



Made With Love

By Buddy Goodboy

>Been a guard in the Crystal Empire for a little bit, seen things change as the new rulers settled into their new roles.

>For a minor act of derring-do during the changeling fiasco, got named one of Princess Cadance's personal guards. Took a turn guarding her chambers every few nights. Started to notice, after the first-time jitters wore off, that the princess had guests over late.

>Noticed the smell, too. Home cooking. And good home cooking, too. Smelled almost better than Ma's.

>Nodded to a little purple dragon leaving late one night. He burped a little curl of green smoke and nodded back, patted his stomach. Never seen a baby dragon before. Never seen one look so full, neither.

>Killed me, that smell did. Belly grumbled like anything. But duty came first. Steeled myself and stood back to attention.

>Next shift, same thing. Little violet unicorn followed the princess back to her chambers and gave me a little smile as they passed. Princess was saying how the unicorn should visit more, that she should get more fresh air, and was Spike making sure she ate right?...

>grrrrumble

>Did they notice? Don't look, just stare forward.

>Sure enough, few minutes later, that smell came out and tickled me right on the nose. Whatever she was making in there, that violet unicorn was lucky.

>An eternity later, chamber doors opened again, and violet trotted out. Bowed to the princess, gave me a nod, and stumbled down the corridor. Swaying a little around a barrel of a belly.

>'Course, the prince lived in her chambers, too. He was there every night.

>And it showed. He was still definitely an old guard, but in that way family men soften, he did. You know guards have a strict diet? We tend to let ourselves go when we first get the chance. Princess gave him every chance.

>Running a kingdom means long hours, and sometimes princess and prince didn't retire to their chambers together. Prince trotted heavily in long after princess had, looking tired, but eager. Knew the look on his face, 'cause I was trying to hide it on mine.

>She was in there, making him a feast. Smelled it for hours before prince showed up. Wondered if he'd take his time, savor the flavor, the texture of each bite, or gobble, certain that volume would satisfy better.

>After months of that smell, I'd gobble.

>So I opened the chambers for him, and I got hit with the smell.

>Criminy.

>Whatever it was tonight, it was delicious. I could taste the air. I coulda swallowed instead of breathed. Somehow kept myself from drooling.

>Princess glided toward us, levitating a tray of appetizers with her. Prince smacked his lips loudly.

>Princess said, Now, now, Shiny. You can have *one* of these.

>Prince snaps it up and gulps it down.

>Princess said, These are for our dear guards, for all their hard work.

>I crack. Turn my head toward the princess, and my jaw drops.

>Princess bows her head slightly, and gives me that smile. Says, You'll share these with your brothers in arms?

>Nodded quickly. Heart pounded. Ch-cherry turnovers...

>Just like Ma used to make.

>Princess and prince take their leave, and I close the chamber doors behind them.

>The turnover explodes in my mouth. I woulda gobbled, but I was lost in the flavor, the delicate but strong texture and sweet tang of the pastry and fruit.

>Brothers in arms can fend for themselves. I got cherry turnovers.

>And they're made with love.