

# *Old-Fashioned*

# ROOTBEER

*the refreshing adventures of Ambrosia & Wing*

**Preface by Wing:** It is probably unfair to say that behind every good story is another good story, but in this case, it certainly rings true. I had heard stories about Lumi's dedication to roleplay – as well as what I now call the character matrix. Characters in the box, if you will, are as real as you or me. They are special. Each and every one of them brings something to the table, a particular brand of amusement with its own DNA. Likewise, I have been ribbed quite a few times for talking about my characters as though they are real. For the same reason, it is simply because they are. They are a fundamental part of me. It makes sense that our boxes would collide and produce something astounding.

Lumi and I had our first meeting in a stream chat. For whatever reason, we spent roughly 30 minutes *bickering* about whether or not I could be broken with feels in a roleplay. The whole thing was rather humorous. I had survived latent hostility like a boss. A friendship was forged, and the gears of destiny started to turn. When I saw that Ambrosia had emerged soon after, it was too good to pass up. Thus began the glorious adventures of RootBeer. Who knew it would grow into such a long, epic, ongoing masterpiece?

## Chapter One – Bottle Caps

### Cinnamon Cookies and Triple Crusted Pizza

Wing T.F. McCallister playfully nudges Ambrosia's side.

[7:29:42 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[7:29:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nudges Wing back! :3

[7:29:55 PM] Ambrosia: Hullo Wing! :)

[7:30:29 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Why hello, Ms. Ambrosia. I heard you wanted to break me with feels. How about we start with the thigh? XP

[7:30:40 PM] Ambrosia: Oh my :O

[7:30:58 PM] Ambrosia: I'm guessing Key told you something about me... :O

[7:31:16 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia pokes Wing.

[7:31:34 PM] Ambrosia: Well, whatever she said... Be careful with it... She's a silly pony ;)

[7:33:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah, well it's easy to extract information when you have somepony in a laughing fit over Fluttershy tables. She's also quite crafty. Alas, I am a silly pony too. I just had to act on the opportunity, even if it was ridiculous. It's just what I do. Guess it's that physics crazy in me.

[7:33:42 PM] Ambrosia: You study physics? : o

[7:34:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods

[7:34:21 PM] Ambrosia: Oh wow... :O

[7:35:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I study things that nopony in Equestria really care about, but I'm also interested in the science behind magic. How about yourself, Ms. Ambrosia? What is it that you do? I'd rather hear it directly from the mare's mouth than through Key's silly antics. ;)

[7:36:05 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[7:36:09 PM] Ambrosia: That's a good plan. :P

[7:36:50 PM] Ambrosia: And... Well... Others may not care, but I care. I read some popular physics books every once in a while. You know, the ones written for ponies that aren't scientists. :3

[7:36:58 PM] Ambrosia: I still don't get it, but I like them xD

[7:37:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister perks up

[7:37:26 PM] Ambrosia: Don't think badly of me, but I also like to see the pictures of the universe in them... I know, it's a silly thing, but the stars are so beautiful. :3

[7:37:37 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister shakes his head

[7:37:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I wouldn't think badly of you.

[7:37:53 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles :)

[7:38:00 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Ponies have issues with physics, in my opinion, because others don't know how to teach it.

[7:38:32 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: As long as you take something from it and incorporate it into how you view things, then you've done more than enough in my book.

[7:39:57 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm :3

[7:40:49 PM] Ambrosia: I wish I could more often... But... I guess I don't get many opportunities? I'm actually a cook. :3

[7:41:06 PM] Ambrosia: I work as a chef on trains, travelling all around Equestria :)

[7:41:25 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Really? That sounds quite fascinating. I take it you like to get around a lot?

[7:41:54 PM] Ambrosia: I kinda do. :P

[7:42:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I am unfortunately Equestria's greatest failure at cooking. I can only make one thing.

[7:42:20 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister chuckles

[7:42:27 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: May I ask what your specialty is?

[7:43:13 PM] Ambrosia: Hmm, my specialty? It's definitely desserts, I think. ^\_^

[7:43:35 PM] Ambrosia: I can make almost anything. :P The only things that I can't make are the things I haven't heard of. :D

[7:44:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That's quite amazing. I love desserts, especially on not so good days.

[7:45:00 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[7:45:03 PM] Ambrosia: Yes...

[7:45:11 PM] Ambrosia: That's probably why I like making them so much. :)

[7:45:18 PM] Ambrosia: It's a great way to cheer a pony up. ^\_^

[7:45:27 PM] Ambrosia: Fun to make too :P

[7:45:38 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stares at the floor

[7:45:46 PM] Ambrosia: What's wrong? :O

[7:45:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: To be honest, I could probably use one of those. Yesterday was not a very good day.

[7:46:02 PM] Ambrosia: Oooh :(

[7:46:17 PM] Ambrosia: What happened? And... Would you like cinnamon cookies? :)

[7:47:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks up with a timid smile and nods

[7:48:23 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts cooking. :3

[7:48:48 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well, I just moved here to take a position at a national lab. Cloudsdale Van Lines quoted me at a certain price, and then after they loaded my stuff up, they went and told me I'd have to pay 70% more. Physics is not exactly a Bitty Bit job. So... my stuff is kind of being held hostage while I try to get funds.

[7:49:38 PM] Ambrosia: :O ; \_ ;

[7:49:48 PM] Ambrosia: That's not fair at all :x

[7:49:55 PM] Ambrosia: They shouldn't do that to you. :/

[7:50:09 PM] Ambrosia: Bits shouldn't be so important that they can't just be decent ponies.

[7:51:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Thankfully, I'm actually from here. My parents have allowed me to stay with them until things get settled. I'm not very good with anxiety though. It's just not a good situation for me.

[7:51:36 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia finishes cookies : )

[7:51:45 PM] Ambrosia: Here, I think you need these :)

[7:51:53 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia gives Wing cookies : )

[7:52:45 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister takes them

[7:53:06 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: My Celestia, Ms. Ambrosia! These smell absolutely amazing.

[7:53:20 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister takes a bite and looks like he's about to die in bliss.

[7:53:46 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[7:54:11 PM] Ambrosia: I'm happy that I could cheer you up, even if it's just a little bit, but... I think you need something else too.

[7:54:18 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia gives Wing a big hug. :)

[7:54:29 PM] Ambrosia: Everything's going to work out ok, Wing :)

[7:55:14 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister returns the hug and munches on another cookie.

[7:55:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Thank you. I know I'll be okay. Although, I know it's bad when even Icarus offers to send me bits.

[7:55:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister shakes his head.

[7:56:32 PM | Edited 7:56:44 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Can't take a little pony's money. It'd just be shameful. I am a good physicist after all. It will be a tough week, but I shall prevail.

[7:57:54 PM] Ambrosia: You're a good pony, Wing. You'll pull through. :)

[7:58:09 PM] Ambrosia: And those other ponies aren't any good for doing this to you. :/

[7:58:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes.

[7:59:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: They are pretty bad, but in all honesty, it's their loss. I did, after all, receive these amazing cookies. You are quite great at what you do.

[7:59:31 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister munches on another.

[7:59:39 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing. :\$



[8:01:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You're welcome, Ms. Ambrosia. Perhaps sometime I can make the only thing I can make. XD I'm sure it won't be nearly as good as these, but it's the least I can do considering how supportive you've been.

[8:02:04 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[8:02:11 PM] Ambrosia: What do you make, Wing? :3

[8:02:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stretches a hoof out proudly and deepens his voice

[8:02:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Infamous Wing's Famous Triple Crusted Pizzas

[8:03:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: One slice is usually enough to fill up the toughest stallion.

[8:03:20 PM] Ambrosia: Piizza! =D

[8:03:25 PM] Ambrosia: I love pizza! :3

[8:03:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Do you now?

[8:04:53 PM] Ambrosia: Yes ^\_^

[8:04:56 PM] Ambrosia: It's also... Welllll

[8:05:09 PM] Ambrosia: It's kinda one of the things that I'm not really great at, myself :\$

[8:05:11 PM] Ambrosia: XD

[8:06:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: It took me quite a while to figure it out myself. If you'd like, I'd be happy to show you.

[8:06:45 PM] Ambrosia: : o

[8:06:48 PM] Ambrosia: Could you? :3

[8:07:02 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods

[8:07:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Lead the way, and I will do my best. :)

[8:08:32 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes a deep breath :P

[8:08:49 PM] Ambrosia: First step is to make the dough, I think? (think)

[8:08:52 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[8:08:56 PM] Ambrosia: I'm a bit nervous... :D

[8:09:29 PM] Ambrosia: I failed a cooking test making pizza, once. (facepalm)

[8:09:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Don't be nervous, Ms. Ambrosia. If there's one thing I've learned from teaching, it's that tests don't mean a buck.

[8:10:09 PM] Ambrosia: That's good xD

[8:10:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister laughs and starts to make the dough

[8:10:23 PM] Ambrosia: I feel better now xD

[8:10:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: My mom told me the secret is getting the water for the yeast just right. You heat it until it's just at that threshold of unbearable.

[8:11:06 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts on prepping tomato sauce!

[8:11:24 PM] Ambrosia: And maybe some mushrooms? (think)

[8:11:28 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks at the sauce and smiles.

[8:11:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I enjoy adding a mix of ground black, white, and green peppercorns. They give it a little kick.

[8:12:24 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[8:12:42 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia adds some peppercorns :P

[8:12:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister starts rolling out the dough.

[8:12:58 PM] Ambrosia: I like things with a little kick ;)

[8:13:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister catches the wink.

[8:13:27 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Y-yeah?

[8:13:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister rolls out one layer into a squarish crust

[8:14:47 PM] Ambrosia: Oooh... A square? :O

[8:15:38 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: XD I make pretty ugly crusts I'm afraid. I'm not much on the finer points.

[8:15:42 PM] Ambrosia: Oooh xD

[8:15:46 PM] Ambrosia: That's ok :D

[8:16:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister rolls up the edges of the crust and pokes the dough with a fork.

[8:16:39 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia blinks

[8:16:43 PM] Ambrosia: ^\_^;

[8:16:50 PM] Ambrosia: That looks silly :P

[8:16:56 PM] Ambrosia: Why poke it with a fork? :O

[8:17:41 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Another thing my mother does. I think it helps the crust breathe, or something like that.

[8:17:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles

[8:17:52 PM] Ambrosia: Oooo

[8:17:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Is the sauce ready?

[8:17:57 PM] Ambrosia: Yup ^\_^

[8:18:11 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia gives the tomato sauce to Wing

[8:18:28 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister pours the sauce over the bottom layer.

[8:18:38 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: This is an important part actually...

[8:18:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister uses the back of a spoon to spread the sauce

[8:18:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: If you do it like this, you won't tear the dough

[8:20:23 PM] Ambrosia: That's a good tip, actually... My last pizza was a real mess compared to this one, and... Actually, the crust doesn't look too bad. :D

[8:21:55 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister rolls out another crust to be very thin

[8:22:25 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Would you mind getting some cheese ready, Ms. Ambrosia? We're going to need a lot of it. In fact, I should probably help too.

[8:23:01 PM] Ambrosia: Ooohhh, that's right... And cheese is something that I love, actually :P

[8:23:12 PM] Ambrosia: Any cheeses that work best with pizza though? :O

[8:23:20 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: What kind of pony doesn't like cheese?

[8:23:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods

[8:23:57 PM] Ambrosia: Mozzarella? Swiss? (think)

[8:24:08 PM] Ambrosia: Provolone? (inlove)

[8:25:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I usually go with a blend of Mozzarella, Provolone, Parmesan, Fontina, Romano, and Asiago.

[8:25:18 PM] Ambrosia: Niiiiice =D

[8:25:27 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts dicing cheese!

[8:25:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister joins in, shredding the cheese into little strips.

[8:25:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I really shouldn't do this...

[8:26:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister starts stuffing his face.

[8:26:14 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I can never stop helping myself to some.

[8:26:18 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[8:26:22 PM] Ambrosia: Welll

[8:26:24 PM] Ambrosia: xD

[8:26:29 PM] Ambrosia: Since you did it... :P

[8:26:38 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia samples a bit, too :3

[8:26:44 PM] Ambrosia: Don't tell anypony ;D

[8:27:02 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nudges lightly.

[8:27:08 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Your secret is safe with me.

[8:27:14 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia giggles. :P

[8:27:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister tosses some of the cheese into the sauce.

[8:27:43 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Are you ready for the final steps?

[8:27:50 PM] Ambrosia: Yes! =D

[8:28:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister cuts the thin crust into strips and sets them in a crossing pattern atop the sauce.

[8:28:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Would you get the oven ready at 425 please?

[8:28:55 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia preheats the oven. ^\_^

[8:29:31 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister throws some more cheese atop the second dough layer before adding the third

[8:29:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: If you use strips instead of a solid crust, it helps the middle cook better.

[8:30:04 PM] Ambrosia: Hmm, you really are good at this. :O

[8:30:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: The dough will expand as it cooks. It should seal shut if I do it right.

[8:30:23 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister tosses on the top layer of cheese and smiles.

[8:30:28 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia opens the oven =D

[8:30:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That means a lot coming from an experienced chef.

[8:30:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister puts the pizza in the oven.

[8:31:38 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia shuts the oven

[8:31:42 PM] Ambrosia: To be honest... I think that working as a chef on the train hasn't been too good for me... Nowadays, I mostly make so many quick things... Other than desserts, I'm sometimes a little lost with complex things. :x

[8:33:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That must be hard. I couldn't imagine what it would be like not having the time to wander off into my tangents. It may not be that much of a consolation, but the little I tasted of your work made it clear to me that you have a signature in your food that's quite complex.

[8:35:46 PM | Edited 8:36:29 PM] Ambrosia: Aww, thank you Wing. :) I sometimes wish I had done like some other ponies and just opened a restaurant or something.

[8:38:00 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think you have plenty of time to do that, Ms. Ambrosia. I'm sure your travels just enhance your experience. If you did open one, I'd be there at the opening... for some cinnamon cookies of course... XP and whatever else you decided to serve.

[8:38:49 PM] Ambrosia: =]

[8:39:15 PM] Ambrosia: I would be pretty good at it, I think (think)

[8:39:28 PM] Ambrosia: It would just take me a bit to get started. (think)

[8:39:40 PM] Ambrosia: I'm actually really good with accounting and other business stuff :D

[8:40:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Then I'm fairly certain you would succeed. Perhaps you could even have a theme emphasizing all the skills you picked up on your travels.

[8:41:32 PM] Ambrosia: Ooo...

[8:41:35 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmmm...

[8:42:10 PM] Ambrosia: How would I get the bits for that though? (worry)

[8:43:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Once I get this business settled with those bad ponies. I'd be happy to help invest in the startup.

[8:43:48 PM] Ambrosia: :)

[8:43:51 PM] Ambrosia: Thanks, Wing ^\_^

[8:44:13 PM] Ambrosia: I'll start working on how to get started. (think)

[8:44:25 PM] Ambrosia: Any suggestions? :3

[8:47:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister pulls the pizza out of the oven.

[8:47:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think you should start with your ideal location.

[8:48:08 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmmm... Manehattan! =D

[8:48:33 PM] Ambrosia: I could keep an eye on Key Gear there, too. :P

[8:48:48 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister laughs

[8:49:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That's probably necessary. My apologies for that horribly setup advance, by the way. You're far too charming for such a thing.

[8:49:28 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister lets the pizza cool.

[8:49:44 PM] Ambrosia: Hehehe, I actually thought it was funny ;)

[8:50:28 PM] Ambrosia: But, yeah, that wouldn't have worked out too well :P

[8:50:42 PM] Ambrosia: I would have felt terrible for slapping you :D

[8:51:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: It probably would have been deserved, though. XP

[8:51:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister starts cutting the pizza into slices.

[8:51:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I love the smell when it first comes out of the oven.

[8:52:13 PM] Ambrosia: Yeah, I'm pretty hungry and this smells delicious :O

[8:52:55 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister plates the first slice and ... hooves ... it over xp

[8:53:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Be careful, it may still be quite hot.

[8:53:59 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nibbles delicately

[8:54:01 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[8:54:06 PM] Ambrosia: This is great! =D

[8:54:12 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia bites in. :P

[8:54:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister sighs in relief.

[8:54:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Thank Celestia. I would have been quite embarrassed if it didn't live up to your standards.

[8:55:00 PM] Ambrosia: :)

[8:55:09 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia eats the whole slice :3

[8:56:03 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister takes a bite of a slice himself.

[8:56:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I love the pepper mix.

[8:57:02 PM] Ambrosia: I do too. :P

[8:57:13 PM] Ambrosia: It really does have a bit of a kick to it. (think)

[8:57:38 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks at a clock

[8:57:41 PM] Ambrosia: Ooohh...

[8:58:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Late for something?

[8:58:31 PM] Ambrosia: Yeah :(

[8:58:35 PM] Ambrosia: Train's leaving soon...

[8:59:23 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm

[8:59:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister sighs at the inevitable

[8:59:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well, it would be my honor to escort you, if you'd like...

[9:00:02 PM] Ambrosia: Would you? :)

[9:00:06 PM] Ambrosia: I would like that... :)

[9:00:40 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Of course. I wouldn't be much of a gentlecolt if I didn't.

[9:01:15 PM] Ambrosia: Alright then ;D

[9:01:20 PM] Ambrosia: Come on, slowpony! :P

[9:01:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hops to the door, then calms down, opens it, and leads the way. :P

[9:02:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister walks beside her and extends his hoof.

[9:02:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Key was right about one thing though.

[9:02:25 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes Wing's hoof. :)

[9:02:29 PM] Ambrosia: What was that? ;D

[9:02:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You do create pleasurable evenings. :P

[9:02:56 PM] Ambrosia: Ooooh :\$

[9:03:02 PM] Ambrosia: Well, I guess that's true. ;)

[9:03:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister chuckles.

[9:03:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I hope that wasn't too cheesy.

[9:03:18 PM] Ambrosia: Noo, it was fine (chuckle)

[9:03:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smirks.

[9:03:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Good, physicists are notoriously terrible at pick-up lines.

[9:03:59 PM] Ambrosia: I didn't say it wasn't terrible ;D

[9:04:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes and looks to the side.

[9:04:35 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That's probably a fair assessment.

[9:04:49 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia gently nuzzles Wing :)

[9:05:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles back and smiles.

[9:06:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I want you to take one of my business cards. If that train ever gets delayed, if you're back in town, or when you finally open that restaurant of yours, don't hesitate to send for me.

[9:06:33 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing. I will, definitely... I travel a lot, I'll be back. :)

[9:06:56 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes Wing's business card.

[9:07:31 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That's good to know. =^-^= You certainly brightened up my day today, Ms. Ambrosia.

[9:08:48 PM | Edited 9:09:00 PM] Ambrosia: I'm happy that I could help, Wing... That's my train over there... And, it looks like the conductor's already looking for me. Been a while since I wasn't early, but... Eh... I'd do it again. :)

[9:09:44 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister grins and sneaks in a quick kiss.

[9:10:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: There's that nature again. :P Safe travels, Ms. Ambrosia.

[9:10:13 PM] Ambrosia: Hahah! You beat me to it! ;)

[9:10:44 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes deeply as his eyes widen.

[9:11:07 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles broadly and kisses Wing

[9:11:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister twitches and shivers.

[9:11:38 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: W-wow....

[9:11:45 PM] Ambrosia: ;)

[9:11:52 PM] Ambrosia: Take care, Wing :)

[9:12:02 PM] Ambrosia: We'll meet again, I'm sure of it... :)

[9:12:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: T-take care, Ms. Ambrosia. I'll look forward to it. (escape Key, escape! lol)

[9:12:41 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia trots to the train...

[9:12:54 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia waves goodbye, blows a kiss, and goes onboard

[9:13:18 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister makes sure to catch that kiss and waves, still somewhat awestruck.

## Chapter Two – Letters from Wing

### I – V – For the Glory of the Plot!

*Dearest Ambrosia,*

*Those horrible ponies are just getting more and more horrible. Things don't seem to be getting any better yet. It's starting to get to me again.*

*Each time I find myself by a train platform, I keep waiting for the next train, hoping that you'll somehow appear. I guess that's just me being my foolish physicist self. I know you're a busy mare – with all of that wonderful cooking you do. It was about the only thing that brought a smile to my face that day, and I hope Derpy manages to deliver this so you know just how much that time meant to me. That pony always makes me nervous.*

*I hope you're holding up well in your travels.*

*Love,  
Wing*

\* \* \*

*Dearest Ambrosia,*

*I've been working on something big since I last wrote to you. A lot of it is a secret which I would rather divulge in person, but suffice it to say that I am back to feeling my normal self. Also, erm... for the love of Luna, if you receive an unexpected picture pack from Key Gear, please don't think any less of me. It's one of those things that can be hard for a physicist to explain easily. I guess I just got caught in one of those showoffy moods and wanted to make sure it was shared with a very special pony. X3*

*Hope all is well on the train, love,  
Wing*

\* \* \*

*Dearest Ambrosia,*

*Life these days seems somewhat bittersweet. I met my boss for the first time, and his personality is about as opposite from mine as one can possibly get. He wants me to drop everything I've been working on for something he says is more useful. And I don't have a choice, which means I've unwittingly become a burden to other physy ponies. In better news though, he said the University will foot the bill for my move, totally crushing those mean ponies into the ground. It also frees up more funds for my special project, which I hope to share with you sometime in the very near future. I have a feeling you will like it. X3*

*Love,  
Wing*

\* \* \*

*Dearest Ambrosia,*

*It looks as though those mean ponies may have gotten the last laugh after all. My bicycle was not delivered in the move, and I fear – as it is the easiest thing for them to steal – that those horrible monsters have just out-and-out run off with it. I had that bike since I was a kid, so it will be kind of sad if it truly is gone for good.*

*My plans are still moving forward however, and I hope that one day soon I will be able to unveil them to you in person. I must admit that I'm quite terrible at playing the waiting game. These thoughts in my mind just never seem to quit coming up with the next little facet I can implement, and that makes things ... somewhat unbearable. It's how I tick though. Once I commit myself to something, I just cannot see myself turning back. You gave me the only speck of light in the midst of such discouraging darkness, so I will stay committed to waiting for you. It's just that ... I cannot help but feel that these letters don't do enough ... to tell you how much I truly miss you, Ambrosia.*

*Love,  
Wing*

\* \* \*

*Dearest Ambrosia,*

*I am writing to you today from the middle of nowhere. My experiment spokesponies decided to have a conference on the outskirts of Hallow Shades. It is crazy up here. There are few ways to talk to the outside world, and when this happens, I cannot help but let my mind wander to other things. I cannot stop thinking about you and how thankful I am that you were there that day. I just hope that eventually I will be there for you, too.*

*When I reflect upon my other letters, I feel guilty for not being forthright. I've disguised things with 'I miss you' and 'I'll wait for you', but I have allowed the full extent of my emotions to be lost – to be summarized in one word that typically comes only at the end. It's wrong for me to do that, and it's time for me to do something about it. I want to be there to shield you from anything that gets in the way of your dreams. I want you to be happy, and I want to be there to watch that happiness lead to incredible things.*

*We're all over the place though. You have a job on a train, and my job drags me to random places like this lonely spot in the woods. Sometimes, when I consider how to tell you what I'm trying desperately to write, I cannot help but wonder if it's unfair to dump this on you from afar. You have the type of charisma that I'm sure attracts a lot of stallions. I'm not really a particularly special pony. I bet you've read letters like this many times before, and for all I know, I'm just another colt in the reckless masses. I have to stop caring about that, though. I cannot let my feelings fester unspoken any longer. My only concern is that this will somehow just be a burden to you. I am truly sorry if it is, but even I can't let that stop me now.*

*I don't just miss you. I don't just want to wait, but I will because I understand that is what this feeling requires. Even now, I'm still struggling to find the right words to put down to express some level of regret at not being able to wait to do this in person, but there are some things that I just cannot wait to say any longer. I love you, Ambrosia. I really do, and not a day goes by when I don't think of you – or a way to tell you this without sounding like a bumbling idiot. That's why I miss you; that's why I'll wait for you; and that's why I know I'll see you again.*

Love,  
Wing

### **Chapter Three – Unexpected Froth**

**Key's gone for a bit. She's had a bad day.**

[10:49:20 PM] Ambrosia: It's been a long time since we've talked, but... It's late now, and I have to tell you the truth. Wing, I'm so sleepy that it's pretty terrible. :3

[10:51:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smirks and offers his coat as a pillow.

I know it's been a while, but well... o///o ...you're worth the wait. You should get some sleep.

[10:52:48 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[10:52:52 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing. :)

[10:53:04 PM] Ambrosia: I won't go anywhere. I'll be here tomorrow. :)

[10:54:11 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles.

R-really? I see... well... that's really convenient because I have something to give you.

[10:55:39 PM] Ambrosia: Hmm...

[10:57:07 PM] Ambrosia: I'm at just a loss for words... You have something for me? :O

[10:57:55 PM] Ambrosia: I'm a curious pony, now I'll have a hard time sleeping. (chuckle)

[10:58:19 PM] Ambrosia: Is it pizza? :3

[10:59:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods.

I have several things actually. A couple surprises... and another letter that... \*looks up at the ceiling\* took a while to write. I guess it's a little obsolete now if you're here, but... \*He stops and looks over.\* I don't want to give you a restless night. A pizza isn't really a surprise. I'll always make a pizza for you.

[11:00:30 PM] Ambrosia: I wish I wasn't so sleepy...

[11:00:43 PM] Ambrosia: I'm a bit... Odd at this time of night. :D

[11:01:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well, then I guess I'll have to add a couple more surprises to my list.

[11:02:32 PM] Ambrosia: Well, for now... Your coat might make a good one?

[11:02:58 PM] Ambrosia: I'll be better able to talk after a good night's sleep... And... Don't worry, I won't be restless. : )

[11:04:00 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and plops down on the couch.

My coat is all yours.

[11:04:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You know me too well. :P

[11:04:20 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[11:04:25 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing : )

[11:04:43 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia lies down and dozes off...

[11:05:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister drapes a wing over the mare and gives a goodnight kiss.

Sleep well, Amby...

## **Chapter Four – Fizzy!**

### **Ambrosia awakens and goes to the kitchen to make pancakes...**

[7:43:10 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister rolls off the couch, eyes still closed, but driven by the smell to float into the kitchen.

[7:44:03 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia already has pancakes ready and orange juice poured

[7:44:11 AM] Ambrosia: Good morning, sleepy pony! : )

[7:48:32 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blinks, at first grumbling about what a bittersweet dream he must be having before his mind finally reconnects the dots.

Amby... \*his eyes shoot open and his muzzle flushes\* good morning. Did you sleep well?

[7:49:46 AM] Ambrosia: Yes! I did :D

[7:50:15 AM] Ambrosia: Sorry if I seemed a little tired yesterday... Key woke me up in the middle of the night, and just about dragged me out here.

[7:50:23 AM] Ambrosia: It was a bit sudden :O

[7:52:25 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister touches down at her side.

You... don't have to apologize at all. I'm glad I was here to be with you.

[7:59:02 AM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing, now you should eat something. It'll be cold soon. (chuckle)

[8:01:29 AM | Edited 8:03:12 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and digs into the pancakes.

Mmmmmmm...best chef in Equestria. Hooves down.

[8:03:31 AM] Ambrosia: : )

[8:03:37 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts eating as well

[8:04:48 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister inches closer.

[8:05:48 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles at Wing

[8:07:50 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister gets caught in the smile and his wings flare up a bit.

Ambrosia...

[8:09:44 AM] Ambrosia: Yes, Wing? ^\_^

[8:10:10 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I'm really glad that you're here. o//o

[8:13:12 AM] Ambrosia: I'm glad to be here... I tried a few times to reach you... Especially when Key gave me your letters. She... Took a while to do that, actually. I think that they might have been better off with Derpy. And... I'm pretty sure that she read each one more than once. When I saw how long it had been, especially from your first one, I was a bit concerned...

[8:13:34 AM] Ambrosia: I wasn't upset with Key, though, she's just a filly. (chuckle)

[8:13:50 AM] Ambrosia: Though, she's a pony that seems older than her years...

[8:18:49 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes.

I didn't know until recently they had gotten to you. Key was really vague about it too. I'm happy they got there. Who knows what Key is up to sometimes? Although, I'd be the happiest stallion in Equestria on a day that a letter came from you. At least, we won't have to be concerned about delivery issues with my fifth one.

[8:35:20 AM] Ambrosia: A fifth? :O

[8:35:25 AM] Ambrosia: Oh, that's right. XD

[8:35:33 AM] Ambrosia: I remember that you mentioned it last night : )

[8:35:56 AM] Ambrosia: I hope that it's good news. : o

[8:37:25 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes immediately and twiddles his hooves.

Y-yeah, I hope so too... It took a really long time before I think I got it just right, but I'm... still not sure.

[8:38:26 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is visibly curious

[8:38:44 AM] Ambrosia: You're blushing... (chuckle)

[8:41:18 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeeeah... \*he doesn't even try to deny it.\* I'll be right back. \*Wing darts into his room and retrieves an envelope from his vault before coming back to the kitchen and reclaiming his seat.\* I - umm - well, this is it. \*He slides the envelope to Ambrosia with a trembling hoof and looks up at the ceiling.\*

[8:41:45 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes the letter but doesn't read it yet...

[8:41:49 AM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[8:42:31 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blinks.

Yeah?

[8:45:03 AM] Ambrosia: Soooo...

[8:45:26 AM] Ambrosia: Well

[8:45:35 AM] Ambrosia: You know, Key is a funny pony...

