Several weeks back, just after he had begun to date Twilight, Caramel had come across a peculiar phrase in a book. As Twilight read to him, he had been given pause by the book as it mentioned “the feeling of having your heart given back to you.” He had asked her to reread the passage several times, but with each repetition the meaning escaped him more.

Now he knew—more than that, he felt it. He had offered his heart up to another, and had it rejected. Four little words had broken Caramel’s world more than anything else could have.

*I’m sorry, Caramel… No.*

He sat in front of the roaring fire, staring blankly at the perfect mare who had just rejected his marriage proposal. His mind was simple white noise, echoes of Twilight’s words bouncing around his head.

“I—uh, you—*what*?”

Twilight hung her head in shame at his pain. “Caramel, I’m sorry. I really am, but it—it’s just not *right* yet.”

“What’s not right? I don’t understand,” he pled, his voice cracking in sympathy with his heart.

“Believe me, I *do* want to be married to you, but not for the wrong reasons.”

“I just, I mean, I only want…”

She met his gaze, both of their eyes slightly watery. “Caramel, I’ll take it back—I’ll marry you tomorrow—just tell me honestly that this proposal has nothing to do with what Daisy and Lily said to you yesterday. Please tell me that didn’t motivate you to do this.”

Caramel’s heart sank into his stomach. “H-h-how,” he stammered quietly, “how could you know about that?”

“After you left last night, I was almost heartbroken. I couldn’t figure out why you kept turning me down, why you kept leaving every time I invited you to stay. I was about to go to bed when Rarity stopped by.” Twilight sighed unhappily. “She told me that she saw you get yelled at by those two.”

Caramel scowled. “Oh, so your friends are checking up on me now?”

Twilight narrowed her eyes right back at him but kept her voice soft. “It’s *not* like that, Caramel, and you *know* it isn’t. I trust you with all my heart. Rarity was just worried about you, and she thought it was something I should know about.”

He winced. “Yeah, you’re right. I’m sorry…”

The unicorn scooted close enough to pull him into a hug, which he didn’t return. “Hey, I understand how you feel. Up until last night, I had almost convinced myself that you didn’t want me anymore because I was pregnant.”

“Twilight, no! Of course not! If anything, I—”

She put a hoof to his lips, silencing him. “I know, Caramel. I knew the whole time, but I still doubted, even though I shouldn’t have. But after Rarity told me what had happened and how it seemed to trouble you, it all began to make sense. I had a suspicion that you might do just what you did tonight.”

A look of pained confusion flashed across Caramel's face. “So, wait, you *planned* to turn me down? I really don’t understand! What is so wrong about wanting to provide for you, wanting to make things right?”

“Nothing, love, nothing!” Twilight hugged him fiercely, as much to assure him as to give herself time to keep from crying before looking back into his eyes. “Caramel, I love you so much, but starting a marriage out of obligation is *never* the right way. If there’s even the slightest doubt that you had a choice, if you feel like you *need* to marry me, then there’s a chance—no matter how small—that someday you or I would regret it. We could regret the marriage—or even the foal who prompted it…” she said softly, rubbing her belly self-consciously. “I *won’t* let that happen, Caramel. I promised Rainbow Dash, if nothing else.” Twilight nuzzled her coltfriend tenderly along his jawline. “When you and I commit to each other, I won’t let anything come between us.”

Caramel sat, still in his haze, only sporadic thoughts passing through to meet his brain. He looked down at the mare who sat holding him, both of them equally on the verge of tears. He put a tentative hoof around her. “I love you, too, Twi,” he said quietly.

She looked up at him, a sad smile on her face. “Someday, the time will be right.”

“When?”

“I don’t know yet, but when it’s right, we’ll know.” She felt Caramel slump slightly in her hooves, so she backed off, letting him go. “I’m going to bed,” she murmured. “I know the mood is totally gone, but if you’re not too upset with me, I’d still like to share my bed with you tonight. Even if just for the company.”

