her sisters in hot pursuit behind her. Eli pauses for a second at the landing, shakes your Master's hand, and simply says "I've never seen them like this. Uh, I'll just go ahead and replace all of it."

"I'll make a late dinner in... let's say three hours. Zephyr, please go turn the TV up as loud as you can."

- Fin -

***Author's note:***

*If you're reading this: Thanks! It's been officially eight years since I posted the first snippet of the fic to /mlp/. I realize I kinda fucked off for a while here. But someone pointed out that the eight-year anniversary was coming up so I decided to channel my angst at how fucking -ancient- I am into this. Hope you liked it.*

***ePub Creator Note:***

*Hey! Hope you've enjoyed the ePub so far! The following part is an extra story that takes place in the Zephyr universe by the same writefag but isn't a part of Zephyr's Tale. I've included it for those who want, but if you're only here for the main story then thanks for reading!*

# Opal and Eli

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## A Zephyr-verse story

It's too quiet.

You've been quietly rolling along in his car for at least a couple hours now, and neither of you has said a word since you lost sight of Zephyr. At first you pretended to be asleep when you realized you were alone with him for the first time, but you're too anxious and twitchy to keep it up anymore. The awkwardness of it all is killing you, and he doesn't seem perturbed in the slightest! Is this how it's gonna be? You're some subhuman thing and he's not even going to dignify you with speech?

Or maybe this is his way of easing you into things? A nice, calm car ride with your... y-

your...

Master.

Oh no, this is bad. Somehow you let your friend and that muscular loon talk you into getting in the car and now this guy thinks he owns you!

...Well, he does kind of own you. He paid an awful lot, so he must be pretty serious about keeping you. Like an animal. Forever.

Okay, okay. Calm down, Opal. He's nice! Zephyr thought so too, and he's been very understanding this whole time, even when you made an ass of yourself. You're just getting worried over nothing for the thousandth time. Unless the nice act was all a ruse and as soon as he's got you safely tucked away in his home he'll break out the chains and whips and... and...

Nausea begins to bubble up from the pit of your stomach while your imagination runs wild with the awful possibilities. You're debilitated, helpless! The only insurance policy you've got is his word that he'll send you back if you're unhappy. He must have lied, you're never getting out of there once you're in! His other ponies are probably both Autumn-level fucked up and now you're gonna be on the bottom of the pecking order, the exotic new toy they'll want to break just like he does!

Slow, deep breaths are the only thing keeping you from losing your lunch all over the back seat as you screw your eyes shut. The world outside the car is a dizzying blur, the bumps and dips of a back country road through the mountains are giving you the most awful sense of vertigo you've ever had, and the only thing you can hear is your blood pounding in your new, too-sensitive ears. It's too hot in here! Air, you need air!

You can feel your breath accelerate to a point near hyperventilation, but at this point you're already lost in your own head, touring realms of terror somewhere in between the strange tortures the man in the front seat will visit upon you and the notion that maybe you're dying right this second. You don't even want to go home, you just want this feeling to stop, anything to just make it stop.

"Are you doing okay back there? You don't look so good."

As much as you'd like to convince yourself that he's just feigning concern for you, the hand that finds its way to your head is warm, and the few firm strokes along your mane are the only bright spot in a realm of suffering before it retreats prior to another turn.

"Opal?"

No no, nice-but-not-nice strange man, please don't make this a thing.

"Opal honey, you're scaring me. Are you okay?"

His voice is so sincere you feel guilty not responding, but telling him that you're having an anxiety attack about being his seems downright rude. You settle for telling half of the truth.

"I'm just a bit carsick is all. Please don't worry."

"You look more than a bit carsick if you ask me. Hang on for a few more minutes and we'll take a break. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I'm really warm right now. Could you open a window? I mean, um, please. Master. Sir."

The sound of wind sweeping in through the cracked window is almost relieving in and of itself, but the rush of cool air has you taking great, heaving breaths in an effort at settling your stomach. The next few turns are far gentler than before, and a slow stop signals the blessed break he promised earlier. You hear him shift a bit in his seat, and you're quite certain he's looking right at you, but you can't quite bring yourself to open your eyes and look back. Trying to wrap your mind around being his pet, a thing he owns, is just too much. Everything depends on him, now. Food, water, shelter and comforts all have to come from him, and you still don't know what he'll want in return.

Sure, he says he just wants you to be all -cute- and -pretty- like how Autumn and Zephyr act for their Master, and that if you're happy he'll be happy too, but that can't be it. No one is that nice, least of all to you, and that means there's a catch. Maybe it's your body warming his bed, or maybe it's subjugating you, or maybe you're just being picked up to entertain the other two in his house, but there's no way he just wants to have you around.

No one wants you around.

The hand returns, gently stroking along your mane and neck, and the shivers it gives you forces your eyes open to face reality. He's gazing at you quite intently, but there's quite a bit of concern in his look. Of course, that could just be because he paid a hefty price for you, and this must be the equivalent of engine trouble in a new car. Maybe you're defective, he must be wondering.

He leans over the seat towards you, and you're stunned as his arms wrap around you and lift you over it into the front and his lap. You're set down



facing forward, saving you the embarrassment of eye contact, but more importantly you have a tremendous view of a river valley below from what seems to be an isolated "scenic view" off the state highway you'd been on. The view is lovely, and his hands are warm. You catch yourself relaxing just a bit, and he seems happy to share the view with you in silence for a minute or two.

"So what have you been thinking about back there this whole time?"

"Uhm... Y'know, pony stuff?"

"You seem awfully nervous about 'pony stuff', little miss."

"I'm not sure if I should say this... being taken 'home' to a place I've never been, by a man I just met, for possibly the rest of my life? It's scary."

"Do I scare you?"

"N-not as much as when we hadn't met, but would you be upset if I said yes? We only just met...."

"Would it help if I stopped at a drive-through and got you a treat?"

"Not if you value this interior. I really was carsick earlier. But thank you for offering, Eli. I mean Master. Sir."

"You can call me whatever you want, y'know."

"I'll figure something out... uh, Master. So what were you thinking about up there?"

"How to start a conversation with you. It's been really awkward the whole ride. Or was that just me?"

Okay... maybe you shouldn't over think these things...

A sudden rush of cool air rouses you into unwelcome wakefulness, and it's everything you can do to press yourself further into the warm spot you've made on the seat and retreat further under your awkwardly..

bulky.. blanket?

Wait, what?

"It's time to wake up, Opal. We're home."

The events of an already long day replay in your head as you remember where you are, and that in lieu of a blanket you've wrapped yourself up in his coat for warmth. You peek out from your impromptu shelter with bleary eyes to see him standing just outside the open door to the back of the truck, smiling at you with a familiar sort of condescending mirth hidden in his face. Yeah, no wonder he and Zephyr's guy get along so well.

"We're here already?"

"You've been asleep for quite a while, little miss. We should hurry, I think I see your new housemates watching from one of the windows."

As apprehensive as you are about being "brought home" or meeting two more people-made-ponies, you do sit up and try to get out of the car.

...Only to fall face first into the seat as one of your hooves catches on the coat you'd been nesting in. The flood of renewed embarrassment is enough that you want to retreat back under the coat entirely, and the whine you emit is not so much from pain but your frustration at continually making an ass of yourself in front of him. He seems to think differently, though.

"You really are adorable, you know that? Come on sleepy head, you'll never make it up the steps like this."

Before you've had time to shake off the 'adorable' comment in regard to your monumental clumsiness he's already picked you up, coat and all, to hoist you into his arms. Firmly in his grasp and too well bundled up by the coat to do anything but squirm, a strange sense of calm overcomes you as your head comes to rest on his shoulder. Amid the soft bobbing motions as he ascends a long flight of stairs toward a very large house, you find it rather odd that instead of scoping out the house he means to

keep you in, or trying to figure out where exactly "here" is, you're currently focused entirely on how he smells up close. There's the same faint "guy smell" that you once had yourself and had already begrudgingly come to enjoy on Zephyr's master, but there's a bit of crispness to him, like a green apple. Is that a bodywash or are you just going insane?

"Are you feeling alright? You're breathing a little heavily there."

Ah, shit! Snap out of it, stupid little pony thing! You barely know this man and you're already getting all flustered over his scent! He seems like a very giving sort of guy, and outside your wild imagination it seems like he won't let you come to any harm in his care, but you're not going to let yourself get all doe-eyed just yet. The hard truth of the matter is that there's no place for you anywhere in this world anymore, save for the place being offered to you here, and accepting that is what kept you from escaping into the woods and probably getting eaten a couple of weeks ago. He'll feed you, and give you shelter, and maybe even pet you from time to time, and you'll gladly do what he asks as long as he holds up his end of the bargain.

But that doesn't mean you want to be some simpleminded thing worshipping at his feet like Autumn. Zephyr seemed to keep her wits about her a bit better, but sometimes even her behavior worried you. You can't lose yourself in the submission games or the affection or the carnal delights that come with this body and life. You'll be his little friend, even his subservient pet. One day you might even let this body get what it seems to want and be... intimate... With him. You just don't ever want to be a willing plaything, with all your hopes and wants replaced with his.

It could be that you're overthinking things again, but just to be on the safe side you resolve not to spend any more time smelling him.

"Oh, they've left the window. Must be waiting for us at the front door."

"You mean your other pets?"

"Yeah, Seafoam and Orchid. You'll be able to tell which is which. I should warn you, I told them as soon as my friend let me know he had

you, so they've been stewing in anticipation for a few weeks now."

"T-they're excited?"

"Oh yes, very. You've probably figured out by now that you're not going to be meeting very many people in your new job. The three of us have been together for a little under a year, a little over a year for just Seafoam and I, all without them seeing much of anyone, really, so you can imagine how exciting a new friend is for them."

"B-but what if they don't like me?"

"Not possible."

"Y-yes it is. What if they think I'm trying to steal you away from them, or that I'm annoying or no fun?"

"I don't think you're annoying."

"You barely know me! I'm always weird or clumsy or annoying, they're going to hate me!"

"Have you always had this kind of anxiety issue?"

Boom. He just hit the nail on the head, and though he pointed it out as a helpful gesture, it mostly just makes you feel worse.

"Y-yes..."

"And how did it work out when you were human?"

Panic attacks. Ruined relationships. Unpaid bills. Wasted education. Long nights awake wondering if it wouldn't be easier to just give up. Inability to make eye contact with strangers.

"P-pretty bad."

"How about you try relaxing a bit? This is a whole new opportunity for you to start over. Think it over quick, because we're here."

Sure enough, you've made it to the front door, behind which lurks two strangers and a very strange new life.

"M... Master?"

"Yes, Opal?"

"I'm scared."

"I know you are. Be brave for me?"

"I can try."

"Good girl."

And just like that, the door opens and Eli carries you into your future.

The nighttime darkness you'd been bathed in since waking up did you no favors when the door opened and Eli stepped in. These new eyes you've been given don't seem to like bright lights much, and for a second or two your vision can't quite adjust as a set a of blurry shapes and strange colors only gradually come into focus. While you try to take in the large and tastefully furnished hallway you've been carried into, fluttering movement draws your eyes down to a large, somewhat crude "Welcome Opal!" banner.