[8:46:15 AM] Ambrosia: Well

[8:46:25 AM] Ambrosia: I guess I should just ask you. (chuckle)

[8:46:35 AM] Ambrosia: Because, I've been thinking about it this entire time. :P

[8:46:48 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: What's that?

[8:47:01 AM] Ambrosia: Key didn't give me the picture. (think)

[8:47:14 AM] Ambrosia: What was it? :P

[8:48:29 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Uh... ummm. Oh geeze... it was \*gulps\* me wearing stockings.

[8:48:41 AM] Ambrosia: ...

[8:48:53 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares at Wing...

[8:49:00 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia laughs loudly :D

[8:49:10 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is also visibly relieved

[8:49:35 AM] Ambrosia: Oh my gosh (chuckle)

[8:49:48 AM] Ambrosia: Who took the photo? :P

[8:50:05 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Key did. What did you think it was?

[8:52:44 AM] Ambrosia: Well, she was laughing so much when I asked her, that I was kinda scared. :P

[8:53:37 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is slightly more at ease but still visibly curious about something...

[8:55:09 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That must have been awkward. \*He looks at Amby and tilts his head as he notices the visible curiosity.\* It looks like you have another question.

[8:56:48 AM] Ambrosia: Welllll

[8:56:54 AM] Ambrosia: Who's Trigger? (think)

[9:01:52 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister brushes his mane with his hoof.

That... is kind of hard to explain easily. I guess, well, hmm, you know how sometimes it's hard for a pony to be really brave or fight when you have to? Trigger is ... I guess it's best explained like this ... the side of my personality that can do those things. It's not like he's a different pony, but when those instincts kick in, others notice the shift, so... that side got a name of its own. I hope that makes sense. It's actually the T in Wing T. F.

[9:17:34 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister twiddles anxiously.

That side also... helps me protect those I care about.

[9:33:12 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia places a hoof on Wing's shoulder.

[9:33:19 AM] Ambrosia: I think I understand now...

[9:33:31 AM] Ambrosia: I only asked because Trigger wrote Key a love letter. (chuckle)

[9:34:30 AM] Ambrosia: And, Key showed me and was happy about it

[9:34:47 AM] Ambrosia: She said it came from you, though, so I was a bit confused until I noticed the name at the bottom.

[9:35:07 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Oh, yes. She was a bit down that day and needed a good laugh.

[9:35:19 AM] Ambrosia: That makes sense now :D

[9:35:39 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Trigger side tends to take a more direct approach to things like that.

[9:35:55 AM] Ambrosia: Well... Would Trigger protect me?

[9:37:01 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: We'd protect you with everything we have...

[9:39:32 AM] Ambrosia: Well, I feel less awkward now... Do you think that I should talk to Key about this? Or... Maybe I should just leave her be. If Trigger had to cheer her up, then I guess she was in a state like she's in now. Far too stressed about too many things.

[9:41:32 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: S-sorry I make you feel awkward. Key will be fine, I think. She has a lot of friends looking out for her.

[9:42:28 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks away...

[9:42:36 AM] Ambrosia: Well, it isn't really you, I think...

[9:42:41 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia sighs...

[9:44:13 AM] Ambrosia: Well, I guess... I might be still a bit sleepy. When I'm tired, I'm just not as bouncy as I normally am. :D

[9:44:25 AM] Ambrosia: I guess you can probably tell? (think)

[9:45:20 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister inches closer again and puts a wing around Amby.

[9:46:19 AM] Ambrosia: : )

[9:46:34 AM] Ambrosia: But, maybe it doesn't matter? Because, you like me anyway? : )

[9:47:30 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes again and nods.

I think... that letter... sums it up... nicely.

[9:49:08 AM] Ambrosia: :D She's a total Drama Princess in her party. She's got the whole deal for her. Sometimes I just happen to see it happens to her as well. She's a funny girl. :D)

[10:13:43 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: (how this... where this... it sounds like Amby, it's a little weird party?)

[10:13:43 AM] Ambrosia: :D She's a total Drama Princess in her party. :D)

[10:13:43 AM | Edited 10:15:48 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles Ambrosia.

If I have to read it aloud to you, then I will.

[10:17:00 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nuzzles back...

[10:17:03 AM] Ambrosia: I would like that : )

[10:18:12 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister plucks the letter from the table and opens it before taking a deep breath.

[10:19:56 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia watches expectantly...

[10:20:26 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Dearest Ambrosia,

I am writing to you today from the middle of nowhere. My experiment spokesponies decided to have a conference on the outskirts of Hallow Shades. It is crazy up here. There are few ways to talk to the outside world, and when this happens, I cannot help but let my mind wander to other things. I cannot

stop thinking about you and how thankful I am that you were there that day. I just hope that eventually I will be there for you, too.

[10:22:07 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: When I reflect upon my other letters, I feel guilty for not being forthright. I've disguised things with 'I miss you' and 'I'll wait for you', but I have allowed the full extent of my emotions to be lost – to be summarized in one word that typically comes only at the end. It's wrong for me to do that, and it's time for me to do something about it. I ... want to be there to shield you from anything that gets in the way of your dreams. I want you to be happy, and I want to be there to watch that happiness lead to incredible things.

[10:24:02 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: We.... we're all over the place though. You have a job on a train, and my job drags me to random places like this lonely spot in the woods. Sometimes, when I consider how to tell you what I'm trying desperately to write, I cannot help but wonder if it's unfair to dump this on you from afar. You... have the type of charisma that I'm sure attracts a lot of stallions. I'm ... not really a particularly special pony. I bet you've read letters like this many times before, and for all I know, I'm just ... another colt in the reckless masses. I have to stop caring about that, though. I cannot let my feelings fester unspoken any longer. My only concern is that this ... will somehow just be a burden to you. I am truly sorry if it is, but even I can't let that stop me now...

[10:24:32 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister gets really flushed as he reaches the last paragraph.

[10:26:03 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks awestruck...

[10:26:16 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I don't just miss you. I d-don't just want to wait, but I will ... because I understand that is what this feeling requires. Even now, I'm still ... struggling to find the right words to put down to express some level of regret at not being able to wait to do this in person... I guess that part is a lie now... but there are some things that I just cannot wait to say any longer.

\*He pauses and takes another deep breath.\*

I..... love you, Ambrosia. I r-really do, and not a day goes by when I don't think of you – or a way to tell you this without sounding like a bumbling idiot. That's why I miss you; that's why I'll wait for you; and that's why I know I'll see you again.

[10:26:37 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks at the ceiling and sets the letter back on the table.

[10:27:23 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia catches her breath sharply...

[10:27:38 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is wide eyed... At a loss for words...

[10:27:41 AM] Ambrosia: Wing... I...

[10:28:05 AM] Ambrosia: That letter...

[10:28:26 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia approaches Wing slowly...

[10:28:45 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs Wing tightly...

[10:29:23 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes, still trembling a bit from the read.

I... will always protect you... Amby.

[10:30:50 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts to cry, softly...

[10:32:09 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hugs back tightly.

[10:34:22 AM] Ambrosia: Wing... I don't get letters like this... At all. I've never received one before. Everypony always notices me but nopony ever cares. Stallions do notice me... I guess I like the attention, but none of them care either... This... This is special... It hasn't happened before...

[10:36:12 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well... o///o ... I care about you Amby. You're the most special pony I know.

[10:36:43 AM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing... Thank you so much!

[10:37:00 AM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia releases Wing...

[10:37:13 AM] Ambrosia: I didn't expect this kind of surprise, but I liked it. : )

[10:38:01 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: W-well... that's not the only surprise. I still have three left.

[10:42:04 AM] Ambrosia: Well... :D

[10:42:23 AM] Ambrosia: I...

[10:43:39 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister brushes her mane and smiles.

I've had some time to prepare and practice.

[10:43:47 AM] Ambrosia: Ok : )

[10:49:04 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hops up.

I'll be right back, okay?

\*He drifts into his lab for a few minutes, lights flashing dramatically until he comes back with a grin on his muzzle. He's slipped into the liberty blue silk stockings for dramatic effect and has a box in his hooves.\*



Oh... my...

That is convenient. Originally I was going to go with purple ones, but given my coat, it just seemed a little too much purple. :P

[6:52:58 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmmmm

[6:53:03 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia studies Wing...

[6:54:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stands there, flushed.

[6:55:28 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmmmmmmm

[6:55:31 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia shakes her head.

[6:55:39 PM] Ambrosia: Purple doesn't match everything. (chuckle)

[6:55:53 PM] Ambrosia: Sometimes, not even itself, actually. (think)

[6:57:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles.

Well hopefully these look okay.

[6:57:19 PM] Ambrosia: They do, actually. :D

[6:57:31 PM] Ambrosia: I think they're cute. : )

[6:57:47 PM] Ambrosia: But, also a bit silly... So, they make a good fit for you! : D

[7:01:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: \*His wings fan out at the remark\*

Well, that's ... good to know. Hehe, you know, I still have a couple of surprises for you.

[7:03:19 PM] Ambrosia: You do? : o

[7:03:33 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks completely at a loss...

[7:03:52 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, you know... Already, you've done more than even my own family bothers with?

[7:05:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah...

I don't really understand that. I mean, you're really good at what you do, and you're really kind.

[7:07:33 PM] Ambrosia: I know... But there are so many ponies out there that are better than me, and they're just as nice. In fact, most ponies are nice.

[7:11:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Amby... \*he says softly before walking up to the mare\* I've met a lot of ponies, and ... well... you're special. It kind of sounds like you think otherwise, but ... I will always view you as special.

[7:12:18 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks down for a moment and then looks back up.

[7:12:41 PM] Ambrosia: I know I've said this a lot today, but... Thank you, Wing. : )

[7:13:53 PM | Edited 7:13:57 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and gives the pony a very silky hug.

You don't have to thank me, Ambrosia. I'm just telling you what I feel and know.

[7:14:35 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs Wing in return. : )

[7:17:11 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: So... Ms. Ambrosia, \*he says in a gentlecoltly tone,\* what would you like to do on this fine day? I still have those surprises to give, but I feel as though we should do something fun to celebrate your visit.

[7:17:42 PM] Ambrosia: Well, this may sound terrible, but... I wouldn't mind a nap. (chuckle)

[7:17:49 PM] Ambrosia: But, at the same time, I don't want to go to sleep. :P

[7:18:04 PM] Ambrosia: So, maybe some sunlight? : )

[7:18:22 PM] Ambrosia: Just a walk might be nice? It is a fine day, after all.

[7:18:50 PM] Ambrosia: A perfect day for a brisk trot! And... Maybe that would help me to shake this odd grogginess.

[7:19:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That sounds wonderful to me.

[7:19:25 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister releases Amby from the hug.

[7:19:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I could probably use the exercise too. :P

[7:21:38 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[7:21:47 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia boops Wing and heads to the door!

[7:21:52 PM] Ambrosia: Well, come on then! : )

[7:22:44 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister trots after her.

Hehe, I'm coming. :) Where shall we go on this brisk trot? Any place in particular you want to see?

[7:22:58 PM] Ambrosia: Are there any parks nearby? With lots of flowers? ^\_^

[7:23:03 PM] Ambrosia: I love flowers, actually. : )

[7:24:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: \*His eyes light up\* Yes! I know the perfect place. There is a park not too far from here. It's very well kept. It's one of the reasons I chose this location.

[7:24:29 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister steps into the sunlight and looks to the mare.

[7:24:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think you'll love the flowers at this time of year.

[7:24:58 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, that sounds delightful... Lead on? : )

[7:25:24 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles broadly and her eyes glitter with silent expectation...

[7:27:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister leads the way, practically bouncing at the site he knows she'll see. He sticks to her side, bounding over a stone arch bridge before the park comes into view. It is a field of green, decorated with flowers in full bloom - flowers of blue and violet.

[7:27:23 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: So... how have things with you been? How's the train?

[7:29:11 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia freezes on the bridge and stares...

[7:29:13 PM] Ambrosia: Wow! : o

[7:29:48 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia shakes her head as though waking up from a dream...

[7:30:06 PM] Ambrosia: Oh... I've been ok enough... The train, well... It's been boring, actually. :D

[7:30:10 PM] Ambrosia: But, fairly busy. : )

[7:31:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Hopefully you've been able to see some great things during the travel.

[7:31:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister continues his course to the flowers and smiles.

[7:32:05 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia follows, while looking around...

[7:33:13 PM] Ambrosia: I have seen some amazing things, but... You know what... I've seen them all before. You know, I've been to every city in Equestria. I've been to all of the great places... I've seen both of the princesses perform their rituals...

[7:33:26 PM] Ambrosia: After you've seen so many uncommon things, they start feeling common.

[7:33:30 PM] Ambrosia: You learn what to expect.

[7:33:52 PM] Ambrosia: It's familiar... I don't mind, but... It's not like when I first see them.

[7:34:10 PM] Ambrosia: I guess I sound silly? :P

[7:36:08 PM | Edited 7:36:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Not at all. To be honest, I generally find the most stereotypically extraordinary things to be rather boring. I guess it's the physicist side of me that makes me think so. Just the fact that we can be here right now in this moment of time, and all the things

that happened to make this event, leave me a bit mind blown. Sometimes, you just have to find the extraordinary in the things that appear simple.

[7:37:38 PM] Ambrosia: Yes...

[7:37:42 PM] Ambrosia: Like flowers? : )

[7:39:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Absolutely. They're all here. They were all cared for, and they all have their own particular shade that makes them special. \*He stops and looks down before his face gets really red.\* Oh dear.... I'm wearing these... outside.

[7:40:40 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[7:40:44 PM] Ambrosia: That's ok. : P

[7:40:55 PM] Ambrosia: Some other ponies may get jealous, though...

[7:41:04 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia giggles and rolls around in the flowers.

[7:41:10 PM] Ambrosia: I love doing this! : D

[7:41:18 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o.O Get jealous of what?

[7:41:25 PM] Ambrosia: Your style : P

[7:41:28 PM] Ambrosia: ^\_^

[7:42:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :\$ I ... well.. maybe?

[7:43:07 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister jumps and hovers inches above the flowers, scanning them for the perfect shade.

[7:46:43 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia plucks a purple flower...

[7:46:48 PM] Ambrosia: You know...

[7:47:28 PM] Ambrosia: I'm not a physics pony, but... To me, uncommon things... They are actually common. Because, they're only uncommon because so few see them.

[7:47:47 PM] Ambrosia: If you take away how rare it is to see them, then they're the same thing every time.

[7:48:13 PM] Ambrosia: But every flower is unique. No two flowers have the exact same hue, leaves, petals... There are subtle differences.

[7:48:22 PM] Ambrosia: That's why they're always beautiful. : )

[7:50:32 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister he plucks a flower and holds it up.

Perfect... \*he floats over to Ambrosia, holding it to her. Near the center, the flower matches her mane but fans out into a complementing blue.\* This one is for you, and you're absolutely right.

[7:51:23 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes the flower gracefully, and places it in her mane. : )

[7:51:30 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[7:52:07 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister plops down in the flowers beside her.

There are a lot of things ponies take for granted.

[7:52:34 PM] Ambrosia: Yes... You know... You may already know, but... Did I ever tell you about my name? : )

[7:53:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You didn't. Please tell me about it.

[7:53:14 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks over curiously.

[7:53:34 PM] Ambrosia: An ambrosia is a type of flower... : )

[7:54:11 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well then, the name is perfect for you.

[7:54:28 PM] Ambrosia: Well... I hated my name when I was a filly.

[7:54:48 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Why's that?

[7:55:38 PM] Ambrosia: Well... An ambrosia is a weed. It's ragweed, actually. Sooooo... The other fillies and colts made fun of me for that.

[7:56:04 PM] Ambrosia: It didn't help that I was sick so much when I was younger.

[7:56:19 PM] Ambrosia: It seemed like I was a weed.

[7:56:33 PM] Ambrosia: Sometimes I just wished someone would pluck me and throw me away...

[7:57:17 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister brushes her mane lightly and stares.

[7:57:33 PM] Ambrosia: I don't think that way anymore.

[7:57:39 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles reassuringly...

[7:58:03 PM] Ambrosia: Because, I realized that a wildflower is still a flower. Ragweed may just be a common weed, but... It's still beautiful... Just like any other flower.

[7:58:53 PM] Ambrosia: (( <http://www.alcovydaylilies.com/images/09BlackAmbrosia12.jpg> And... Now... You know the origin of her color scheme... Yes... I saw one of these one day. Weed or not. My God, they are beautiful... ))

[8:00:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: It's too bad I didn't know you when I was a colt. That would have bit the dust quite quick. I'm glad you don't think that way anymore. After all, it's like you said, a flower is always beautiful, \*he turns on his side and stares\* Ambrosia.

[8:01:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: (( Yes... I was looking at photos. ))

[8:01:10 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia blushes...

[8:01:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: (( tehehehe ))

[8:02:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles.

It looks like you're the one blushing now.

[8:02:48 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles...

[8:02:50 PM] Ambrosia: I am...

[8:02:51 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[8:03:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Good... because it feels really one sided being the only one.

[8:03:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister laughs.

[8:05:31 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia laughs, too

[8:05:42 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia boops Wing's nose. :P

[8:06:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes and stares.

Wh-what was that for?

[8:08:44 PM] Ambrosia: Nothing... :D

[8:10:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Oh yeah? \*returns the boop with a light one of his own\*

[8:10:22 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[8:12:27 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You know... it is really nice to be able to spend time with you like this.

[8:12:46 PM] Ambrosia: It really is... : )

[8:13:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I'm kind of afraid to ask... but how long are you going to be in town?

[8:15:08 PM] Ambrosia: For a few days, this time. : )

[8:15:19 PM] Ambrosia: I hope you don't mind if I stay with you a bit longer? : )

[8:17:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o/////o Of course I don't mind. I would insist. My coat's all yours while you're here.

[8:17:43 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister is beaming.

[8:17:47 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: A few days....

[8:18:32 PM] Ambrosia: I wish I could stay forever, really... But, I have my job, and... I'm not sure if I'd want to try to get another one.

[8:20:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o/////////o I wouldn't want you to take a job you wouldn't want. As long as you enjoy it, that is all that matters.

Though, I will admit, I wouldn't mind if you could stay forever. But that'd kind of make me a selfish pony X3

[8:49:19 PM] Ambrosia: Maybe...

[8:49:28 PM] Ambrosia: But what would it mean if I wished that, too? : )

[8:50:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: O/////////O W-well... it'd mean I'd be a very happy pony.

[8:52:02 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[8:53:54 PM | Edited 8:54:03 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and stares into the mare's eyes.

I think... if you ever wanted to tackle that dream... you'd make a great restaurant owner.

## **Chapter Five – Another Confession**

**akita-ken ambles over to the door and opens it...**

[6/15/2013 11:51:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blinks.

[6/15/2013 11:52:00 PM] Key Gear: ...

[6/15/2013 11:52:07 PM] Key Gear: Hello akita-ken... : )

[6/15/2013 11:52:09 PM] akita-ken: ...

[6/15/2013 11:52:14 PM] Key Gear: Doing ok?

[6/15/2013 11:52:19 PM] akita-ken: Key... :/

[6/15/2013 11:52:23 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken hugs D:

[6/15/2013 11:52:26 PM] Key Gear: Yeah?

[6/15/2013 11:52:26 PM] akita-ken: I'm sorry :(

[6/15/2013 11:52:37 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear is visibly shocked...

[6/15/2013 11:52:41 PM] Key Gear: Wait...

[6/15/2013 11:52:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks over to the door.

[6/15/2013 11:52:53 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken hasn't let go

[6/15/2013 11:52:57 PM] akita-ken: I missed you too (think)

[6/15/2013 11:52:58 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear hugs back, hesitantly...

[6/15/2013 11:53:04 PM] Key Gear: What are you sorry about? (think)

[6/15/2013 11:53:18 PM] akita-ken: It wasn't your fault, the other day :|

[6/15/2013 11:53:30 PM] akita-ken: I shouldn't have doubted you ; \_\_\_\_ ;

[6/15/2013 11:53:35 PM] Key Gear: :)

[6/15/2013 11:53:41 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear hugs back tighter...

[6/15/2013 11:53:54 PM] akita-ken: You think you could find it in your heart to forgive me? ;(

[6/15/2013 11:54:04 PM] Key Gear: Well....

[6/15/2013 11:54:16 PM] Key Gear: Of course, I can...

[6/15/2013 11:54:34 PM] Key Gear: But... Akita-ken?

[6/15/2013 11:54:49 PM] akita-ken: Yes? :(

[6/15/2013 11:54:50 PM] Zoop: (kiss her, you fool!)

[6/15/2013 11:54:59 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken releases Key from hug

[6/15/2013 11:55:12 PM] akita-ken: Is there something wrong?

[6/15/2013 11:55:21 PM] Key Gear: No, nothing's wrong... I...

[6/15/2013 11:55:32 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks confused...

[6/15/2013 11:55:33 PM] Zoop: Zoop flails his hooves wildly at Akita from behind Key.

[6/15/2013 11:55:58 PM] akita-ken: Key...

[6/15/2013 11:56:02 PM] Key Gear: Akita?

[6/15/2013 11:56:07 PM] akita-ken: Whatever it is, you know you can tell me :(

[6/15/2013 11:56:18 PM] akita-ken: You're more than a friend to me

[6/15/2013 11:56:32 PM] Key Gear: I am?

[6/15/2013 11:56:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister leans over the back of the couch and grins.

[6/15/2013 11:57:07 PM] akita-ken: And I don't ever want to lose you again ;(

[6/15/2013 11:57:16 PM] Zoop: Zoop nods furiously at Akita

[6/15/2013 11:57:30 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks away...

[6/15/2013 11:57:42 PM] Zoop: Zoop makes indecipherable and enthusiastic hoof gestures in the background at Akita.

[6/15/2013 11:58:00 PM] Key Gear: Do you really mean that? Because... I forgive you, but... I didn't know... What to make of that. I thought... Well, I thought you would recognize me.

[6/15/2013 11:58:10 PM] Key Gear: Because, I thought you knew who I was?

[6/15/2013 11:58:22 PM] akita-ken: I know, I should've, and I was a foal for not being able to :(

[6/15/2013 11:58:27 PM] Key Gear: But, maybe that's my fault... I don't really share much about myself...

[6/15/2013 11:58:36 PM] Key Gear: Do you know why?

[6/15/2013 11:58:56 PM] akita-ken: It isn't your fault, Key. I haven't been very forthcoming with you either (worry)

[6/15/2013 11:59:36 PM] Key Gear: Well... Maybe it's for the same reason that I haven't... See, I don't want to be hurt. But... Look at what happened? We were both hurt anyway...

[6/15/2013 11:59:43 PM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks back and shrugs...

[6/15/2013 11:59:54 PM] Zoop: Zoop ducks to avoid being sighted.

[6/16/2013 12:00:07 AM] akita-ken: Key. :|

[6/16/2013 12:00:14 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken holds Key's shoulders

[6/16/2013 12:00:31 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks at akita-ken.

[6/16/2013 12:00:32 AM] Key Gear: Yes?

[6/16/2013 12:00:41 AM] akita-ken: The last thing I'd want is for you to be hurt (shake).

[6/16/2013 12:01:03 AM] Zoop: Zoop pokes head back out and makes more random gestures

[6/16/2013 12:01:06 AM] akita-ken: Would you give me a chance to show that I really care? (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:01:16 AM] Key Gear: Well...

[6/16/2013 12:01:19 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear smiles...

[6/16/2013 12:01:26 AM] Key Gear: Why not? :P

[6/16/2013 12:01:44 AM] Zoop: Zoop makes kissy faces and gestures toward Key.

[6/16/2013 12:01:55 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken leans closer.. :|

[6/16/2013 12:02:07 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks curious...

[6/16/2013 12:02:27 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods with enthusiasm (nod)

[6/16/2013 12:03:23 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken leans in and gives Key a kiss :)

[6/16/2013 12:03:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :O

[6/16/2013 12:04:04 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister pumps a hoof in the background

[6/16/2013 12:04:17 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear 's eyes open wide, and she looks confused for just a moment, before hugging akita-ken and returning the kiss...

[6/16/2013 12:04:25 AM] Zoop: Zoop strikes a victory pose.

[6/16/2013 12:04:34 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister flails hooves at Zoop

[6/16/2013 12:04:40 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken embraces Key (inlove)

[6/16/2013 12:05:35 AM] akita-ken: I promise I won't ever doubt you again, Key (yn)

[6/16/2013 12:05:40 AM] akita-ken: There's also something..

[6/16/2013 12:05:47 AM] akita-ken: I want you to have. (think)

[6/16/2013 12:06:02 AM] Key Gear: Ok... (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:06:06 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken fishes around in his mane

[6/16/2013 12:06:10 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken pulls out a picture

[6/16/2013 12:07:35 AM] akita-ken: \*picture shows akita leaning against a tracked vehicle of some sort looking tired\*

[6/16/2013 12:08:52 AM] akita-ken: \*a couple other ponies are visible, also taking breaks and relaxing\*

[6/16/2013 12:08:56 AM] akita-ken: This is the only picture I have of myself while I was still in the army :|

[6/16/2013 12:09:02 AM] Key Gear: :O

[6/16/2013 12:09:22 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear holds out a hoof to receive the picture.

[6/16/2013 12:09:22 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister squees

[6/16/2013 12:09:59 AM] akita-ken: It was taken after our final exercise, I've carried it around with me since then because it's one of the few times I had fun in the army

[6/16/2013 12:10:17 AM] akita-ken: Many of the ponies in the picture have already moved on and I don't where they are now

[6/16/2013 12:10:23 AM] akita-ken: But regardless

[6/16/2013 12:10:36 AM] akita-ken: If you ever feel lonely

[6/16/2013 12:10:41 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister whispers.

Give it to her already.

[6/16/2013 12:10:44 AM] akita-ken: I'll always be there :)

[6/16/2013 12:10:52 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken places picture in Key's hoof

[6/16/2013 12:11:04 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear puts her other hoof over akita's...

[6/16/2013 12:11:10 AM] Key Gear: Thank you, akita-ken. :)

[6/16/2013 12:11:42 AM] Key Gear: I'll treasure it forever... Actually... I probably will... Nopony has ever given me anything like this before... And... This is kinda cool, really....

[6/16/2013 12:11:44 AM] Key Gear: :P

[6/16/2013 12:12:00 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken beams and nuzzles Key :3

[6/16/2013 12:12:10 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear nuzzles akita back. :)

[6/16/2013 12:12:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister whispers again,

Oh my Celestia, that is adorable.

[6/16/2013 12:12:40 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: ;~;

[6/16/2013 12:12:57 AM] Key Gear: Sooo, what's this mean, though?

[6/16/2013 12:12:57 AM] akita-ken: dsc

[6/16/2013 12:13:03 AM] akita-ken: c

[6/16/2013 12:13:15 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods at Akita.

[6/16/2013 12:13:16 AM] akita-ken: :)

[6/16/2013 12:13:22 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear holds picture while looking completely confused...

[6/16/2013 12:13:32 AM] Key Gear: Well... What are we now? :P

[6/16/2013 12:13:38 AM] Key Gear: Because, I don't know anymore...

[6/16/2013 12:13:40 AM] akita-ken: Well.. (think)

[6/16/2013 12:14:24 AM] Zoop: Zoop mouths incomprehensibly at Akita.

[6/16/2013 12:14:41 AM] akita-ken: I don't really know either, Key.. ...would you.. be my marefriend? (think)

[6/16/2013 12:14:51 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear blushes...

[6/16/2013 12:14:52 AM] akita-ken: I won't force you into anything you don't want to, Key (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:14:55 AM] akita-ken: :\$

[6/16/2013 12:14:57 AM] Key Gear: W-w-w-what?

[6/16/2013 12:15:05 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :O

[6/16/2013 12:15:05 AM] Key Gear: :\$

[6/16/2013 12:15:07 AM] Key Gear: (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:15:09 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken looks away :\$

[6/16/2013 12:15:12 AM] Key Gear: Ummm....

[6/16/2013 12:15:17 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks away, too...

[6/16/2013 12:15:18 AM] Key Gear: Ummm...

[6/16/2013 12:15:32 AM] akita-ken: It's alright if you don't!!! (:|

[6/16/2013 12:15:42 AM] Key Gear: I don't even know what that means... I mean, I know what the word means, but... What does it really mean? (think)

[6/16/2013 12:16:37 AM] akita-ken: Will I always have a special place in your heart, Key? Because you will, in mine :)

[6/16/2013 12:16:43 AM] Zoop: Zoop pulls out a dictionary and opens it to the proper page, flashing it in Akita's direction, pointing at the page as if to say "read this!"

[6/16/2013 12:16:50 AM] Key Gear: \*a cheerful voice pipes up\*

Ambrosia: "Wait... Well... What do you think it means, Key Gear? Because, by the way that you're looking, you'd assume that it meant something bad. It just means what it looks like..."

[6/16/2013 12:17:07 AM] akita-ken: I've never really met anyone like you before.. :\$

[6/16/2013 12:17:14 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken draws circles on the ground with his hoof..

[6/16/2013 12:17:18 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia takes Zoop's dictionary and boops him with it\*

[6/16/2013 12:17:35 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear shuffles hooves awkwardly...

[6/16/2013 12:17:36 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister jolts from Amby's sudden presence.

[6/16/2013 12:17:38 AM] Zoop: Zoop lets off an oof and duck back behind the couch.

[6/16/2013 12:18:18 AM] Key Gear: Well... Akita... I mean... Ummm... I've never really met anyone like you before, either...

[6/16/2013 12:18:56 AM] akita-ken: (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:19:05 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia sighs...\*

[6/16/2013 12:19:22 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia approaches the two younger ponies\*

[6/16/2013 12:19:43 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Wing? Is there anything for them to be afraid of?" :P

[6/16/2013 12:20:46 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes and floats over from the couch, landing beside the mare as a gentle smile appears on his face.