He nodded, closing his eyes as he received a soft kiss on the cheek. Caramel listened to her hoofsteps fading out on the padded stairs, instead turning to stare into the now-dying fire. He looked around for a poker or some implement to stoke the fire with, but his search came up empty. With a grimace, he poked quickly at the logs with his hoof only to back off quickly, shaking his hoof as he felt his fur start to singe.

“Woah, woah!” Caramel turned as a decidedly masculine voice came from behind him. The logs in the fireplace glowed blue as they shifted about, and another log floated in to join them on the hearth.

Shining Armor sat down next to the earth pony. “Thought you were gonna hurt yourself there.  Sorry about not having a poker.  House full of unicorns and all that.”

“Oh,” Caramel said, his eyes shifting uneasily at the nearby stallion, “of course.”

The royal stallion glanced over at him several times. “Are—are you scared of me?”

“Um… sorta.”

Shining laughed. “Why? Because I’m a prince?”

Caramel shook his head. “No, because you’re Twilight’s big brother and you probably hate me now.”

The unicorn chuckled and backed off, settling easily into one of the large, soft armchairs. “You know, I actually had a plan for this visit. I was all set to give you a hard time, do the big brother thing. And then Twilight announced that she was pregnant and you were the father. Oh, wow…”

Caramel winced. “Yeah. I thought you were gonna jump over the table and kill me…”

“I considered it.” Caramel gawked at Shining. “Oh, trust me, I thought about it. I wanted to drag you into the street and beat you senseless right then and there, but like the wonderful, intelligent mare she is, Cadance made me stop and think first.” He sighed, leaning back into the chair. “I still wanted to talk to you, but she said we needed to give you two some space. While we were upstairs, Cadance told me just one thing. She said, ‘Go easy on him, Shiny. They’ve got it. I can see it all over both of them.’”

“I don’t quite follow…”

Shining chuckled. “Cadance’s specialty is love. She can sense when two ponies are truly in love, and in some cases she can actually help those ponies realize it for themselves. I told her days ago that if she interfered here, though, I’d be rather upset.” He sighed overdramatically. “Of course, that news did throw a wrench in my plans—can’t play the angry big brother now that I know my sister’s truly in love.”

Caramel stared into the fire and mulled over Shining’s words.  The two stallions lapsed into silence, less tense and more at ease with each other.

“Shining,” Caramel asked at last, “what is love?”

Shining Armor grinned. “Filly, don’t hurt me?”

“Oh, why would you bring that up?” Caramel chuckled. “I swear, if I never hear that song again…”

“Heh, yeah.”

“Seriously, though. There’s gotta be something I’m missing.” He looked over at the married stallion. “Twilight just turned me down.”

“What do you mean, turned you down?”

“I asked her to marry me, and she said no.”

Shining Armor leaned forward. “What, seriously? Why?”

Caramel sadly gave Shining the overview of the conversation that took place earlier that night, and the results thereof. Shining sat amazed, shaking his head slowly.

“I swear sometimes, that filly…” he muttered.

“Am I wrong, Shining? Did I screw it up?”

“Caramel, there’s a lot of things I could tell you about love and marriage, and most of it really wouldn’t make sense right now. Frankly, most of it you just have to experience for yourself. For what it’s worth, I agree with my little sister; it’s not wrong, but it’s just not quite right yet, either.”

The earth pony gritted his teeth in frustration. “But what does that *mean*?”

“What would you do if Twilight called it off?”

“Wait, what?” Caramel asked, floundering from the change of topic.

“I know you’ve had the thought, because all stallions think it at some point, especially those like us, who know our mates pretty well outclass us: ‘Someday she’s gonna realize that I’m not that great and leave. Someday she’ll wake up and see that she could do so much better than me.’ Am I right?”