More interesting than the banner, though, is the fact that either end it is pressed between a pair of forehooves, occasionally twitching or slipping a bit. You're a a little bit dumbstruck as it dawns on you that the sign is meant for you, clutched between the trembling forehooves of your owner's other pets. Other ponies, former people, who have spent months trotting around on all fours and playing nice for this guy. You're almost afraid to make eye contact, painfully aware that if they're both like Autumn you're probably doomed to become like her yourself. In this context, the thrilled, stereophonic cheer of "Welcome home!" they greet you with doesn't seem promising.

As much as that worries you, refusing to answer them would be rude,

though being set down on the floor and released from the bundle he'd wrapped you in gives you a much needed second to collect yourself and get a decent look at them. Eli really wasn't joking when he said you'd be able to tell which is which, as the two ponies in front of you couldn't be more visually distinct from one another if they tried. The one you're sure is Seafoam has a bright blue coat, all the way up to a flowing but slightly curled off-white mane. You hate to call it "wavy" considering her name, but that's really the only word for it.

The freckle pattern on her face is the same off-white as her mane, and you'd find the whole effect totally adorable if the look of complete and unmitigated enthusiasm in her green eyes wasn't a little too reminiscent of Autumn for your own comfort.

On the other side of the hallway sits a pony who went perhaps a little too far in designing the OC she became, though you're hardly one to be making judgement there. A deeper red coat than what you'd think belonged on a pony, but in practice it looks no less vibrant than any of the others you've seen, topped off with a long, tropical-looking yellow mane and tail, accented heavily by the occasional streak of purple running down either. The horn poking out of her mane is plain to see, and you come to the realization that your useless little bat wings to still technically make you a pegasus, meaning that between Seafoam's earth pony build, this unicorn, and you Eli has a complete set. This is undoubtedly the one he called "Orchid", but your immediate and powerful sense of attachment to her doesn't have anything to do with her colors, but rather the wry smile and look of amusement in her too-pink eyes. Oh thank goodness, this one looks like she's still grounded in reality.

They went to the trouble of making a welcome sign for you, no easy feat on hooves, and that gesture seems friendly enough.

You try the "deep breath" trick Zephyr kept harping on about, and give it your best.

"N-nice to meet you! I'm Opal and I, uh, guess we live together now?"

...Okay, not your best effort. Neither of them looks crestfallen, though, so

you aren't a disappointment just yet. In fact, the small chuckle coming from Orchid doesn't even sound derisive! In your book, that's already a win. For a few seconds it looks as though everything might just be looking up.

Then the blue one starts touching you.

It's not the full-blown pounce you had been forced to adapt to in the last house, but before you know it's happening she's already put her hooves up to your face and started talking.

"Orchid, come look at her eyes, they're incredible!"

Well, at least she seems to like you...

"And this mane is just lovely! Do you think she'll let me style it?"

The unicorn lives up to your expectations at once, at once responding while trying not to laugh.

"You could try asking her, Sea. You are up in her face, you know."

"Sea" as she is called, does not, and instead takes one of your hooves in hers for a closer examination before beginning to circle you.

"Those wings! And look! She's even more slender than you are! Oh, I don't wanna be the fat one!"

"Dude, you won't be the fat one. I told you he makes the pegasi skinny. You've just got a fuller figure is all."

"Hardly, look!"

You don't know what you were expecting, but it certainly wasn't Seafoam wrapping her forehooves around your waist and lifting your rear end skywards. The sudden action sprawls your front end out and gives her the leverage to show the whole room what she's talking about. Your cool broke right around there, but no amount of yelping and squirming seems to dislodge you from the Earthie's larger build.

"Smaller, yeah, but look at how firm this is! He's been making improvements since changing me, and now I'm outdated."

"Uh, Sea, maybe you shouldn't..."

Her forehoof poking your rump repeatedly to drive her point home is the last straw, and in aghast desperation you do the unthinkable.

"Master, help!"

Well, that's it then. You've been in his house for a grand total of two minutes before giving up on solving the simplest problem, like demanding your molester stop, and needing him to it instead. Under duress, that's your first response? Cry out for him? Jeez, Zephyr's Master really did mess up your head more than you thought.

You hardly needed Eli's help after that, though. Your outburst alone seems to have surprised Seafoam into dropping you, and while you feel no end to the shame of it you still find yourself scrambling behind Eli's legs for safety. Your refuge doesn't last very long, as your new Master picks you back up and then seats himself on the floor, once again putting you on his lap, now in plain view of the other two. There's still an air of amusement in his voice, but there's a gentle authority there that seems to command the attention of your new compatriots.

"Now let's try that again. Seafoam, Orchid, this is Opal. she's had a bit of a rough time adjusting to all the changes and it might be for the best if you take it easy on her for a while. Opal, this is Seafoam and that's Orchid."

This is so embarrassing. The whole situation isn't even your fault, but shame is a powerful motivator and right now you'd give anything to be anywhere else. Whether it be intuition or experience with you, Eli seems to understand that you're seconds from bolting out of his lap and into the darkest corner you can find. Rather than allow this to happen, he wraps his arms around you and pulls you close, leaving you on your haunches and with only your tail to preserve your modesty. The other two remain quiet while you sniffle a bit, but once it's clear that you're not going to



cry Seafoam makes the first move.

"Listen, Opal, I'm really sorry about that. You look amazing and I got so excited... Then I got caught up in my own vanity.

I've been wearing a collar in this house for more than a year, and I guess I forgot how it felt when this was all new. I'm sorry, please don't hate it here because of me."

She certainly sounds sincere enough, and even a bit less like Autumn than you thought she would.

"It's... well, alright. That was a bit too much all at once, and I'm a bit... flighty? I'm sure your- er, our, Master can tell you more. You were too excited, I was too nervous."

"Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, but after touching my butt you at least owe me dinner."

She stands there utterly dumbfounded by your joke, but it certainly wasn't lost on Eli or Orchid. The sudden chortle from above and behind you makes you feel pretty good about yourself, but it's the look of approval and possibly increased excitement from Orchid that really makes breaking the serious mood worthwhile.

"She tells jokes! Little sister, you and I are going to have a lot of fun around here."

Your joke seems to have broken the ice pretty well, defusing what could have been a bad situation and helping you make your first good impression since meeting Eli. The hands that were keeping you from bolting out of his lap relax their grip, and one settles on your head. Eli works his fingers in small circles up and down your scalp, making an absolute mess of your mane but drawing an involuntary sigh from your lips before you knew it was coming. Your worries are all but forgotten for a few wonderful seconds, his continued assault forcing your eyes shut as relaxation, physical and mental, crash over you like a tidal wave.

It's so good that when his hand recedes you find yourself turned about to face him, whining pitifully and pawing at his chest with a hoof, all pride forgotten. The amused look on his face is enough for you to remember yourself and stop acting like a needy animal, but the damage is clearly done.

"Liked that a lot, didn't you? He said you'd be a cuddler if I could get you to relax. Now, as much as I'd like to get you settled in myself, I've been awake since about this time yesterday. Can I ask you to stick with Orchid and Seafoam until you know your way around? I don't mean to brag, but it's a really big house."

Your mind races to conjure up objections. Does he think you're stupid enough to get lost indoors, or does he want you to be watched at all times? He doesn't trust you not to run off, even worse, he doesn't trust you enough to let you have some privacy! For a split second you let frustration boil up in your chest to bursting, but when you open your mouth to give him what-for it just isn't there.

Ugh, this is self-sabotage. Maybe you do just want to be left alone for a little while... But you're looking for reasons to argue or resist or rebel and they just aren't there, or at least they're too trivial to matter. He's made a simple request of you, and you made Zephyr's master a promise in exchange for your still unused trump card. You told him you'd be a good pet.

You told him you'd obey.

"Yes... Master."

"There's a good girl. Sea, Orchid, is there still enough food on the bottom shelves to cover the three of you for the night?"

A dual "Yes sir!" comes from behind you in a still-unsettling stereo, but You're too busy enjoying the notion of feeding yourself.

"Is my kitchen floor a mess?"

"No sir!"

"Good. Take care of yourselves for the night and I'll cook for us in the morning, okay? Oh, and show Opal where the bathroom is when you get the chance."

"Yes sir!"

What you're inferring just from his conversation with the other two is encouraging, to say the least. Zephyr's guy was so big on controlling just about everything that went on, you don't think you've fed yourself since stopping at a fast-food joint on your last night as a human. Looking back you wish you'd been a bit more gluttonous there, it was the last chance you ever had to eat meat. Or buy something in a store. Or be seen in public.

Before you have a chance to fall into another little anxiety attack dwelling on how much you've lost Eli wraps up his conversation with the other two. He can't be aware of your internal dialogue, but the hug he wraps you in is enough to help you escape it. Being held against him in the hug is the strangest thing yet, as you find yourself noting the differences between him and Zephyr's guy with an almost academic interest. He's definitely got a belly in place of the unnaturally toned midsection on the crazy kidnapper, and he's generally much softer, but in truth that just makes him warmer to the touch, something that you're alarmed to find is quite pleasant. Enjoying a bit of contact is something you can at least dismiss. Now the sensual feeling of his breath on your neck, on the other hand, that's really setting off a whole new set of worries and strange thoughts, but at least they're just awkward as opposed to depressing. Still, here you are securely pressed against his body, hind legs sticking out to either side of him...

If he weren't wearing clothes, you'd basically already be...

"Opal? You're doing that breathing thing again, is something wrong?"

Crap! What the hell is wrong with you? This was never a problem with the big loony in the woods, but this is like the third time you've started thinking about... him. Once back at the other house... you even told Zephyr about it... and now twice when you're close to him. This is bad,

this is really really bad. Not that the notion of sex in this body was all that awful to you anymore- Zephyr and Autumn took care of that- but sex with a guy, sex with this guy? You know he's open to it and you know he's leaving it up to you...

Ugh, no. You can't let yourself do this. Nevermind how long you've known the guy, if you did anything like that it'd be too much of a commitment to staying here. Also... you've had this sneaking suspicion that if being petted and held was enough to get you to cave and obey the last guy, real intimacy might mess with your head even more. The unspoken commitment such a thing would come with might not even matter if you're only an orgasm away from thinking you love him anyway. Stay strong, don't be Autumn.

"I-it's nothing. I'm fine."

"I'm going to go to bed now, but Seafoam and Orchid can show you around and answer any questions. If you need anything don't hesitate to wake me up, my door is right across from the stairs."

Once again, there's nothing insincere in his voice. No subtle inflection telling you that he doesn't mean it, or that he thinks taking you was a mistake. You know it's pathetic, but the little bits of compassion and patience are so new to you that there's a small but growing sense of attachment, maybe even affection, taking root in you. After a long, stressful day you're finally feeling better about things, enough to think that maybe, just maybe, taking orders from this guy won't be so bad.

"Okay. Have a good night, M-master."

"Good girl. I'm happy you're here, you know. I hope we haven't scared you off yet."