Life is too short to be worried about stuff.

[6/16/2013 12:21:46 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "And... It's also too short to not enjoy it. I've heard about the two of you, you know. The way that I see it, you're already in a relationship. You might as well just acknowledge it. Otherwise, you're just fooling yourselves." :)

[6/16/2013 12:22:00 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear blushes and look at Ambrosia...

[6/16/2013 12:22:29 AM] Zoop: Zoop pokes out from behind the couch.

[6/16/2013 12:22:35 AM] Zoop: Lumi and I called it months ago!

[6/16/2013 12:22:38 AM] Zoop: Zoop ducks back down.

[6/16/2013 12:22:58 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia shoots a sharp glance at the couch before looking back\*

[6/16/2013 12:23:26 AM] Key Gear: Wait... Wait, wait, wait... Yeah, but what's that even mean? I'm not... I'm not his marefriend... I mean... Not that I don't want to be... I just don't know what that means. What do I need to do or not do? I don't know... Anything... About any of this...

[6/16/2013 12:24:04 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blinks.

[6/16/2013 12:24:06 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "I think that you just do what you've already been doing, basically. The only thing that's been missing between the two of you is just recognizing what is already there?"

[6/16/2013 12:24:48 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You... open up your feelings... and create special memories. :)

[6/16/2013 12:24:59 AM] Key Gear: That's not easy for me.

[6/16/2013 12:25:14 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear tenses slightly...

[6/16/2013 12:25:55 AM] Zoop: You've already opened to him in a lot of ways already. (think)

[6/16/2013 12:26:02 AM] Zoop: I'd never get away with the things he does. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:26:12 AM] Key Gear: I know... But... I can't go much further than that.

[6/16/2013 12:26:22 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well, opening up takes time for any pony, but... well Key Gear... since I've known you, I'm already aware of special memories. We have fun around here, but... it's clear the bond you share with Kenny is special.

[6/16/2013 12:26:43 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia studies the younger ponies, in silence.\*

[6/16/2013 12:26:46 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken takes a step back (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:27:25 AM | Edited 12:27:36 AM] akita-ken: It's alright if you don't want to, Key, I'll respect your decisions :(

[6/16/2013 12:27:28 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks tired...

[6/16/2013 12:27:32 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister places a hoof on Akita's back.

[6/16/2013 12:27:33 AM] Key Gear: Well... The thing is...

[6/16/2013 12:28:26 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear talks fast.

I've always wanted a colt friend, but I was afraid to ask... I don't like to be open, I can't be open, it's not what I do, and I don't think anypony would ever just accept that and let me be myself...

[6/16/2013 12:28:52 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister gives Akita a gentle push forward.

[6/16/2013 12:30:15 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister steps back and nudges Amby gently.

[6/16/2013 12:30:39 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks tentatively at Wing... She's concerned...\*

[6/16/2013 12:30:46 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken takes Key's hoof in his. :|

[6/16/2013 12:30:47 AM | Edited 12:30:54 AM] akita-ken: You don't have to reveal what you don't want to, Key. I just want you to be happy. Hearing that you were upset has made the past few days the longest I've ever had :(

[6/16/2013 12:31:40 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks to the mare, his lips curved up slightly.

[6/16/2013 12:32:05 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister gives Amby another gentle nudge.

[6/16/2013 12:32:40 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks at akita-ken, but isn't sure of what to say...

[6/16/2013 12:33:57 AM] Zoop: Just do it! (think)

[6/16/2013 12:34:06 AM] Zoop: Nothing ventured, nothing gained, etc.

[6/16/2013 12:34:08 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia glares at Zoop\*

[6/16/2013 12:34:16 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "shhhh!" D:

[6/16/2013 12:34:26 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks back at the two young ponies...\*

[6/16/2013 12:34:28 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Key Gear... I don't think that akita-ken has problems accepting you for who you are? He already has... He isn't asking you for anything... Just that you... Be yourself... Because, I get the sense that maybe... Well, maybe the two of you haven't been yourselves really? Around the other? You've been holding back, sometimes, not really showing the other how you felt..."

[6/16/2013 12:34:35 AM] Zoop: what? sometimes you've gotta be direct. :|

[6/16/2013 12:35:05 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken nervously rubs his hooves together, generating tiny electrical arcs (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:35:28 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 12:35:39 AM] Key Gear: Nothing ventured, nothing gained? Eh?

[6/16/2013 12:35:45 AM] Key Gear: What do you mean by that?

[6/16/2013 12:36:19 AM] Zoop: are you truly satisfied with how things have been for you? would you not like something more from life?

[6/16/2013 12:36:29 AM] Key Gear: More as in what?

[6/16/2013 12:36:57 AM] Zoop: a relationship with greater emotional depth than simply being somepony's roommate.

[6/16/2013 12:36:59 AM] Zoop: Zoop shrugs.

[6/16/2013 12:37:01 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia steps back and looks quizzically from Zoop to Key Gear and back again\*

[6/16/2013 12:37:17 AM] Zoop: sure there's the potential for being hurt and all that, but ultimately it's a risk/reward situation.

[6/16/2013 12:37:24 AM] Zoop: can't have any reward without risk.

[6/16/2013 12:37:30 AM] Key Gear: What's the reward?

[6/16/2013 12:37:32 AM] Zoop: in this case I think the risk is pretty minimal :P

[6/16/2013 12:37:41 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear eyes Zoop with a raised eyebrow and a slight smile.

[6/16/2013 12:38:15 AM] Zoop: well, just think. if you're officially in a relationship with Akita you won't have to worry about me flirting with either of you anymore.

[6/16/2013 12:38:32 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 12:38:49 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister facehoofs

[6/16/2013 12:38:51 AM] Key Gear: Well, that's not really a reward.

[6/16/2013 12:38:57 AM] Zoop: I kid, I kid. ;)

[6/16/2013 12:38:57 AM] Key Gear: That's something that I could get anyway.

[6/16/2013 12:39:01 AM] Key Gear: Ok

[6/16/2013 12:39:02 AM] Key Gear: Good.

[6/16/2013 12:39:10 AM | Edited 12:39:11 AM] Key Gear: Because, I've got wrenches.

[6/16/2013 12:39:20 AM] Key Gear: And I don't like pink. :|

[6/16/2013 12:39:21 AM] Zoop: oh I know. Lumi introduced me to one of them (drunk)

[6/16/2013 12:39:26 AM] Key Gear: Ouch...

[6/16/2013 12:39:52 AM] Key Gear: Well

[6/16/2013 12:39:58 AM] Key Gear: Sooo, what real reward?

[6/16/2013 12:40:17 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "No more being awkward?" :)

[6/16/2013 12:40:53 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Nice things every once in a while? Spending time together being sweet and just talking normally?" :)

[6/16/2013 12:41:03 AM] Zoop: eh, difficult to put into words. it's just... a tremendously satisfying feeling. x)

[6/16/2013 12:41:05 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: No more unnecessary bottling?

[6/16/2013 12:41:20 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Somepony to share the feelings that you want to share?"

[6/16/2013 12:41:38 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "You don't have to share everything with your special somepony." :P

[6/16/2013 12:42:04 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Just think about it? Have you ever really wanted to talk to somepony. But... You didn't have one?"

[6/16/2013 12:42:20 AM] Zoop: eh, haven't you ever wondered what it is about having a relationship that people get so... happy and excited over? (think)

[6/16/2013 12:42:26 AM] Zoop: no curiosity at all? x)

[6/16/2013 12:42:29 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "What about when you're lonely? Somepony to think about?"

[6/16/2013 12:42:31 AM] Zoop: no desire for... experimentation?

[6/16/2013 12:42:32 AM] Zoop: science? ;D

[6/16/2013 12:42:45 AM] Key Gear: Nah, no science... This isn't science.

[6/16/2013 12:42:53 AM] Key Gear: This is something else.

[6/16/2013 12:42:58 AM] Zoop: you're right. it isn't. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:43:28 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Well... Maybe it is? Just a different kind of science. Relationship science. Because, you do need to learn about it. You start with one hoof in front of the other..."

[6/16/2013 12:43:49 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Try appreciating the little things... The special moments that maybe you took for granted before?"

[6/16/2013 12:43:54 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 12:43:54 AM] Zoop: not in the traditional sense, anyhow.

[6/16/2013 12:44:01 AM] Zoop: Ambrosia is right though.

[6/16/2013 12:44:21 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear takes a deep breath and looks away.

[6/16/2013 12:44:25 AM] Key Gear: I'm scared.

[6/16/2013 12:44:33 AM | Edited 12:44:52 AM] akita-ken: A bead of sweat rolls off akita's neck (:|

[6/16/2013 12:44:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister scoots over towards Ambrosia and puts his wing over her while staring at the ceiling.

[6/16/2013 12:44:56 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia nuzzles Wing.\*

[6/16/2013 12:45:00 AM] Zoop: mm... well, it's natural to be afraid when you approach something unfamiliar for the first time. (think)

[6/16/2013 12:45:17 AM] Key Gear: Right...

[6/16/2013 12:45:18 AM] Zoop: but, really, how can you expect to move forward in life if you don't allow yourself to step out of your established comfort zone?

[6/16/2013 12:45:32 AM] Key Gear: I've always been out of my comfort zone...

[6/16/2013 12:45:34 AM] Key Gear: That's the problem.

[6/16/2013 12:45:36 AM] Key Gear: I think...

[6/16/2013 12:45:40 AM] Zoop: hm...

[6/16/2013 12:45:52 AM] Zoop: in that case, perhaps Akita can help you build one? (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:46:02 AM] Key Gear: But... What if I don't want one?

[6/16/2013 12:46:10 AM] Key Gear: What if I just want to be free?

[6/16/2013 12:46:21 AM] Zoop: a comfort zone isn't a cage, you know.

[6/16/2013 12:46:38 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Zoop's right... But, Key... You already know this, don't you?"

[6/16/2013 12:46:51 AM] Zoop: there are no bars. no bindings to hold you. unless you're really into that sort of thing for some reason, but I don't expect that to be the case thankfully.

[6/16/2013 12:47:06 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia stares at Zoop\*

[6/16/2013 12:47:19 AM] Zoop: Zoop raises a brow.

[6/16/2013 12:47:22 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles Ambrosia softly.

Key... Zooop! ... Key... \*exhales and tries to put the words together\*

[6/16/2013 12:47:44 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks at Wing and nudges him for encouragement\*

[6/16/2013 12:47:57 AM] Zoop: someone has to keep the atmosphere here from getting too stuffy in here. ;)

[6/16/2013 12:48:43 AM] Zoop: ultimately, relationships aren't about being held down or held back. their nature is such that they're designed to offer support, not restrictions.

[6/16/2013 12:49:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Akita accepts you for who you are, and no matter where you go or what you do, I doubt that will ever change for him. You should have seen him when you were gone and he was blaming himself. It was pathetic really. I wanted to smack him. But I know he means well. He really does care about you. That doesn't have squat to do with your freedom. If anything .. it makes you more free. You can do anything, and he will always have your back.

[6/16/2013 12:49:53 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear stops looking afraid...

[6/16/2013 12:50:10 AM] Key Gear: I can do... Anything? :^)

[6/16/2013 12:50:32 AM] Zoop: just think... if he takes you as his girlfriend, he is honor bound to take you out for pizza whenever you like.

[6/16/2013 12:50:41 AM] Key Gear: Really? :O

[6/16/2013 12:50:45 AM] Zoop: yes!

[6/16/2013 12:50:49 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well... I wouldn't go murdering little fillies or something... but you know... he supports you.

[6/16/2013 12:50:49 AM] Key Gear: Wow...

[6/16/2013 12:50:58 AM] Zoop: there are actual perks involved here. (mm)

[6/16/2013 12:51:01 AM] Key Gear: Oh...

[6/16/2013 12:51:03 AM] Key Gear: Neat!

[6/16/2013 12:51:25 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks slightly befuddled\*

[6/16/2013 12:51:31 AM] Zoop: of course, at the same time... you would be honor bound not to exploit his good will, but --- you've just got to strike the right balance. I think a 30% increase in pizza would be perfectly reasonable.

[6/16/2013 12:51:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks over to Amby.

[6/16/2013 12:51:48 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks amazed\*

[6/16/2013 12:52:05 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "30% How'd you get that?" (think)

[6/16/2013 12:52:11 AM] Zoop: it's a nice number

[6/16/2013 12:52:12 AM] Zoop: I like it

[6/16/2013 12:52:20 AM] Zoop: not too high, not too low.

[6/16/2013 12:52:20 AM] Key Gear: Yeah, I like it too...

[6/16/2013 12:52:24 AM] Zoop: 25% would be too cliché.

[6/16/2013 12:52:25 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear nods...

[6/16/2013 12:52:26 AM] Key Gear: Actually

[6/16/2013 12:52:33 AM] Key Gear: It can't be a percentage, though.

[6/16/2013 12:52:42 AM] Zoop: that's true. :^)

[6/16/2013 12:52:48 AM] Key Gear: See, akita-ken has never taken me out for pizza.

[6/16/2013 12:52:52 AM] Zoop: percentages look and sound good in casual speech, though.

[6/16/2013 12:52:54 AM] Zoop: aha.

[6/16/2013 12:52:56 AM] Zoop: well you know what

[6/16/2013 12:52:59 AM] Zoop: that would change.

[6/16/2013 12:52:59 AM] Key Gear: So, 30% of nothing is nothing, right?

[6/16/2013 12:53:00 AM] Zoop: in fact

[6/16/2013 12:53:17 AM] Zoop: I think it'd change tonight. or tomorrow night if you're both a bit wore out tonight and don't want to go anywhere.

[6/16/2013 12:53:34 AM] Key Gear: Well, hold on though.

[6/16/2013 12:53:42 AM] Key Gear: What if I just wanted something else?

[6/16/2013 12:53:51 AM] Zoop: that's fine, too. pizza is just an example.

[6/16/2013 12:53:56 AM] Key Gear: Ok :)

[6/16/2013 12:54:06 AM] Zoop: if you wanted chocolate cake every night, I'm sure he could find a way to arrange that, too. ;)

[6/16/2013 12:54:10 AM] Key Gear: Nah...

[6/16/2013 12:54:20 AM] Key Gear: I don't really like chocolate all that much...

[6/16/2013 12:54:33 AM] Zoop: I figured not. I was just reminded of the last time I made food related metaphors and such to somepony. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:54:48 AM] Key Gear: Luminescence? Yeah... She talks about chocolate cake all the time...

[6/16/2013 12:54:55 AM] Key Gear: She also talks about something else, though.

[6/16/2013 12:55:00 AM] Zoop: what's that?

[6/16/2013 12:55:05 AM] Key Gear: A bedtime story. :P

[6/16/2013 12:55:14 AM] Zoop: oh? :O

[6/16/2013 12:55:20 AM] Key Gear: And... That's what I would really want... Maybe, just every once in a while... Akita-ken could tell me a bedtime story? :)

[6/16/2013 12:55:33 AM] Zoop: bed time stories are free.

[6/16/2013 12:55:36 AM] Key Gear: And we could hug... And... Be best friends... And stuff like that?

[6/16/2013 12:55:59 AM] Zoop: I'm pretty sure you could get all of that from him at a moment's notice. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 12:56:04 AM] Key Gear: And... So, I could be silly sometimes? :P

[6/16/2013 12:56:12 AM] Zoop: silly sometimes?

[6/16/2013 12:56:16 AM] Key Gear: Yeah

[6/16/2013 12:56:18 AM] Key Gear: I do that

[6/16/2013 12:56:20 AM] Key Gear: Sometimes

[6/16/2013 12:56:21 AM] Zoop: my dear, I daresay you could be silly all the damn time.

[6/16/2013 12:56:26 AM] Key Gear: Really? :P

[6/16/2013 12:56:28 AM] Key Gear: Ok

[6/16/2013 12:56:29 AM] Zoop: or however much as you like.

[6/16/2013 12:56:30 AM] Zoop: yes.

[6/16/2013 12:56:42 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stares at Amby and blushes.

[6/16/2013 12:57:06 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks back at Wing and smiles\*

[6/16/2013 12:57:16 AM] Key Gear: Well, what about...

[6/16/2013 12:57:27 AM] Key Gear: Well, Sometimes I just vanish for a while.

[6/16/2013 12:57:35 AM] Key Gear: I do things, you know? Or, I go places.

[6/16/2013 12:57:47 AM] Key Gear: And... I may not say what or where?

[6/16/2013 12:58:01 AM] Key Gear: What about that? Because, I dunno...

[6/16/2013 12:58:01 AM] Zoop: Zoop glances at Akita.

[6/16/2013 12:58:06 AM] Zoop: thoughts on this?

[6/16/2013 12:59:04 AM] akita-ken: I'd be on edge... but.. I know you'll return, Key :)

[6/16/2013 12:59:07 AM] akita-ken: I'll wait for you (nod)

[6/16/2013 12:59:26 AM] Key Gear: You would? ... Really? :O

[6/16/2013 12:59:32 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken shifts his weight uneasily (worry)

[6/16/2013 12:59:42 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks away...

[6/16/2013 12:59:44 AM] Key Gear: Would you?

[6/16/2013 1:00:08 AM] akita-ken: More than anything (nod)

[6/16/2013 1:00:18 AM] Key Gear: Hmmm

[6/16/2013 1:00:23 AM] Zoop: don't worry. Wing and I can take care of Akita for you while you're away. (mm)

[6/16/2013 1:00:30 AM] Zoop: keep him out of trouble (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:00:31 AM] Key Gear: You'd better...

[6/16/2013 1:01:21 AM] Zoop: in fact, I could even stand in for you while you're out - he could take me out to nice dinners and such in your place. (think)

[6/16/2013 1:01:25 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 1:01:29 AM] Key Gear: Yeah, well, no.

[6/16/2013 1:01:37 AM] Zoop: Zoop shrugs.

[6/16/2013 1:01:41 AM] Zoop: it was worth a try.

[6/16/2013 1:01:44 AM] Zoop: free food is tough to come by.

[6/16/2013 1:01:45 AM] akita-ken: :^)

[6/16/2013 1:01:54 AM] Key Gear: Maybe I'd take you out to a nice dinner when I came back.

[6/16/2013 1:01:59 AM] Key Gear: You could eat a wrench.

[6/16/2013 1:02:12 AM] Zoop: been there, done that~ (music)

[6/16/2013 1:02:22 AM] Key Gear: Not from me, I think?

[6/16/2013 1:02:27 AM] Zoop: (think)

[6/16/2013 1:02:29 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I'd look after him... just because listening to him mope every day is a pain in the flank. ;)

[6/16/2013 1:02:38 AM] Zoop: minor detail (y)

[6/16/2013 1:02:41 AM] Key Gear: Ok... Soo... One more thing.

[6/16/2013 1:02:53 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods.

[6/16/2013 1:02:58 AM] Zoop: I know what you're thinking Key, and it is regrettable.

[6/16/2013 1:03:00 AM] Zoop: but...

[6/16/2013 1:03:03 AM] Key Gear: What?

[6/16/2013 1:03:06 AM] Zoop: I think it's necessary.

[6/16/2013 1:03:10 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear stares at Zoop...

[6/16/2013 1:03:14 AM] Key Gear: What am I thinking? (think)

[6/16/2013 1:03:23 AM] Zoop: you're thinking that if you get together with Akita, there will never be a chance for anything to happen between the two of us.

[6/16/2013 1:03:28 AM] Zoop: it's regrettable... but for the best.

[6/16/2013 1:03:43 AM] Key Gear: Oh, yeah... That's not what I was thinking, but it has something to do with that.

[6/16/2013 1:03:59 AM] Zoop: are you afraid of chaining akita down to you? :P

[6/16/2013 1:04:10 AM] Key Gear: Well, yeah... But... Not me.

[6/16/2013 1:04:13 AM] Key Gear: It's my friends.

[6/16/2013 1:04:29 AM] Key Gear: Sooo... Akita-ken... Ummmm...

[6/16/2013 1:04:36 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear shuffles hooves...

[6/16/2013 1:05:13 AM] Key Gear: Ummm... Never mind that first thing.

[6/16/2013 1:05:15 AM] Key Gear: Ummm

[6/16/2013 1:05:20 AM] Key Gear: Just skip to the other thing.

[6/16/2013 1:05:28 AM] Key Gear: Look... Ummm...

[6/16/2013 1:05:33 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear takes a deep breath.

[6/16/2013 1:06:25 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear talks fast...

I know you probably wouldn't like this, and it's why I haven't said anything about it, but I want you to do a favor for me that you aren't going to like, but... I think it's important, and... Yeah... So... I mean... Ehhhh... Well... Um.

[6/16/2013 1:06:50 AM] Zoop: you want him to get "I <3 Key Gear" tattoo'd on his forehead? :^)

[6/16/2013 1:07:01 AM] Key Gear: No... I wouldn't mind that though... (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:07:10 AM] Key Gear: But

[6/16/2013 1:07:11 AM] Key Gear: Actually

[6/16/2013 1:07:12 AM] Zoop: I could arrange for it, I think. (think)

[6/16/2013 1:07:14 AM] Key Gear: Errr

[6/16/2013 1:07:25 AM] Zoop: (mm)

[6/16/2013 1:07:36 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken tenses (worry)

[6/16/2013 1:07:40 AM] Key Gear: Maybe this isn't a good time...

[6/16/2013 1:07:41 AM] Key Gear: Eh

[6/16/2013 1:07:44 AM] Zoop: Akita, this is where you say "anything for you, my dearest and most beloved love~"

[6/16/2013 1:08:01 AM] Key Gear: But, if not now, then when?

[6/16/2013 1:08:06 AM] Zoop: no better time than the present!

[6/16/2013 1:08:17 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks nervous...

[6/16/2013 1:08:21 AM] Key Gear: Ok

[6/16/2013 1:10:05 AM] Key Gear: Look, I want you to talk to Luminescence. She's feeling bad, even after the good time that she had. She's just a filly, a weird one, but still... I talked to her. She wants to apologize. She knows what she did was wrong... She thinks you hate her. I told that wasn't true, and she said "ok", but I know she doesn't believe it. She's my friend, you know...

[6/16/2013 1:10:36 AM] akita-ken: Lumi is capable of feeling bad? :^)

[6/16/2013 1:10:49 AM] Key Gear: Yeah... She feels stuff.

[6/16/2013 1:10:59 AM] Zoop: She is, yes. She's perhaps a bit odd in some respects, but she's still a pony with emotions just like you or I.

[6/16/2013 1:11:03 AM] akita-ken: Isn't all she care about for, her own amusement? |-(

[6/16/2013 1:11:17 AM] Zoop: it isn't her fault that she is the way she is.

[6/16/2013 1:11:19 AM] Key Gear: She thinks differently, like I do.

[6/16/2013 1:11:29 AM] Zoop: all of us have our own unique thought processes

[6/16/2013 1:11:35 AM] Zoop: I mean heck, look at me, right? :3

[6/16/2013 1:11:46 AM] Key Gear: Luminescence and me... We're not that different, honestly.

[6/16/2013 1:12:09 AM] Zoop: if anything, Lumi needs good friends that can help move her in a better direction.

[6/16/2013 1:12:23 AM] Key Gear: Yeah... She doesn't mean others any harm.

[6/16/2013 1:12:24 AM] Zoop: if she's left on her own without guidance... it would be very sad :(

[6/16/2013 1:12:40 AM] Key Gear: She grew up alone, you know?

[6/16/2013 1:12:45 AM] Key Gear: Just like I did.

[6/16/2013 1:13:05 AM] Key Gear: She needs somepony to take care of her, but she's like me... She doesn't like constraints at all.

[6/16/2013 1:13:17 AM] Key Gear: But she understands stuff if you talk to her.

[6/16/2013 1:13:23 AM] Zoop: she does

[6/16/2013 1:13:23 AM] akita-ken: Okay Key.. Since you asked. I will talk to Luminescence the next time she's around.. (nod)

[6/16/2013 1:13:36 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear shuffles hooves, again...

[6/16/2013 1:13:36 AM] Key Gear: Well

[6/16/2013 1:13:41 AM] Key Gear: She wants you to visit her.

[6/16/2013 1:13:47 AM] Zoop: you just need to be a little patient with her. :)

[6/16/2013 1:13:59 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :O

[6/16/2013 1:14:32 AM] akita-ken: I have to find her?! :^)

[6/16/2013 1:14:36 AM] akita-ken: Okay Key...

[6/16/2013 1:14:42 AM] akita-ken: Where can I find her?

[6/16/2013 1:14:55 AM] Key Gear: Well, that's the thing. >\_<

[6/16/2013 1:15:05 AM] Key Gear: She doesn't really have a single place.

[6/16/2013 1:15:09 AM] Key Gear: She just kind of roams.

[6/16/2013 1:15:21 AM] Zoop: hm, an idea.

[6/16/2013 1:15:24 AM] Key Gear: What's up?

[6/16/2013 1:15:41 AM] Zoop: Key, you should have Akita move in to your bedroom... then Akita's room could be repurposed as a guest room for Lumi. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:16:14 AM] Key Gear: Move into my bedroom? (think)

[6/16/2013 1:16:50 AM] Key Gear: And... Luminescence moves in? :)

[6/16/2013 1:16:50 AM] Zoop: having your very own Akita-Ken nearby would be better than having to resort to plushies for cuddling, right? (mm)

[6/16/2013 1:17:00 AM] Key Gear: Yeah... :)

[6/16/2013 1:17:14 AM] Zoop: I can help move his stuff whenever you give the all-clear~

[6/16/2013 1:17:33 AM] Key Gear: Ok...

[6/16/2013 1:17:43 AM] Key Gear: Akita? Are you ok with this? :)

[6/16/2013 1:18:16 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken looks wistfully at his room (think)

[6/16/2013 1:18:51 AM] Zoop: just think, Akita. You can do away with the old Key Gear plushie you keep hidden by your bed.

[6/16/2013 1:18:55 AM] Zoop: And trade it in for the real thing!

[6/16/2013 1:18:56 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 1:18:58 AM] Key Gear: :O

[6/16/2013 1:19:05 AM] akita-ken: :O

[6/16/2013 1:19:08 AM] akita-ken: :\$

[6/16/2013 1:19:25 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken flails at Zoop D:

[6/16/2013 1:19:34 AM] Key Gear: Well... :^)

[6/16/2013 1:19:36 AM] Key Gear: You know...

[6/16/2013 1:19:38 AM] Zoop: what?

[6/16/2013 1:20:05 AM] Zoop: she probably has an Akita plushie.

[6/16/2013 1:20:10 AM] Key Gear: Nah... I don't.

[6/16/2013 1:20:14 AM] Key Gear: But...

[6/16/2013 1:20:21 AM] Zoop: you've always wanted one? (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:20:27 AM] Key Gear: Nah.

[6/16/2013 1:20:29 AM] Key Gear: Not really

[6/16/2013 1:20:32 AM] Key Gear: But...

[6/16/2013 1:20:40 AM] Key Gear: Well... Akita... Luminescence told me... Ummm... That you're quite cuddly. Apparently, she... Kinda tucked herself in one night.

[6/16/2013 1:20:57 AM] akita-ken: Whutttt?!! :O

[6/16/2013 1:21:01 AM] Zoop: o.O

[6/16/2013 1:21:01 AM] Key Gear: Yeah

[6/16/2013 1:21:13 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: O.O

[6/16/2013 1:21:30 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia stares...\*

[6/16/2013 1:21:37 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Ummmm... What?"

[6/16/2013 1:21:48 AM] Zoop: Zoop shrugs.

[6/16/2013 1:21:58 AM] Zoop: Lumi is Lumi.

[6/16/2013 1:22:00 AM] Key Gear: Well, that's what she told me. She's pretty blunt. I think it's probably true.

[6/16/2013 1:22:05 AM] Key Gear: Yeah, Zoop's right.

[6/16/2013 1:22:06 AM] Zoop: Lumi does what she wants. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:22:25 AM] Key Gear: Yeah, she kinda does... But, she's a good filly. She'd behave if she moved in.

[6/16/2013 1:22:42 AM | Edited 1:22:48 AM] akita-ken: Well.. Oks.. If that's what you want, I suppose Lumi can use my room :3

[6/16/2013 1:22:55 AM] Key Gear: It's what I want! :)

[6/16/2013 1:23:02 AM] Zoop: oh how cute, look at him trying to curb his enthusiasm for the idea ;)

[6/16/2013 1:23:11 AM] Key Gear: Well, I'm not. :P

[6/16/2013 1:23:39 AM] Key Gear: We would be a family, akita! :)

[6/16/2013 1:24:01 AM] Key Gear: Luminescence would be like our own filly... I've always wanted a family... But, I never want to bother with foals of my own...

[6/16/2013 1:24:31 AM] Key Gear: I didn't have a family until I met my brother, you know? Not at all, not really. Even now, he plays too many games to really have time to talk much. >\_<

[6/16/2013 1:24:52 AM] Zoop: I could arrange to have something terrible happen to his consoles if you like? (think)

[6/16/2013 1:25:02 AM] Key Gear: ...

[6/16/2013 1:25:04 AM] Key Gear: Could you? :3

[6/16/2013 1:25:08 AM] Key Gear: I would like that. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:25:17 AM] akita-ken: : o

[6/16/2013 1:25:19 AM] Zoop: I'll see what I can do. (mm)

[6/16/2013 1:25:34 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister plops down and listens

[6/16/2013 1:25:58 AM] Zoop: Wing. we must discover some means of reversible sabotage to perform later on.

[6/16/2013 1:26:03 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear hugs akita-ken!

[6/16/2013 1:26:40 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken hugs back (inlove)

[6/16/2013 1:26:59 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think I have an idea already Zoop.