Caramel nodded his head sadly. “Yeah, it’s true. She deserves much better than me…”

Shining Armor got up and walked over, lightly punching a hoof into Caramel’s shoulder. “Hey, cheer up. Just the fact that you realize that says there’s hope for you. But just as a hypothetical, what would you do if that happened? What if she said she wanted to end your relationship?”

Caramel let his gaze fall back to the floor, staring at nothing as he pondered. It was the blackest scenario he could imagine. It had played out in his head many times before, but he had never yet considered what his response might be. “Well,” he said hesitantly, “I guess I’d want her to be happy, no matter what. I guess I’d have to let her go.”

“And that’s how I know that it isn’t right yet.” Shining put up a hoof to forestall Caramel’s question. “No, I’m not going to explain it. When you can figure out what I mean for yourself, then you’ll know if the time is right, too.” He put a brotherly hoof around Caramel’s shoulder and sighed. “Look, Caramel, I can’t believe I would ever tell anypony this, and it’s *only* because I love Twilight dearly. If I’m any judge of my sister, she feels *terrible* over what she said to you. Right now I’m sure she’s lying in bed, probably crying over how she hurt you, and I can’t stand that thought. So what you need to do is go be with her. I know you’re confused and hurt, but don’t think that she doesn’t love you. Just go, hold her, and let her know it’s all going to be okay.”

“Wait, did you just tell me to get in bed with—”

“Ah la la la la,” Shining interjected, closing his eyes and shaking his head in a juvenile “can’t hear you” gesture. “No, do *not* talk to me about that. I just know that you can make her feel better, and you should. I mean, yeah, I know that you two have already been”—his face twisted slightly—“*together*, obviously, so I can’t really say much. Just don’t make my little sister hurt any longer than she has to over this.”

Caramel felt his heart warm as he gave Shining a sheepish smile. “Thanks, Shining. For everything.”

“Hey, don’t mention it. Really. Don’t. But I’m glad to help.” He dropped his hoof back down and started walking towards the stairs. “Besides, I get the feeling that it won’t be *that* long before we’re brothers anyway, so why not?”

Once again left alone, Caramel thought over the night so far and the emotional ride it had been. At the start, he had been so sure that he loved Twilight more than anything, and now he felt uncertain as to what that even meant. Everything that used to be clear was muddied and indistinct now, but one thought remained in the forefront of his mind.

Shining Armor was right about one thing: Caramel knew Twilight felt terrible, and he couldn’t stand to think about that any longer than necessary. In the end, that made up his mind for him.

He checked to make sure the fire would die down safely and left the room, walking softly up the stairs and to the door at the near end of the hallway. The door swung open silently, but the shape under the covers still stirred as he entered.

“Caramel?” came Twilight’s tired, slightly strained voice.

He didn’t answer. Instead, he simply walked to the bed, pulled back the sheets, and slid into the bed against her back, putting his hoof around his marefriend and pulling her as close as possible. In the darkness, he heard her sigh happily in his grasp, as though a week’s worth of tension had just been released by his presence. In Caramel’s head, all the noise and confusion seemed to die down as he nuzzled up against the back of her neck, feeling the loose wisps of her mane against his nose.

*This is right*, he thought. *This is enough for now.*

“I’m sorry…” she whispered, sniffling quietly as the remnants of her glistened in the darkness.

“I still have you,” he murmured in her ear. “And I still love you.”

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As the train made it out of the mountains and into the plain that led to Ponyville, Twilight couldn’t get the morning’s breakfast out of her head. Perhaps it was to be expected after the events of the previous night, but the morning had been a flurry of mixed emotions and responses. Caramel had been very quiet, and, despite his repeated assurances that he wasn’t mad at her, Twilight knew that her rejection was weighing heavily on him. Conversation at the table had been subdued but without the tension of last night. Her father had made it a point to give her a hug and apologize for his reaction. He had taken Caramel aside to speak privately with him as well, and they had ended with a smile and a friendly hoof bump, so things seemed patched over between them at least.