He sets you down between the other two as they spout off their own "good night", and offers each of you a quick pat on the head before trudging up the stairs and out of sight. For a few seconds you're actually a bit excited about exploring the house and trying to figure this guy out while you're at it, but judging by the two sets of radiant eyes pointed straight at you it seems like you're going to be the center of attention for

quite some time. You focus on Seafoam, trying to think of something to say that will dispel the lingering awkwardness, but she beats you to the punch with a simple, gentle hug. More warmth and hooves at your side confirm that Orchid has decided to join her. This should be awkward, but there's just something about the body heat of another pony that puts you at ease, maybe something your captor did on purpose to make sure his pleasure toys would be as cuddly with each other as the customer would expect.

"I'm still sorry about before" Seafoam mumbles into your ear "But welcome to Eli's house."

You accept her apology, considering that she's far from the worst offender as far as personal space violations go lately, and allow her and Orchid to lead you on a tour of Eli's cavernous home. Just as promised, all of the bathrooms contain facilities your new anatomy can actually use alongside the normal, human ones and for a moment you really feel as though you might cry about it. Sure you're trotting about on all fours, but this more than anything else makes you feel far more like a person than some peculiar animal, and it's such a happy thought that a small part of you wants to bound into Eli's room and thank him right this second.

A lot of the rooms are apparently unused, or at least inaccessible to the three of you, but the sheer size of the rooms you're being shown fills you with equal parts awe and annoyance. If you thought there was a malevolent bone in Eli's body you'd be frothing at the mouth right now. Here's some wealthy businessman, apparently unable to impress regular women, who used his vast resources to have three people from the impoverished underclass remade to suit his tastes and enslaved into his service!

... Is what you would think if you hadn't already met the guy. You'd worry more about the implications this has for all the other pets out there, but your new found compatriots just lead you into the kitchen. You hang back and let them show you what's what, but when they open some low cabinets and a small minifridge in the corner and start asking what you feel like eating you're just a bit overwhelmed.

"He really lets you feed yourselves?" It sounds much sillier than you

thought it would. You already knew this from the earlier conversation, but watching them carefully lift and pull bags of assorted foods with their own hooves or mouths really drives the point home.

"Well yeah, why wouldn't he?" scoffs Orchid through a mouthful of dry breakfast cereal. There's always a note of laughter in her voice so far, meaning either she's mocking you, or more likely she's simply as charming as she seems. You're a bit lost in trying to retort, however, your own face scrunching up a bit as you realize that you've unwittingly become accustomed to being fed whatever your caretaker felt like giving you. Orchid seems to catch this, her own grin faltering a bit in recognition.

"Oh! Right! He's totally a control freak, isn't he? How long were you there being 'trained'?" she asks you in a serious tone, but for the last bit of the question she put her hooves up and bent them in an adorable mockery of quotation fingers.

"I, uh... I think a little under a month? Uh, only two or three weeks as a p-p-pony, though."

"You... weren't changed when you got there?" There's no suspicion in her tone, but the curiosity is clearly there. Ugh, great, now you're going to need to tell them something about how this whole mess happened.

"It's a really long story" You divert, though that's certainly true "and not good mealtime talk, either" you finish lamely, but if you had to tell them the smallest detail about what Charlie wanted, or when you punched poor Zephyr they'd certainly lose their appetite... and probably hate you, too. Eli hasn't heard your origin story either, for that matter. Would lying, or maybe omitting certain elements of the truth... would that be okay?

"I'll take that, but you're telling me the whole story sometime." Chirps orchid, "But yeah, if he's busy or gone on business he'll stock the shelves we can reach. When he's home eating together is a big thing for him, but you can get away with a little snacking here and there."

You're still a little unsure of what's what in the shelves, but Seafoam seems to have that covered herself, as she slides a bowl across the floor

with her nose toward you.

"Here, it's oats and some dried berries and fruit." There's an odd maternal tone to her voice, but when her eyes meet yours you get a much clearer 'big sister' vibe. "That's alright, isn't it?"

"Oh, yeah! I mean, of course it is, but thank you for getting it for me. I'm still not very good with my ha- uh, hooves."

She cracks a very sweet smile, and saunters a bit closer to you. She called you 'thin' before, but you never really got a sense for it until now. She's not fat, despite what she seems to think, but it seems as though she's just proportionately larger than you are, as though Zephyr's guy decided to shrink down his product a bit at some point between her and you. She's easily got a couple of inches on you height wise, and all of a sudden "big sister" is definitely the right term for it.

"Ha! You'll get pretty good with them eventually. I've had more than a year without thumbs and I get by just fine, feel free to ask for help."

"You might want to reconsider that offer, I'll be asking all the time."

"Then we'll teach you!" she says with a smile "How to get your own food, how to use Eli's stuff. How to prance, dance, and play with the best of us!"

"Uh, did you just say you'll teach me to dance?" you squeak out, gulping ominously before adding "and.. uh, prance?"

Before you know it, she got her forehooves around your neck, and as you're pulled in close her expression fades from the cheery welcome you've been given into something all too familiar. Those half lidded eyes, that cool little smile, that breathy voice...

"Oh, yes, new girl." She whispers into your ear. "He just loves it when we dance for him. Don't you worry Opal, we'll show you every little thing he likes."

Visions of Autumn screaming at you for not loving this enough bubble

up in your head as you look very pointedly toward a spot on the ceiling and start stammering. "I w-wasn't really gonna... uh, do, any of that right away, if that's okay."

"Ooh, and if I said it wasn't, would you join him in bed?"

"I... ah, I mean..." you half mumble out, feeling terrified of what she wants and disgusted in equal parts with what she suggested and your imagination running wild with the promise of warm, soft hands touching you... everywhere...

"Sea! Quit freaking her out already, it's getting weird." Chides Orchid, still munching idly on cereal as though this whole scene wasn't playing out. Seafoam's sudden laughter doesn't quite compute for a few seconds when you hear it, and it's not until she releases you backs off a bit that you see a wicked smile on her face and realize she's not serious.

"Sorry, sorry, I'm just messing with you. You didn't really think I'd just up and force myself and Eli on you, did you? I'm a pet, not a psychopath."

"Y-yeah, just suddenly doing something like that would be c-crazy..."

"Oh, honey" She coos, face falling a bit "I hope I didn't really bother you! I figured we could bond over jokes..."

The wild mess of colors that constitutes Orchid appears in your field of vision, looking inquisitively at you as you try your best not to look and more stupid than you already must. On the one hand it's great that the idea of pulling something like Autumn might is a silly joke to them, but on the other hand you took it seriously and now you're all kinds of flustered.

"Sea, maybe don't make bedroom jokes for a while." Orchid slowly drawls out, still seemingly lost in thought.

"Well, sure, but Why?"

"Because I think our new housemate is like me. Opal, were you a guy before life got weird?"



This kind of confession shouldn't be shameful, not to these two, both of whom should understand your situation pretty well, but it's still everything you can muster to nod your head in the affirmative and wait to see how they react.

You didn't expect affectionate nuzzling from Orchid, but the simple, kind gesture is exactly what you needed. You can't help but return it in kind, sparing a thought to your friend back at the loony bin as you do.

"Relax, Opal" comes Orchid's melodic voice "I know what's going on in your head right now, but trust me when I say you'll feel much better about it with some more time. Don't worry about Eli, either, he didn't try a thing with me until I started it."

"Started it"? Honey, she started humping him in her sleep." blurts a still-laughing Seafoam.

"Right, so until you start humping him in your sleep, don't worry about it."

Some small part of you wants to ask how long it took, to get a forecast on how some... ugh, pony in your position can hold out against the suite of urges you've been saddled with, but you've got a sneaking suspicion that you won't like the answer. Better, at least for now, not to know and continue enjoying your evening. You settle down to eat and chat with your new roommates, hopefully new friends, and find yourself in a lengthy discussion of the show. Finally, after an absurdly long day, you feel like you might be able to live here as comfortably as these two.

The night to come, on the other hand...

You chat up Seafoam and Orchid for what feels like ages, pleasantly surprised to find that they're actually very normal and sociable in spite of having only had each other and Eli for company for months. In a way, Seafoam ended up keeping her word about telling you what Eli likes, though after she and Orchid have given you the run-down about your new provider... your owner, the three of you manage to shift into silly, superficial things and telling jokes. By the time Seafoam starts yawning

you're honestly at ease with the situation. If these two can be happy pet ponies and still be this normal and funny, it means you probably can too, even if this body gets the better of you. On the one hand, that's great news and a huge relief. On the other hand, you've got one less argument against the little voice in the back of your head telling you how good it would feel to just jump Eli's bones.

You suppose that will be your cross to bear for the time being.

You're not tired in the least, having slept for the latter half of an extremely long car ride, but Seafoam's been yawning more and more frequently and Orchid's head has been drooping lower and lower for the better part of an hour. You're not surprised when they decide to call it a night, though you're quite unsure as to what to do with yourself when they do.

"So I guess we're sleeping down here tonight, aren't we?" Orchid murmurs out, eyes mostly closed and body largely limp on the couch cushions.

"I'm sure we could get into Eli's room if we wanted, but we should probably let him rest. Besides, Opal hasn't seen her bed yet." Seafoam replies, substantially more chipper sounding were it not for the mid-sentence yawn.

"I... I have a bed?" It's not a particularly stunning thing to think, Eli had plenty of time to prepare for your arrival, but when you gave up and accepted being someone's pet you kind of assumed you'd given up any right to possessions of your own. Ultimately "your" bed is still Eli's property the same way you are, you suppose, but it's awfully nice of him to have gone to the trouble. Your new compatriots are staring at you like you've grown another head for what must be the fifth time tonight, though.

"Of course you do, Opal. Why wouldn't you?" Orchid chirps out, looking vaguely incredulous at your question.

"N-nevermind, I'm just being weird again. Can I see it?"

They share a look and a smile at your strange naivete, but otherwise they let it slide without making fun of you. You still can't quite wrap your head around having a bed of your own, and your imagination runs wild for a few seconds as Orchid and Seafoam lead you around a corner into small alcove created by bookshelves and couches...

To a trio of colorful, basket-shaped plush dog beds on the floor. Okay... maybe you got your hopes up a bit too high. It was a bit much to assume you'd get a mattress or anything specifically human out of this, but you can't help but feel insulted despite sleeping on loose piles of large pillows in the basement you'd been kept in. They waste no time in settling into two of the beds, but it's not until they do that you realize that the beds and blankets are color coded for each of them. Reds and yellows all over the bed Orchid's curling up into, and a blue-and-white wave pattern covers the blanket Seafoam is rearranging with her mouth at the moment.

The empty one, clearly meant for you, features black and purple over every inch of it, along with a very, very soft looking gray blanket folded neatly in the middle, clearly brand new. You're not sure whether you should feel like you're being patronized here or if the rush of warmth to your cheeks and the strange feeling in your chest should win out and the flattery should take precedence. He took the time to find something that would "suit" you, as part of a clear effort to make you feel welcome... comfortable... wanted. The feeling in your chest is troublesome in its implications, that rush of excitement like getting a valentine's present unexpectedly... with all of the accompanying intent.

Sure, just like your coat it makes you seem like some goth girl gone mad, but no one's given you a gift of any kind let alone a thoughtful, sincere looking one in years. He can't have known it when he bought these things, but Eli is absolutely wreaking havoc on your emotions right now.