[6/16/2013 1:27:00 AM] akita-ken: Well.. I suppose Lumi would be like a difficult child :P

[6/16/2013 1:27:11 AM] Key Gear: Nah, she'd be easy. :)

[6/16/2013 1:27:17 AM] Zoop: difficult? nah.

[6/16/2013 1:27:17 AM] Key Gear: She just needs the right parents...

[6/16/2013 1:27:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: X3 And two crazy uncles nearby. ;)

[6/16/2013 1:27:39 AM] Key Gear: Yes! :)

[6/16/2013 1:27:46 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wait.. correction.. only one

[6/16/2013 1:27:52 AM] Key Gear: Oooo

[6/16/2013 1:27:58 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I forgot about that Zoop contract.

[6/16/2013 1:28:01 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :P

[6/16/2013 1:28:05 AM] Zoop: (wasntme)

[6/16/2013 1:28:07 AM] Key Gear: Yeah... Good point. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:28:14 AM] Key Gear: She's serious about it, too.

[6/16/2013 1:28:22 AM] Key Gear: Very serious.

[6/16/2013 1:28:38 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods.

[6/16/2013 1:28:43 AM | Edited 1:28:53 AM] Zoop: and as such I will be as well ^^

[6/16/2013 1:29:08 AM] Key Gear: I think that I've got this stuff figured out now. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:29:40 AM] Zoop: so... Key x Akita day zero... how is it so far? (think)

[6/16/2013 1:30:33 AM] Key Gear: I don't really have to be like an open book or something, but I just need to be myself and not worry about things. I don't really need to leave anything behind... I'm just getting something new? I can keep Luminescence? :)

[6/16/2013 1:30:48 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods.

[6/16/2013 1:30:56 AM] Key Gear: Alright...

[6/16/2013 1:30:58 AM] Key Gear: Well, ok

[6/16/2013 1:31:14 AM] Zoop: Works for me... that way she might actually be around once in a while to speak with. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:31:23 AM] Key Gear: Akita, yeah... I'll be your marefriend... That's a good thing, right? (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:31:37 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken beams (sun)

[6/16/2013 1:31:39 AM] akita-ken: Yes!

[6/16/2013 1:31:45 AM] Key Gear: Yay! =D

[6/16/2013 1:31:58 AM] Zoop: Zoop throws confetti.

[6/16/2013 1:32:00 AM] Zoop: (party)

[6/16/2013 1:32:06 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister lets out a relieved sigh.

[6/16/2013 1:32:10 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Yay!"

[6/16/2013 1:32:21 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia laughs cheerfully and hugs Wing!\*

[6/16/2013 1:32:37 AM] akita-ken: Yesyesyesyseyesyesyesyesyes (lalala)

[6/16/2013 1:32:44 AM] Zoop: Zoop laughs cheerfully and ... hugs himself.

[6/16/2013 1:32:44 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes deeply and hugs back.

[6/16/2013 1:33:08 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear giggles. xD

[6/16/2013 1:34:07 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken lets out the breath he has been holding for the past half an hour D:

[6/16/2013 1:34:26 AM] akita-ken: (whew)

[6/16/2013 1:36:10 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Feels good, doesn't it Kenny?

[6/16/2013 1:36:47 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken relaxes, and collapses into a heap

[6/16/2013 1:36:47 AM] akita-ken: Yes :3

[6/16/2013 1:36:49 AM] akita-ken: (nod)

[6/16/2013 1:37:00 AM] Zoop: Zoop trots over and nudges Akita with a hoof.

[6/16/2013 1:37:03 AM] Zoop: still alive? :O

[6/16/2013 1:38:07 AM] akita-ken: I think so (drunk)

[6/16/2013 1:38:35 AM] Key Gear: You know, akita... I was kinda waiting for you to do something. I wasn't sure what though.

[6/16/2013 1:39:09 AM] Key Gear: Because, actually, I could've punched you if you did the wrong thing. So, yeah...

[6/16/2013 1:39:52 AM] Zoop: thankfully, with my masterful guidance, Akita was well equipped. (nod)

[6/16/2013 1:39:57 AM] Key Gear: Oh yeah?

[6/16/2013 1:40:01 AM] Zoop: Zoop nods.

[6/16/2013 1:40:01 AM] Key Gear: That's what I thought.

[6/16/2013 1:40:11 AM] Key Gear: So, how much coaching was there, really? :^)

[6/16/2013 1:40:28 AM] Zoop: not so much coaching as it was "Don't be afraid! You can do it!"

[6/16/2013 1:40:36 AM] Key Gear: Ok (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:40:42 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Pretty much what Zoop said.

[6/16/2013 1:40:52 AM] Zoop: a few hours of it.

[6/16/2013 1:41:01 AM] Key Gear: Am I really that scary? :O

[6/16/2013 1:41:01 AM] Zoop: I was gentle. Ambrosia was blunt.

[6/16/2013 1:41:09 AM] Zoop: no, he's just a wimp in this regard. :3

[6/16/2013 1:41:12 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yesterday, that collapsed heap was the exact opposite.

[6/16/2013 1:41:13 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks at Ambrosia.

[6/16/2013 1:41:18 AM] Key Gear: You were blunt?

[6/16/2013 1:41:19 AM] akita-ken: >:

[6/16/2013 1:41:26 AM] akita-ken: I'm not a wimp .\_.

[6/16/2013 1:41:30 AM] akita-ken: I'm not a foal .\_.

[6/16/2013 1:41:31 AM] Zoop: Zoop hugs Akita.

[6/16/2013 1:41:33 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Maybe a little? I can't really deny it." :P

[6/16/2013 1:41:45 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear separates Zoop and Akita.

[6/16/2013 1:41:50 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear hugs akita : )

[6/16/2013 1:41:53 AM] Zoop: :|

[6/16/2013 1:41:56 AM] Key Gear: He's not a wimp.

[6/16/2013 1:42:01 AM] Key Gear: He was in the military. :P

[6/16/2013 1:42:14 AM] Key Gear: He's just a nice pony. : )

[6/16/2013 1:42:14 AM] Zoop: it was a joke. (think)

[6/16/2013 1:42:21 AM] Key Gear: I'll punch you. :|

[6/16/2013 1:42:48 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia mutters: "Not before I do..."

[6/16/2013 1:42:59 AM] Zoop: |-(

[6/16/2013 1:43:02 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear looks at Ambrosia....

Really? :O

[6/16/2013 1:43:10 AM] Key Gear: Hold on, I'd like to see that!

[6/16/2013 1:43:19 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blinks.

[6/16/2013 1:43:28 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Ummmm..." :O

[6/16/2013 1:43:43 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "You heard me?! I'm not a violent pony..."

[6/16/2013 1:44:39 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Well... I'm sorry, Zoop. You just... Ummm... Annoy me sometimes. In a good way, though!"

[6/16/2013 1:44:52 AM] Zoop: :^)

[6/16/2013 1:44:57 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear blinks... :^)

[6/16/2013 1:45:21 AM] Key Gear: Riiiiiiight, well... Ummm. I'm going to bed.

[6/16/2013 1:45:33 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister giggles.

[6/16/2013 1:45:38 AM] Key Gear: So, Zoop, you'll move akita-ken's stuff for us? :)

[6/16/2013 1:45:46 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Better carry your marefriend to bed akita...

[6/16/2013 1:45:54 AM] Key Gear: Nah, I can walk. :P

[6/16/2013 1:46:09 AM] Zoop: I can help. Wing will help, too.

[6/16/2013 1:46:21 AM] Zoop: But I imagine you'd prefer us to move it into your room when you're not trying to sleep in it (think)

[6/16/2013 1:46:31 AM] Key Gear: Pffft, I use earplugs. :P

[6/16/2013 1:46:40 AM] akita-ken: That's quite all right

[6/16/2013 1:46:46 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken is an extremely Spartan pony

[6/16/2013 1:46:54 AM] Zoop: You mean you want Wing and I wandering around your bedroom while you enjoy your first evening alone with Akita? o.o

[6/16/2013 1:46:57 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken only brought what he needed when he originally moved to Manehattan

[6/16/2013 1:47:07 AM] Key Gear: Zoop, whaddya mean? :^)

[6/16/2013 1:47:15 AM] Zoop: nothing, nothing.

[6/16/2013 1:47:25 AM | Edited 1:47:51 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken throws the few things he has into a duffle bag and hauls it over his neck :3

[6/16/2013 1:47:27 AM] Zoop: just thought you'd want your cuddling and such to not be a public spectacle.

[6/16/2013 1:47:36 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia facehoofs\*

[6/16/2013 1:47:37 AM] akita-ken: It's a habit I kept from my time in the military ^^

[6/16/2013 1:47:38 AM] Zoop: :P

[6/16/2013 1:47:49 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister makes that a double facehoof

[6/16/2013 1:48:06 AM] Key Gear: Uh huh, riiight... Zoop, you're a silly pink pony. :P

[6/16/2013 1:48:12 AM] Zoop: Zoop glances down at his hoof

[6/16/2013 1:48:25 AM] Zoop: sometimes I lament the lack of five - or even three - different digits on this thing.

[6/16/2013 1:48:46 AM | Edited 1:48:51 AM] Key Gear: Zoop, next time you're over, we'll try science? Come on, akita-ken! :P

[6/16/2013 1:49:07 AM] Zoop: I don't know. I don't think certain ponies would appreciate what my first inclination would be to utilize them for. (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:49:31 AM] akita-ken: :3

[6/16/2013 1:49:42 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia looks confused...\*

[6/16/2013 1:49:50 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Do I want to know?"

[6/16/2013 1:50:02 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister yawns.

Probably not...

[6/16/2013 1:50:08 AM] Zoop: Zoop waves a hoof.

[6/16/2013 1:50:13 AM] Zoop: nothing to worry about, nothing to worry about.

[6/16/2013 1:50:39 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear laughs as she trots to her room. :P

[6/16/2013 1:50:42 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken trots after Key

[6/16/2013 1:51:07 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Zoop, you know, I think that you and Luminescence would make a great match, actually." (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:51:28 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "You both worry me sometimes."

[6/16/2013 1:51:36 AM] Zoop: how so? (chuckle)

[6/16/2013 1:51:58 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Weellllllll... You... Ummmm... Have odd senses of humor."

[6/16/2013 1:52:24 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "And, I have a hard time figuring out what you mean when you say stuff and what you're thinking."

[6/16/2013 1:52:56 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear gets to her room, and rolls right over into bed.

[6/16/2013 1:53:02 AM] Key Gear: This was... A weird day...

[6/16/2013 1:53:36 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken nuzzles Key

[6/16/2013 1:53:39 AM] akita-ken: Rest well :3

[6/16/2013 1:53:44 AM] Zoop: I try to find humor in as many things as I can... it helps me to forget just how grim the world can be. :)

[6/16/2013 1:53:44 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear nuzzles back... :)

## **Chapter Six – To the Root of the Matter**

### **Ambrosia looks thoughtful...**

[1:54:02 AM] Zoop: if I took everything seriously I'd no doubt be reduced to a trembling waste of a pony.

[1:54:18 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Actually... That's fair... I think I might just understand you a bit better, from that perspective. That's the same reason that I think about flowers a lot."

[1:54:40 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles

[1:55:05 AM] Key Gear: Key Gear falls fast asleep, snoring softly...

[1:55:19 AM] Zoop: at any rate, it's a bit late... perhaps Wing should escort you home? (think)

[1:55:42 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Well, I'm staying with Wing, actually." (chuckle)

[1:55:54 AM] akita-ken: akita-ken sits and watches Key for a while before leaving quietly :)

[1:56:06 AM] Zoop: I figured as much (think)

[1:56:09 AM] Zoop: I meant his home.

[1:56:34 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia gives Zoop a quick hug\*

[1:56:53 AM] Zoop: :)

[1:56:57 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "You're probably right... Good night, Zoop..." :)

[1:57:15 AM] Zoop: good night~

[1:57:16 AM] Zoop: Zoop waves.

[1:57:41 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Come on, Wing, let's go home?" :)

[1:58:40 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister extends his foreleg to her and smiles.

Y-yeah. Another night... of my coat being yours. :)

[1:59:07 AM] Zoop: Zoop raises a brow.

[1:59:18 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia smiles at Wing and leads the way out of the door\*

[1:59:25 AM] Zoop: I'd tell you to get a room, but I think you're beyond that at this point.

[1:59:34 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Hah!" :P

[2:00:02 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister follows Ambrosia and looks back at Zoop.

A gentlecolt always offers a flower a soft place to rest...

[2:00:13 AM] Zoop: mhmmm

[2:02:28 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia talks to Wing as they trot home.\*

Ambrosia: "I think that went... Much better than I thought it would." (chuckle)

[2:02:50 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and nods.

Yeah. I was surprised.

[2:03:00 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: They really... opened up to one another a bit more than expected

[2:03:21 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia nods.\*

Ambrosia: "They really did..."

[2:04:13 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I'm ... really happy for them. It's obvious they feel something for one another.

[2:04:32 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister opens the door for Ambrosia.

[2:04:56 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia enters while she continues to talk\*

Ambrosia: "That's true..."

[2:05:41 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "You know, Wing... I never really had a chance to answer your question after we spoke yesterday... The day just went by so fast, and... Well... As you could probably tell... I was thinking about some things..."

[2:06:18 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Then, there's the thing... You didn't really ask the question outright... Did you?" (chuckle)

[2:06:26 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "And... Neither did I..."

[2:07:57 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "For all of our lecturing akita-ken... I think that... Maybe we should listen to ourselves? It's like I said... I'm a bit of a wanderer... In that way, maybe I'm not too different from Key. I like to travel... When you told me how you felt... My first thought... It was actually the same as the one that Key had... Well, not quite the same, but... I jumped too far ahead. I think you know what I mean?"

[2:10:45 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods slowly.

I think... well... I guess it does need to be said. I would never stop you from wandering. No matter where you go... or what you do... I will always feel the same way about you. My feelings in that letter... won't change.

[2:12:51 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "Well, let's not take as much time as the younger ponies did? And... I'll say it. Wing... In truth, I haven't met anypony like you before, ever... Most smart ponies that I meet are too stuck up to even care about me as a pony, much less as anything more than just another stranger. But... Even from the beginning... When you made that horrible pickup line... I knew you were somepony different. Wing... Would you be my colt friend?" :)

[2:16:15 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes deeply and leans closer.

Of course I will. \*He smiles and presses his nose to the mare's as a grin creeps along his countenance.\* I have another one for you. I am going to pluck you Ambrosia, except... I am going to keep you instead. \*Pushes forward and closes his eyes, moving in for a kiss that is much more drawn out than the quick, sneaky one he pulled at the train station.\*

[2:17:08 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia returns the kiss and hugs Wing tightly\*

[2:19:02 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hugs tightly and smiles.

W-well mare friend, \*he continues - his muzzle characteristically flushed,\* would you like to make use of this faded lavender coat now?

[2:21:40 AM] Key Gear: Ambrosia: "I probably should, it's getting late. But, before I do. I just want you to promise me something... If you pick a flower, you know you should always keep it. Don't throw it away. For me... I've been thrown away before, and it wasn't a good thing for me at all. You'll keep me, won't you Wing? Even if sometimes I bloom somewhere else? And... You won't let anypony step on me?"

[2:26:39 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister brushes her mane.

I'd die before doing something to hurt you, Ambrosia. If you bloom somewhere else, then I'll consider those around you lucky to see the blossoms, and when you return, I'll be more than willing to hold you no matter the mood you're in. I've ... been thrown away before too... and I will never, ever, ever do that to you. You're a wonderful pony, and I must be the luckiest stallion alive to have you want me as your coltfriend. \*His eyes narrow and the timbre in his voice gains a little grit\* And if a pony tries to step on you, I'll be your ultimate shield.

[2:29:09 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia smiles, clearly reassured and comforted.\*

Ambrosia: "Wing... Thank you... I... I really can't believe that I'm lucky enough to have met you, and that we've even come so far, since I was gone for so long... But... I won't ever question it. And, I won't ever doubt that you'll be there for me. I trust you. I always have, really. Completely... But, now... I think we both know how much we trust the other? So... We should get some sleep?" :)

[2:32:36 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister spreads his wings and floats down into his mattress.

o////o You don't have to thank me, Ambrosia. I... r-really have to thank you. You saved me from a dark place, and if it was not for you, then I just don't know where I'd be. I certainly wouldn't be near the stallion I am today. \*He smiles and stares up at her.\* It's definitely time for sleep, and my coat is all yours.

[2:35:12 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia smiles back at Wing before wordlessly lying down, resting next to Wing and accepting his offered coat\*

Ambrosia: "You're welcome Wing... And... Your coat isn't faded... It's a nice shade of lavender... A pretty shade, I think... Good night..." :)

[2:36:36 AM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister kisses Amby's forehead.

Good night, Ambrosia. Sweet dreams. :)

[2:37:10 AM] Key Gear: \*Ambrosia smiles as she drifts into a pleasant night's sleep\*

## **Chapter Seven – Seeds and Roots**

### **Luminescence waves!**

[8:55:47 PM] Luminescence: Wing...

[8:55:50 PM] Luminescence: Wiiiiiiiing.

[8:55:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah?

[8:55:53 PM] Luminescence: Wing (sun)

[8:55:57 PM] Zoop: TURN DOWN THE OCULAR DEATH-RAYS, LEST YOU BURN THE FILLY WITH YOUR EVIL EYE DEATH RAYS

[8:56:00 PM] Zoop: Zoop ducks.

[8:56:10 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence grins.

[8:56:14 PM] Luminescence: Zoop is silly...

[8:56:15 PM] Luminescence: But.

[8:56:23 PM] Luminescence: Wiiiing, you are forgetting something?

[8:56:25 PM] Luminescence: Maybe...

[8:56:28 PM] Luminescence: Now? (sun)

[8:56:32 PM] Luminescence: I am impatient. :)

[8:56:33 PM] Zoop: Wing, you owe her money! Pay up!

[8:56:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o////////o

[8:56:37 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[8:56:41 PM] Zoop: Zoop leaps behind a couch.

[8:56:44 PM] Ambrosia: Zoop...

[8:56:48 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You mean... that?

[8:56:53 PM] Luminescence: Yes.

[8:56:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: :O

[8:57:00 PM] Luminescence: There is no time like the present for a present.

[8:57:05 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[8:57:25 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister sneaks a kiss on Ambrosia.

Don't go anywhere! \*stumbles out of the kitchen and into his room\*

[8:57:30 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[8:57:35 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks at Luminescence...

[8:57:39 PM] Zoop: Zoop pokes his head out from behind the couch.

[8:57:43 PM] Ambrosia: What's he doing?

[8:57:48 PM] Ambrosia: :P

[8:58:07 PM] Luminescence: Something good. :)

[8:58:14 PM] Ambrosia: Well, I hope so...

[8:58:45 PM] Luminescence: He's going to pay me back.

[8:58:48 PM] Luminescence: Zoop was right.

[8:58:50 PM] Luminescence: (chuckle)

[8:58:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister returns wearing a suit, liberty blue vest, his gold pocket watch, and the feathered fedora with liberty blue band.

I have somewhere to take you.

[8:58:51 PM] Zoop: 5,000 bits.

[8:58:56 PM] Ambrosia: o\_o

[8:59:05 PM] Zoop: Wing is dumping Ambrosia for Lumi? D:

[8:59:07 PM] Ambrosia: Oh... Wow....

[8:59:10 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[8:59:14 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister glares at Zoop

[8:59:17 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks crazily at Zoop.

[8:59:18 PM] Zoop: Wing... what are you doing? :O

[8:59:19 PM] Ambrosia: Zoop!

[8:59:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister trots up to Amby and kisses her again.

[8:59:39 PM] Ambrosia: :\$

[8:59:40 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You came home at the perfect time.

[8:59:47 PM] Ambrosia: I .... I did? :D

[8:59:53 PM] Luminescence: Yes (sun)

[9:00:02 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods and pulls Amby close.

[9:00:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You've been all over Equestria right?

[9:00:17 PM] Ambrosia: Well... Yes... :D



[9:02:53 PM] Luminescence: Go! (sun)

[9:02:57 PM] Zoop: Zoop floats upward.

[9:03:06 PM] Luminescence: Yay!

[9:03:07 PM] Luminescence: =]

[9:03:13 PM] Luminescence: I'll be silent. :3

[9:03:19 PM] Zoop: how close should we get?

[9:03:22 PM] Ambrosia: A cloud... :O

[9:03:32 PM] Luminescence: ... Close enough to hear. But not be seen.

[9:03:37 PM] Luminescence: We can hide in a cloud.

[9:03:46 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:03:52 PM] Zoop: Aye, captain.

[9:03:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister settles his back into the cloud and relaxes, smiling as he stares up at Amby.

Just in time for the sunset.

[9:04:12 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares down at Wing and then back to the sunset...

[9:04:14 PM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[9:04:33 PM] Luminescence: (chuckle)

[9:04:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah?

[9:04:46 PM] Ambrosia: This is...

[9:04:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks around...

[9:04:55 PM] Zoop: so what is this about?

[9:05:03 PM] Ambrosia: It's beautiful. :\$

[9:05:12 PM] Luminescence: Romance, Zoop.

[9:05:21 PM] Luminescence: Can you see it? (sun)

[9:05:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: It wouldn't be me if I didn't say my view was better. \*stares right at her\*

[9:05:32 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares back...

[9:05:42 PM] Zoop: hm. I suppose love may well be in bloom.

[9:05:44 PM] Ambrosia: ... Really?

[9:05:52 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence grins.

[9:05:53 PM] Luminescence: Yes.

[9:05:54 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:06:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Of course.

[9:06:08 PM] Luminescence: I am not romantic, but I like this kind of thing. (sun)

[9:06:14 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[9:06:19 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks at Wing...

[9:06:31 PM] Ambrosia: My view is pretty good as well...

[9:06:38 PM] Ambrosia: :)

[9:06:51 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister blushes as his wings flare up.

o////o

[9:06:59 PM] Luminescence: Oh my. (sun)

[9:07:26 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia kisses Wing...

[9:07:46 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:07:48 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister holds the kiss as his muzzle gets even more flushed.

[9:08:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stares.

[9:08:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Remember, when I said I had another surprise?

[9:09:13 PM] Ambrosia: Yes... I do remember that... (think)

[9:09:37 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister reaches into his vest pocket and pulls out an envelope.

[9:10:08 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares...

[9:10:11 PM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[9:10:22 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Remember.... the first time we met... when you talked about opening your own restaurant?

[9:10:45 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[9:10:50 PM] Ambrosia: Wing... :O

[9:10:55 PM] Ambrosia: Yes... I ... I remember...

[9:11:33 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well... \*gulps\* I've been saving up ever since, and umm... I think I have saved up enough to be a worthwhile investor.

[9:11:54 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[9:11:56 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[9:11:58 PM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[9:12:22 PM] Ambrosia: You... You're... I.... :\$

[9:12:32 PM] Ambrosia: We... ....

[9:13:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I want you to have this for whatever your dream may be.

[9:13:37 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks away for a moment before looking back...

[9:13:49 PM] Zoop: besides... as it stands... if we don't interfere with these plans, perhaps we could get some manner of friend discount from whatever establishment they end up creating.

[9:13:59 PM] Ambrosia: Wing... This is... The nicest thing... That... Anypony... Ever... Has ever done for me...

[9:14:16 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs Wing and closes her eyes...

[9:14:22 PM] Ambrosia: T-thank you...

[9:14:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister wraps a leg around the mare and smiles.

[9:14:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You're welcome, Ambrosia.

[9:15:18 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:15:26 PM] Luminescence: Well.

[9:15:34 PM] Luminescence: It is a good thing that we didn't interrupt.

[9:15:40 PM] Luminescence: I like discounts.

[9:15:44 PM] Luminescence: I am a bit cheap.

[9:16:01 PM] Zoop: I am, of course, speaking in jest about all of this. I am happy for them, though I am perhaps minorly jealous of their happiness, and as such feel the need to poke at them a bit.

[9:16:11 PM] Zoop: Not that they'll ever know, of course, but still. (chuckle)

[9:16:16 PM] Luminescence: Hmmm. Yes... I can understand. (sun)

[9:16:29 PM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[9:16:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah?

[9:16:54 PM] Ambrosia: I think... I think I'm going to faint...

[9:17:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister slides the envelope back into his vest and holds the mare tightly.

[9:17:20 PM] Luminescence: I can help you improve your flying.

[9:17:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: No worries. I'm not letting go.

[9:17:56 PM] Ambrosia: Ok...

[9:18:05 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia tries to control her breathing...

[9:18:13 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia blinks...

[9:18:20 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia faints...

[9:18:24 PM] Zoop: I'm... afraid I tend to think more like an Earth pony than a pegasus in most cases. Probably due to my family. Flying is bloody useful, but... eh...

[9:18:33 PM] Luminescence: Oh... Then, you are like me?

[9:18:39 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister rubs Ambrosia's back lightly.

[9:18:39 PM] Luminescence: My parents were earth ponies.

[9:18:44 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:18:47 PM] Luminescence: I think she fainted.

[9:18:55 PM] Zoop: My entire family was. Not a single bloody unicorn or pega--- yeah, I think you're right.

[9:19:00 PM] Luminescence: -\_-

[9:19:05 PM] Luminescence: Well. That is discouraging.

[9:19:16 PM] Luminescence: But, she received the surprise first. (sun)

[9:19:24 PM] Luminescence: Also

[9:19:36 PM] Luminescence: Hmm...

[9:19:43 PM] Luminescence: Take me closer. ^\_^

[9:19:48 PM] Zoop: How close?

[9:19:51 PM] Luminescence: All the way.

[9:19:55 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:20:01 PM] Zoop: Should we offer to take her off his hooves and lower her down for him? (chuckle)

[9:20:07 PM] Luminescence: Maybe?

[9:20:13 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:20:18 PM] Luminescence: Or... Maybe not...

[9:20:20 PM] Luminescence: I am not sure.

[9:20:37 PM] Zoop: Zoop flies down alongside Wing, calling out "AHOY THERE, SAILOR. YOU APPEAR TO HAVE A WOUNDED SHIPMATE. DO YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE RETURNING HER TO SHORE?"

[9:20:49 PM] Luminescence: YES! SAILOR!!!

[9:20:51 PM] Luminescence: WE CAN HELP YOU!

[9:20:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister looks over.

[9:20:57 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o.O

[9:21:05 PM] Luminescence: OHAIWING.

[9:21:15 PM] Luminescence: We are sky pirates. :)

[9:21:19 PM] Luminescence: But, we are off duty.

[9:21:19 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:21:25 PM] Zoop: yar har har.

[9:21:28 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt grumbles as he wakes up, before going outside, looking around

[9:21:36 PM] Zoop: ye don't have anything worthy of plunder, do ye?

[9:21:41 PM] Luminescence: I think he does.

[9:21:42 PM] Electrobolt: Who's making all that noise???

[9:21:43 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:21:45 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think I'm fine. :)

[9:21:49 PM] Luminescence: Oh...

[9:21:51 PM] Luminescence: :3

[9:21:55 PM] Luminescence: Are you sure?

[9:21:56 PM] Luminescence: ^\_^

[9:21:58 PM] Zoop: hm.

[9:22:07 PM] Zoop: is it worth preparing a boarding party, Lumi? (think)

[9:22:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Besides... this is like the longest hug I've ever had. :P

[9:22:17 PM] Zoop: probably too dangerous (chuckle)

[9:22:22 PM] Luminescence: Yes... (chuckle)

[9:22:35 PM] Luminescence: And... Wing... Really? (sun)

[9:22:39 PM] Luminescence: That is nice.

[9:22:54 PM] Zoop: think it's time to go back down? I think we've seen all there is to see.

[9:23:01 PM] Luminescence: Yes. I agree. (sun)

[9:23:10 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence waves at Wing.

[9:23:16 PM] Zoop: Zoop waves cheerfully at Wing, before dropping out of the sky like a brick.

[9:23:24 PM] Zoop: Zoop catches himself in time to avoid cratering.

[9:23:27 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles

[9:23:28 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence grabs onto Zoop. o\_o

[9:23:37 PM] Luminescence: Meep.

[9:23:40 PM] Luminescence: o\_o

[9:23:51 PM] Zoop: Zoop lands directly in front of electro.

[9:24:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles Amby.

[9:24:54 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia weakly nuzzles Wing back...

[9:25:03 PM] Ambrosia: This isn't a dream?

[9:25:13 PM] Luminescence: Yes.

[9:25:18 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Nope, it's not a dream.

[9:26:21 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[9:26:38 PM] Ambrosia: Then it must be real...

[9:27:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yes, it's real. :)

[9:27:26 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[9:27:29 PM] Ambrosia: Then...

[9:27:37 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia kisses Wing...

[9:27:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o/////o

[9:27:55 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister returns the kiss.

[9:28:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia whispers into Wing's ear...

... Thank you... :)

[9:29:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You're welcome.

[9:29:29 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister stares.

[9:30:21 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares back. :)

[9:30:32 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o/////o

[9:30:41 PM] Zoop: Wing and Ambrosia.

[9:30:55 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I love you, Ambrosia. o///o

[9:31:25 PM] Ambrosia: Wing... I love you too. :)

[9:31:45 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and hugs.

[9:32:34 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think that was the best sunset I ever saw. :P And I didn't even look at the sun.

[9:32:44 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia giggles. (chuckle)

[9:32:47 PM] Ambrosia: No kidding? :D

[9:33:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: X3 You know me. Horrible lines for the win.

[9:33:24 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken exits his room and makes his way to the kitchen. (yawn)

9:33:30 PM] Ambrosia: That's ok... I don't mind... :P

[9:33:37 PM] Luminescence: AKITA!