What had truly surprised Twilight were the attitudes of Shining and Cadance. Shining had been very friendly with Caramel, making her think that they had gotten the chance to talk. The lack of bruises on Caramel made her wonder, but maybe Cadance had gotten Shining Armor to calm down before they met. From Cadance herself, Twilight almost felt a sadness directed towards her. As Twilight had left the house, hugging her family members goodbye, Cadance had held her tightly and said she wished she could fix things.

Twilight glanced over at Caramel. He wasn’t asleep like he had been on the way to Canterlot, but he was just as silent. He stared out the window, but she could tell that he wasn’t focusing on much of anything. The blankness of his face gave away nothing to most ponies, but the simple absence of his usual emotional expressions told Twilight that he had a lot on his mind.

She cleared her throat softly, just enough to break through to Caramel. “So,” she said hesitantly, “I guess you got a chance to talk to my brother, huh?”

He nodded. “Yeah, he came down after you went to bed.”

“Did he—I mean, how did it go?”

His chuckle sounded forced. “He didn’t beat me, if that’s what you’re wondering.” Twilight rolled her eyes, but inside she heaved a silent sigh of relief. “We just talked,” Caramel said.

“What about?” she prodded gently.

“Stallion stuff,” he said noncommittally.

Twilight stifled the urge to beg for more details, knowing that Caramel wasn’t in a mood to talk. His silence was beginning to worry her, though. She knew that apologizing yet again would only exasperate him, but the need to do so was becoming a bit overwhelming. Twilight was a scientist and an academic. She felt an innate need to fix and understand things, but Caramel wasn’t something she could fully understand. They were so different at times that it scared her, and she continually had to fight the urge to pry into his life. The more she relaxed and let him be himself around her, the more he opened up, but being patience wasn’t one of her strong suits.

The worst part by far was the growing influence of her body, especially the way the hormones in her bloodstream were making her act less and less like herself at times. She woke up irritable, even though the morning sickness had started to ease lately. There were mood swings, and her passion and her desire for Caramel could just as easily be matched by bitterness or defensiveness, with little to no warning. *Maybe he’s just being smart by not staying over,* she thought wryly.

The train pulled into the station, and ponies of every color moved to retrieve their luggage from the overhead racks and under their seats. Twilight set her bag on her back, gently cinching the strap around her midsection with her magic, and she and Caramel joined the crowd to walk off the train and onto the platform.

Outside, Caramel hesitated, his gaze shifting indecisively between the paths to Twilight’s home and his own. She leaned up against him. “Hey, do you want to get something to drink before we head home?”

He sighed quietly, a slightly pained expression showing through at the corners of his eyes. “I dunno, Twi. I think I just need some time alone to think things over.”

“Oh,” Twilight said, her face falling along with her spirits. “Yeah, I understand that.”

Caramel leaned down to nuzzle her gently. “I’ll see you soon, though. I love you,” he said.

“I love you, too,” she responded, smiling in spite of the mood.

Twilight stayed and watched him trot slowly away, his head low and his ears down, before she set off in the opposite direction, knowing her posture was probably a pretty close match for his. She kept telling herself that Caramel was telling the truth, that he just needed some time to sort through his feelings and he’d be back soon. Even so, her mind seemed to delight in making her consider all the worst scenarios.

*What if I pushed too hard and now he’s too heartbroken to come back? What if he thinks I’m too high-maintenance now, or that I’m too demanding? What if I only get that one chance?* She turned onto the final street, making her way towards her home. *Was it really worth breaking his heart for my fears? Who’s to say that either of us would ever regret being married anyway? Did I— Is that Fluttershy?*

Her thoughts derailed, Twilight trotted up to the library just as Fluttershy turned away from the door, apparently having just tried to determine if Twilight was home or not.

“Uh, hi, Fluttershy,” Twilight said, trying to keep her voice quiet.