Orchid's head emerges from under a stunningly red blanket with the same look of amusement and maybe a bit of nostalgia, you realize, and stares at you for a couple of seconds before breaking the silence. "So, do ya like it or what?"

"I... I really do. He got this just for me?"

"Honey, you're in for a few more of these surprises soon. He absolutely loves buying us stuff, and you'll be no exception."

"S-surprises like what?"

"If I told you they'd hardly be surprises. Relax, little sister, nothing you need to worry about." She teases, before her head retreats back under the blanket with a mumbled "G'night."

Seafoam, apparently satisfied that the blanket is positioned correctly, picks up where her compatriot left off.

"I'm glad you like your bed, Opal. If you need anything, you can wake me right up."

"T-thanks, but I'm sure I'll be fine. Do you guys really sleep with the lights on, though?"

"Oh, of course not! Watch this." Seafoam extends both forelegs to either side, then swings them both together in rapid succession, and the lights go out at once.

"He got you guys a clapper thing for the lights?"

"Yeah! We call it 'the clopper'!"

"Sounds dirty."

"Only a little. Goodnight, Opal."

"Goodnight, Seafoam."

Aside from some shuffling noises as Seafoam makes herself comfortable, the room is perfectly quiet as you unfold the just- as-soft-as-it-looked blanket and settle onto "your" new bed. It's no surprise that it's as heavenly as a dog bed could ever be, plush and soft and warm, with enough room to spread out a bit, though you follow Orchid's lead in curling up against the elevated ring along the outside and covering yourself with the blanket. You revel in the comfort of it all for longer

than you can keep track of, but having slept the day away in Eli's car means that now you're still wide awake and alone with your thoughts.

Being alone in your own head is historically not the best move, and tonight is no exception. You're too awake and without anything to focus on the nagging sense of anxiety you've been living with crawls back into the fore. There's nothing to worry about! Eli is incredibly, impossibly nice to you! His ponies are funny and friendly and call you "little sister"! There's nothing to be freaking out over so now you're just left with this broad, existential sense of worry about your life. Eventually twitchy restlessness gets the better of you and with care not to wake either of your new friends you slink out of the living room, pausing to figure out that the odd squeaking noises you've been hearing are, in fact, some kind of too-cute snoring coming from Seafoam's bed.

So here you are, awake in a strange house at... 3:30 in the morning, too wired to sleep and with no idea what to do with yourself in the meantime. You help yourself to a bit of water from a pony-height faucet in the kitchen, another little amenity that Eli has seen fit to bless you with, but beyond that you're at a loss for what to do besides worry about how helpless you are and feel bad about how the world is moving right along without you, because you weren't contributing anything anyway. You end up wandering around, eventually finding a large window with a decent view of the night sky for you to stare out.

The moon and stars are brilliant tonight, but you're not really taking any of it in, still going around in circles trying to figure out why you're so nervous. You're alone in a big, unfamiliar place and not sure about where your life is headed and you're homesick for places that you'll never be able to go back to... but you've made your peace with all that! So what is so wrong with you that you can't just relax? You've been anxiously kneading your forehooves on the floor in front of your, becoming gradually aware of a discomfort not just in the joint you're putting pressure on, but a strange new sensation of pressure.

Your eyes dart down to your forehooves as the pressure sensation becomes much, much sharper, developing into an unfamiliar pain. Augh, what's going on? It feels like someone's closing a vice on your fingers!

Wait, fingers?!

Your anxiety blossoms into a bewildered fear as you realize the sensation is like slamming a car door onto your fingers. All of them, five on each limb, and you can feel each of them! Your eyes can confirm that it's just not the case, though. There on the end of your freakish little forelegs are two useless lumps of whatever fingernails are made of, but you swear you can feel them there, wriggling in a new kind of crushing agony. The cognitive dissonance is getting to be just too much, and you're not ashamed of the low whimpering noises that escape from your muzzle, or the tears that fight their way loose from your eyes.

Something is wrong. Terribly, painfully wrong. Is it the nanomachines? Did that loony in the mountains screw something up? You'll be like this for hours before you can even get to him! You can't go to a hospital! Oh no, oh no, oh no.

The sound of a door opening somewhere upstairs calls you out of your painful fugue state, and ginger hoofsteps carry you toward the stairs with a frightened urgency. You don't call out to him, afraid of waking the whole house and having to explain yourself like a child having a bad dream, no matter how serious the situation is. As you begin to ascend you can hear the sounds of water running and realize that Eli must have gone to the bathroom, and the sudden light from that very bathroom door opening makes you duck low to the stairs, as though you've been caught doing something you shouldn't. You shouldn't be afraid of him, you need him!

Your whimpering betrayed you, though, and a disheveled, half-awake Eli peers into the darkness for a few confused seconds before speaking aloud.

"Opal, what're you doing up at this hour?"

It takes a few deep breaths before you can put a sentence together, and there's an ashamed urgency in your voice as you whine out "I'm sorry, I don't mean to be a both-"

"Opal, what's wrong?" The pain in your voice must have been all he

needed, his voice at once perking up to something resembling wakefulness.

"M-m-my fingers hurt!"

"Your what?"

"I know how stupid that sounds and I don't have any but I swear I can feel them and they hurt!" Your voice cracks on that last syllable, you're now full-on crying in front of him, at like four in the morning with ridiculous, impossible pain.

"It's okay, I believe you" he coos, lifting you off the stairs and carrying you in both arms into his bedroom. You find yourself being rocked back and forth on his lap while he hurriedly dials his phone and curses repeatedly as the calls ring their way through to a voice mail until finally, on the sixth call, someone picks up. There's a familiar, grumpy sounding voice on the other end, and you're more relieved than you ever thought you'd be to hear Zephyr's master, even if it's unintelligible to you. Eli wastes no time on pleasantries, with concern evident to an extreme degree in his voice.

"Opal is telling me her fingers hurt!"

What follows is an apparently very long-winded explanation on the other end, with Eli only giving attentive grunts as he listens to what you hope are instructions to fix you. For good friends you wouldn't have expected Eli to sound so terse as he hangs up the phone with "If this doesn't work I'm bringing her to you."

Eli drops the phone unceremoniously and at once uses that hand to stroke your mane. "Okay sweetie, I'm gonna try something to make it stop, but you've gotta believe that this is all in your head, okay?"

All he gets is a desperate head shake yes and more desperate little whining noises. Your invisible, nonexistent fingers are still being crushed, you'll agree to anything if it will just go away!

"Alright Opal, close your eyes for me and keep them shut, okay?"

You've complied before he even finished the sentence, now only seconds from screaming. It's getting worse! Why is it getting worse?! Eli turns you around to face forward with him and leans you back against his chest. You can feel his arms moving around, but don't dare open your eyes to see what he's doing lest you somehow ruin it.

"Okay, deep breaths, with me. In and out, slowly. In. Out. In. Out."

This is stupid! Nevertheless you do as your would-be Master instructs, timing your own breaths to match the rise and fall of his chest against your back.

"Okay, now think about those fingers. Hold your forelegs up in front and imagine your fingers. Got it?"

"Yes!"

"Alright, now make a fist, and then release it. In and out, just like the breathing, okay?"

"Mmm!"

"Alright, honey. Now fist. Now release. Okay?"

"Please, it hurts..."

"Now open your eyes."

When you do, you're shocked to find a pair of human arms in front of you, hands clenching and un-clenching in time with your breathing. For a few seconds it's all you can do to cry and keep breathing with him, but his voice keeps you on task.

"See, fist open, fist closed. Just like that. Keep going now."

Eli's carefully positioned hands open and close in perfect time with your shared breathing, and in perfect time with you doing much the same with your imaginary hands. It takes several minutes of this repetition to reduce



your pain down to that awkward pressure from before, and then finally to see it gone all together. It takes several minutes after that for you to stop crying into his shoulder while he holds you.

"Wha.. What was that?"

"Apparently its happened to a few other ponies before. Phantom limbs, just like an amputee. I'm sorry that it happened to you."

"Is it gonna happen again?"

"Maybe. We'll just keep doing that when it does, and I'm told they go away after a little while."

You offer him the sincerest "Thank you, Master" you've ever said, hugging him with your useless, but pain-free, limbs and turning as if to get off his bed and go back to yours when a pair of arms scoop you back up. You find yourself held against him, big and warm, facing forward as the "little spoon".

"C-can't I go back d-downstairs?"

"Nope. What if it happens again? You're staying right here with me, little lady."

Any further objections you may have had are handily dealt with in the form of an elaborate scalp massage with one hand. The other one is looped around the narrowest point of your waist, holding you tight against him as he curls up around you a bit. He looked afraid earlier, when he didn't know what was causing your pain, and not in the detached way of a person afraid for their property. He was afraid for you. No matter what you'd like to think, he really, really does care and it makes you happy in ways you didn't think were possible. You're uncomfortable with what this means for you, and him, and your life here. You are also very, very comfortable physically, and his body heat and ongoing petting finally lull you to sleep.

When you finally wake up sometime in the early afternoon you find Orchid snuggled up to your other side, and the small, too- cute squeaking

noises coming from behind your big spoon seem to indicate that Seafoam found her way up here as well. They're going to be absolutely brutal with jokes at your expense once you're all awake, but they've got every right to considering it only took you a few hours to end up in his bed for one reason or another. Eli's arms are still wrapped around you, providing warmth and comfort and safety in ways you wouldn't have believed yesterday morning. The last time you woke up in a man's arms you had a panic attack and nearly fled into the woods. This time you cuddle a bit deeper. You won't act like you're totally alright with living here in the long-term for a couple more weeks, just to keep up appearances, maybe get treated extra nice while he still thinks you've got a trump card. In all honesty, though, you know that if you ever go back to the house Zephyr lives in, it'll be because your Master brought you along for a visit.

From now on, you're Opal. And all things considered that's probably the best way things could have turned out.

As much as you'd like to say that after your night in Eli's bed you got right down to it and tried to really befriend these new people... or, um, person and ponies... you were supposed to spend your life with, you just couldn't. Too much stress yesterday and too little sleep last night caught up to you hard, and you barely made it through breakfast without nodding off (as though giving yogurt to the likes of you wasn't already messy enough.)

Even Eli noticed it when he was dabbing off your muzzle with a cloth, as if that weren't already embarrassing enough. Still, where Zephyr's guy would've mocked you, your guy - still very weird to think of him like that - only smiles a bit, rests a hand atop your head and asks if you'd like to rest with him for a bit.

Your agreement is as enthusiastic as you can make it, and while Seafoam and Orchid seem disappointed at your lack of energy they still follow along behind him as the four of you make your way through his labyrinth home. The sudden blinding light of the mid-morning sun is hardly welcome without warning, but once your eyes adjust and the rough silhouettes of your companions move along ahead of you you're able to get a decent view of an incredibly lush garden. The humidity and the sound of running water is quite unexpected until a look up reveals that you're

not outside at all! The sun shines in through glass panels on all sides save the wall of the house proper, and you can't help but scowl when you realize you're in a private greenhouse, visibly overgrown with tropical-looking plants and flowers around inlaid stone paths and the odd artificial stream.

