Interlude Siobhan

Rain pattered the windows outside of the bar. The drops expended their payload of sound and ran down the glass in spent rivulets of shimmering light. The shimmering light came from the interior of the building the window sat in. Warm light from a gently crackling fire suffused the main hall of the Dragon’s Flagon. The bartender polished a glass with clawed hands. Adroit fingers sliding an aged rag across the glass until it sparkled as much as the rain on the windows. He turned his attention back to the mare in front of him. She had interesting eyes, black vertical slashes instead of the regular pony pupils marked her as something closer to his kind than the average mare. The bartender took the rag out and flicked it a few times, more as a force of habit than to get any filth off it.

“So, have you seen a blue pegasus in a trench coat anywhere around here?”

The bartender looked at his rag and then continued polishing the glass without answering the question. The mare frowned.

“The beer here is pretty good. I brew it myself. Not the warm piss you get around the corner. Good ale.” The bartender held the glass up to his eye and looked through it. He pointedly avoided letting his eyes wander over the mare in front of him, while she was looking at least. The mare let out a sigh and flipped open a strap on her saddlebags. Ten bits came out and clattered on the counter in that way only things that are coins can, heavier sounding than normal discs of metal. The bartender slid them into a pocket of his apron and slapped the rag in his hands onto his shoulder. The mug smacked against the wood of a cask behind the draconic barkeep and his claws clicked against the spigot for a second before dark, close to black, frothing liquid flowed out into the glass. He sat it in front of the mare.

“Ten bits gets you two glasses of Coal’s Black stout.”

The mare picked up the glass and sucked down the contents of it far faster than the bartender expected. She sat it back down with feminine gentleness tinged with sarcasm.

“Father never did teach me how to sip, excuse the impropriety dear.”

The bartender chuckled a wry grin onto his face.

The mare smiled wide and dazzled the bartender with her teeth.

Both of them were feeling fine until the drunk came in out of the rain. The occurrence was not particularly remarkable for a bar in Bucksburg. There was plenty of rain and plenty of drunks in a town where the most fulfilling occupation was swinging a pick and trying not to think about gas leaks. The remarkable thing about this one is that he was not a miner and that he was armed. He blindly let his gaze wander over the patrons and the bartender. His brain took a few moments to process the sensory input and came back with volatile disgust.

“I didn’t want no motherfucking scaly shithead saloon.” The drunkard took a moment to unsteadily draw a hand cannon from his side. At least that’s what it looked like before it came into the light when the drunk levelled it at the barkeep. The thing was actually a Goonsley & Mookson Concealed Crossbow Mk.7 but that is a mouthful so most called it *The Tube*. Pretty accurate considering that besides the trigger and the grip that’s about all there was to the thing. One long black tube containing an arrow that you’d have to push against stone to cock again after it fired. Most users of the *The Tube* did not worry much about shooting twice, one way or another.

“Fucking hate reptiles. Shitheads with their fuckin’ treasure hoards too good for us. Can never nail the pieces of shit down neither. Always got that one goody two shoes slit eyed fuckin’ newt wants to make nice and can’t do nothin’ ‘bout them or everyone’s on yer feckin’ arse about it.” The drunk paused in his tirade to retch a few of his guts out onto the floor. He heard a slight shuffling and let the arrow in his crossbow fly before he could get his head back on straight. There was a short cry, whether it was one of pain or fear the drunk couldn’t tell. Before his eyes stopped swimming he heard a sharp crack that nearly split his eardrums in half and one of his legs folded under him with sudden viciousness that knocked the wind out of his lungs in a pained puff of air. He heard a shuffling of hooves as he tried to breath steadier. Adept hooves tugged the contents of his coat pockets out. The steps went away for a moment just as he got enough breath back in him to try and communicate his distaste for the current situation with as much eloquence as he possessed.

“Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck, goddam fucking leg shot I can’t walk for shit mother of FUCK this hurts. Gonna get fucking dragon AIDS off this goddam dirty ass floor.” He took in a breath and was about to start on another speech when he felt something liquid hit his leg. Then his leg sent some signals to his brain that said it was on fire. He tried to vomit again but ended up dry heaving. Liquid splashed against his chest and face before he got roughly shoved onto his stomach. He felt himself slide over something both fluid and solid. Realization lit up his alcohol clouded mind and told him that someone was using him to mop up his own puke. The drunk tried to fight or say something or do anything to show that he was still in control of the situation. He felt a firm tap on the back of his head that told him wriggling was dangerous to his health. He didn’t abide by it, but the tap did disorient him enough that he couldn’t do anything except wait for his head to stop ringing like a seven day alarm clock. The drunk slid to a stop and opened his eyes. He was right in front of the bar’s entrance. Something grabbed his shoulder and ripped part of his coat off.

“Try not to drown. I doubt anyone wants to clean your sorry ass off the street. Drag yourself into a trashcan and bleed out, considerate like.” Said a gruff feminine voice.

The drunk pushed his body up a little bit. He had to close his eyes again with the effort involved. Only one of his front hooves was operational after all. A door clicked in front of him and he felt wood smash into his chin. He flopped to the ground, limp and tired and still hurting like the bitch he was. Hooves pressed against his back and slid him out across the rain slick cobbles. The door shut behind him.

“Fuck.” He said.

The mare sat back down at the bar. She tucked the cloth she’d torn from the drunk into her saddlebags along with the crossbow she took off him and the bastard’s wallet. She’d left him his keys. Once her hooves were free she pulled her flintlock from her side, the barrel still a little warm.

“So, about that other Ale and the pony I was asking about, anything forthcoming?” She asked as her hooves began loading the gun again. She didn’t look at the firearm as she did. Her eyes remained lazily trained on the bartender. To his credit he had barely changed his expression throughout the whole ordeal. The dragon behind the bar picked up the glass still sitting on the table and filled it again.

“The ale is.” He said, putting the glass down in front of her with the air of someone repeating a routine that might haunt his dreams at night. “Honestly haven’t heard much about your pony though. Might try Bo over there by the fire though. He tends to stay up on stuff.”

The mare nodded her thanks. She took the ale and the now half empty bottle of vodka she’d purchased with the drunk’s money with her to where the indicated Bo sat.

The barkeep tried not to look at her ass. Then he settled for staring so long as she didn’t notice him doing it.