[9:33:39 PM] Luminescence: COME OUTSIDE!

[9:33:41 PM] Luminescence: I NEED YOU!

[9:33:43 PM] Zoop: he's awake?

[9:33:43 PM] Luminescence: HELP!

[9:33:49 PM] Luminescence: No.

[9:33:52 PM] Zoop: wait, why are you calling for help?

[9:33:55 PM] Luminescence: But he is now.

[9:33:57 PM] Luminescence: (chuckle)

[9:34:04 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt winces at the shouts of Luminescence, as he tries to get cleaned off

[9:34:10 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken mutters to himself "What now.." and ambles outside :^)

[9:34:19 PM] Zoop: Zoop waves at Akita from the mud.

[9:34:20 PM] Luminescence: Hello akita-ken. How do you feel? (sun)

[9:34:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles.

So.. erm... what would you like to do now?

[9:34:25 PM] Electrobolt: Ugh... Mental note... Invest in earplugs...

[9:34:30 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence waves at akita-ken from the mud as well.

[9:34:31 PM] akita-ken: Absolutely smashing |-(

[9:34:35 PM] Luminescence: Excellent.

[9:35:08 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence grabs akita-ken's hoof, her horn starts to glow with crackling electricity, and mud slings into the sky towards Wing and Ambrosia.

[9:35:35 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[9:35:52 PM] Ambrosia: I guess that we should probably...

[9:35:57 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is hit by mud.

[9:36:00 PM] Ambrosia: .....

[9:36:01 PM] Ambrosia: What.

[9:36:09 PM] Zoop: O.o

[9:36:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: O.O

[9:36:18 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence watches from the ground as mud falls right on target.

[9:36:22 PM] Luminescence: SUCCESS

[9:36:22 PM] Zoop: Zoop ducks into the mud as low as he can go.

[9:36:24 PM] Zoop: oh god.

[9:36:27 PM] Zoop: I'm going to die.

[9:36:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister twitches.

[9:36:31 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence releases akita-ken's hoof :)

[9:36:40 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia is rained on by mud...

[9:36:42 PM] Ambrosia: Luminescence...

[9:36:43 PM] Zoop: this is all going to come back to me.

[9:36:50 PM] Zoop: Zoop shivers lightly.

[9:36:50 PM] Luminescence: How is your charge, akita-ken? (sun)

[9:36:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister spins over and holds Amby tightly.

[9:36:58 PM] Luminescence: I am energy efficient. :3

[9:37:01 PM] akita-ken: Was fine

[9:37:02 PM] Luminescence: I have been practicing.

[9:37:04 PM] akita-ken: Didn't really feel it

[9:37:08 PM] Luminescence: Excellent. (sun)

[9:37:19 PM] Luminescence: I learned how to use electricity a little when I recharged you. :3

[9:37:23 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt sighs as he gets cleaned off, before getting out a little while later and grabbing a nearby towel to dry off

[9:37:30 PM] Luminescence: Which is useful, because I do not have magic right now...

[9:37:38 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[9:37:40 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken looks bemusedly at mud-covered Ambrosia

[9:37:58 PM | Removed 9:38:04 PM] Luminescence: This message has been removed.

[9:38:00 PM] Zoop: Okay, I think perhaps we should go inside and get cleaned up.

[9:38:10 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken suppresses a chuckle

[9:38:11 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares down at akita-ken...

[9:38:16 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[9:38:17 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister tries to brush the mud from the mare.

[9:38:23 PM] Zoop: Zoop winces.

[9:38:27 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:38:30 PM] Zoop: it's going to come back to me. I know it.

[9:38:33 PM] Luminescence: I think we may be in trouble.

[9:38:37 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence waves.

[9:38:38 PM] Zoop: I think...

[9:38:40 PM] Luminescence: It was me. :)

[9:38:45 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Hey.. Ambrosia...

[9:38:50 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence yells out.

I DID IT!

[9:38:51 PM] Zoop: Zoop glances at Lumi.

[9:38:57 PM] Zoop: are you insane? D:

[9:39:00 PM] Ambrosia: Yes, Wing? (think)

[9:39:07 PM] Luminescence: No.

[9:39:08 PM] Luminescence: :3

[9:39:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Remember when you asked me if Trigger would protect you?

[9:39:18 PM] Luminescence: I don't want them to think that akita-ken did it?

[9:39:24 PM] Ambrosia: Yes... I remember that?

[9:39:26 PM] Zoop: we should have blamed the ursa minor that lives in the sewer.

[9:39:26 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken cracks a small smirk "Glad to be of assistance", before ambling back to the kitchen

[9:39:30 PM] Zoop: ...

[9:39:34 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:39:36 PM] Luminescence: Wait.

[9:39:38 PM] akita-ken: Guess that's what you get for making out on a cloud (chuckle)

[9:39:38 PM] Luminescence: Akita D:

[9:39:41 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:39:45 PM] Luminescence: (chuckle)

[9:39:46 PM] Luminescence: Yes...

[9:39:47 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Would you like to see the result? ;)

[9:39:52 PM] Zoop: Lumi. get on my back?

[9:39:54 PM] Zoop: we may need to flee.

[9:39:58 PM] Luminescence: But. Wait.

[9:40:01 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:40:02 PM] Luminescence: Or no...

[9:40:07 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm.

[9:40:11 PM] Zoop: I, at least, don't want to die.

[9:40:13 PM] Ambrosia: Yes, actually... I would.

[9:40:16 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:40:20 PM] Zoop: (worry)

[9:40:22 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence jumps on Zoop's back!

[9:40:28 PM] Luminescence: Time to go!!!!

[9:40:30 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister descends extremely quickly

[9:40:34 PM] Luminescence: o\_o

[9:40:35 PM] Zoop: Zoop flees across the countryside in self-preservation fueled terror.

[9:40:35 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister clutching the mare tightly.

[9:40:43 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence waves!!!

[9:40:46 PM] Luminescence: Byyyyyyyyyy!!!

[9:40:54 PM] Ambrosia: Oh goodness...

[9:40:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister lands and rolls up his sleeves

[9:41:03 PM] Ambrosia: Luminescence!!!!

[9:41:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister grabs a wad of mud.

[9:41:14 PM] Luminescence: Hehehehe!

[9:41:15 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister chucks it at the fleeing party as hard as he can.

[9:41:17 PM] Zoop: Zoop leaps across a dramatically placed canyon.

[9:41:22 PM] Luminescence: ....

[9:41:25 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence turns around.

[9:41:26 PM] Electrobolt: They better not shout again...

[9:41:28 PM] Luminescence: Ummmmmmmm.....

[9:41:29 PM] Luminescence: Zoop.

[9:41:34 PM] Zoop: Zoop doesn't quite make it.

[9:41:39 PM] Zoop: yes?

[9:41:48 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence is hit by mudball going at sonic speed.

[9:41:54 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence frowns dramatically.

[9:41:56 PM] Zoop: D:

[9:42:02 PM] Luminescence: I'm going to need a bath.

[9:42:05 PM] Luminescence: x\_x

[9:42:12 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Hmm... my elevation was off.

[9:42:15 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia laughs wildly. :D

[9:42:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister throws another at Zoop.

[9:42:24 PM] Zoop: Zoop dodges behind a large rock.

[9:42:27 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt lowers his head to the pillow and drifts back to sleep

[9:42:39 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence waves hooves around.

[9:42:39 PM] Zoop: Zoop pulls Lumi behind it with him.

[9:42:49 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence is pulled behind the rock.

[9:42:51 PM] Zoop: This rock is surrounded by bushes.

[9:42:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I think those had some electric action too...

[9:42:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: which means....

[9:42:55 PM] Zoop: it has a high cover rating.

[9:42:56 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[9:42:58 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister glares at Akita.

[9:43:08 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hurls mudball at him.

[9:43:10 PM] Zoop: in a moment or two we'll be invisible to them until somepony is able to act as a spotter.

[9:43:19 PM] Zoop: this makes sense, yes? (drunk)

[9:43:23 PM] Luminescence: Just like the tanks game? (chuckle)

[9:43:27 PM] Luminescence: Yes, it makes sense.

[9:43:30 PM] Luminescence: I play it too.

[9:43:49 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister trots up to Ambrosia and kisses her.

Now then... I'm more of the brawling type. Shall I just go in and shotgun the hidiers?

[9:43:59 PM] Ambrosia: Yes, I don't see why not. :P

[9:44:20 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken is hit in the flank by mudball

[9:44:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister grabs a stack of mudballs and darts across the dramatically placed canyon.

[9:44:24 PM] akita-ken: What the.. HEY

[9:44:27 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:44:28 PM] akita-ken: D : <

[9:44:38 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence rolls on the ground laughing at akita-ken.

[9:44:47 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence ducks back behind rock.

[9:44:48 PM] Luminescence: Oops.

[9:44:52 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister flies over the rock and delivers DFA

[9:44:55 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[9:44:58 PM] Luminescence: D:

[9:45:03 PM] Luminescence: AHHHH!!!!

[9:45:07 PM] akita-ken: It wasn't my fault! > : (

[9:45:08 PM] Zoop: Zoop leaps over Lumi.

[9:45:12 PM] Zoop: Zoop takes all of the mud. ;\_;

[9:45:21 PM] Zoop: Zoop falls to the ground.

[9:45:23 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence shields eyes! x\_X

[9:45:26 PM] Zoop: Zoop weakly lifts a single hoof to the air.

[9:45:32 PM] Luminescence: D:

[9:45:35 PM] Zoop: d...on't.... for...get me...

[9:45:37 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smirks and flies back to Ambrosia.

[9:45:53 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia chuckles. (chuckle)

[9:46:08 PM] Ambrosia: You know what? I don't mind being covered in mud now. :P

[9:46:12 PM] Ambrosia: That was fun. :D

[9:46:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles Amby.

hehe.

[9:47:01 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nuzzles back.

[9:47:16 PM] Starshine: You two, go get a room. eww

[9:47:19 PM] Ambrosia: ...

[9:47:20 PM] Ambrosia: :|

[9:47:24 PM] Starshine: Starshine belches

[9:47:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o.o

[9:47:30 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia throws mud at Star.

[9:47:35 PM] Starshine: Mares are disgusting when up close that personal

[9:47:37 PM] Starshine: Hey D:

[9:47:39 PM] Ambrosia: We already have one. ;)

[9:47:51 PM] Ambrosia: You'll learn more when you get older. :)

[9:47:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: And you were in it all evening.

[9:47:59 PM] Ambrosia: :P

[9:48:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: It is my lab after all.

[9:48:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Honestly.

[9:48:27 PM] akita-ken: Your 'lab', right// (smirk)

[9:48:38 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister points at the building.

[9:48:41 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well, that is.

[9:48:42 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks coolly at akita-ken.

[9:48:49 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm?

[9:49:27 PM] akita-ken: Well, have fun doing your 'experiments' in it (chuckle)

[9:49:34 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken goes back in to clean off the mud

[9:49:36 PM] akita-ken: :|

[9:49:39 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia raises an eyebrow...

[9:49:43 PM] Ambrosia: Oh, akita-ken~

[9:49:44 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o.O

[9:49:52 PM] Ambrosia: One moment...

[9:50:02 PM] Ambrosia: Could you come back out, please~

[9:50:07 PM] Starshine: Bah. Ain't working

[9:50:19 PM] Luminescence: Oh my...

[9:50:26 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken turns around

[9:50:28 PM] Luminescence: What can we try now?

[9:50:29 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken steps out for a bit

[9:50:37 PM] Starshine: Starshine rolls his eyes at Ambrosia

[9:50:38 PM] Ambrosia: Come a bit closer~

[9:50:44 PM] Starshine: Just go in there and make some babies

[9:50:56 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken takes a few more cautious steps..

[9:50:59 PM] akita-ken: What's happening..?

[9:51:08 PM] Ambrosia: Well. I may need your help?

[9:51:20 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia points at Zoop and Luminescence.

[9:51:33 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt groans as he opens his eyes, beginning to walk out of his room and outside the building

[9:51:45 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken looks

[9:51:48 PM] akita-ken: Well, what 'bout them?

[9:52:10 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia quickly starts kicking mud all over akita-ken.

[9:52:18 PM] Ambrosia: Nothing!

[9:52:20 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[9:52:26 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt opens the door, a tired look on his face

[9:52:36 PM] Electrobolt: Who was it that shouted this time...?

[9:52:49 PM] akita-ken: Why you... :^)

[9:52:50 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: O.O

[9:53:01 PM] Ambrosia: What's wrong? (smirk)

[9:53:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Just got schooled.

[9:53:31 PM] Ambrosia: Mhm.

[9:53:33 PM] Electrobolt: Wing... Do you have any earplugs I could use...?

[9:53:56 PM] Electrobolt: I'm tired of all of this shouting and hollering keeping me awake...

[9:53:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Flip the third switch on the wall Bolty. Noise cancellers :P

[9:54:05 PM] Electrobolt: Ah, thanks Wing

[9:54:18 PM] Ambrosia: :3

[9:54:23 PM | Edited 9:54:25 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt waves at Wing and Ambrosia before closing the door, returning to his room

[9:54:39 PM] akita-ken: akita-ken wipes mud off face and goes back in with a deadpan expression :|

[9:55:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smirks and holds out his hoof to Amby.

Perhaps we should go inside so I can give you this envelope in a more serene environment.

[9:55:24 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks around...

[9:55:27 PM] Ambrosia: Ummmm. Yeah. :D

[9:55:45 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister escorts the mare inside.

[9:56:01 PM] Starshine: Starshine whistles loudly at Wing and Ambrosia

[9:56:02 PM] Luminescence: Luminescence stares at Zoop.

[9:56:03 PM] Zoop: but... dead? nah.

[9:56:09 PM] Electrobolt: Electrobolt gets into his room and shuts the door behind him, locking it before flipping the third switch as Wing told him, then climbing back in bed

[9:56:09 PM] Zoop: it was for dramatic effect (sun)

[9:56:11 PM] Starshine: Go make a bunch of babies!!

[9:56:19 PM] Zoop: 0.o

[9:56:23 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia glares at Starshine.

[9:56:31 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia follows Wing inside.

[9:56:33 PM | Edited 9:56:38 PM] Starshine: Starshine rolls on the floor laughing

[9:56:39 PM] Luminescence: (sun)

[9:56:40 PM] Zoop: Star... Ambrosia isn't a factory.

[9:56:44 PM] Luminescence: ...

[9:57:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: What a moron. \*sighs\* Well then, my dear. \*hooves over envelope\* I believe this belongs to you.

[9:58:16 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes the envelope, being careful not to get it covered in mud.

[9:59:01 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia opens the envelope.

[9:59:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles.

It's a check inside, so ... I guess there isn't as much to worry about. :)

[10:00:07 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia pulls out the check and stares.

[10:01:35 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia stares.

[10:01:41 PM] Ambrosia: Wiiiing...

[10:01:47 PM] Ambrosia: That is... a lot of bits. :O

[10:02:18 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well... it's worth it for you, Amby. o//o

[10:03:12 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia faints again...

[10:03:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister catches.

[10:03:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Oh dear...

[10:03:41 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles Ambrosia gently.

*Out like a light...*

## **Chapter Eight – Two Moons**

### **Ambrosia has a message for you**

[7:29:49 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: oh?

[7:29:55 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs.

[7:30:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: ^-^ \*hugs back\*

[7:30:35 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister whispers: you smell like cinnamon :3

[7:37:20 PM] Ambrosia whispers back.

Well... I haven't been baking, but I bet that I always smell like cinnamon. (chuckle)

[7:37:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hugs tighter.

That's not a bad thing. In fact, well ... I find it quite pleasant.

[7:38:57 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles and nuzzles Wing gently.

[7:39:14 PM] Ambrosia: So, today is the day? Two months later, I think? : )

[7:40:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles back and nods before losing himself in a stare.

Umm... \*jolts and looks around\* I have something for you.

[7:41:17 PM] Ambrosia: You do? ^^;

[7:41:59 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Of course I do. What kind of coltfriend would I be if I didn't have something planned? X3

[7:43:42 PM] Ambrosia: Well... You'd be my coltfriend, no matter what. : )

[7:44:02 PM] Ambrosia: With or without plans, you're still Wing. (chuckle)

[7:44:13 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o/////o Oh my.

[7:45:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You are a lot better at line delivery than I am. \*chuckles\*

[7:46:25 PM | Edited 7:46:36 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Though... in this case... I really did get something for you, but you're going to have to close your eyes first. I find them way too addicting, and I'll get lost in them over and over again. X3

[7:46:47 PM] Ambrosia: And, you said that I was better. Mhm. : )

[7:46:51 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia closes eyes.

[7:46:59 PM] Ambrosia: Alright, then : P

[7:48:42 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister grins and ducks down, gently lifting Amby's forehooves over his shoulders before pushing them both up onto their hind legs and delivering a tender kiss.

[7:50:18 PM] Ambrosia: :\$

[7:50:37 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs Wing tightly

[7:51:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smirks.

That wasn't the surprise though. X3 That was me engaging in theft.

[7:52:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Left or right?

[7:52:47 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm

[7:52:49 PM] Ambrosia: Left

[7:54:57 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and shuffles a little so he can turn his body and take hold of her left foreleg. Slides a purple jade bracelet adorned with gold and amethyst over the hoof and lets it set into place.

That's the surprise.

[7:55:45 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia opens eyes and stares

[7:56:02 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[7:56:04 PM] Ambrosia: W-w-wing...

[7:56:23 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Happy two months, Ambrosia.

[7:57:55 PM] Ambrosia: T-thank you. :\$

[7:58:12 PM] Ambrosia: I... You...

[7:58:30 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks down and then looks back up again

[7:58:45 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia starts to cry softly...

[7:59:34 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister leans back in and kisses the tears away.

Now, why in Equestria is my flower crying?

[8:00:35 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia sniffles a bit

[8:00:39 PM] Ambrosia: I don't know...

[8:01:20 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister chuckles and hugs her tightly, a grin slowly emerging on his face.

You can feel my thigh if it'll make you feel better. X3

[8:02:41 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles and laughs softly but cheerfully (chuckle)

[8:03:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: That's my marefriend. :)

[8:04:15 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia pokes Wing

[8:04:31 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing : )

[8:05:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You're welcome, Amby; but in all honesty, I still owe you a lot of thank you's.

[8:05:23 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia blinks :O

[8:05:26 PM] Ambrosia: You... You do?

[8:05:42 PM] Ambrosia: But... For what, Wing? ...

[8:06:56 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Because I'm the stallion who gets to love best pony.

[8:08:36 PM] Ambrosia: Me? :\$

[8:09:04 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Absolutely.

[8:12:54 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: And I'll probably owe you another one in about a minute.  
X3

[8:13:04 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia blinks

[8:13:15 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[8:13:22 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, I disagree with you... (chuckle)

[8:13:28 PM] Ambrosia: I think that you are best pony...

[8:13:38 PM] Ambrosia: And, I should thank you : )

[8:13:46 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister pomfs.

Wh-what?

[8:13:57 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: o////////o

[8:14:41 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[8:14:50 PM] Ambrosia: You heard me... I can tell. :D

[8:15:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister gets really flushed and tries to tuck his wings, failing miserably.

[8:16:08 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Oh dear...

[8:18:11 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[8:18:15 PM] Ambrosia: Mhm. : P

[8:19:26 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Well.... erm... no pony has ever told me that before. It was a bit shocking. \*smiles\*

[8:19:38 PM] Ambrosia: Well...

[8:19:44 PM] Ambrosia: I believe it.

[8:21:21 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister twitches and blushes.

Well, these bad colts aren't going anywhere any time soon. \*leans in for a kiss\*

[8:21:45 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia leans forward and gives Wing a kiss.

[8:22:29 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Still tastes like cinnamon. (inlove)

[8:22:57 PM] Ambrosia: : )

[8:24:16 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I'll again offer my apologies in advance, but... it's just too tempting not to... \*gives a quick ear nibble\*

[8:27:25 PM] Ambrosia: That's fine, Wing, but just don't bite too badly (chuckle)

[8:27:35 PM] Ambrosia: I have sensitive ears : P

[8:27:52 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia suddenly freezes and blinks a few times

[8:27:57 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmm

[8:28:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Something wrong, my dear?

[8:28:42 PM] Ambrosia: Well... Luminescence has been... Sharing a few things with me. : (

[8:29:15 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Oh? What did she share?

[8:31:01 PM] Ambrosia: She said that... Keystone is a bit upset at me.

[8:32:41 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Yeah... he's still... flankhurt I guess.

[8:32:56 PM] Ambrosia: I think that I should apologize to him.

[8:33:22 PM] Ambrosia: I am just a little afraid, because... Well. Wing, I'm not proud of how I acted. I made a mistake..

[8:33:27 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks down...

[8:35:09 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister lifts Amby's muzzle up and smiles softly.

If that's what you want to do, then I'll be standing right beside you. And if he's still upset after you make an effort, then those are his sour grapes.

[8:36:52 PM] Ambrosia: Alright... I will try... Tomorrow, maybe.

[8:37:07 PM] Ambrosia: Luminescence just told me today. She was rather blunt, actually.

[8:37:20 PM] Ambrosia: Even more than she would normally be.

[8:37:39 PM] Ambrosia: I guess I may have known already...

[8:37:43 PM] Ambrosia: I just didn't really know...

[8:37:53 PM] Ambrosia: It would have been silly to apologize and he wasn't upset

[8:38:18 PM] Ambrosia: I mean... I think I already apologized... But... It may not have seemed like a real apology.

[8:38:28 PM] Ambrosia: I just... I don't know... I am... Well...

[8:38:34 PM] Ambrosia: I'm not used to making other ponies that upset at me...

[8:38:47 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hugs tightly.

[8:38:52 PM] Ambrosia: I thought I was a good pony, and... Maybe that was the problem?

[8:39:05 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Ambrosia...

[8:39:12 PM] Ambrosia: Yes, Wing?

[8:39:18 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You're a wonderful pony.

[8:39:33 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles...

[8:40:01 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Even best pony can make mistakes. It takes a good, wonderful, amazing pony to want to do something about them.

[8:40:19 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing...

[8:40:33 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia yawns...

[8:40:49 PM] Ambrosia: Definitely not tonight, though, but I will find him tomorrow. : )

[8:41:19 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and nuzzles.

And I will be there for you.

[8:41:30 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs Wing : )

[8:42:11 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: You give.... the best hugs, by the way.

[8:44:50 PM] Ambrosia: Well... I hope it works on Keystone... He is one of the few friends that Luminescence has... Well... She doesn't let that many get close to her. She was upset that he was upset... I think that this is a mess... Well. It will be fixed tomorrow.

[8:46:34 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nods and smiles.

[8:48:53 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: I have full confidence in the Ambyhug. X3

[8:50:04 PM] Ambrosia: Alright : )

[8:50:32 PM] Ambrosia: I was just... Well... I was ashamed to think that I pushed another pony so far that they thought about hitting me...

[8:50:45 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks down...

[8:50:50 PM] Ambrosia: I didn't even know that I could do that.

[8:52:24 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister exhales slowly and starts rubbing Amby's back.

[8:53:02 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia shivers a bit

[8:54:03 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister nuzzles as he continues the back rub.

I will always be your shield.

[9:00:17 PM] Ambrosia: Alright : )

[9:00:28 PM] Ambrosia: Well... I think I should probably get some sleep.

[9:01:02 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Is that so my dear?

[9:01:30 PM] Ambrosia: Yes : )

[9:02:29 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister floats onto his back and smirks.

Well you know my coat is all yours. X3 I was hoping to drop in another surprise, but I guess it will have to wait. :P

[9:03:05 PM] Ambrosia: : )

[9:03:15 PM] Ambrosia: There is always tomorrow... : )

[9:03:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia yawns again and then lies down

[9:04:10 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister hugs tightly and kisses.

Good night Ambrosia. Sweet dreams.

[9:04:42 PM] Ambrosia: Good night, Wing...

[9:04:51 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia falls fast asleep...

[9:05:37 PM] Wing T.F. McCallister: Wing T.F. McCallister smiles and brushes lightly. Nighty night.

## Chapter Nine – A Restaurant in Las Pegasus

**Ambrosia:** She was awake significantly before sunrise, and her head was filled with thoughts. Her heart was filled with hope. Her memory was flooded with the events of the previous day. The memories were fresh, vivid - as though they had just occurred. She closed her eyes and attempted to go back to sleep, but the damage was already done. It would be impossible to get any more sleep. The day would soon stop, and her internal clock was hard to override.

She inwardly sighed, but sleeplessness wasn't a new problem for her. At least, this time, she had managed some sleep. Her dreams, she was certain, had been remarkably pleasant. Softly, silently she rolled out of bed and went to the washroom to splash some water on her face and get her day started. The cold water felt refreshing. She didn't bother drying it off. Instead, she studied her reflection in the mirror.

The pony that Ambrosia saw in the mirror looked just like the pony that she had always seen in

the mirror. It was her, undoubtedly, but something was different. She shook her head gently and reached for a towel. It was too early for contemplative thinking. She dried her face off carefully, and then did her best to tidy up her mane and tail. She wasn't a vain pony, but she was at least somewhat appearance conscious.

It took her longer than normal to finish her morning routine, but thankfully, the sun still hadn't risen. She was hoping that she would be able to catch it. Whenever she awoke early and had a busy day ahead, she liked to catch the sunrise, alone, to steady her thoughts. She peeked out of one of the windows in the kitchen and smiled. It would be a beautiful day today.

Normally, she would have ventured to cook something, but her heart yearned to get outside and experience the day. So, she settled for some pieces of bread and an apple, which she stuffed hurriedly into a saddlebag along with some napkins. She would need to eat as she went. Without her really even noticing the transition, her thoughts had moved on to getting things done. The haze had cleared, somewhat.

It was probably the impact of the food. The apple, specifically, it was such a pretty red thing. The moment that she had pulled it out and placed it into her saddlebag, her thoughts had cleared and a cheery grin had appeared on her face. Ambrosia was a cook, but even more than this, she was a pony that loved food. Handling the apple had caused her to think about the restaurant that she had been entrusted to start.

The moment that her thoughts centered on this, a list of things to do began to take shape in her head. It would be exciting, but she would need to get a lot of things in a short amount of time. She found a pencil and some paper. First, she wrote a note for herself. She needed a list of what she was going to get done that morning. She thought about this for a moment.

It would be a busy day, but there wasn't a lot of things to do. Instead, she just had a few important things that she needed to focus on. She needed to resign from her position as a train's cook. Her dream had always been to own a restaurant. If she was serious about her dream, then she could no longer drift between cities as a train's cook, and even more than this... Wing was a pony that was worth settling down for. His trust was almost supernatural. It was no small statement to say that she had never met a pony quite like this one.

Her eyes sparkled as she added her resignation to the list. Far from being sad, she was overflowing with glee. For years, she had figured that being a cook on a train was the best she would ever be able to do with her life. Now, she was free. It was an interesting feeling. The freedom of being able to travel would now be replaced with what was really the ultimate freedom - the freedom to control her own destiny.

The next few items that she added were less grandiose. A trip to the market was added to the list. It had only taken her a quick glance around the kitchen to see that they were running low

on a few critical ingredients - notably cinnamon. There was never enough cinnamon. She would stop by the market on her way back from the train station. The next step would be to find a library. She quickly added that to the list.

The last thing, for now, would be to actually read about owning a restaurant. While it was something that she had always wanted to do, it was not something that she had ever really thought in depth about. Who could have blamed her? It had been a dream, just a hazy point on the horizon, and one that she might have never reached. Now, she was there. The dream was a reality, and she immediately realized just how little she knew.

Her list was finished. The next note that she wrote was a note for Wing and anypony else that might have come looking for her. On it, she mentioned that she would be taking care of a few things around town. Anypony looking for her would be able to find her at the library in the afternoon. She would be back home, probably, in the evening of the day. She left that note on the table. Right below it, she left another note, this one for Wing. It thanked him, again, reminded him not to miss a meal, and said that she loved him.

After that, she took her own list, the pencil, and some paper. She added them to the saddlebag, and she left the house. The train station was the first stop. It was a good distance away, but she didn't mind. She had left the house just in time to see the start of the sunrise. The day was beautiful. There were just a few wisps of clouds; just enough to be picturesque without marring the sunny day. The local weather team had an excellent sense for beauty, she thought to herself.

While Las Pegasus was a large city, the train station was on the outskirts of the city. Just like the area around her home, it was helpfully distant from the hustle and bustle of the area closer to the city's center. Since it was still early in the day, she was able to get into the station, write a short letter of resignation, and turn it in without much fuss. No pony seemed to mind the suddenness, though there were some raised eyebrows.

A few ponies that she had known from her time working for the railroad seemed concerned, and they asked what had happened. Each time, she told them the same story. She was in love. Her colt friend trusted her enough to have pledged bits towards her opening a restaurant. The reactions were varied. Some ponies just knew that she was crazy. Others knew that her colt friend was crazy. She was careful to not give away exactly who her colt friend was. Despite being social, Ambrosia was a private pony.

She walked through the train station. It wasn't on her list, but she felt like doing it. It still wasn't very crowded. She nodded to a few familiar faces. Her hooves froze when she saw a familiar train. It was her train. It would always be her train, even though she had been assigned to another some time ago. Vim, the conductor of the Las Pegasus Express, had been like a father to her both during her time onboard his train and afterwards. Springer, the

assistant conductor, had been like an older brother, an admittedly strange one.