The yellow pegasus still jumped slightly, spinning around with a quiet yelp. “Oh, goodness, Twilight, there you are. I was just coming by to return a book, and I wasn’t sure if you had gotten back from Canterlot yet.”

Twilight unlocked the door and welcomed her friend inside, not bothering to flip the sign in the window from “closed.” Fluttershy pulled the book out of her saddlebag and held it up in her mouth. “Thanks,” Twilight said as she took the book and reshelved it.

“Um, are you okay?”

Twilight tried to summon up an easy smile. “Yeah, why?”

Fluttershy frowned. “Really?”

“Okay, no, not really,” Twilight admitted, her smile falling away.

“What’s wrong, Twilight?” Fluttershy asked, sitting down on a bench and patting the space next to her invitingly.

Twilight found a bench of her own and brought her friend up to speed on how the day in Canterlot had gone. The pegasus nodded and occasionally *hmmmed* along with the story, but she kept silent as Twilight spoke.

“… So now I’m trying to convince myself that I haven’t ruined everything,” Twilight finished with a sigh, looking up to meet her friend’s gaze. “Have I screwed up? Am I asking for too much?”

Fluttershy wrung her hooves, biting her lip in concentration. “Well, I don’t really know Caramel *that* well, so it’s hard to say, but I don’t think you’re wrong for wanting things to be perfect.”

“But things are *never* perfect, so isn’t that irrational?”

“Oh, my,” Fluttershy blurted, scrambling to keep up. “I don’t think we should stop hoping for it, though.”

Twilight slumped, her head on her hooves. “I hurt him so badly. I’ve never seen him so withdrawn before. What do I do about it?”

“Do you trust him?”

Twilight glanced over. “How do you mean? I wouldn’t suspect him of doing anything wrong, certainly not just because of this.”

Fluttershy shook her head. “No, I mean do you trust his *heart*? Do you believe that he can follow it even after being hurt?” Twilight remained silent, frowning as Fluttershy went on. “I’m probably not the best pony to tell you this—maybe Rainbow Dash would be better—but part of loyalty is trusting your friends to make the right choices.”

“So, by worrying so much about Caramel’s feelings, I’m selling him short?”

“I suppose you could look at it that way, but maybe it’s easier to describe as ‘don’t push him before he’s ready.’ Just be there when he needs you. Stallions need space when they’re hurt. It’s the same way with most male animals, actually,” she said, growing more confident as she spoke about her passion for animals. “When a male animal is hurt, they won’t want to come to me for help as readily, and if I insist that they need it, they just pull away more. If I allow them to come to me for help when they’re ready for it, they’re more likely to come sooner.”

Twilight nodded. “I suppose I *am* thinking more like his mother than his marefriend…”

“You’re worried, and he’s in pain. It’s perfectly natural. Just remember to let him find his own way when he needs to.”

“You know something, Fluttershy?” Twilight said with a relaxed laugh. “You’re a lot more helpful to talk to than my reflection.”

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Caramel wasn’t very sure of anything anymore. He barely slept at all that night, tossing fitfully in the grasp of dreams he couldn’t understand and couldn’t hang on to. When morning came, he was grateful for the distraction of the workday, and set off for Sweet Apple Acres.

He had discarded his cloak in favor of a tighter-fitting vest for use against the cold. Even in the brisk winter air, the movement it afforded him was much more suited to his job. The sun helped as well, and he didn’t feel the bite of cold as he trotted onto the farm’s expansive campus.

On an ordinary day, he probably would have been chuckling, going cross-eyed trying to stare at the plumes of his breath misting in front of his face, but today his gaze was miles distant. The empty branches of the orchard seemed to clutch at the scattered clouds as he walked down the frozen dirt path towards the farmhouse.