What on earth does Eli do for a living that he can afford all of this? And why spend so much on all this luxury, and three involuntary transformed and subjugated people, when he seems so down-to-earth in behavior and speaking style? Eli closes the door behind you once you clear the threshold into the greenhouse before reaching a hand down to your mane, scratching lightly before speaking.

"So this is my quiet place to relax. Do you like it?"

His tone is so self-assured, you know he expects you to be awestruck... and of course you are! This greenhouse looks big enough to hold an olympic swimming pool, and he's filled it with a tiny chunk of paradise! Orchid and Seafoam are already dashing off into the brush, apparently free to roam off the laid paths. As cool as it is though, it just seems so excessive...

"It's amazing... But this must have cost so much money to build just for you and Orchid and Sea..."

"Not as much as you'd think, really."

"B-but still! You could've fed hungry people! Or vaccinated children! Or... or..."

Words fail you when you look up at him, perhaps more angry than you should've been, to find him looking at you with an expression you can't quite place. The sudden rush of fear that you've offended him is more instinct than logic, though your mind is quick to conceive of punishments for your insolence or harsh words coming your way for being "ungrateful". You had already realized that from now on you were going to have to depend on him for everything you need to live... but the realization that he could just as easily make your life a living hell hadn't really come in force yet.

This sudden terror is what flings you to the ground beneath your hooves, head bowed low and eyes shut as you grovel at his feet. You're ashamed of yourself for doing it, but you're begging for forgiveness before he even has time to speak.

"I'm sorry! I won't talk back like that again, please don't me angry! I w-wasn't thinki- eh?"

Your sudden, confused silence is the result of him laying a finger across the front of your muzzle, already kneeling for better eye contact. A hand returning to the top of your head to tousle your mane is your first sign that he's probably not that mad, and the words that follow only serve to remind you that jumping to conclusions never really works out for you.

"I'm not mad at you, Opal. If I wanted a pet that didn't think I could've just adopted a cat, you know."

"I, uh... You know your friend in the woods would never have let me get away with that, right?"

"I'm not my friend. I suppose you must've come from some hard times, then? This must all seem stupid to someone who struggled with the basics."

"Y-yeah. Really hard times. Living on cheap frozen vegetables. Going from that to this... it's really strange. If you don't mind my asking, what do you do that earned you all this?"

"I'm in finance. Also... a lot of this is an inheritance. I had to earn it first by proving myself in the field, but once I had and my father passed suddenly I had an actual fortune."

"So you used your dad's money to buy me?"

"And the others. Those disgraceful "little girl horses" he almost wrote me out of the will over, bought with his money and living in his old house. I think it's pretty funny."

"You didn't like you father much, did you?"

"I liked him just fine, but I wanted a pony and he can't mock me from beyond the grave, so here you lot are. Now come on, you still need a nap and I need to check some numbers."

You have no idea what he means by "check some numbers", especially considering that you're currently in a private chunk of rainforest, and as you follow along behind him taking in eyefuls of gorgeous floral colors and lush greenery the thought occurs that you know about as much about his job and how he does it as a dog would about it's owner's business. It's hardly pleasant to think of yourself as being so uselessly dumb compared to the likes of him, but financial talk about stocks or bonds or whatever always flew clear over your head, and it would seem that is his business. Still, you suppose anyone with a similar level of business acumen to yourself wouldn't be able to provide for you very well at all. The vision of your old apartment flashes before your eyes, now with an unfamiliar stranger sharing his box mac n' cheese with you.

Yeeaaaah, no.

You follow Eli to what seems to be the center of the greenhouse, and discover a small clearing with a large lawn bench in the center, set up to swing between the posts it hangs from. A few feet away is a simple little plastic table that Eli wastes no time in approaching, picking up a sleek, glossy tablet computer before setting himself down on one half of the bench. You try your best to contain yourself when he taps the space beside him twice, inviting you to join him up there. Sure, he'll probably be working most of the time, but the occasional hand reaching down to skritch at your mane while you nap in a tropical paradise is a wonderful prospect, enough of one that he smiles a bit wider at the involuntary perking of your ears and tail.

The bench swinging as you try to clamber up almost topples you, but thankfully you're able to pull yourself up before making a scene. He's been watching you regardless, and once you've sat back on your haunches he chuckles for a second before apologizing.

"I should've helped you, but I forgot that you're too new to have Orchid

or Seafoam's grace. They just jump up."

"Yeah, if I try to jump up you'll be too busy helping me with my nosebleed to get any work done."

"Maybe my work is really important. Maybe I throw a towel at you and tell you to keep pressure on it."

"Hmph. Some Master you'd be then."

The look he gives you in one of surprised laughter, but as his hand settles atop your it shifts into something else entirely. Is that fondness? A kind of adoration?

M-maybe he likes you?

"I've never had a pony give me a guilt trip before. I'll try to live up your expectations. You know I was kidding, right?"

"Last night you sat up with me to help me get over my ridiculous brain problems. Of course you were kidding." You reply with a healthy bit of jest before setting your forelegs down on the bench. You'd originally intended to lie down beside him, but you got your measurements a bit wrong. You only realize that once your head is nearly situated in his lap, though you're able to scoot an inch or two back before his hand guides you the rest of the way down. Using his thigh as a pillow is actually pretty alright, much softer than the other guy's thigh, and the fingers rubbing small circles through your mane make it doubly lovely. The tablet ends up resting on his other thigh, his free hand tapping away while you zone out. You can see Orchid through some of the brush in front of the bench, reared up on her hind legs to lean against a tree. There's something in her mouth, and as far as you can tell she's fiddling with a strange looking bird feeder hanging from a low branch. There aren't any birds in here as far as you can see, but you decide to put off asking what's going on over there until you're not so wonderfully comfortable.

Every now and again Eli will say something to himself about whatever it is he's working on, and you're pretty content to ignore it while you fade

in and out of sleep, briefly coming to every time his free hand starts or stops petting you. There comes a point, probably sometime around noon, where the greenhouse is simply too bright to remain asleep. By then you feel well rested enough to actually face the day, Eli turning to face you with a smile as you stretch your neck and yawn.

"Enjoy your nap?"

"Mhm, Yes sir! How's your work?"

"Looking pretty good. Just made some new investments! This seems like it could be a winner down the road, right?"

He excitedly holds the screen up in front of you, and while that's most certainly a line graph, some numbers, and the odd bit of actual English, it's an otherwise indecipherable fact sheet. Admitting that you can't make heads or tails of it would be a bit shameful... but using this to play for more attention could net you profit! ... of a sort. You look away from the screen, back up towards him, and wordlessly tilt your head to the left, flicking your left ear as you do, keeping your face as neutral as possible despite your desire to laugh. Is imitating a confused dog too much? It's degrading, but then again self-deprecating humor is really what you're best at...

His face falters, apparently taking a few seconds to put two and two together before he starts to laugh. The tablet gets put back down before he settles his hands on either side of your face.

"You're adorable, you know that? Though not much for picking stocks I take it?"

"Well, uh, no. To be honest I used to work in a convenience store..."

"You don't need to say it like that was a bad thing. You were gainfully employed and keeping your head above water. The guy who made you cute couldn't even say that for a while."

"Y-you're giving me too much credit... I wasn't above water at all. More like drowning."

"Poor thing. Well, it's in the past now, so cheer up! Now, I don't know about you, but I could use a little exercise. Let's find the others and move along, shall we?"

And off you go, following his lead as he searches for your companions. Seafoam is sitting by an artfully built artificial pond staring into it pretty intently, and though at first you wanted to make a joke about her apparent spacing out a sudden splash a few feet ahead of her shuts you right up.

Eli chuckles to himself again when you mutter "Oh no way." and pick up your pace to a quick trot ahead of him to water's edge. The water is clear and laden with aquatic plants just as lovely as everything else in here, but the explanation for the splashing comes swimming right up to you, apparently attracted by your shadow. Gazing up at you from within are half a dozen colorful fish, delightful to behold but still insulting to your sensibilities, bringing your scowl right back. Seafoam speaking up perks your ears back up from their annoyed fold, and you look back up to find her putting a few items in a small bin with her hooves.

"What, you don't like koi? I raised them myself, you know!"

"Wait, \*you\* raised them?"

"Well, yeah. Eli said they'd be too much work for him to bother with, so I promised I'd take care of them."

"But... but you're a pet."

"Which is awesome. Your point?"

"You're a pet with pets."

"Oh, right, Eli used to joke about that too. Think of it like a reverse food chain. He feeds me and I feed them."

"And no one gets eaten."

"Now you've got it!"



"Still, though. He bought you fish? Just 'cause you asked?"

A finger arrives unseen behind one of your ears and begins to scratch as Eli steps into your field of vision and begins to do the same for Seafoam, the conversation pausing for a moment while that most enjoyable sensation overcomes both of you.

"Of course I bought her the fish. Sure, she needs me to help if the filter needs cleaning or the pump stops working, but otherwise the whole thing is her responsibility. Besides, Opal, how do you expect to enjoy life all cooped up with the likes of me without a few hobbies?"

"I haven't really thought about it... To be honest since I woke up like this I've just kinda been focusing on putting one foot- ah. One hoof in front of the other. That and I figured you'd be petting me, mostly."

"You're sweet," He leads in, shifting his finger to lightly scratch beneath your jaw. Ooh, this is a new one, you'd be purring like a kitten if you could. "But you should probably think about something I can give you to keep you fulfilled and sane. Fulfilled, remember. Not the same as being entertained."

"So no video games?"

"Oh, I didn't say that. But I'd like you to pick something real, that you can put your mind to and physically work on."

Well, he didn't outright forbid the vidya, and that's a good sign. Granted, without fingers you're not gonna be much for the shooter scene anymore, but there's bound to be something you can play. He wants you to pick a hobby off the top of your head, though... You miss that beat up old guitar back at your apartment, but by now that poor old girl is probably in the trash with the rest of your stuff...

But you weren't any good when you had fingers, and now you don't even have them...

"I don't know what I'd pick, Master..."

You'd like to continue wondering what you want, but calling him "Master" automatically, being as lost in thought as you were, unsettles you a little. Seafoam and Orchid call him by name, and you've even been trying to... but that guy in the woods really does his job well, so in your head you guess he'll always be "Master". Still, this one doesn't seem to want you around just so he can make you submit, he even wants you to have activities of your own... a kind of life! If you thought it was anything but sincere, you'd swear it was a devious plot on his part, because granting you little pieces of personhood the way he's offering to is probably going to make you a much better pet.

"Take your time. We can even do a little research later if you like."

The thought of "doing research together" is more tempting than you'd like it to be, conjuring visions of a seat in his lap while he googles things for you. Mm! Lots of petting to be had there. You know Zephyr's guy apparently told Eli you'd be "a cuddler" if he could calm you down... does that mean you're abnormally needy even for a mutant little horse? You were pretty lonely before being turned... maybe you're just that desperate for physical contact? Sad.

Your sad little self-loathing session ends abruptly when Orchid emerges from some nearby brush, for a moment looking every bit like the tropical flower she's been named for.

"I thought I heard voices over here. Are we leaving?"