Her breath caught in her throat and she took a few steps back. She couldn't tell them now. She hadn't told either of them anything about Wing. Now, with the suddenness of her resignation, what could she say to them? They would all see each other less now. She shook her head. If she had known that this train would be in, then she would have never walked in this direction. She wasn't quite ready for this yet. Her hooves backpedaled without another thought. Today was a happy day. She didn't want to deal with any sadness.

She left the train station. The next stop was the market. She preferred to go to the smaller market near home. The food was often just slightly fresher than that from the big market in town, and it took less time for her to find what she was looking for. She was in the market and out again within just a half hour. The sun was hanging beautifully in the sky.

She stopped, just outside of the market, to finally eat her breakfast. She smiled. It was hypocritical, she was always telling others to not miss meals but she herself missed them all of the time. She took her time and savored the simple food. The bread was fresh, and the apple was delicious... Especially with the cinnamon that she sprinkled on it. Sometimes, she thought, simple was better.

With her meal completed, she made her way towards where she was certain a library would be. It was the only part of town that she hadn't yet visited. Along the way, she passed a pool, there were a few ponies there. She also passed a park, and she hesitated for a moment. It was tempting to wander around the green expanses, but she was more curious about what she would find in the library. She could easily visit the park on her return journey. She passed their home.

It didn't take long to find the library. It was a relatively unassuming building, but it was clearly marked with a friendly blue sign. She was surprised when she first saw it, the building was a bit larger than she expected. She opened the door, waved to a pony that she assumed to be a librarian, and then immediately wandered into the bookshelves. Ambrosia knew well enough how to find a book in a library, but it always took her a few moments to get acquainted with the layout.

Probably looking like a lost pony for a few moments, she walked aimlessly around the shelves. Finally, she started to find what she was looking for. She found a book on creating a menu for a restaurant. She was a bit disturbed that it existed. Was there really a need for a whole book about one thing? She found what looked to be an ancient tome that claimed to cover the "nuts and bolts" of restaurant ownership. A third book was a quick reference to operating a restaurant.

She settled down at a table. She was frowning. Just looking at the three books that she was

found was already enough to make her feel somewhat intimidated. She wondered what restaurant operations even consisted of. Why were nuts \*and\* bolts important? It seemed to her that cooking should have only been about the first one, and bolts should have nothing to do with it.

With a deep breath, she chose to open the older book first. It was a bad choice. The book really was about the nuts and bolts of restaurant ownership. The table of contents looked like some nightmarish perversion of organization. Every chapter had subchapters, every subchapter had subsubchapters. In fact, it went on for several levels of complexity. Her eyes went wide and her mouth dropped open with a breathless panic.

**Keystone:** Beneath a large, thick tree, in the midst of an expansive and obnoxiously green park, there slept a pink pegasus pony. Kept warm by the gentle heat of the midsummer sun, but cool enough to be comfortable by the shade provided by the branches and leaves overhead, the pony lay peacefully, curled up not unlike a bored cat, with a book sitting, still open but now forgotten at his side.

The pony, a lithe, beautiful, exceedingly adorable, delightfully pink, and - most importantly - deliciously modest pegasus by the name of Keystone hadn't originally planned on coming out to the park for the sake of a nap; rather, he had decided that a quiet morning alone with a book would be the perfect way to follow up on the excitement of the previous night... but, as it had turned out, the previous night's events had apparently kept him up late enough that his comfortable little place in the park had been more than enough to lure him to sleep.

It had been a fun little evening, though some parts had played out a little too much like a bad romance novel for Keystone's liking (he would, as a matter of course, deny having any knowledge of what actually *did* go on in bad romance novels), but all in all he had enjoyed it. It wasn't often that one had a chance to throw mud at Ambrosia - playfully, of course - and walk away with each of your limbs intact, after all.

And thus, Keystone slept the early afternoon away, tail twitching occasionally, and mumbling about ponies with cat ears, wrenches, and murder.

**Wing:** The sun had long since risen by the time Wing rolled out of bed. While Ambrosia was more than capable of getting herself up for the solace of the sunrise, he had only occasionally

been touched by that particular brand of light. Groggily, the stallion slipped from the covers and dragged a hoof over his eyes. He noticed that she had long since departed, and was not surprised in the slightest. He figured that there was a lot on her mind, and even more that had to be done. After all, he had surprised her with the chance at a fresh start -- if she wanted to take it, of course.

He trotted into the kitchen slowly and looked around, taking particular note of the barrenness of his cupboards. "I need more cinnamon," he stated bluntly before a small grin perked up a corner of his lips. His gaze finally fell upon the table where two notes waited to fall victim to his curiosity -- or perhaps it was the other way around. He read through them, chuckling at her demand for him to remember to eat. He was quite horrible at it, having a knack for missing breakfast on a reliable basis. It was the last words, however, that touched him the most.

Wing ran one of his forehooves over the three little words, awestruck by how a trio of puny syllables could carry the weight of the world - and easily brighten and transform his day. "I love you too, Amby," he whispered to the empty house, knowing already that the day would be long and brutal before he could see her again. Science was calling; other ponies needed him, and there were things to be done. He would meet her at the library later, perhaps pick up some flowers from the park along the way, and have a glorious evening with his fantastic marefriend.

Unfortunately, the universe had the habit of playing cruel tricks on the stallion. After making it to his laboratory, he sat at his desk trying to focus, but finding that his thoughts wandered continuously to her. How was he supposed to think about a fundamental theory of magic, or how a particle behaved, or what the parton distribution functions of the proton were when such a much more beautiful and practical subject presented itself to his mind? She had swept him off his hooves without breaking a sweat, but more importantly, she had saved him.

Just thinking about how things had been made him shudder. He had gone through a lot, lost a bunch of friends, and thought he was losing his mind when she showed up - a stranger out of the blue. Well, not quite a stranger, thanks to a certain Blue mare, but still ... Ambrosia gave him cinnamon cookies and lifted his spirits when no other pony could. She opened up to him, and he opened up to her. There was no turning back at that point. He had made up his mind when they said their first goodbyes at the train station that he would fight with everything he had to see her again, and now...

His colleagues looked at Wing as though the physicist had lost his marbles. What had he done? What had he said? He was in a meeting after all, babbling about some stupid bug in code that made his age seem foolish. When the question came about what flowers had to do with particle propagation software, Wing's muzzle flushed and he promptly buried it beneath a hoof. At least none of his bosses were present for this particular meeting. "Sorry guys," he answered. "I am a bit distracted with other matters that have a bit more to do with chemistry than physics."

Wing dismissed himself from the meeting and trotted back to his desk. His heart was burdened by the desire to get the heck out of the office, and his stomach sank over that embarrassing debacle -- and growled over the fact that he had still neglected to eat anything of value. Ambrosia's note flashed through his thoughts, and the stallion promptly plucked an apple from his liberty blue saddlebag. "Almost forgot," he spoke, munching down on the delicious fruit as younger, student ponies galloped by.

The rest of the day was not as agonizing as he assumed it would be. Graduate students asked him questions about various things, all of which would probably make his beloved wonder how in Celestia's name he put up with it. She was certainly not a physicist pony, and the thought made him reflect upon opinions of herself that Amby had long ago presented. She was smart to him regardless, not in the same way he was, but Wing believed that everypony excelled at something.

He wondered how she was doing at the library, and his eyes quickly glanced at his desk clock. He could escape the lab soon if he wanted -- and if no other pony came after him with work related business. The stallion would not give them the opportunity. Wing pushed up from his chair, threw his bag over his back, waved farewell to a few of his closest coworkers, and trotted out the door.

The afternoon sun was refreshing, and the manner in which the breeze tugged at his mane made Wing feel guilty that Ambrosia was spending such a beautiful moment trapped in stacks of books. He knew she had research to do and things that had to be done if she wanted her dreams to come true. She was changing a lot of aspects about her life, and he was the luckiest stallion in Equestria to have her settle down with him. No matter the things they had done for one another in the past; he had to do something special for her now.

He took in a deep breath, raking in the scent of the laboratory grounds before bursting into a full gallop. He would swing by the park first and look for something - anything he could give her to brighten up her day. Las Pegasus rushed by the stallion as he bolted through town. He would head to the park with the flower garden where - once upon a time - he had taken the mare on a date.

Having reached his destination, he scoured the fields for the perfect flower and ran about like a madcolt. For a brief moment, he wondered what in Equestria he must have looked like to any onlooker, but he shoved the thought into the back of his mind and continued his noble quest.

He was working up a sweat as he continued the rapid pace until he froze mid-stride. Something pulled at him. Profound feelings of a dichotomic nature yanked his heartstrings of sorrow and love. His left forehoof was still hanging in the air as he stared straight ahead over the colorful expanse. Nature was telling him to look down. Words tied to lingering anamneses. *"If you pick a*

*flower, you know you should always keep it... I realized that a wildflower is still a flower. Ragweed may just be a common weed, but... It's still beautiful... Just like any other flower..."*

Wing's muzzle slowly lowered until he was peering right at his still-suspended hoof. It hovered inches above the ground, and the stallion gulped as though he were caught in some awe-inspiring moment. He gradually moved his limb to the side, revealing the vibrant petals of an ambrosia blossom that had been waiting for him. He leaned over and bit the stem, plucking the beautiful purple starburst and gently setting it in his saddlebag. "I'll always keep you," he whispered to the wind, "and I'll be there soon."

**Springsteps:** "Twinkle twinkle little stars, how I wonder what you are~"

Springsteps was trotting alongside a humongously large public pool, humming nursery rhymes to herself. She had no idea that Las Pegasus had this kind of pool, nor how could she ended up here, but she was too busy trying to remember the rest of the song to worry about it. Her face scrunched.

"Up above the sky... nana. Na na nina nana ni!" Her hooves bounced in excitement. She didn't have to remember the lyrics to sing along! She continued singing the word 'ni' in random intervals and discordant notes as she slowly forgot what she was originally singing. Near the edge of the pool, she abruptly stopped and raised a hoof in salute to somepony who wasn't there. "Ni!" she exclaimed.

Springsteps looked down. The water was very clear, she could almost see her own reflection on the water. Slightly amazed by the sparkly water, she tentatively dipped a forehoof into the pool. With a giggle she swirled around the hoof in the water. It's so cool and clean! Usually large bodies of water she saw was either too deep or too dirty for her to see the bottom, but this one was different. Way different. She sat on her haunches and kept playing with the water with her hooves.

Would her mother be able to find her here? she inwardly mused. Her mother had an uncanny ability to know where was everypony in any time, usually it only took the mare a mere minutes to find her when she was hungry, but her father said it was nothing but 'guessing with gusto'. Springsteps chuckled, her father said the weirdest of things. He also once said that Celestia doused all the water with fluoride to control ponies. That's just silly, everypony knows that fluoride was only good to make your teeth sparkly clean. Slowly she lowered her head and

touched the cool water with her muzzle. Would her mother mind it if she swam around for a bit?

**Tich:** The sun had risen, it was early in the morning and. Tich trotted down the street, wearing his goggles in his hair and his orange t-shirt around his upper body. Additionally he was carrying a pair of saddle bags, one of them revealing a large rainbow coloured pool noodle jutting out from each side. The item was big enough to impede his wings forcing him to walk. His facial expression didn't show any annoyance, rather his eyes were wide at the sight of reaching the Las Pegasus public pool. He immediately noticed the large water slide and the higher diving board. "I have to try out all of those." he rejoiced, clearly forgetting to say this as an internal monologue.

Tich ran in quickly, not noticing anyone else currently at the pool, it was still early, so he assumed he would be one of the first. It was quite warm today so he wished to cool off as quickly as he could. He dropped his bag at a poolside sun lounger. He dragged his hoof over his goggles, flopping them over his eyes. "Here I go, he exclaimed." He ran over to the water edge taking a single leap, giving another push with his wings giving him more height. At the apex of the jump, Tich could see the serene uninterrupted water, having settled for a long while. Gracefully, Tich moved his hooves into a stretched position as he broke the water surface, soaking him instantly. Tich swam a small length completely submerged before resurfacing. Treading water he looked around once more, the water rippling around him as he had disturbed the peaceful surface.

The orange t-shirt Tich was wearing and his tail hair had gotten a mind of its own, just swirling around his body underwater as he treaded water. He looked around and saw a young female unicorn on the other side of the pool, carefully inspecting the water. "Come on in, the water is great." he yelled over at her. He laid himself on his back and started floating. Enjoying the water. He opened his wings to help him remain stable. Taking off his goggles letting them hang from his neck.

**Serah:** *Las Pegasus, the famous city of lights."*

Serah crossed the border, and stepped into the unknown. All she carried on her person was a fuzzy coat (stolen), a half-filled journal (stolen), a sack of dwindling food supplies (all stolen), and the hope that she would find what she was looking for (on loan).

Serah walked the streets of the Las Pegasus suburbs, occasionally stumbling, but recovering before anypony could notice. Every time her step faltered, she couldn't help but grumble to herself.

*"Almost a month since injury. Shouldn't still be like this. Something is wrong."*

Before Serah could take the time to get to know the city any better, she had a list of three objectives to complete, which she'd written about in that morning's journal entry.

1. Seek medical attention
2. Find place to sleep
3. Acquire food

Nothing was more important than satisfying these three goals. Serah was in full-on survival mode, and nothing would distract her.

*"What is this?"* Serah stopped in her tracks as a large gated area distracted her. She glanced at the billboard that accompanied the site. *"Las Pegasus Public Pool."*

She shook her head, banishing the idea that came to mind. It was silly. She could be dying for all she knew, and she was actually considering wasting time playing in the water? Serah scoffed at herself.

She looked at the sign again, and this time made special note of one of the attractions, a hot tub. She shuffled her hooves awkwardly as her mouth scrunched up in annoyance.

*"I am still cold, despite the weather. Perhaps warm water could ease joints, even preclude need for medical help,"* Serah reasoned with herself, walking through the entrance-way and ignoring the employee that greeted her. *"This is a mistake..."*

It was a very large, spacious pool area; almost like an amusement park. Nothing like what she had seen in Manehattan, to be certain. However, one thing was familiar to her: a large, circular water pool with a small measure of steam rising up from it. It was empty, too, perhaps owing to the fact that it wasn't a particularly breezy day outside. The hot tub practically seemed to call to her.

*"10 minutes,"* Serah promised herself, making her way towards the source of heat. Along the way, she passed by a young filly staring at her reflection in the water, and another pony who was already in the pool. She didn't pay either much mind, and before she knew it, she'd doffed her jacket and was submerged in the soothing water of the hot tub.

*"This is good."* Serah sighed. *"In Manehattan, had to fight the Water Tribe for control of the area, just so we could soak."*

Serah frowned.

*"No. Not thinking about Manehattan. That's behind me."* She let herself sink deeper into the water, leaving only her eyes and snout above the waterline. *"Just sit here and relax. Warm up. Just 10 minutes..."*

Underneath the bubbling current, where nopony could see, Serah smiled. It was her first smile in what seemed like years.

**Deft:** The young mare, a red earth pony, had positioned herself where she could see but not be seen. She had climbed on of the trees in the park and was looking down at the pool area. She was wearing a grin. Pools were places for making mischief. They were the best places for making mischief. Well, nearly the best places... She debated the question internally, as though it was a matter of great importance.

Of course, for Deft, mischief making was always a matter of great importance. Pools were fun places because ponies, regardless of their swimming skills, would often congregate around. Captivated by each other and the pool itself, they rarely paid attention to their surroundings. A well timed cannonball could make more than a dozen ponies soggy and grumpy. A slight "accidental" bump could send an awkward pony flailing into the pool.

She giggled as she deftly swung herself to a slightly higher branch. With the height, she could conceivably jump from the tree and land into the pool. It would be a wicked cannonball. Probably wasn't safe, but it wouldn't be the first time that she had injured herself in the line of duty. Deft took her mischief making extremely seriously. It was always worth an injury to inconvenience or disturb another.

Besides, harming herself gave her plausible deniability with her grandfather. She practiced her pout. Yup, she would be fine. The first potential victim arrived at the pool. A purple pegasus stallion. A very happy one. Her grin fell into a frown. She immediately crossed him off her list. If his swimming goggles and excitement were anything to go by, this was a skilled swimmer. If the pool noodle and orange shirt were anything to go by, this was also a pony quite comfortable with awkwardness.

She winced as he self announced and made a dive into the pool. It was a silly thing to do, talking to oneself. One of her eyebrows raised as she surveyed the dive. It appeared, to her, to be wonderfully graceful. When the pegasus came back up from beneath the waves, she couldn't deny that he looked kind of cool. The orange shirt was a nice touch. She liked the color orange quite a bit. This definitely wouldn't be her target.

Her eyes drifted to a younger filly that had entered the pool area while she was surveying the purple stallion. She had thought that she heard some silly babbling of some kind. The source was... Almost too enticing. The filly seemed completely mindless, wandering the pool's edge. She was now peering into it, studying her face. Deft's grin reappeared. Target selected.

She could jump from her position in the tree. She was fairly athletic. She could make it to the pool, she reasoned. That would be the quickest approach... And the riskiest. The other approach would be to descend from the tree, enter the pool, and just give a gentle push. But, that would take time. The filly would likely be gone or swimming by then. The push would be more satisfying, though.

The stallion called out to the filly. Deft decided against the leaping cannonball approach. It would be a total disaster if she hit the stallion. She blinked. Then, there was the other possibility. What if she blacked out when she hit the water with so much force... Or, what if she

hit the edge and rolled in. Probably not worth it. She would end up saved by the filly, or drowning if she took the stallion and herself out and the filly couldn't save them.

Her eye twitched. Too much thinking. She started to scramble from her perch when a third pony wandered into the pool area. A red unicorn mare. She was wearing a coat but it didn't seem that cold to Deft. The mare made a beeline directly to the hot tub and sank in, apparently relaxing if Deft was judging. Deft's eye twitched again. She took a hoof and swatted the side of her head. She hated the twitching. But, she knew what it meant. A relaxing pony? Far too amusing. New target selected.

Without a second thought, she scrambled down the tree like it was on fire. She grabbed her saddlebag of tunes and snacks and made her way into the area of the pool. There, she caught her breath. She hadn't thought about exactly what she would do. She blinked and froze for a second. Unconsciously, she dropped her saddlebag by the bag belonging to the pegasus stallion. After spending a moment in thought, she decided to just do whatever she felt like in the moment.

First, she weaved, quietly towards the filly. "Hi." She said, mysteriously, and then weaved away. Her eye twitched. Why didn't she grab the filly and throw her in? She didn't know. The next target was drawing nearer, the pony in the hot tub. Deft stopped and placed a hoof over her eye. It was really bothering her. Lots of twitching. She threw her forehooves towards the sky. Still no idea of what to do... All of that waiting... But, no plan...

"Celestia!" She hissed before shaking her head aggressively from side to side. She couldn't think. It was pointless. "Well... If you can't beat 'em..." She said, speaking to herself a little too loudly. With a sigh, she covered the remaining distance to the hot tub and slipped in with an air of resignation. The sudden warmth was a good feeling. It stopped the twitching. She cleared her throat and spoke jauntily. "Heya, how's the weather?"

**Veracity:** She was lying on a cloud. Or, rather, in a cloud. It was her habit to dig a bit into clouds and then cover herself as much as possible. She didn't like to be seen when she was resting, because it normally signaled an end to her rest. Whoever noticed her would always, without fail, interrupt her peace with questions. Where was she from? Why was she there? Was she an important pony? How fast was she? She hated that last one most of all. It seemed shallow...

There were so many more important things than speed. Grace, for one thing. Veracity valued gracefulness. From her own perspective, it was the most important thing. To carry oneself with grace and elegance was to treat oneself well and with respect. Respect was also important, but no ponies ever asked if she was graceful and no pony ever seemed concerned about respect. Ponies could be so shallow...

She was a rather tall mare, at least a head larger than a mare's normal height, and she had webbed wings rather than the normal feathered wings of a pegasus pony. She had been told that she was beautiful and this was why others took notice. She didn't know about that, though. There were many beautiful ponies. She didn't care if she was considered one of their number or not. She did know that she tended to draw crowds at the worst times. She hated crowds.

It was a pretty day. She could feel the warmth of the sun, even beneath the clouds surface. She rolled over onto her back and swung a wing, clearing the blanket of cloud that she had been under. It was worth the risk of being seen. She took a deep breath and basked in the delightful warmth. Her head was emptied from all thoughts. This was, truly, the best form of rest that the world had to offer, both in Equestria and elsewhere.

Keystone, on 12 Oct 2013 - 4:27 PM, said: 

And thus, Keystone slept the early afternoon away, tail twitching occasionally, and mumbling about ponies with cat ears, wrenches, and murder.

Things were so peaceful. She lay there for some minutes, until an odd recurring sound attracted her attention. It sounded like mumbling or murmuring. It was an oddly discordant sound on such a delightfully silent day. She rolled over and stood, listening carefully. It sounded like a voice, a confused one, she suspected. She stepped slowly, finding her way to the clouds surface, then, carefully, she spread her wings and descended in the direction of the sound.

She opened her mouth a few times as she coasted, emitting a high pitched sound that was imperceptible to normal ponies. After each sound, her ears received the "echoes" of the noise off of various surfaces. Without a conscious thought, her mind took the messages relayed by her ears and used them to create an image of the world in front of her. This image was all that she had. Her ears and mind did what her normal eyes could not do. In this place, she was blind.

She could smell him now - a stallion. He had a funny smell. She landed nearby and stepped closer. She had a very good idea of where he was. It was a very funny smell. She moved even closer, then even closer still. She was lost in her sense of smell. In just a few short moments, the tall mare was standing immediately over the stallion, her hooves on either side of him. Slowly, she lowered her head towards the stallion's, sniffing constantly.

Her nose was mere inches from his, but it still wasn't quite satisfied. What was this odd smell? It was curious, foreign. Her large silver eyes were closed completely. Perhaps the smell was in his dream? His mumblings were so odd. She moved her nose even closer, and while doing so, mistakenly took a step to one side, placing a forehoof firmly down on the sleeping stallion. Her silver eyes shot open wide and she lifted the hoof slightly, making no other movement. Her face was frozen in an expression of restrained surprise.

**Springsteps:** A stallion called out for her. Springsteps nearly jolted away from the water in fright, in her contemplation she nearly forgot that she was still in a public place, and a relatively crowded one at that. She laughed sheepishly. What did the stallion said again? Something about the water... Springsteps shrugged, probably nothing important. The pegasus stallion looked like he was enjoying himself, she didn't want to bother him by asking.

Another pony called to her, this time it was a young mare. Springsteps craned her neck away from the water as the mare suddenly changed her mind and turned to the other direction. There was a lot of murmur coming from the mare even as she was trotting away. Springsteps titled her head, a bit confused. Were city ponies always this weird? She shook her head a few times and turned back to the pool.

She tentatively licked the water. Yep, the water tasted fresh enough. Time for some diving! She took in a deep breath and unceremoniously plunged herself into the pool, her small frame allowed her to enter the water without causing much disturbance.

Under the water, at the bottom of the pool, Springsteps grinned widely. The water miraculously didn't sting at her eyes, not unlike those pristine rivers outside the cities. Awkwardly she paddled her way across the bottom of the pool, bubbles of air slowly escaping from her nostrils. She couldn't hold her breath forever but the pool was so awesome down here! She could see

both end of the pool and many ponies who mingled in it, rays of sunlight danced from the surface like some kind of a broken disco light. If she could, Springsteps would have squeed right there.

Slowly she could feel that rising pressure in her lungs, her body had remembered that she wasn't amphibious and demanded a new intake of air. She looked upward to the surface, and saw the purple frame of the earlier stallion. Maybe some introduction was in order! With a kick she propelled herself upward and emerged near the stallion. After briefly gasping for fresh air, she grinned at the stallion and chirped, "Hello! Today is a good day, isn't it?"

**Aiden:** A tanned-cream coloured unicorn stallion casually navigated through the bookshelves, his eyes scanning every book they could possibly see. Aiden had scheduled today to be solely taken up by a long, relaxing visit to the library, so he had no preference as to what books he would be taking a look through. Fiction or nonfiction, mystery, action, epics, they were all viable candidates for this pony's stack for the day. On top of these possibilities, he had already taken the liberty to search through for some cooking book, interested in learning some more recipes or hoping to find some inspiration to form his own beverage recipes. Lucky for him, a magazine on the news-racks, was doing an issue all about beverages and mixology, so he happily scooped it up rather quickly.

After about an hour of searching through the large amount of rows, Aiden had managed to pick up around two short fictional mysteries, and a decently sized copy of early Equestrian history, as well as the cooking magazine he had first picked up. Content with his choices, he worked his way to a small table with a lamp attachment, and sat down. After neatly floating the books down to the table, he used his hoof to adjust the lamp, positioning it just right over the first book of the mysteries he had chosen on reading through. Using his magic to bring up his neon green headphones, he inserted the plug into the headphone jack on his MP3 that he placed on the table and turned on some soothing classical music. Nothing helped him get more immersed into a story than the sounds of a string orchestra playing in the background, relaxing his mind and allowing the images to flow with ease. Before diving into the story, he took a quick look at the time and saw that it was still quite early. He gave a light chuckle before bringing his attention to the white paper and black letters that laid before him, pulling him out of the real world and into the world of his imagination, erasing any sense of time.

The unicorn gave a soft yawn as he turned the final page of the short story, his cheek resting upon a hoof with eyes of disappointment. Without moving his face, he glanced up to the clock that hung on the wall, a bit surprised at how much time had actually passed from when he started the book. Flipping the novel right side up, Aiden slid it to the top right corner of the table. It had been a boring read, the so called "mystery" was so easy to figure out, he thought a foal would be able to deduce the answer as quickly as he did. Nonetheless, it did provide some clear imagery that made the story playback simple to put together and let roll, something he always enjoyed to watch, regardless of how lacking the plot of the book was in terms of sheer amusement.

Leaning back for a moment to give back and hooves a brief stretch, Aiden thought about what he should begin to flip through next. He felt that a bit of knowledge upkeep would be a wise choice, so he put the other mystery he had chosen on top of the first one, and left them be. Turning back to the two others he had chosen, he gave an examination of their covers. The cooking magazine had stronger appeal naturally, and only enticed him further. Wasn't much longer that a verdict was made and he had chosen to go with the magazine in hopes of learning a new trick or two. Re-positioning a hoof under his chin as he began to read the slightly levitating issue, he used his other hoof to change the track playing from his music player.

Page by page, the unicorn sifted through all the contents, finding recipes for everyday drinks as well as alcoholic. Though he was no drinker himself, he still kept the knowledge of some hard drinks in the back of his mind in case of a special occasion. As he continued to look through the magazine, he took notice of a yellow coloured mare taking a seat a few tables down with a fair few books of her own choosing. He took quick note of her expression and began to wonder why she could be feeling down. Reading when happy or at least slightly cheerful was always best and helped to get more sucked into the story, that's what he thought anyway.

Feeling a sense of wanting to help, Aiden stood up from his spot, turning off the lamp in the process. He quickly unplugged his headphones, being sure the music was off and the system was shut down first and slid them down his hang, letting them hang from his neck. Still wishing to continue to read through the magazine, he held onto it, using his mp3 as a form of bookmark. With a quick sigh, he slowly trotted over to the yellow coloured mare. Hoping not to spook her, he approached her from the opposite of where she sat, a warm expression worn on

his face. Speaking as loud as his setting allowed, Aiden spoke to the mare, "Hello. I'm sorry to disturb you, but I couldn't help but notice that you looked a little bit distraught. I was wondering if you needed any form of help or something."

**Serah:** Luminescence, on 14 Oct 2013 - 01:02 AM, said: 

With a sigh, she covered the remaining distance to the hot tub and slipped in with an air of resignation. The sudden warmth was a good feeling. It stopped the twitching. She cleared her throat and spoke jauntily. "Heya, how's the weather?"

Serah's smile flipped/turned upside down, and she took a second to sit right there and stare at the mare who had dared disturb her privacy.

*"The hell is this? Doesn't she know who I am?"* Serah wondered. As soon as the thought came to her, her frown deepened. *"No, of course she doesn't. What am I thinking?"*

This must have been what others described as a formal pony interaction.' It was far removed from Serah's usual method of meeting new ponies, which involved a painful entrance ritual that rendered them loyalty to her for 'life'. She supposed she preferred this non-violent approach, if only for its lack of formality.

Realizing there was no reason to rebuff the other mare's question, Serah decided that answering her would cause no harm. Even if she didn't say anything, she had a feeling the other pony wouldn't leave her be. She raised her muzzle out of the water to respond.

"Fine," Serah answered, and said no more.

*"Wonder if that was too friendly,"* she thought to herself.

**Winged Ratchet:** It broke. He had finally driven all the way across country, and it decided to blow up on him. Some luck Winged had. He stared at the remains of what was his custom motorcycle. The front of it remained somewhat in-tact; The two wheels hanging off the boiler

were only a little bent out of whack and could be easily fixed in a day or so. There was a leak somewhere in the smoke exhaust, though, causing black smoke to pour out of the exhaust port in the rear. The end of the bike had no wheels - which was fine, that's the way it was built - but the rotor blades from the inside of the steam turbine had all either been puked out the exhaust or had shot out the side of the engine compartment, lodging themselves in the pavers or the trees in the park nearby. After nearly two years of hard work, it all blew up in his face. WR didn't know what was worse, the fact that he would have to cough up three thousand bits that he didn't have to fix his bike, or the fact that he now had no way of returning to his home in Fillydelphia.

Winged was only driving down the road when his bike decided to explode. Luckily, he had an ear for machines, and he had heard the off-beat whining of the turbine before it was able to fail any more catastrophically than it did. The soft pitter-patter of an offset blade hitting the internal chamber alerted him immediately to throw the E-brake. Of course, this threw the tail-end of the bike into the ground, as it was no-longer making thrust. It was then that a noise similar to that of a truck-sized helium balloon popping and the sound of shearing metal and flying shrapnel greeted the city of Las Pegasus. Surely, anyone who was still sleeping that morning was in for quite the rude awakening.