In front of the home was Applejack, fighting the water trough in front of the outdoor pump with a small hatchet, breaking apart the ice so the animals could get to the water inside. She straightened and set the axe down, shaking the splashed water from her face as she heard the steady crunch of Caramel’s hooves against the snow and dirt.

“Mornin’, Caramel. How was the trip?”

He stopped short of the trough, stamping his hooves to loosen the snow that had tracked onto them. “Oh, it was all right,” he grunted.

Applejack cocked her head as she looked up at him. “That’s it? How was her family?”

“They were… caught off balance,” he said diplomatically. “But they came around after we got to talk. I think they like me okay—or at least okay enough that her brother isn’t going to have me killed.”

Applejack chuckled even as she watched him intently. “And Princess Celestia? Didja get ta meet her?”

“Yeah, she was great. And different than I would have expected.”

“True, she ain’t really stuck to stereotype much.” His boss put a hoof to her chin. “So, to recap: You got to hang out with royalty, meet your marefriend’s family, none of the above wants to kill you, and the trip was just ‘all right’? What’s eatin’ ya, sugarcube?”

Caramel blanched slightly. “Who said anything about something being wrong?”

“Caramel, if you coulda seen yourself before ya left, you’d know there was a significant difference.”

He sighed, letting his false cheer drop. “Well, Twilight told me she didn’t want to marry me.”

Applejack stared at him like he’d grown a horn and wings. “Um, what?”

“I proposed to her, and she turned me down. Said I was proposing because I felt like I was supposed to.”

Applejack leaned against the trough unsteadily, her face flickering between confusion and disbelief as Caramel sat sadly on the ground, unconcerned by the feeling of his haunches on the snowy ground.

“So,” she began hesitantly, before the silence could get too awkward, “was she right?”

He sighed. “I don’t know, AJ.”

“Ya know why you’re with her, right?”

“Of course I do, I’m with her because I love her.”

Applejack smiled. “Is that why you want ta marry her?” Caramel opened his mouth to reply, but was cut off by his boss. “Remember, you’re talkin’ to the Element of Honesty, here.” Caramel shut his mouth and thought hard instead. Applejack patted his shoulder with a hoof as she turned to leave. “You think it over, sugarcube. No reason to rush.”

Caramel watched her leave, his head swimming. He completed his tasks in a daze that day, as if controlled remotely by somepony else. He felt as if he were watching himself from the outside, not really comprehending what was going on. His mind kept revisiting the same question, over and over. *Why?*

As the sun tipped over its apex and began its downward arc, Caramel gave up. He hung up the shovels and rakes and wandered off to his own little corner of the work barn. In the corner was his kingdom. A workbench, covered in hoof tools and parts in need of mending, sat against the wall, and a small locker stood in the corner. There was even a bathroom with a tiny shower for his use as well. He clicked on the desk light and went straight to the locker, reaching in and pulling a notebook out of the saddlebags hanging inside.

He flipped open the cover, leafing through the thick, rough pages as he searched for a pencil with his other hoof. The small pad was filled with sketches, rough and complex both. Everything from machine diagrams to still life portraits covered the off-white paper, from sunsets captured in shades of graphite grey to a simple flower shown in almost excruciating detail to a rough sketch of Applejack and Big Mac tending to the fields.

As he neared the back, though, the subjects began to change, becoming increasingly dominated by a single mare’s face and outline. He stopped, putting the sketchbook down as he stared at the page before him, and the outline of a form he knew so well that lay on it. Caramel tried to distance himself, to look objectively at the crude drawing, to see what it might be saying to somepony else. What feelings did these simple lines contain? Was there love in his pencil strokes?