Eli replies in the affirmative, though no one goes anywhere right away as Orchid heads directly over to you and Sea, nuzzling each of you in turn before turning to you.

"Like the greenhouse? It's my favorite place."

"It's incredible... and I guess it suits you, doesn't it?"

"It should! Apparently he only got it in his head to buy a pony as garish as me from sitting in here."

"You're not garish! Just, uh, unique."

"You're sweet, Hon. If you can believe it I'm actually toned way down from my OC, the guy who turned us thought it'd be cruel to oversaturate me."

"That's his idea of cruel?"

"Well, think about it. If you're gonna be a pony you at least wanna be able to look in the mirror without cringin'."

All there is to do is giggle in response, high and feminine where there used to be a little baritone chuckle. You really do like Orchid, though. Kinda like Zephyr, she gets you without having to try. Maybe there's a camaraderie in both having been male prior to being slender, admittedly cute, female ponies, but you'd like to think it's her sense of humor.

"So, uh, I know Seafoam has her fish. Earlier I saw you fiddling with some kinda bird feeder? Do you have pets in here too?"

"Not quite a bird feeder. Eli, can I show her?"

Your owner agrees with a smile, and by now you're wondering if there's any reasonable request he'd refuse. With instructions to meet him at the door when you're done Orchid leads you along a new path through a wire-frame arch covered in flowering vines... morning glories, you think?

"So he bought you as a garden accessory?"

"Sorta. I'm not going to lie, when he told me that at first I was worried he meant for me to live in here. I mean, it's really nice and all but it would be, I dunno, like being a zoo animal or something."

"Heh, wouldn't Seafoam have her own fake beach if that were true?"

"And you'd have a belfry, you batty little thing. By the way, does having those cat eyes affect your vision?"

"I'm not sure, honestly. I can't tell if my night vision is any better, but

bright light seems harder to adjust to, though."

"You should ask for a hat or something."

"I suppose I could... it still seems weird to me."

"Having to ask?"

"No, getting it at all."

"I know you said you were in the woods with our first Master for a while, but don't tell me you forgot about being able to acquire goods."

"Like I told Eli earlier, I was on strictly survival spending for a long time. If I wanted a hat, well, that could just as easily buy a full day's worth of food, you know."

The long walk around seemingly every corner of the greenhouse finally ends when you reach another small clearing, a young tree in the center. It occurs to you as you look around that Orchid could have brought you here in a fraction of the time she took taking the long way... she just wanted to talk to you. You're glad for it, these little efforts on her part to get to know you. The tree is vibrant beyond compare, though you don't remember it being as colorful as it looks now.

It's not until one of them flutters off its perch over to the "bird feeder" you'd mistakenly identified that you realize it's an ordinary tree, here and there peppered with butterflies attracted to whatever is in the hanging piece of plastic Orchid had been messing with earlier.

"They can get by alright on just the flowers in here for a bit, but I prefer to give them a little something every day. You should come by here later today when they're more active."

"You keep butterflies?"

"Sea gets her koi, so I wanted something to brighten this place up other than myself."

"No fair, the both of you have themed pets. I don't even want a bat!"

"I liked butterflies before being turned, I'll have you know. Now I have the time and resources for them."

"You're both doing so well with them, too... what if I screw up what I pick?"

"Try, try again, little sister. You've got nothing but time to get it right. So... besides suddenly thinking you had fingers last night, are you liking it here?"

"You know, I never thought I'd be so unhappy about feeling my hands again. It's all very surreal, this money and his attitude and you two being so nice. At least back at the place in the woods I could focus on what I'd lost. This place... I'm either worried there's a catch or that maybe I died that night and this is some kinda fucked-up afterlife. It doesn't seem real."

"There's no catch as far as I know. Eli's too nice for his own good. I imagine if he'd picked out one of the ponies I shared the basement playroom with he'd have paid to let them go. Tearful and angry about being turned, you know? He wouldn't be able to deal with it."

"I was like that. Weren't you?"

"Me? Quite the opposite. I was a little freaked out at first, and who isn't, but when the big guy with the domination fetish came in and explained things to us I ended up surprising him. Apparently not many ponies tearfully thank him for taking them away, he didn't really know what to make of me. Everything is such a big deal with him, too, it got annoying. I don't need a lecture about the collar, just put it on me so we can go for a walk."

"So you liked being a pet?"

"I liked leaving my life behind and having a body I didn't hate. That it happened to involve collars and leashes and warming a guy's lap... it's a good deal in my book. You're clearly made your peace with it, little miss snuck-up-to-Eli's-bed."

"Hey! I told you that was a real medical probl-" You stop suddenly, Orchid's head turning as she laughed had revealed something far more amusing to you.

"Yes?"

"There's a, well, one of them is kinda sitting on your mane."

Sure enough, a lone butterfly has wandered away from the area around the feeder and has settled on the back of Orchid's mane, looking like a particularly delicate hairpiece on the top of her yellow strands.

"Oh, yeah, they do that. I must look like a flower to them. Color scheme's everything, y'know."

Orchid lightly shaking her head and waving a hoof nowhere near the actual insect is enough to scare the little thing into the air, a satisfied little hum coming out of your compatriot's muzzle as it does before she turns to you and starts laughing as it settles on the tip of your nose, dominating your vision. A quick snort from you convinces it that you're not a good thing to sit on, either, and it sets off back toward the tree.

"Good, they like you. Now, we've probably kept Eli waiting. C'mon."

The two of you waste no time getting back to Eli, Orchid navigating low brush with an ease that surprises you, and while you're nowhere near her agility you're at least able to keep her tail in sight long enough to end up back at the door to the house, Where Eli is kneeling over Seafoam, upside-down on her back and with a look of complete and utter contentment while he rubs her belly. While you certainly wouldn't have traded your bonding time with Orchid for anything, there's a pang of jealousy you're hard-pressed to ignore. Eli perks right back up to open the door, with Seafoam rising a bit groggily to her hooves as though she'd been asleep. Oh, dammit, maybe later you can get him to do that to you without too much fuss...You'd been ready for another winding trip through the bafflingly large house... or maybe it's time to abandon modesty and call it a mansion? To your surprise the destination for "exercise" appears to be just down the hallway, through a door you

passed on the way to the greenhouse. The shock of the greenhouse having already jaded you quite a bit, the smell of chlorine gives your destination away before you've even rounded the corner. Sure enough there's a pool in here, shielded by glass panes from the outside in a manner rather similar to the greenhouse itself. Looking around now you're able to gather that the pool is nestled in the center of a "U" shape made by the rest of the building, the glass surrounding you, along with the greenhouse, clearly later extensions to an old building. Is this the power of what they call "old money"? You'd always assumed it was a pop-culture artifact, something that used to exist but kept getting referred to... maybe you need to revisit that assumption.

The sound of hooves on tile and war-cry yell is followed by Orchid and Seafoam throwing themselves into the water with gusto, emerging from beneath seconds later with an off sort of doggie-paddle getting them around without any apparent danger. You look around the room for Eli, and while you do spot him you end up turning away as quickly as you can, considering that he is currently changing into swim trunks. An eyeful of man-butt is strange enough, the last thing you need right now is an eyeful of his bait and tackle... it might end up being less awkward and more, er, tempting, and that's gotta be avoided. You make your way toward the shallow end of the pool, head stiffly turned to face anywhere but Eli, watching your "sisters" splash about with an impressive amount of speed. Clearly they've got practice.

As curious as you are to see how they're swimming so well, arriving at water's edge and looking in at the submerged stairs leading into the shallow end causes you foreleg to retreat a little. Even the shallow end looks like it would be over your head if you sank, and as far as ways to die go "drowned in the shallow end" is not one you'd like to experience. You're barely coordinated enough to get out of bed, swimming seems more and more hazardous by the minute.

It's this mindset that causes you to yelp embarrassingly loud when Eli grabs you from behind, rests you against his chest, and carries you with him into the water. Before you've even managed to stutter out a thing he's already cleared the steps you could have comfortably stood on without drowning and brought you into water that would be above your head.

"Wait! Wait hang on please bring me back to the step!"

"You're not scared of a little water, are you?"

"No! I'm scared of drowning because I don't know how to swim with hooves."

"Right, so I'm gonna be right here until you learn."

"O-oh... You're sure there's nothing in the water that'll ruin my coat or mane?"

"I'm sure, we went through that with Seafoam once. I use much gentler chemicals now."

Wait, why did you even ask him that? The only three people who're ever gonna see it even if you do get bleached for a while are him and his other pets. You don't need to look good... Who are you trying to impress? You quietly admonish yourself for worrying about your appearance, still fretting that it's somehow a feminine thing and you're losing your gender identity but also fretting that worrying about your coat has nothing to do with femininity and connecting the two might make you a sexist.

While you're off in Opal's la-la land of anxiety, which you're sure didn't sound as nice with your old name attached to it, Eli begins to slowly lower you into the pool. He does so very, very slowly and you're lost as to why until you realize that you're squirming more and more as parts of your fur come in contact with the water, and he's just enjoying the show. You'd like that to bother you, but that rush of blood to your cheeks as you blush invisibly under your dark fur is less embarrassment and more... well... excitement. He keeps his hands at your side, still offering support once you're in up to your neck.

"There. Not so bad, is it?"

You look back up at him, embarrassed by his tone, but his small smile is too infectious, his eyes just beaming out charm, so it's hard not to crack a smi-"



Oh shit it's him. He's the one you want to impress. Oh hell, you were hoping you could coast through the rest of your natural life without ending up like Zephyr, but that's not looking too good now.

"Don't talk to me like I'm a kid... You know I have issues."

"I think you're getting better. You aren't hiding behind furniture anymore."

"...Well, no, you're right, I'm not. You're not as frightening as I imagined you."

"Oh? And what do you think of me now?"

He's fishing for a compliment, but there's an element of seriousness to his tone, he's clearly got your "return policy" in mind. Well, why not just tell him the truth? It's the highest praise you've got, honestly.

"I think you're kind. Last night I told you a silly, impossible thing was causing me pain and you believed me without hesitation. You worried about me, and not just 'cause you dropped a fat wad of cash buying me. I can tell."

"Why, little pony, it sounds like you might even like me." His tone of mock-surprise is one of pure jest, but his eyes still betray him, because you can see how pleased he is at hearing that.

This is flirting. It took you this long to figure it out, why this feels so easy, so giddy, so strange, but you're actually quite sure that's what is going on here. He's flirting with you because he thinks the worrywart bat-pony is cute. You're flirting back because....

...Because he bought you? Because you need him? Because he's good at calming you down?

...Because his eyes are his best feature...?

Oh crap... you're flirting back because you think the big guy is cute, too.

It's not like there's anything to do about it now, you suppose. You can freak out and demand to be brought back to the house in the woods... but you don't want that.

"I think it sounds that way too. You got that wrong by the way."

"Hm?"

"I'm not just 'little pony'. Aren't I 'Your little pony', Master?"

You really wish you weren't so pleased with yourself for saying that aloud. You knew coming here was probably a one-way trip, and once you arrived you were pretty confident about having won some kind of karmic lottery, but you didn't think you'd like him so quickly!