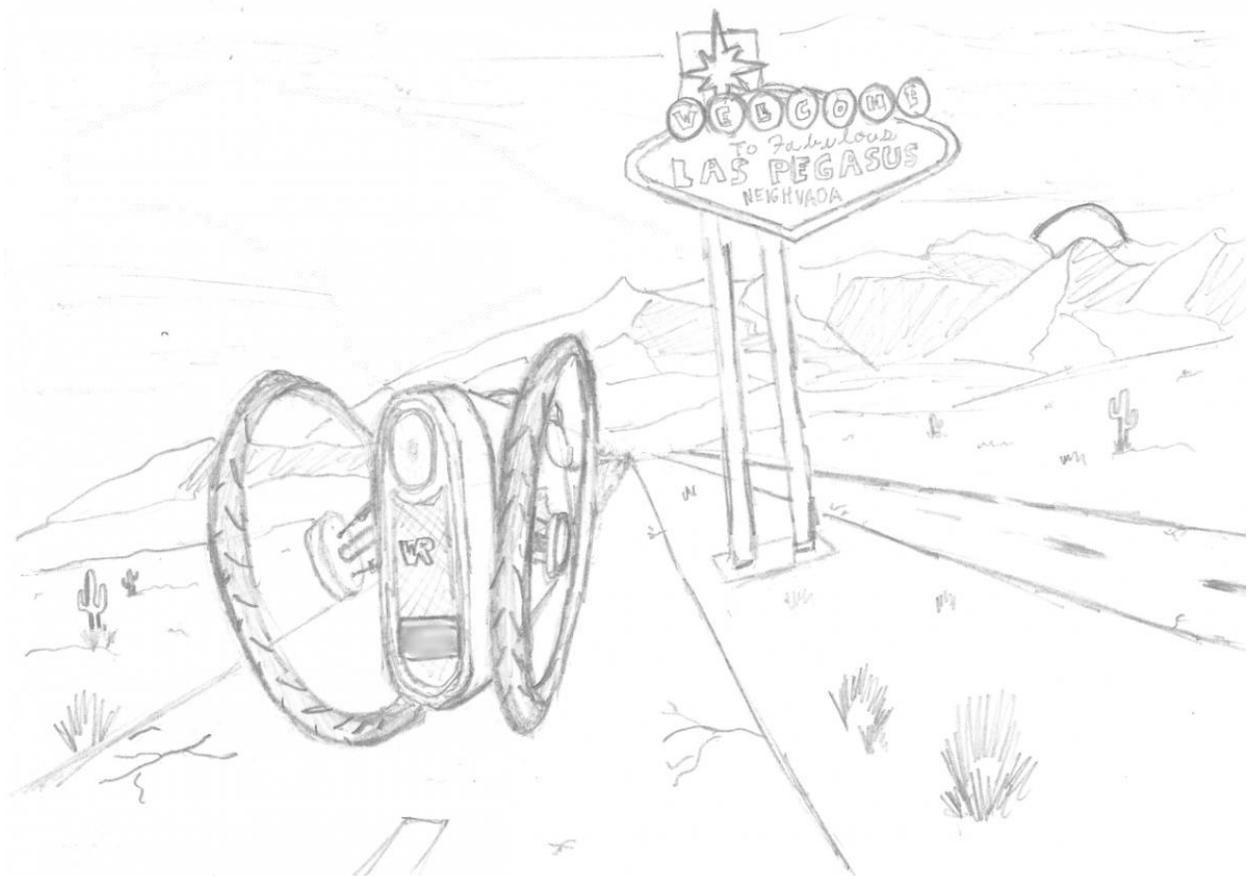
He would have to send Dawn Rider a letter. It was the only way he was going to get anywhere. He had some money backed up in an account from his old job, in case of an emergency like this. The real issue was that he had no sustainable income at the moment. All those funds in the bank were all he had left - it wasn't to be squandered, no matter how much it seemed like. The whole purpose of this excursion was to test to make sure this new bike worked, in hopes that he could market it. Gazing into the ruins of the bike felt like the end of everything for Winged. He had yet again failed, and this time, he wasn't sure that the problem would be easily fixed.

Surely this is why he lost his old job.

Winged shrugged off the negative emotions. There was no sense moping in the middle of the street. He walked up and down the road, picking up the pieces that had been strewn all over. Every now and then he would shoot a glance over at the park nearby to see if anyone noticed. It was hard to tell, given his angle and distance. There were a number of ponies in the park though, from what he could tell... A pink pegasus sat under a tree and appeared to be

conversing with another blue pegasus - He couldn't tell why, but something seemed off about the blue one. WR also noticed a turbine part sticking into the back of the tree, and gave a little awkward chuckle at the sight. A little further off, another pony was picking flowers. WR wasn't sure if this one was grey or Lavender, and for some reason, he couldn't stop pondering this fact. He went back to gathering parts from the street, saying nothing as he did so.

Winged looked down at his hooves, now filled with scrap metal that he had no place to put. He looked around a bit, and decided to dump all of the pieces in a heap by his dead bike. He fetched his satchel off the back and checked to make sure everything was there: Multi tool? Check. Bag of bits? Check, Pens and paper? Check. Well, at least he had comforts of home with him. WR made his way across the street, and sat at a bench in the park. He let out a deep sigh, and stared into the off into the sky. Something told him that he was going to be here for quite some time - more than a day or two. Winged sniffed and looked down at his hooves. Unsure of what to do with them, he fished a pen and a sheet of paper from his satchel out of habit, and tapped the pen on his thigh.



**Arcanel:** "Ahhh... trotting through new places... there really isn't a better hobby than this one. Sans collecting minerals that is." A white pegasus chuckled to himself. Arcanel had been peacefully now walking through the streets of the city known as Las Pegasus.

The reason he was here was quite simple. He had decided to, after quite a while, take a vacation at the last city he knew he was going to deliver before it. His boss, Fast Post, had no trouble in agreeing to the decision for it, as the older pony had known that allowing some sort of rest to one of his most trustworthy and working ponies in the mail office back in Vanhoover, whether or not Arcanel would actually admit or accept such a fact, as the stallion was quite modest about his work. However, the white mailpony felt that it was a good time to actually take the time to rest from his work for a small while, And decided that he would take the last city he would have needed to make a delivery in, since he knew he wouldn't be able to choose by himself. The city happened to be Las Pegasus.

From what Arcanel had heard, Las Pegasus was quite known for its gaming and gambling tradition, as well as being a rather lighted city at night. In his mind, this wasn't really what he was used to, as Vanhoover, while not being a small city by any means, wasn't really known for being "flashy". He thought that however the change of style would be interesting for him and its why he now found himself simply checking it out.

"I have to admit that this definitely bigger and "flashier" than I thought it'd be. They weren't kidding when they said something about being the "city of lights". Oh well... I'm done checking out the downtown... let's just "investigate" this zone of the city." He said cheerfully, a smile on his face as he still trotted on the streets. He passed a park, which he thought would be a nice place to rest in later, but he usually walked around parks a lot back in Vanhoover, so he decided to leave it for later. *\*I'll probably see if there are actually some minerals I haven't seen before... maybe I could see how the sky is at night. Would be rather nice! But that's for later now.\** He thought, walking past the park and now also past a library, which he thought should check out later as well.

However, his gaze stopped as he watched a very big public pool appear in front of him. "Oh wow..." was all that could escape Arcanel's mouth as he faced the pool. In truth, pools were already something he wasn't really used to in Vanhoover as there weren't really a lot of pools in the city. The fact he was seeing one of such size had made him feel just the littlest

mesmerized. "Ok... I think I know where I'm taking a small rest." He chuckled, now heading towards the pool. He saw a couple of ponies interacting around it or even in it, watching a light blue unicorn filly talking with a purple pegasus stallion in the water, who, in an image that made him raise his eyebrow slightly, was wearing an orange T-shirt. *\*Ooook... who wears a shirt when going into the water? Seems a bit odd to me... oh well, he probably either forgot, or likes being in it. Either way it's not something extremely odd.\** he inwardly giggled, albeit still slightly weirded out by the image of a purple pegasus wearing a T-shirt on the water. Right next to the pool, there was a hot tub in which two crimson ponies, a unicorn mare, and a earth pony mare, seemed like relaxing within the tub. One of them looked rather relaxed. The other, not so much from what he could see, however, he decided not to interrupt the two mares.

It was at this point that he had reached the edge of the pool almost without noticing. While he was up for talking with other ponies, right now, he felt more like relaxing in peace and took one of the edges of pool, away from all 4 ponies, and stuck his hindlegs in it, shivering a little at how the water felt cold against his fur, but quickly got used to it, and let his forelegs hold him up over the edge, not fully diving in yet and closing his eyes, relaxing his mind. "Ahhhh... I think I really needed something like this... a nice pool to relax in..." he trailed off as his voice became smaller as he now just breathed in and out slowly, trying to calm his usually active mind.

**Wing:** Wing jolted at the sound of horrifically dying machinery. His head snapped in the direction of the atrocious noise, and it did not leave much to the imagination with regards to guessing that something horrible had - in fact - happened. The stallion's wings unfurled quickly and he darted into the sky to survey the situation. "Outlook, not so good..." he muttered upon seeing the fragmented bits of metal that littered the landscape. It appeared as if a foal had dropped a snow globe on the floor -- a rather large one at that.

He focused on a yellow pegasus who also seemed to be taking a look at the situation. It was not difficult for Wing to tell that this stallion was the origin of the commotion. His demeanor spoke volumes, and the way in which he plucked parts from the street made it even more obvious to the physicist. Still hovering in the air, Wing wondered if his fellow pegasus was okay.

Such a question was fairly stupid in retrospect. Of course this stallion wasn't okay. A contraption, which seemed to have been this stallion's mode of transport, was now a loitering carcass of machinery that up and decided to vomit its metal guts everywhere. The scientist's eyes darted around. It was a miracle of Celestia that no pony appeared hurt in the blast - at least none that he could see.

He watched as the stallion dumped a pile of scrap by the vehicle and made way to one of the park's benches. Wing decided it was time to act and cupped his forehooves around his muzzle. "Hey down there! Are you alright?" He paused a moment. "Well... I mean... you physically. Obviously, the whole loud noise, exploding thing is not okay," he added, somewhat descending into a rambling state before concluding. Given his connections to the Equestria National Accelerator Lab, Wing was familiar with the local mechanics, inventors, and machine enthusiasts. This pony was definitely someone who he had not seen before, but based on what he saw, Wing was undoubtedly curious. "What I mean to say is do you need a helping hoof?"

**Tich:** Seeing the area fill up more, Tich closed his wings and stopped floating on his back near the middle of the pool. He started treading water, causing more ripples in the surrounding waters. He looked around, seeing the poolside had become more busy around him. A young light blue filly unicorn surfaced next to him greeting him.

"Oh today is going to be a great day," he responded, putting his goggles back on over his eyes. "I am taking a dip in the pool."

Tich chuckled as he casually swam backwards towards the other far edge of the pool. Feeling his t-shirt brushing up against his coat, still waving about as he moved around. Tich felt free in the water.

**Ambrosia:** She blinked, but it did absolutely nothing to ease her growing sense of confusion. The problem wasn't just the density of the material. The problem was that everything honestly seemed to be important for running a restaurant. Keeping it clean? Certainly, that was important. Choosing good staff? This was obviously important, but she had never even thought that far. Proper accounting practices? Ambrosia stared. She hadn't thought of this either, despite the fact that she routinely handled bits when purchasing supplies for trains. She sighed.

'Aiden', on 14 Oct 2013 - 07:54 AM, said: 

Hoping not to spook her, he approached her from the opposite of where she sat, a warm expression worn on his face. Speaking as loud as his setting allowed, Aiden spoke to the mare, "Hello. I'm sorry to disturb you, but I couldn't help but notice that you looked a little bit distraught. I was wondering if you needed any form of help or something."

Ambrosia slowly looked up from the book, and relief, discouragement, and confusion played their way across her face. She finally settled for a weary smile, surprised by how much energy that this one small effort had taken out of her. Her thoughts focused on a single reality that was now starkly apparent. Opening a restaurant would not be an easy thing to do, and even then, starting the thing was only the first step. Keeping it running would be an adventure all on its own.

After a deep breath, she greeted the apparently friendly unicorn with a soft whisper. "Ummm... Hello..." She blushed slightly as she thought of how silly she must have seemed, panicking with just a glance at a table of contents. She closed the book, hurriedly. "You're, well... You're not really disturbing me. In fact, I think I really needed to do something else for a moment. I guess..." She paused for a second, lost in thought. "I guess if you wanted to help, maybe you could listen?"

Without even waiting for an acknowledgement, Ambrosia took a deep breath and then spoke comfortably, as though speaking with an old friend. "Well, my name is Ambrosia, and I'm new around here... But, I am trying to figure out how I should start a restaurant. I thought maybe a good reference would be a good place to start, so I picked up this book. But, I just looked in it... I can't even figure this thing out. It's not that it's overwhelming, even though it is kinda... But, it's just that... There's so much... There are so many things to think about... I have to do this, though. It's my dream. It's what I've always wanted, but..."

She lifted the seemingly ancient tome and then dropped it on the table again. It made a dignified thud. "I don't think that I..." She caught herself and paused for a moment, closing her eyes in reflection. She continued with confidence. "What I mean to say is that I don't think that

this is really the best strategy for me... When I was in school, I was good at homework and reading, but... On my own, I've always just done things, feeling my way through... Just like cooking..."

Her eyes sparkled at the mention of cooking. She smiled wonderfully and tilted her head slightly to the side. " You really want to stop every once in a while and taste what you're cooking. Otherwise, you get to the end and it's nothing like what you expected. You could have the best recipe in the world and follow it to perfection, but you could still end up with a mess. It's because the ingredients don't always have the same taste. If you're really paying attention, every vegetable, every fruit, even every seasoning... They're all different even if they're the same. No two apples taste exactly alike... That's why you can't count on following a recipe to give you a good meal..."

Ambrosia looked like a pony that was on an adventure. She stopped speaking and gestured in the air with a hoof once. The she spoke again, her voice raised to a level that was perhaps just a little too loud for the setting. "I don't think I need to follow a recipe for a restaurant. I mean, I've got a general idea of what to do. It works fine for cooking. Maybe, I can do the same thing here... I mean, I won't do anything wild. Probably. I'm a responsible pony... Or, maybe I should just read this book and go crazy?" She directed a goofy grin to the unicorn across from her. "What do you think, stranger?"

**Deft Precision:** Serah, on 14 Oct 2013 - 08:59 AM, said: 

She raised her muzzle out of the water to respond.

"Fine," Serah answered, and said no more.

*Mother fucker...* The exclamation went through Deft's thoughts like a lightning bolt. The only thing that kept it from coming out of her mouth was her hoof closing it, fast, before she could say anything. Despite the calming effect of the warm water, her twitch returned. She wanted to scream, jump out of the hot tub, and go running off. The tables were turned, she thought. Her attempt at finding a victim had backfired. Her brain whirled. *Rude! Rude! Rude! This is a setup. No pony greets me like that. Fuck! What do I say now?! I can't let this conversation end like*

*this... What would grandpa do... He \*always\* had something to say! I need to think. Gotta win...*

Her thoughts continued to rage, and her insides seemed to be on fire. On the outside, other than the slight twitch, there was no sign of the internal warfare. Instead, she wore a pleasant, almost saccharine smile. After a second or two of hesitation, her mouth started moving without waiting for her brain to catch up. Sounds emerged. "Fine? Yeah, I think you're right. Much nicer temperatures than Badlands. I was just there last week. It's warm over there."

Her thoughts stopped and listened to the words coming out of her mouth. *Oh yeah, that's a good approach. Match her pattern. Short and choppy. No buddy stuff. That's fine. I got this. Exchange information. Get information back. Appear intelligent. Buck! I am intelligent.* Her mouth was still going, with a smooth, steady pace. "I spend a lot of time down there, in fact. Get used to the heat, you know? Then, I go back down here."

She sat up and coolly continued. "Took me a while to get acclimated to this temperature when I first came here. I had to wear a jacket to warm up to something a bit more familiar. Then, there's this hot tub. Same thing. You from a warmer climate?" On the inside, Deft grinned wickedly. She still had it. Grandpa himself couldn't have outdone that recovery. There's no way she would get another one word answer. She internally winced... *Maybe two...*

**Serah:** Luminescence, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:20 PM, said: 

"Fine? Yeah, I think you're right. Much nicer temperatures than Badlands. I was just there last week. It's warm over there."

*"Badlands. Sounds warm. Next destination, perhaps."*

Luminescence, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:20 PM, said: 

"I spend a lot of time down there, in fact. Get used to the heat, you know? Then, I go back down here."

*"Located south. Got it."*

Luminescence, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:20 PM, said: 

"Took me a while to get acclimated to this temperature when I first came here. I had to wear a jacket to warm up to something a bit more familiar. Then, there's this hot tub. Same thing. You from a warmer climate?"

*"Sun of Celestia, she's still talking?"*

It became obvious to Serah that the other mare wasn't content with idle pleasantries. She seemed to be searching Serah for an actual conversation. It was not an appealing prospect. Normally, she would have blown the mare off, but the relaxing effects of the hot tub were far more potent than she realized. She just couldn't work up the energy to get truly angry at the other pony, despite her incessant chatter.

*"Fine. Match her pattern. Short and choppy. No friendly banter. Exchange information, get information back,"* Serah thought to herself.

"Not really," Serah answered. "From east. Mild climate, smelled of oranges. Recently spent too much time in Applewood Mountains, though. Arrived here less than an hour ago."

*"Should be plenty background. No point in losing anonymity. My turn to ask a question."*

"Is there a hospital nearby?" Serah asked, hoping she didn't sound as vulnerable as she felt.

**Winged Ratchet:** Wing McCallister, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:11 AM, said: 

"Hey down there! Are you alright?"

Winged lifted his head and stared straight ahead of him. He knew exactly where the sound was coming from, but he had been so lost in thought that it took him a moment to return to reality. In truth, he still didn't want to. He was miles from home without any means of getting back, and his dream bike suddenly looked like something from one of his nightmares - perhaps he was in a nightmare? No, life had played many cruel jokes like this on him before, and to further confirm he was not in a bad dream, he wasn't falling from something, as usual. Snapping out of his hazy thoughts, WR remembered the pegasus above, who began mumbling nonsense at him.

Tuning his thoughts and vision to the stallion hovering a few meters above his head. "Beg your pardon?"

Quote

"What I mean to say is do you need a helping hoof?"

He looked back down at his hooves and considered the offer. Did he need help? Help was really only a letter or a phone call away, but it wouldn't arrive for a while. Could this stranger even help him? Who does he think he is, anyway, butting in on other ponies business? *Well, WR thought, I suppose it is his business... I did nearly kill him with the whole exploding bike thing...* He looked back to the pegasus above him gave a deep sigh and asked, "You wouldn't happen to know where I could find a hotel, would you?"

**Keystone:** Keystone was dreaming. It was something he did often, and something that he was rather typically quite fond of. His dreams were silly creatures, lacking in both sense - common *and* uncommon alike - and sanity. They weren't always completely pleasant, but at the same time they were typically goofy enough in some way or another that they didn't *quite* qualify as nightmares. Keystone never really found himself being startled awake by them; rather than waking up in a cold sweat, he would instead wake up and scratch his head in confusion at the visions that had floated into his head.

Sadly, there was a first time for everything. Rather than fading gracefully, Keystone's dreamscape was violently shattered by the feeling of something crushing down upon his body with what his sleep-addled mind interpreted as unrelenting destructive force and intent; a malevolent presence seeking to shatter and flatten him in one fell swoop. Even before Keystone's eyes shot open, and even before the vision of the pale gray eyes staring down upon him at close proximity had a chance to register in his mind, Keystone's body was in motion; moving in ways that he would never consciously be able to duplicate, with such grace and agility that it would make any gymnast green with envy. In one fluid, mind-bending motion he went from being sprawled on the ground, to being on his hooves. In the next moment he was

leaping away instinctively from his perceived attacker into the air, moving with great precision at high velocity to safety --- and right into the tree that he had been resting in the shadow of.

### ***Whack!***

The sound of Keystone's collision with the leafy abomination echoed through the park as the pink pony crashed head first into it at a comical velocity, before bouncing back from it, to the ground, and back off again, directly into the owner of the two pale eyes that he had woken to, bouncing off of him or her like a rubber ball and landing directly in front of them in a pile.

**Springsteps:** Springsteps watched as the blue pegasus slowly drifted, seemingly already far too deep in bliss. She chuckled, the only pegasi she knew close enough was rather afraid of water, saying that water would ruin their feathers. The stallion was very different though, this one knew how to have some fun! Deciding that she too should have some fun time, Springsteps turned around and started swimming in circles.

Her hooves paddled under the surface to keep her afloat, while her head periodically bobbed up and down to a merry tune she once heard somewhere. It was nice, the pool and everything. It was a rare occasion, being able to swim leisurely without any of her parents to tell her not to do things. Don't dive here, don't swim that way, don't flop into the water belly first, don't eat too much, yadda yadda. Springsteps rolled her eyes. It's not like she would drown or anything. Before she knew it, she was already gasping for air. Her left hindhoof cramped.

"Aw aw aw...Aw!" Springsteps whined, her head twitched. She quickly paddled her way to the edge of the pool with her other three hooves and quickly climbed out of the water, taking care not to put too much pressure on the hurting hoof. Still soaking wet, she limped to one of the chairs and sat there, one hoof nursing her calf muscle. "So much for the pool," she sighed.

**Deft Precision:** Serah, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:53 PM, said: 

"Not really," Serah answered. "From east. Mild climate, smelled of oranges. Recently spent too much time in Applewood Mountains, though. Arrived here less than an hour ago."

*First two words! Hah! This is easy.* Deft relaxed. The two words were followed by more, though. It was far easier than she had ever expected it to be. Finally, the pony across from her was beginning to... *Applewood Mountains... Too much time... Recently... Recently arrived.* She struggled

to keep her polite smile in place, while her mind started processing the mare's words.

What was in Applewood Mountains that were of any importance to anypony? Treasure? Hardly. It would have been found by now, for certain. There were tons of ponies that travelled by air over those very same mountains, every day. What could possibly be left to uncover? At a frenzied pace, her thoughts rummaged through her memories, looking for connections.

*Wait. Stop. Start at the beginning. Mild climate out east? Ponyville... No. Grandfather took me there... A million times. That's apples not oranges, not apples to oranges. What am I thinking? Forget it. Where are oranges a big deal... Oh, yeah. Manehattan. Orange family, rolling in bits like pigs. Grandfather hates them, and he likes almost all earth ponies.*

It had only taken a second. Deft allowed her smile to increase just a little more in size. Her twitching stopped. *Yes! I know where she's from! ... Wait. Manehattan. Applewood Mountains. There's no train line through that route... She can't fly... Did... She... Walk? Her smile fell from her face. From where? In a straight shot? Maybe took a train to Ponyville... Makes sense... Some kind of challenge or something?"*

Serah, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:53 PM, said: 

"Is there a hospital nearby?" Serah asked, hoping she didn't sound as vulnerable as she felt.

"A hospital?" Deft's mouth was going again, making sounds. Her thoughts, on the other hoof, were wildly spinning. *Hospital? What... Why... Is she sick??* Calmly, Deft's eyes surveyed the water she was in. *Great. I'm in a hot tub with a pony that may have an infectious disease or something. I bet that's why she walked... Untreatable illness... Was thrown out of town... Now, I'm gonna catch it, because of this stupid idea! I'm going to die? Get thrown out of town?*

*My fur might fall off... Wait, no... She has her fur. What the hell is her problem, anyway? She looks fine? Is it the weather? Oh Celestia this is NOT what I wanted! I'm too young! I'm too bucking pretty! I haven't even had any fun today!* Her face twitched, her teeth set, her eyes lost a bit of focus. But, her polite smile was forcibly returned to its place. The twitching was contained to being barely perceptible.

While her thoughts ventured into the territory of a horror novel, her voice continued smoothly. "Yeah, there's a hospital, a few of them. Big city, you know. I've been here enough times to know my way around. I could point you in the right direction. Maybe walk you over or something?" She raised an eyebrow. "What kinda hospital do you need, though? For something

simple, there's a tiny one nearby. For something odd or more complicated, we'd need to go into town." *Small hospital... Please... Oh please, oh please, oh please... I don't wanna be sick!*

**Veracity:** Keystone, on 18 Oct 2013 - 10:46 PM, said: 

In one fluid, mind-bending motion he went from being sprawled on the ground, to being on his hooves. In the next moment he was leaping away instinctively from his perceived attacker into the air, moving with great precision at high velocity to safety --- and right into the tree that he had been resting in the shadow of.

A tragedy... Such peace disturbed. She felt terrible for what she had done. Her curiosity could be a terrible weakness... She had reproached herself the moment she became aware of the pony being awake. Dreams were better than wakefulness. As the rush of movement occurred. Veracity extended her wings, and her ears moved to positions of full alertness. He was moving away from her, quickly. She blinked. He was moving directly into the tree. Could he not see it?

Keystone, on 18 Oct 2013 - 10:46 PM, said: 

The sound of Keystone's collision with the leafy abomination echoed through the park as the pink pony crashed head first into it at a comical velocity, before bouncing back from it, to the ground, and back off again, directly into the owner of the two pale eyes that he had woken to.

He hit the tree with a painful noise. She winced. Now, she had caused another pony pain in addition to disturbing their slumber. He hit the tree again. It was odd. Was he purposefully injuring himself? He wasn't going to hit the tree again, he was moving towards her. It was an uncontrolled motion, fast and disorganized. Immediately before the collision, Veracity rolled herself backwards to a sitting position.

When the other pony collided with her, she reached out, wrapping her hooves around him. She allowed the force of the impact to carry her onto her back, stopping the forward momentum, completely. The other pony was a pegasus, she could feel the feathers. He was also, thankfully, not an overwhelmingly large pony and quite warm. She grinned, revealing a set of perfectly white teeth, including two oddly sharp ones that seemed just slightly higher than the rest.

Veracity didn't consider the awkwardness of her current situation. The smell was still there, even more so than before, and it was quite distracting. She still had no idea of what it could

be, so she decided to satisfy her curiosity with finality. Using a hoof, she poked around where she figured the face of the other pony would be. Content that she had the right place, she licked the other pony. On the nose, she hoped.

With an apologetic tone, she spoke. For a mare, she had a slightly deeper voice than would have been expected. It carried with it an unusual, wistful current, like a pony suspended in a daydream. "So sorry... I can't see. I wonder if you can... It was never my intention to harm you or to cause you harm. I am a friend. My name is... Not important right now. But, I would like to share something that is. You taste like strawberries. I'm rather fond of these." She grinned again, slightly wider than before.

**Serah:** Luminescence, on 19 Oct 2013 - 02:02 AM, said: 

"A hospital?" Deft's mouth was going again, making sounds... her face twitched, her teeth set, her eyes lost a bit of focus. But, her polite smile was forcibly returned to its place. The twitching was contained to being barely perceptible.

"Yeah, there's a hospital, a few of them. Big city, you know. I've been here enough times to know my way around. I could point you in the right direction. Maybe walk you over or something?" She raised an eyebrow. "What kinda hospital do you need, though? For something simple, there's a tiny one nearby. For something odd or more complicated, we'd need to go into town."

"Don't know. Condition is... personal. Not infectious, though." Serah added that last bit after noticing how she'd set the other pony on-edge with her last question.

Serah mutely wondered if sustaining a bullet wound and surviving for over a month without medical attention, on top of an impromptu mountaineering excursion, called for the big hospital or the 'tiny' hospital. She almost chuckled.

*"Either way, no bits. Small hospital less likely to need paperwork, or follow up for payments. Don't know how serious injury is, anyways."*

"Small should do. Directions will be fine," Serah concluded.

**Keystone:** Keystone felt himself collide with something warm and soft, knocking it to the ground as it stopped him and pillowed his impact with the otherwise unforgiving ground. Laying limply atop whatever he had landed on, Keystone shook his head a bit, trying to remove the pain induced cobwebs from his mind while slowly opening his eyes, which had been to that point scrunched shut. Slowly, the image of a blue mare smiling up at him came into focus. He stared down at her for a few brief moments, dimly becoming aware that the pony beneath him was apparently the owner of the pale blue eyes that he had seen upon waking, while also becoming dimly aware of the rather distinct shape that some of her teeth had.

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, in a small compartment disconnected from the pain, Keystone noted that she was quite attractive. There were certainly worse things to find beneath you upon opening one's eyes, he decided. This observation was not, however, enough to stop a quiet groan of discomfort and pain from escaping his mouth.

His groan came to an abrupt end, however, when the pony began prodding gently around his face with one of the hooves that had only moments prior been wrapped around him. Keystone blinked, confused at her sudden actions. He tried thinking of something to say to give voice to his confusion when she suddenly raised her face to his and licked him. On the nose. Keystone blinked yet again, his confusion now doubled.

'Luminescence', on 19 Oct 2013 - 02:04 AM, said: 

"So sorry... I can't see. I wonder if you can... It was never my intention to harm you or to cause you harm. I am a friend. My name is... Not important right now. But, I would like to share something that is. You taste like strawberries. I'm rather fond of these."

Her words snapped him out of his confusion, as his brain began to process them.

She couldn't see? So she was blind? That certainly explained why her eyes had that pale look to them, and why she had groped around his face with her hooves moments prior. She didn't intend to cause him harm? Fair enough, he was sorry that he had apparently barreled into her, so it was all good. She was a friend? That was good. Friends were nice. He liked friends.

Besides, it would be awkward if he was laying on top of her and she *wasn't* a friend. Her name wasn't important? Eh, fair enough. He could work with that. He tasted like --- wait, what?