The page offered up no secrets to him, no advice. He grunted in irritation and flipped to a clean sheet, snatching up his pencil. He hovered over the empty page, holding the leaded tip short. He closed his eyes and took a deep, cleansing breath. *What do I want most?*

He released the breath slowly, allowing the pencil to begin scrawling across the surface. He sketched in short, emphatic bursts, tracing over lines dozens of times, as if forming the image out of marble instead. He chiseled away at the shapes, slowly bringing the image in his head to life. He saw Twilight’s head, held low, eyes closed. He paused, forcing himself to stop before he added details, simply staring at the nearly blank form. *Where am I in this?*

He started again, roughing in a second form behind that of his love, allowing his own body to come into the picture. He had never drawn them together before, now that he thought about it. Maybe he had been too busy holding her up as an ideal instead? It seemed in the drawing that Twilight was curled against his neck lovingly, and his head was tucked against her tenderly as well. He drew his own eyes closed as well, and paused again before details could be added.

*I don’t even really know what I’m feeling here, any more than I know what she’s feeling…*

Were they holding each other out of joy? Sadness? Was it a truly contented feeling or one filled with melancholy?

Caramel let the pencil drop from his hoof, the graphite leaving small, scar-like traces on the edges of the paper as it rolled to a rest. It seemed that the more he learned about Twilight, the less he knew about himself. Even his art seemed to attest to this fact, going from lifelike portrayals to abstract sketches over the course of their relationship. He knew there was something more to this sketch, though, something that eluded him, contained in the utterly simplistic line drawing. It was as if his drawing held some truth that he just couldn’t put his hoof on, and adding anything beyond what was already there would just obscure it more.

He gave a frustrated snort and shut the sketchbook, stuffing it back into the saddlebag and slinging the whole case over his back. He walked home the long way, wandering alone through the back fields and along the edge of the Everfree. He finally arrived at his apartment, walking up the stairs at the rear of Bon Bon’s sweet shop to the rented living quarters above, and stopped with his hoof hovering over the doorknob.

The sketch surfaced in his mind, the first time he had ever drawn himself and Twilight together. He really, *really* didn’t want to be alone right now. He turned and headed back down the stairs, setting his hooves on a path they knew well.

The sun was about halfway set when he arrived, the light warming his back as he rapped gently on Twilight’s door with a hoof. The door swung gently open, pulled by the telekinetic force of the mare inside.

“Oh, Caramel! How are you?”

Caramel’s heart jumped slightly at seeing the way her face perked up when she saw him. “You were right, Twilight,” he said softly. “My motives weren’t right. There’s so much about all this I still just don’t understand. I don’t even understand myself, really.” He took a breath, letting it out slowly. “I’m not really sure *why* I want to be with you, I just know I do.”

She beamed at him, her smile warming his heart. “That’s good enough for me,” she said, welcoming him in with a tender nuzzle.

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Twilight curled up against her stallion, her head laid on his chest, listening to his breathing slowing as he drifted to sleep. The steady cadence of his heartbeat was comforting to the mare, making it all seem more real.

Caramel had told her that he didn’t want his staying the night to become a regular thing, that he wanted it to stay special to them both. She pulled her head back just far enough to look into his face, seeing the utter peace on it as he slept. There was no doubt it was special. Even though she wasn’t experienced in love, Twilight had talked to her friends and heard enough stories to know that Caramel was something a mare didn’t find every day. His touch was tender and loving, never forceful. He gave his affection, never taking for himself.

Even though she had turned down his proposal of marriage, his motivations had still been focused on her, misplaced though they may have been. Twilight couldn’t really figure out why the answer she needed to hear seemed to elude him so often. As outward as his emotions were, surely he could see that she just wanted him to love her for the sake of loving her? He never expected that all the things he did for her would buy her love, but he resorted so quickly to those way to show his love.

*Still, though,* she thought, *he’s never had a problem showing his affection.* The unicorn snuggled back up against Caramel’s side, the stallion twitching slightly in his sleep and wrapping a hoof around her back unconsciously. Twilight sighed happily as she let her eyes close. All those little differences between them never seemed to matter in moments like these. It made her sure that they could make it as a couple, that eventually, no matter what, they would be happy together.

It was a good thought to fall asleep to.