You're pulled back out of the water for a hug, still sopping wet and pressed against his chest. While he murmurs "only if you want to be." into your ear. While you're sorely tempted to ruin the moment by motorboating his small but still present man-boobs you'd rather just go on being hugged. Your wet cuddling transforms into extremely embarrassing swimming lessons from him with occasional input from Seafoam or Orchid as they race laps around the pool.

As it turns out, swimming in this body is exactly what it seemed; an awkward doggy-paddle that suffices to keep your neck above water. Orchid and Seafoam seem to have built up quite a lot of endurance at this, but your occasional mistakes and near-dunkings mean that you stick to the shallower end of the pool, having learned that the water allows you to "stand" on your rear hooves if need be. It's an extremely awkward position to hold yourself in, and realizing that it's as close as you'll probably ever get to your old human posture makes it vaguely humiliating.

Still, it's very good exercise, and before too long Orchid and Sea join you in the shallows for a splash fight and a bit of roughhousing, all while Eli makes up for lost time with his laps. Finally, there comes a time when everyone is good and tired you're quite happy to drag yourself back onto dry land for a quick shower under a faucet in the corner to wash the pool chemicals away, then waiting your turn for Eli to dry you off after the

other two. You end up waiting for a while for him to get done with both of them, Taking the time to tie back Orchid's long mane into a loose ponytail and brush Seafoam's little bob-cut to wavy perfection. Oh lord, your owner is going to want to do that with you too, isn't he?

"Alright Opal, let's get you dried off before you catch a cold or something."

You're grateful for his concern, and once you're toweled off and feeling better you learn that Zephyr's guy made a big mistake. If he had walked into that playroom with a brush you would've been putty in his hands from day one. It's covered in short bristles that send shivers down your spine with every stroke along your fur, and Eli seems to delight in your dopey-looking smile as he pampers you. Once he's finally satisfied that every inch of fur you've got has felt such unmitigated bliss he moves onto your mane and tail with a hairdryer before beginning to play with them, brushing and combing them this way and that and sometimes stopping to look you over from different angles.

"Hmm, I think you'd look best with some structure... maybe a spray or a light gel. It could stand to get a little shorter, too."

Oh no, he really means to do your hair. You can't help but retreat from him a little, suddenly feeling too much like a life-sized pony toy to be comfortable. He picks up on it, of course, watching you side-step away from him as though he'll give you cooties.

"Not big on mane styling, I take it?"

"N-not really, no. I-if you're going to do stuff to it I want a say, too."

"Of course you get a say in it. Later on you and I can sit down with a mirror and find something you like."

"This... isn't optional, is it?"

"No? C'mon, it'll feel nice enough to be worth your while even before we find a good look for you."

Ah, hell. You already had to get used to the other guy insisting on brushing your mane into shape from time-to-time to keep you presentable, now this one wants to make you sit there while he does it up. You don't like long hair! If you hadn't had much bigger issues at the time getting this thing cut down to size would have been priority one. Seafoam's got the right idea, but Orchid's super-long mane looks like hell to you. Oh god, what if he thinks you'd look good like that?

... Well... what if he does think you'd look good like that? If he thinks a certain cut or styling is the cutest, you should at least consider it, right? You've spent too much time in ponymaker games or with photoshop messing with manes to pretend you don't kinda get it...

You just never thought you'd be the pretty pony in question. Well, even by your own admission you're a pretty cute, sorta-hot little female pony... in his place you'd probably geek out about it too...

"Who's a good pony?"

Dammit.

"I am. Just... I dunno, nothing super involved, okay? Simple."

"That's my girl. C'mon, let's go hang out for a bit before lunch, I can show you some more stuff."

You silently swear to yourself that if he leads you into another hugely expensive pleasure den you're going to find something pricey looking and pretend that breaking it was an accident, consequences be damned. It's not that you don't like him, or even that you didn't enjoy your morning in the garden or your afternoon swim, those were both fantastic. You knew you sucked a lot at life before getting in Charlie's van, and becoming less than human hardly helped matters... but his life is so easy, so carefree that your already battered and beaten ego is still wounded. Is there a fancy vase on a table around here you can bump into?

Despite your discontent with so much luxury around here you're honestly surprised to end up back in the living room, but no more surprised than you are when you're scooped up without any prompting on his part and

set beside him on the couch. Seafoam excuses herself to the restroom and Orchid darts off to... somewhere, you guess, leaving the two of you alone for the second time today. You can't decide if this is deliberate on their part or not. On the one hand, it's not like you've seen them conspiring to leave the two of you alone with one another. On the other, they seem to at least like you enough to want you to stay... or they see Eli wants you to stay... Not like you're itching to leave or anything. Your owner settles in, forcing you to move back a bit as he puts his feet up before he focuses on you.

"So, what do you feel like doing now?"

Huh. Good question, actually. Your fellow pets are nowhere to be seen, he looks awful comfortable where he is... No real answer but to get comfortable too...

He seems a bit surprised to find you climbing over his legs before settling on his lap and stomach, but he's no fool either.

"Soooo, you wanna cuddle?"

No eye contact. Eye contact is the little shame that ends your fun. Still... rolling over onto your back, quickly flicking your tail up for modesty's sake, and laying your head back onto his shoulder does the trick nicely. You do tense up a bit when his hands settle onto your exposed stomach, the whole region so incredibly sensitive to the touch that your muscles react involuntarily. Your intense shudder and sharp inhale when he runs a hand up the length of your belly makes him laugh a bit, and though you try to look up at him in indignation his smile is, as always, too infectious to resist.

"Would you perhaps like a belly rub, little Opal?"

"Y-yes."

"Mhm? I didn't hear you."

"Yes, please rub my belly, big strong Master-man who is apparently deaf."

He stares at you, nonplussed for a moment, until your sheepish grin breaks his facade and the belly rub begins in earnest. H-his hands!

M-m-m-much softer than the last guy's....

"Ah-a! Y-you're really goood at this, y-you know!"

"I've got two other ponies, you know. Lots and lots of practice. Though I don't think they like it quite as much as you do."

"T-then they're dumb. This is A-a-awesooooomeee!"

Seriously. All that practice with the others is paying off in spades. Your forehooves twitch and paw at the air madly while your rear legs occasionally kick of their own volition, hitting either air or the soft back of the sofa. You find yourself making the strangest little noises, high-pitched little squeaks of pleasure whenever his fingernails deign to run every so lightly up your abdomen, and pressing the back of your head against his shoulder, occasionally turning it this way and that in what you hope seems like a sign of affection.

You wonder if you can get a written agreement for regular sessions like this in exchange for your trump card? He might find your posturing cute! Even as he rubs, though, you catch yourself dwelling on the idea that being cute is how you'll get by these days... is that what your problem was with mane styling? Shorter hair would look good with your weirdo shade of purple, and you always liked short-haired girls yourself. In fact, between the hair color, his proposed hair style and your admittedly lean but shapely butt you're beginning to think that aside from being a pony you're actually becoming your own ideal girl.

...Though maybe he has similar tastes in women?

Gah! Stoppit! It's only been one day, and you've got to stop crushing on him! It's gotta be something Zephyr's guy did to your head, no way would you start wanting to catch his eye like that so quickly! Though you had a nasty habit of falling "in love" with girls after a date or two before... Considering that, it's possible that manipulating you into loving

someone just because he pets you is just that trivially easy.

Dammit, you really were an ideal candidate for his business, weren't you? A stray animal in human guise, waiting for someone to come take you in... pathetic.

Eli's fingers keep rubbing, though, so your self-loathing can't last terribly long. So what that you like him? You're supposed to like him, he owns you! Besides, he seems as patient as he claimed to be, even now this belly rubbing session is pretty much chaste, his hands are well clear of your awkward little horse teats and your tail-covered womanhood. All you have to do is keep control of your baser impulses and you'll be just fine.

Though right now your baser impulses seem awfully thrilled at the strange bump pressing against your rear end, your squirming seems to have unintentionally been grinding your plot into his lap. Welp, so much for chaste...

"Uh.. uhm, Eli?"

"Yes?"

"Is... is that..."

"Oh, you noticed. Sorry, can't really help it with the way you were moving."

"So you just weren't gonna tell me?" You groan, now trying to wiggle out of his grasp and get clear of the erection as though it were going to attack you.

"The boner isn't awkward until someone talks about it." He replies, matter-of-factly, as though you weren't separated from his genitals by maybe a couple centimeters of cloth.... okay, so that happens every time you sit in his lap, but usually he isn't ready to go!

"Well I'm talking about it! It's awkward, so lemme go!"

"Nope. We've gotta un-awkward this."

"How does holding me against your schlong make it un-awkward?!"

"Because I'm gonna do this."

For a moment you're positively terrified. Does he mean to kiss you, grope you, touch you in places? Will he expect you to do the same?

Too much! Too much too fast! No no no no no gotta get outta here gotta run gotta-

A solitary finger running down your side, along your belly near your hips, causes an involuntary response. You squirm against it, sure, but the unwilling giggle is what sets off alarm bells in your head. Oh crap, you'd almost prefer it if he wanted to make out!

"No, wait, Eliiiahaha, noooooo!"

Now all nine other fingers join in, having found your ticklish spots and now ruthlessly attacking them. Your squirming becomes wild and forceful to the point of bucking, though he seems well-adapted to pony struggling. He must be well-practiced with this too, as he doesn't skip a beat in pursuing you with those accursed wiggling fingers even as your roll off of the couch and onto the floor in a desperate bid for escape, laughter approaching shrieking volume as he pins you. Stuck beneath him you're not going to have any luck in escaping, his tickling only getting more intense.

"STAAHP! ELIIIIIIII STOPPIT I CAN'T BREEHEEATHE!"

The fingers stop as Eli lifts himself off of you, and you collapse onto the floor, panting heavily and still occasionally suppressing little giggles for a minute. A look back up reveals your owner to be quite satisfied with himself by the look of things, grinning like an idiot with a look of mischief in his eyes as he kneels on the floor.

"See? Not awkward anymore."



Your response is a slow, light prodding of the region with one of your rear hooves, and to your relief it would seem he's managed to get it under control down there. You try your best to look disappointed, softening your voice as much as you can for the sake of the joke.

"Y-you mean tickling isn't your fetish, Anon?"

The eruption of laughter is just what you hoped for, Eli at once slumping against the sofa and laughing in that guilty manner that signifies only the best kind of joke. You let yourself laugh at your own joke, safe in the knowledge that if nothing else, you can at least be the funny one. His funny little weirdo pony doesn't seem like a bad thing to be, you suppose, and it's a fair deal better than you thought you'd be when he picked you up.

"Oh, oh wow. I didn't think you'd be the one to start making flutterape jokes."

You're about to reply to him, still sprawled out on the floor upside-down, when a big red something fills your vision. Orchid seems to have arrived while you were laughing, looking down at you with a big, big smile.

"I knew I liked you."

Your internal thrill at having won over at least two out of three housemates is offset by your confusion at Orchid's appearance. Her head seems to be covered by... Hang on! You roll yourself upright and stand at once, fascinated by the hood resting over Orchid's head. Her own color scheme is complemented nicely by the purple zip-up sweatshirt currently covering the upper half of her body, the sleeves visibly worn out by stretching to get over her hooves.

"You've got a hoodie!"

"Uh, yeah. It's comfy as hell, too." She replies, more than a little bemused by your attitude.

"You get clothes?!"

"We, Honey. We get clothes." her smile now dominating her face as she realized why you're so excited.

You whip your head back to face Eli, his eyebrows already raised expectantly.

"I get clothes?"

His response is to pick you back up in a hug, resting you on his lap before speaking like an exasperated parent.

"Only if you ask nicely, darling."

"B-but I can get a hood like hers?"

"Of course you can, you'll look just as cute as she does in it."

"And other stuff?"

"Yes, Opal, other stuff too. Though I'll warn you now: If I buy you clothes you want to wear, I get to buy some clothes I want you to wear."

"... You're gonna play dress-up with me?" You groan, voice laden with the same dread the earlier hair conversation gave you.

"Nothing too extreme, I promise. No pink frilly things."

You stare at him, eyebrow quirked for a moment. His usual tone carries a sincerity and an honesty that you've come to respect quite a bit. When he talks like that, you believe him. So, his tone changing suddenly for the second sentence worries you to no end.

"Well... No pink frilly things right away?"

You're not even gonna dignify that with a response, still just staring at him as neutrally as possible in silence.

"We can barter over what it'll take to get you to wear something once it's here. I'm confident I can make it worth your while to let me have my fun."

I'll have you know that neither Seafoam or Orchid have hated anything I've bought for them."

"It's true." Orchid chirps from beside you "I always end up liking how I look when he gives me something."

"Even when being female was still a new thing?"

"He went easy on me at first."

An arm wraps itself around Orchid's midriff and lifts her into place beside you on his lap, and soon you're being hugged by both parties at once, even as Orchid is wrapped in his other arm.

"And I'll go easy on you, too. Besides, with your color scheme pink would be risky. You'll let me try, won't you?"

It's not a command, so at the very least you're not responding out of impulse, but being asked a question like that and then looking into his eyes... You know it's something that got done to your head, some trick to make you obey...

But you wanna be good, just so he'll like you, right?

"Yes, sir. But, please, just don't put me in dresses or anything right away."

"That's just fine. Do you know how much work it is to get a dress to fit one of you, anyway? I have to do it myself, too, lest I have to explain anything to a seamstress."

"You tailor the clothes?"

"Only the stuff that doesn't fit from the get go. Hoods, shirts, jackets and the like barely ever need work, and even then it's just the sleeves. I like those the best. I mean, come on, doesn't she look freakin' adorable?" he finishes the sentence on a cutesy note, kissing Orchid on the cheek and hugging her a bit harder. Your friend Orchid, probably the only reasonable model for how you can expect to feel and behave in the future

if you stay here, nuzzles into his shoulder before returning the kiss on his cheek, looking at him with an affection you think is somehow different from Zephyr and Autumn's feelings for the loon in the woods. They look at him with a kind of eerie worshipfulness that, given how he treated them, made a lot of sense but always worried you. In fact, the fear that you may have felt something similar is what prompted your near-escape from that place. Orchid and Eli look and act much more like a committed couple in love. There's adoration, yes, and dependency in spades, but you get the distinct impression that there's a sort of mutual respect in there, too. Eli seems just as grateful for her love as she does his.

That's... Well... Kinda...

You can't help but feel envious. Not possessive jealousy, you don't want to take it away from Orchid... but you would like to have it too...

Feeling that way, being loved that way, it must be so nice. Despite still being in the hooves of that very mare and the arms of that very man, all of a sudden you feel terribly lonely.

"Now then, I think Orchid's the only one who hasn't had a bellyrub today." He declares, putting you down on the floor before hoisting himself and Orchid back onto the sofa. You settle in beside the couch, still vaguely rattled by the rush of emotion, and try to relax for a bit while Eli makes a big show of unzipping Orchid's hood, and while you try to quietly figure out where the remote for the television is you hear the sounds of Orchid enjoying herself above you, just as squeaky as you but a bit more melodic. You mean, your new voice is a bit nasally but well tailored to your new body and, you're happy to realize, great for joke delivery. Orchid, on the other hand, has absolutely honey-sweet tones with every spoken word, and given her colors you're surprised her name and cutie mark don't have something to do with a songbird rather than a flower. Then again, made-up ponies posted online can't really have their voice taken into consideration very often, Zephyr's guy must come up with them as he goes... or maybe it's random?

Seafoam's return only becomes apparent to you when a pair of forelegs wrap themselves around your abdomen and you find yourself pulled back down onto the floor as she starts cuddling you.

"Still not big on personal space, are you Sea?"

"Oh, hush. Now there's always someone to snuggle with even when he wants one-on-one time, and I'm taking full advantage of it."

You'd like to snark back at your "biggest sister", still the one you're least comfortable with so far, but her grip is firm as she wraps her limbs around you, and you can't help but nuzzle back once she starts. It's only a few minutes before you're discussing favorite books and movies and shows, in between giggle fits as she starts nibbling on your ears for amusement. So maybe she isn't the kindred spirit you've found in Orchid, but at the very least you're confident that you and Seafoam can function amicably as housemates and friends without trouble.

Your earlier loneliness gets the better of you, and you find yourself turned around to face her and clinging tight as you cuddle. She does seem a bit surprised by your forwardness, but like her nearest physical counterpart you're aware of, Autumn, the return on your investment is many-fold, her strength advantage over you is actually something of a comfort here. To your dismay she's actually far more perceptive than Autumn ever seemed, leaning in to quietly whisper into your ear.

"Is something bothering you, Sweetheart?"

"I'm just feeling... out of place. It'll pass."

Knowing that it will is new. Usually a single worry blossoms into half a dozen given even the tiniest bit of credence by your mind. Maybe it's just something about being held, or maybe it's the relaxing morning... but the lack of anxiety is sort of strange.

Huh. Maybe this place is good for you after all?

By the time Eli is done cuddling with Orchid lunch is actually quite late, and though he's apparently in a hurry to make his "afternoon calls" he still insists on serving it for the lot of you. A quick fruit salad ends up being your main course, but the lemonade he gives you is a big pick-me-up just because it's in a glass with a straw, not a bowl on the floor. At

what point does being treated like a person rather than an animal start making you feel like a mooching slacker? Seriously, when the person feeding you treated you like a dog you could huffily take your food and think nothing of it! Not that Eli can't afford it, you suppose, but you're still sort of waiting for there to be a catch to all this beyond him wanting to use you as a life-sized pony dress-up doll...

"So, I've got to go make the usual phone calls to follow up on this morning's computer work, but I trust you can keep yourself occupied with Orchid and Sea?" He asks, quickly rinsing the dishes while you sit on the floor nearby. You don't know what you're waiting for, but the other two sat down over here so it must be some part of the routine, right?

"Of course!"

"Good girl. Actually, Orchid, could you help her shop around a little for clothes or a hobby on your tablet?"

Orchid assents while you sit there, totally dumbfounded. She has a tablet? She doesn't even have hands!

...On the other hoof, if she can use one, so could you. Though you've got to wonder what she had to do for Eli to get it. Something like that is pricier than clothes or hobby supplies, and Eli seems to always want something in return...

Gah. No! You don't think such unpleasant things about your owner! Everything you've seen and heard makes it clear Eli wouldn't make her do something she really didn't want to.

You've been spaced for long enough that only Eli's hand moving in front of your face gets your attention, leaving you with the sole recourse of apologizing sheepishly after he asks if "anyone's home in there?"

"All forgiven, sweetie. Now, pony want a treat?"

A small voice cries out within you that no, you've been enjoying being treated like an equal, rather than an animal. A much larger voice responds with a definite "Yes!", this time out loud, your ears perking and your

posture straightening unconsciously when you see an honest-to-god cookie in his hand.

Junk food! Terrible little sweet things! Oh, Zephyr's guy was always so fixed on healthy stuff he cooked himself that you haven't seen a delicious hunk of preservatives and corn syrup since your last shift at work!

The cookie on offer is in your mouth in seconds, your old qualms about eating out of someone's hand long since put aside. He scratches behind your ears as you chew, and the usual wash of happiness at his attention is doubled by the bliss of the treat. You know he's got business that needs attending to, but a strange day has left you with some strange emotions, so you decide to get a few of them out now, rearing up onto your haunches and wrapping your forelegs around his thighs in a crude little hug.

Somewhere behind you Orchid jokes to Sea that "I think she liked the cookie." but you know what? The hell with it. If all you have to offer him in exchange for everything you've been given so far, and all the promises for the future, is little pony hugs and letting him mess with your appearance then that's what he'll get. Eli's surprised little "woah" at your sudden movement is the only response you get until his hands descend, pulling you out of your hug around his thighs and instead holding you tight against his chest. All that effort and worrying, even pulling a fast one on the guy who sold you, and you're not even pretending that you might use your "return policy". He seems to get it, too, if the intensity of this hug is any indicator. Alright, little pony. Your Master is kind, his other pets both seem lovely, and you can have just about anything your heart desires save for hands or vacations...

Why not be good? Why not be a pet?

Without a good answer to either question you plant your lips against his cheek. Just a peck, a little chaste thing that could come from anyone, but aside from staring at the odd crumb you leave behind you don't follow up with much of anything besides burying your head in his shoulder. You did it on impulse, and you don't regret it but you're certainly rather embarrassed.

He has to push a bit to do it, wedging his own face into the gap between your head and his own shoulder to make his lip connect with your own fuzzy cheek, and equally chaste peck with a satisfied little hum to himself as he breaks it off. Proof that Eli really is starting to get you comes easily, as all he does after that is set you down on the ground, pat you on the head once more, and tell all three of you to have fun while he worked. Talking about what you just did and it's myriad meanings and implications would simply have been too much, and nothing makes you think you've made the right decision more than Eli apparently understanding that. Seafoam and Orchid, on the other hand...

"You know, Orchid..."

"Yes, Seafoam dearest?"

"I think her actions just now change things a bit, don't they?"

"I'd have to say they do, sister."

"Uhh, guys?" You stammer, concerned at how dryly and coyly they're talking. M-maybe they take offense to that? Oh no, you're moving

too quickly, they must think you're some kind of little hussy! Little hussy horsey!

"There's a phrase for what it makes her, isn't there?"

"Yes, What was it? Something like..."

"Oh, yes, I know!" Seafoam cries, as Orchid's mask of stillness splits into a vibrant grin as they finish in unison.

"One of us!"

Your companions jump you at once, both ponies throwing themselves onto you with enthusiasm in spades. Seafoam is all hugs, while Orchid keeps chanting "One of us! One-of-us!" in a faux-zombie voice for a bit before blowing a raspberry or two on your belly. You yelp and pretend to struggle, but in truth you're... okay.



No, better than okay. You feel a bit lightheaded, breathing an enormous sigh of relief as you cross the threshold into a committed life here. Pent up stress seems to be washing away as you laugh like a crazy pony, an entire lifetime of anxiety flying out the window as you embrace something new, relaxed, and different.

You thought when Charlie offered to pay you a few grand to help him take back "something" that belonged to him that all your troubles would be over once it was done. The job never got done, but you're prepared to admit it: This is much, much better than what you thought you'd be getting.