Keystone's mind went blank for a moment. Had she just said that he tasted like strawberries? He blinked once, twice, thrice, and then once again while contemplating a response. Finally, he shrugged, before reaching his own head down and licking her on her own nose. From there, he opened his mouth and began to speak, having settled on a course of action.

"So sorry to have ran into you! I can in fact see, usually quite well, but occasionally a bit poorly depending on how much of my mane falls into the way. It was never my intention to ram into you or to knock you on your back. I am also a friend! My name is Keystone, it's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Not Important. I must say, I'm quite happy to taste like strawberries, because strawberries are really quite delicious - they are, in fact, my favorite type of berry! Have you ever had a strawberry smoothie? If not, you really ought to. I'd be happy to buy you one, if you like. I'm not entirely certain what you taste like, but whatever it is that you taste like is really quite tasty. I approve," he spoke, barely stopping or pausing throughout the entirety of his little speech, a grin on his face as he did so, despite the pain he still felt in his head. The situation was goofy, to say the least, but he decided that he may as well try to make the most of it.

**Wing:** Wing looked at the sky with an deceivingly absent-minded looking expression as he pondered his internal map of the town. "Post Office is two blocks south," he responded, gesturing with his hoof. "It's that way and on the left. There are hotels all over the place, but the nearest one is ... I think... 6 blocks that way." He moved his hoof to point to the west and nodded in agreement with himself. "That doesn't appear to be your biggest problem though. It seems as though your vehicle had a breakdown." He scratched the back of his head and brushed his mane before letting out a sigh.

"I know this is going to come off as slightly strange from a total stranger. My name is Wing, and I am a physicist. It's quite unusual to see a contraption such as that. Most transit is relegated to rails. I have to say, I'm curious to know how you developed the engine.. Hmm, I am getting offtrack - and that was not really the point I wanted to make. Since I'm a scientist, I have a lab. It's pretty obvious that you're not from around here, so if you needed a space to work - or if you need tools to fix your machine - I have it." He landed by the yellow pegasus and extended his hoof for a shake. "My home lab is not too far from here. It's a block more

down the same street with the post office. If you want, you can drop your stuff off at the garage there before finding your way to a hotel."

Wing smiled and got a better look at the newcomer. The lavender stallion was admittedly getting a bit restless. He did not want to throw himself upon the yellow one - so to speak. Not every pony understood Wing's empathy. They did not understand that deep down he had an unyielding intuition to help those in need. "I'm sure this is a little odd, coming from somepony you've never met, but I'll try to help you the best way I can. That offer is really the best I can make. Unfortunately, it's getting a little late, and I should probably be on my way to the library - or else I might run into a slightly upset mare." He gave a sheepish grin and tilted his head to the side. "Either way, again, feel free to bring your stuff by and let me know where you end up staying if you wish. I can't rightly let a visitor go around a new city without lending a hoof."

**Arcanel:** Arcanel was still relaxing over the edge of the pool, simply breathing peacefully, but then suddenly, a small series of yelps snapped him out of his reverie.

Dreamwalker, on 18 Oct 2013 - 11:30 PM, said: 

"Aw aw aw...Aw!"

The moment he heard them, he quickly tried to locate the sound of the yelps, looking around until he saw the small filly from before struggling to paddle towards the edge, and he could see that she had one hoof that looked rather limp. *\*Oh no... she must have probably had a cramp in that leg...\** he thought, worry starting to fill his mind as he quickly started to pull himself out of the water, and trotted as fast as he could to where the filly had pulled herself out, helping her out being his first and foremost train of thought. When he reached her, he stopped right in front of her, a look of concern on his face.

**@Dreamwalker,**

"Hey are you ok there? Do you need any help?" he quickly asked, hoping that he'd be able to do something for the filly.

**Aiden:** Luminescence, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:02 PM, said: 

After a deep breath, she greeted the apparently friendly unicorn with a soft whisper. "Ummm... Hello..." She blushed slightly as she thought of how silly she must have seemed, panicking with just a glance at a table of contents. She closed the book, hurriedly. "You're, well... You're not really disturbing me. In fact, I think I really needed to do something else for a moment. I guess..." She paused for a second, lost in thought. "I guess if you wanted to help, maybe you could listen?"

Without even waiting for an acknowledgement, Ambrosia took a deep breath and then spoke comfortably, as though speaking with an old friend.

Aiden helped himself to a seat, keeping himself where he was. He placed the magazine he had still been holding onto on the ground next to him and he began to listen to Ambrosia. Listening was just the kind of thing he liked to do, no matter the situation. Whether it be someone he had been friends with for years, or just a random stranger, if the intent was to help that pony out with their problems, Aiden would always take the time to do so. With an open mind and clear of all bias, he listened to everything Ambrosia had to say, breaking it all down for the issues then restructuring it together again.

The entire time Ambrosia had been speaking, Aiden never twitched a hoof. He gave her all the time she needed to express anything she had wanted, or even needed to. Keeping a calm and warm expression on his face all while being an open ear for this apparently distraught mare. As Ambrosia continued her little, confession, it became blatantly clear what she needed to do and how she could possibly go about her dream. Aiden had even more of an inclination to respond when she had asked for his own opinion.

Luminescence, on 16 Oct 2013 - 12:02 PM, said: 

She directed a goofy grin to the unicorn across from her. "What do you think, stranger?"

Releasing a slight chuckle and the warm and light expression the mare across from him wore, Aiden took a brief breath and began to let his thoughts flow. "Well, hehe, it does sound like you have your hooves quite full. I won't be light in saying that starting, or even running, something like a restaurant is quite a managerial and a bit, taxing, of a job. However...just from

sitting here, it is quite clear that you obviously really have the ambition and desires for such a dream to become reality."

"Now," Aiden took another sigh, his expression being a bit more serious, "Based on what I've heard, I think it would be wise for you to follow what your instincts tell you. Tackling your dream shouldn't be fully at the hands of another, but at the same time, I don't want you to just put away those books. There will be times where that reference, as daunting as it seems, can and will be incredibly useful. Just like in cooking, even if you know the recipe to a dish fully, isn't it wise to keep it on the one chance that you want to note down a change, or even check to see if you had accidentally forgotten one of the ingredients?"

Aiden thought for a few moments, making sure what he wanted to say, would be wise to actually do so. Having decided on his choice, he spoke up once again, but with a warmer tone, "Take everything one step at a time. Don't look at this mountain as a whole, break it into stages and ascend that elevation before fully thinking about the next stage," Aiden began to issue a slightly awkward smile at Ambrosia, feeling a bit embarrassed for the cliché speech he was giving her, regardless, he continued. "I'm sure a pony such as you has some close friends. Just remember that you don't always have to do things alone, and that they will always be there to lend a hoof if you ask for it."

Once he finished speaking, he dropped silent, experiencing a bit more awkwardness. He thought back to what he said, and doubted whether or not it was truly what should have been said. But, in the end, it didn't really matter. Everything had already been said, there was nothing he could do about it. If they worked and resonated well, then he would feel relieved. If they didn't...well, then he would try again were she to let him. Pressing on such weighted matters were never the best idea, especially when the two had only just met. In a moment of realization, he had realized his first error; a proper introduction was never given.

Aiden internally cringed at his mistake and quickly attempted to fix it, speaking with as much sincerity as he could. "Oh...please forgive me, it seems that I forgot to even introduce myself to you. My name's Aiden, and it's a pleasure in meeting you Ambrosia..."

**Deft Precision:** Serah, on 19 Oct 2013 - 09:57 AM, said: 

"Don't know. Condition is... personal. Not infectious, though."

*Personal?* Deft's already strained smile grew just slightly more strained when that word was spoken. She could think of many unfortunate ailments that a pony wouldn't want to talk about. None of them were good. She thanked Celestia when the next sentence was spoken. *Not infectious...* But, despite her relief, Deft chided herself. There was really only one way that the other pony would have known to add that. She had failed this game. Her concern had been obvious.

Serah, on 19 Oct 2013 - 09:57 AM, said: 

"Small should do. Directions will be fine," Serah concluded.

She didn't allow her disappointment in herself to show. Deft nodded and tried to return to her original manner, short and choppy. "Alright. I can give directions. Just exit this pool area. Go to your right. Good sized residential area. You'll pass through there and there's a market. Make a sharp left at the market. Hospital is really small, but you can't miss it. It's just a bit out of the way, still an easy trot. And, worth the trip. They're good. Trust me, I'd know."

Deft slid a bit into the water. She was finished, those were the directions. But, still, she felt as though there was something that she hadn't said. Her eyebrows raised in surprise. "Oh, yeah! And, I'm Deft. Deft Precision. My grandfather's name is Vim Precision. He's like... The best train conductor ever and the best stallion in Equestria! Errr... Yeah. Ummm... Hey, I guess you're going to probably go or something, but it was nice talking to you. Look me up if you're ever bored or whatever." She smiled awkwardly.

**Veracity:** She listened carefully. She didn't feel that the other pony was becoming uncomfortable, and the silence was beautiful to her ears. Far too beautiful. She could hear the sound of the grasses moving. The leaves rustled. Small creatures made their way around. It was inferior to the symphony that she could hear while lying on the cloud, but it was still quite lovely. It was becoming boring, though. She blinked.

Keystone, on 20 Oct 2013 - 9:42 PM, said: 

Finally, he shrugged, before reaching his own head down and licking her on her own nose. From there, he opened his mouth and began to speak, having settled on a course of action.

It wasn't unexpected. When dealing with others, Veracity always expected both nothing and anything. Her strategy made it easier for her to avoid both disappointments and surprises. Still, she thought, this was a most unusual pony that she had found. Most would not have reacted in the same way. When he began to talk, her grin immediately faded into a strongly neutral expression. She was intending to listen.

Zoop, on 20 Oct 2013 - 9:42 PM, said: 

"So sorry to have ran into you! I can in fact see, usually quite well, but occasionally a bit poorly depending on how much of my mane falls into the way. It was never my intention to ram into you or to knock you on your back. I am also a friend! My name is Keystone, it's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Not Important. I must say, I'm quite happy to taste like strawberries, because strawberries are really quite delicious - they are, in fact, my favorite type of berry! Have you ever had a strawberry smoothie? If not, you really ought to. I'd be happy to buy you one, if you like. I'm not entirely certain what you taste like, but whatever it is that you taste like is really quite tasty. I approve," he spoke, barely stopping or pausing throughout the entirety of his little speech, a grin on his face as he did so, despite the pain he still felt in his head. The situation was goofy, to say the least, but he decided that he may as well try to make the most of it.

His words tumbled out like dust from a shooting star. At first, she was bemused. She was used to others stuttering or at least taking a few moments to think of what to say to her. She was an unusual pony. She had become accustomed to being treated like she was an unusual pony. But, this stallion, despite his insistence to the contrary, did indeed seem as though he was blind. Perhaps, not the same blindness that she had but another kind.

Bemusement became amusement as she listened to his words. There was an odd rhythm to his talking. While it was ceaseless, it wasn't quite babbling. It seemed, to her, more like fishing with more than one line. In a moving boat. Quickly moving. Probably traveling with no known course. She giggled softly at the mental image. Her giggle was an odd sound, a blend between a hiss, a sneeze, and a soft cough. Unmistakably, it was a joyous sound. The smile on her face was enough to communicate this, but that did nothing to abate the oddness.

The stallion had ceased talking, but she was still giggling. Aware that her laughter could be

misinterpreted as mockery, she hastily covered her mouth with a hoof. "I do apologize. I wasn't laughing at you, but I just thought of something... It was funny, but I don't think I could explain it. Unless you want me to. If you want to know, then I can of course share. You might laugh. You might not. Most don't understand the things that I find funny."

She hesitated. "But, you could buy me this strawberry smoothie first? My funny thing would give us something to talk about. I assume you have a location in mind. I have nothing to do now but listen, smell... I have nothing against joining you for this meal. I have actually had strawberry smoothies in the past. I can make them, in fact. But, those weren't free... Unless, I pick the strawberries myself... Just like I did now, it seems?" Her toothy grin returned. "Or, we could just stay here and talk. I like the way that you talk. I would get hungry at some point, though. I would have to leave. I usually leave, quickly... In this case, though... I feel that I can stay? Would you like me to stay?" The question was probing.

**Ambrosia:** Aiden, on 21 Oct 2013 - 3:54 PM, said: 

"Now," Aiden took another sigh, his expression being a bit more serious, "Based on what I've heard, I think it would be wise for you to follow what your instincts tell you. Tackling your dream shouldn't be fully at the hands of another, but at the same time, I don't want you to just put away those books. There will be times where that reference, as daunting as it seems, can and will be incredibly useful. Just like in cooking, even if you know the recipe to a dish fully, isn't it wise to keep it on the one chance that you want to note down a change, or even check to see if you had accidentally forgotten one of the ingredients?"

Ambrosia fidgeted with the large book in front of her. The pony that she had spoken to was making a lot of sense, but she was certain that it wasn't quite in the way that he had intended. She flipped through the pages, looking at the table of contents again. The pony across from her had a calming effect. It was no longer so much of a stretch to see herself benefitting from the usage of the ancient tome. Her eyes twinkled. He was both right and he was wrong. As she looked at the pages of the book, something began to become clear to her.

Aiden, on 21 Oct 2013 - 3:54 PM, said: 

"I'm sure a pony such as you has some close friends. Just remember that you don't always have to do things alone, and that they will always be there to lend a hoof if you ask for it." She searched the unicorn with her eyes. Ambrosia wondered what was meant when he said "a pony such as you". She thought about her situation again. She had some close friends, yes, but would they want to help her? They all had their own jobs, their own lives, and their own

problems. She tilted her head slightly. She hardly thought that she looked like a pony that had friends with a lot of spare time. She stopped herself, though. Perhaps, she was reading too much into it? He was right, after all. She would need somepony, that was for certain. But, who... She was lost in her own thoughts as the awkward silence lingered onwards.

Aiden, on 21 Oct 2013 - 3:54 PM, said: 

Aiden internally cringed at his mistake and quickly attempted to fix it, speaking with as much sincerity as he could. "Oh...please forgive me, it seems that I forgot to even introduce myself to you. My name's Aiden, and it's a pleasure in meeting you Ambrosia..."

The tone of apology was noticed. Gracefully, she reached out a hoof to the pony across from her. She spoke softly. "There's really no need to apologize, Aiden. After all, I'm the one that distracted you from whatever it was that you were doing, and you're the one that's helping me. Your words were helpful, by the way... Thank you." She smiled reassuringly. "I wonder about something, though... You mentioned keeping references for cooking, but I never actually do that. I just read a recipe once, and I never forget it. I don't keep notes. I don't forget ingredients either. Well, alright, I may if I'm really, really tired."

"So, I suppose that I may not be the best cook for your example. Cooking has always been my special talent, but I've never really treated cooking like most cooks. For most cooks, the recipe in a cookbook really is good reference. They can use it just like you said. To change the recipes, keep track of changes. I don't really work like that, though. To me, cooking is like painting is to some others. For each and every ingredient, I know the taste, how it would change the outcome. Once I have a general idea of how a recipe is, I can change it... A lot. And, it will still turn out right, even if it's just my first time making it."

She tapped her nose with a hoof. "I guess you could say that I have a taste for cooking. Maybe? Or, maybe that's silly... I guess you could also say that I'm the perfect seasoning for my own dish? ... I think that sounds even worse, though." She laughed softly and looked away. It was a cheerful sound. "It's true though." She gently brought both forehooves down on the table with an expression of mock defiance before laughing again. A rather grim looking librarian peered around a corner at them both before going back to his work.

Ambrosia waved happily at the grumpy librarian before continuing in a hushed tone. "Actually, I think you're right. A restaurant is like a recipe, but I don't think that it needs a reference to

figure out. I think that maybe there's another way of looking at it. Maybe, you just need the right ingredients. What you said about friends to help... I'm just one ingredient, I would be a bland dish on my own. Other ponies could help... Each one bringing something different to the taste... What do you think? Hey, have you ever thought about being an ingredient in a restaurant?" She winked stealthily.

**Springsteps:** Arcanel, on 21 Oct 2013 - 10:51 AM, said: 

"Hey are you ok there? Do you need any help?" he quickly asked,

Springsteps quickly perked up when a stallion greeted her. She had totally missed his presence around her. Who was this stallion again...? She shrugged. Nope, never seen him anywhere. She smiled sheepishly, trying futilely to hold back the still rising pain in her hind leg. "It's okay! Nothing wrong, really. Just some cramp, give it time and it'll go away," she said. At least she hoped it would go away real soon. Anytime now! "Although a bread would be nice..." Her eyes slowly shifted out of focus for a few moment before she shook the daze away.

She slid upward on the chair for a more comfortable position, a forehoof still rubbing at the hurting muscle. "Anyway, the name's Springsteps. Nice to meet ya!" she grinned and raised a free forehoof overhead as if expecting a high-five. "The pool's great, isn't it?"

**Keystone:** The mare had begun to laugh a bit as Keystone had spoke, the laughter continuing a little bit beyond the completion of his little monologue before she abruptly cut it off, placing a hoof to her mouth. The sound had been a little unusual to Keystone's ears, but not at all unpleasant to listen to. keystone had experienced unpleasant laughter before in the past - this was quite far from it. Besides, Keystone had an honest and healthy - usually - appreciation for the unusual; life was dreadfully boring without anything to help spice it up, after all. The grin that had began spreading across his face when he had finished speaking moments before continued to grow, as did his amusement at the situation.

'Luminescence', on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

"I do apologize. I wasn't laughing at you, but I just thought of something... It was funny, but I don't think I could explain it. Unless you want me to. If you want to know, then I can of course share. You might laugh. You might not. Most don't understand the things that I find funny...

But, you could buy me this strawberry smoothie first? My funny thing would give us something to talk about. I assume you have a location in mind. I have nothing to do now but listen, smell... I have nothing against joining you for this meal. I have actually had strawberry smoothies in the past. I can make them, in fact. But, those weren't free... Unless, I pick the strawberries myself... Just like I did now, it seems?" Her toothy grin returned. "Or, we could just stay here and talk. I like the way that you talk. I would get hungry at some point, though. I would have to leave. I usually leave, quickly... In this case, though... I feel that I can stay? Would you like me to stay?"

Keystone felt himself chuckle a bit as he listened to her. "No need to apologize," he began, his mirth beginning to add color to his voice, "if anything I'm quite happy that I was able to amuse you. Amusement is important, you know? Quite important, in fact. Perhaps even the most important thing in life, I would say... after all, I certainly wouldn't want to live in a world without amusement. It'd be boring. Dreadfully boring. I can't really say that I enjoy being bored, dreadfully or otherwise," he said, a smile on his face.

"I'd be quite happy to listen to your explanation, even if I don't fully understand it. I don't really have anything important to do, and have no important or meaningful plans for the day. Enjoying something sweet and strawberry-y with you sounds quite a bit more appealing than doing all of nothing..." Keystone paused for a moment, chuckling a bit before continuing, "I can't say that I've ever made any sort of smoothie myself, I'm afraid. I'm a bit of a miserable failure in the kitchen, you see. Completely abysmal at anything that involves more than simply heating things up!" he continued on, with what may have sounded like completely misplaced pride in his voice. "That said, I am rather curious as to how your smoothies would taste. Perhaps sometime I could try one of them? I could provide the strawberries, of course. Nice and fresh!"

Keystone paused, taking a moment to catch his breath before continuing his lengthy little monologue. "Staying here and talking sounds good to me as well... and to be quite honest, I must admit that you make a very comfortable pillow to rest on top of. I'll leave it to you to

decide what route we should take... I do know a place nearby that we could stop at, unless you'd prefer to stay here a little while and speak. If that's the case I can remove myself from you if you'd like. Or remain as I am. I wouldn't complain. You're quite warm. And soft. It's quite cozy. Either way, I'd be quite happy if you were to stay with me. Unless you'd prefer not to. Which is fine, too." he said, winking playfully out of habit.

**Arcanel:** Dreamwalker, on 21 Oct 2013 - 8:00 PM, said: 

"It's okay! Nothing wrong, really. Just some cramp, give it time and it'll go away," she said. At least she hoped it would go away real soon. Anytime now! "Although a bread would be nice..."

Arcanel heard the words of the filly and sighed in relief, unable to hold back a small chuckle as he listened to the sudden wanton of bread. *\*Well, at least she's ok... glad to know it was only a cramp... and that it was only a pool otherwise...\** he trailed off in thought and stopped, shuddering when he thought of what could have happened to the filly in more open, deep waters.

Dreamwalker, on 21 Oct 2013 - 8:00 PM, said: 

"Anyway, the name's Springsteps. Nice to meet ya!" she grinned and raised a free forehoof overhead as if expecting a high-five. "The pool's great, isn't it?"

The sudden greet took him out of his reverie once more, and the white pegasus shook his head slightly and quickly, before returning the blue filly, who now he knew was named Springsteps, a name he thought was rather nice for her, and put a smile on his face. "Haha, nice to meet you too Springsteps! My name is Arcanel, and yes, the pool DOES feel rather nice." He said, releasing a small giggle. "Though, next time, we should make sure neither of us gets a cramp to enjoy it more don't you think?" he asked teasingly, before letting out a small smile again. "Seriously though, are you sure you're ok? I could help you walk elsewhere or something like that." The mailpony offered, thinking that he should have probably asked about her parents, but since he couldn't see them anywhere, he figured that she had taken a walk on her own, and felt it wasn't really needed to ask unless it was more important. *\*Last thing I want to do is upset her somehow...\** he thought.

**Springsteps:** Springsteps for some reason couldn't help but to raise an eyebrow from Arcanel's latest words. It's not like she was bleeding or anything. The stallion was nice, but the tone of his voice reminded her of the guys back at the caravan who wouldn't stop bugging her about random things. Nevertheless, she gave the stallion a reassuring smile. "I'm okay! Really, just another minute or two and you can see me back swimming again." She rubbed a hoof at her calf muscle. Yep, any moment now.

Springsteps was rather worried that the stallion would ask where her parents were and told them about her having a cramp. While her father would just say that it was 'good for her', her mother would... be not so pleasant. The filly involuntarily shivered. Change the topic, fast! "And uh... Are you here for a vacation? Do you have a marefriend?" Springsteps quickly asked to Arcanel without even thinking what did she just said.

**Arcanel:** Dreamwalker, on 23 Oct 2013 - 9:23 PM, said: 

"I'm okay! Really, just another minute or two and you can see me back swimming again."

Arcanel sighed in relief once more, albeit still slightly worried as he saw the filly still rubbing her hoof. *\*Well, she doesn't look completely ok... but at least it's not anything more serious I guess...\** he thought, not quite as reassured as he could have been before, but it was at least it wasn't worse. Suddenly, she saw her shiver and was about to ask the filly once again if she was ok, only she spoke first.

Dreamwalker, on 23 Oct 2013 - 9:23 PM, said: 

"And uh... Are you here for a vacation? Do you have a marefriend?"

The white mailpony couldn't help blink a few times, completely taken by surprise with the sudden questions, especially the last one, before trying to recompose himself and respond properly. "Uhhh yeah, I'm on vacation. Taking a break from my job back at Vanhoover as a mailpony, to be precise." He spoke with a smile. "And ummm... as for a marefriend... not quite. I haven't really looked at having a relationship just yet." The pegasus said, rubbing the back of his head in slight embarrassment. "What about you? Are you on vacation yourself?" he asked, his face now one of wonder as his embarrassment subsided.

**Aiden:** Luminescence, on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

The tone of apology was noticed. Gracefully, she reached out a hoof to the pony across from her. She spoke softly. "There's really no need to apologize, Aiden. After all, I'm the one that distracted you from whatever it was that you were doing, and you're the one that's helping me. Your words were helpful, by the way... Thank you." She smiled reassuringly..

Aiden loosened up from his solid posture, a large internal sigh flowed through his body. To Aiden, making the proper introductions were quite important and helped to facilitate good conversation. Based on how a pony would introduce themselves, he would try and get an estimate as to how the future conversation would end up. By hearing Ambrosia's kind words mixed with her smile, he knew he was in the clear, for the time being.

Luminescence, on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

She tapped her nose with a hoof. "I guess you could say that I have a taste for cooking. Maybe? Or, maybe that's silly... I guess you could also say that I'm the perfect seasoning for my own dish? ... I think that sounds even worse, though."

He gave a light chuckle at the words Ambrosia had chosen to describe herself. Despite what she thought, to him, they rang true. If what she had said about herself was true, then she didn't need a "special blend" or a secret technique to make a dish perfect, all she needed was her own creative imagination and a dream.

Luminescence, on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

Ambrosia waved happily at the grumpy librarian before continuing in a hushed tone. "Actually, I think you're right. A restaurant is like a recipe, but I don't think that it needs a reference to figure out. I think that maybe there's another way of looking at it. Maybe, you just need the right ingredients. What you said about friends to help... I'm just one ingredient, I would be a bland dish on my own. Other ponies could help... Each one bringing something different to the taste... What do you think? Hey, have you ever thought about being an ingredient in a restaurant?" She winked stealthily.

Aiden listened closely to Ambrosia as she spoke, becoming quite curious as to what she was getting at. He offered her another light chuckle as she connected the construction of a restaurant with her love of cooking. Though he felt a bit off at the slight shortcoming of his words, it became visible that not everything he had said wasn't applicable. Although, he couldn't really put all that blame onto himself, barely knowing this mare didn't really give him much footing when he confronted her to give some assistance. He continued thinking about the entire situation until his ears picked up a question from Ambrosia that he would have never expected.

He looked shocked to say the least. The question caught him completely off-guard and broke any train of thought he had. Did he really think he was a good pony for this sort of job? Ambrosia apparently had some inkling that he might be useful, but was he sure of himself? Realizing that he probably wasn't giving the best impression by being all quiet, he quashed all doubts and placed his thoughts back into order and gave the question another brief moment of thought before returning to reality and addressing Ambrosia. "W-Wow...help out...i-in a restaurant, eh? Can't really say that's always been on my career choice list." Aiden laughed quietly and rubbing his neck with his hoof.

"However," He looked down to the table with a serious manner before switching to one of sincerity, "I don't think an opportunity like this, would really ever come again. ... At this very moment, I may not be sure as to what I could bring to this dish, but..." Aiden looked to Ambrosia with confidence. "I am willing to lend any form of help you may require for your endeavor Ambrosia. So, with your acceptance, you can surely count me in."

**Winged Ratchet:** Winged listened as closely as he could to write down the directions. The notes were about as short as his thoughts: Start at park. Post is two blocks south and on the left. Hotel 6 blocks west. Getting directions from the stranger made Winged feel completely helpless. He usually was able to think clearly, but the idea of being so far from home was just drilling away at him, forcing him into a paradoxical cycle of worrying about how worried he was.

Everything stopped. The pegasus above him let out a sigh, immediately catching WR's attention.

Quote

"I know this is going to come off as slightly strange from a total stranger...

Winged awkwardly extended his hoof to meet the stranger's. A physicist? That was somewhat WR's speed. But surely, this pony couldn't have the tools he needed. What use could a physicist have for machining equipment? He took a mental note of Wing's address regardless. "Well, it's a kind offer, but I don't know that I could possibly throw myself on you like that. I've caused enough trouble already," Winged gave a quick glance over to the turbine blade still stuck in the tree where the pink and blue ponies were speaking. Winged sighed, "I don't know... I'll think about it I suppose."

"I should be going then. I should get to the post office as soon as possible. Thank you again for the offer," WR gave a half smile. Hopefully the stranger bought it. Winged stood up, nodded to the pegasus, collected his things, and paused half way through turning to leave. He wasn't going to be able to move the heavy metal litter pile in the street; He would not be walking away from this person so easily. "Maybe one more question," Winged said, frustrated while turning to Wing one more time, "Do you know where I can find a cart for all that garbage over there?"

**Serah:** Luminescence, on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

"Alright. I can give directions. Just exit this pool area. Go to your right. Good sized residential area. You'll pass through there and there's a market. Make a sharp left at the market. Hospital is really small, but you can't miss it. It's just a bit out of the way, still an easy trot. And, worth the trip. They're good. Trust me, I'd know."

Serah wondered how this other pony knew the quality of the hospital so well. Perhaps the other mare must have spent an extensive amount of time there? But she didn't look the like the type to live dangerously, even if her coat coloration and mane-style were similar to Serah's own. Come to think of it, their speech patterns seemed to be somewhat similar as well.

Luminescence, on 21 Oct 2013 - 7:53 PM, said: 

"Oh, yeah! And, I'm Deft. Deft Precision. My grandfather's name is Vim Precision. He's like... The best train conductor ever and the best stallion in Equestria! Errr... Yeah. Ummm... Hey, I

guess you're going to probably go or something, but it was nice talking to you. Look me up if you're ever bored or whatever." She smiled awkwardly.

The similarities between the two came to a stop as the Deft ran her mouth off about the greatest train conductor in Equestria. Train conductors weren't a group Serah had gotten along with recently, and not even the hot tub could heal her wounded pride. Or her crippling physical condition, for that matter. Why had she spent so much time talking to this other mare again?

"Okay. I'll be leaving now." Serah didn't explicitly thank Deft for her help, but she figured that tolerating her presence was thanks enough. "My name is Serah. But I probably won't be here long."

With that, Serah eased herself to a standing position, and gingerly climbed out of the hot-tub. The water had indeed helped, as the pain she'd been feeling was at least numbed for the moment. The chill in her bones had certainly been taken care of, and her muscles weren't screaming in protest as they had been during the hike.

*"Don't understand,"* Serah thought to herself as she opened the gate and exited the pool area. *"Doesn't the body have ways of healing itself? Never had disease before. Bullet wound isn't the same thing, I suppose. Shouldn't it just hurt my chest, though?"*

At first, the pain had been regulated to her chest, which made sense, seeing as she'd been shot. But as time went on, she'd started developing terrible headaches and stomachaches. It had made it difficult to eat, but 'luckily', she hadn't had much in the way of rations to begin with. She had difficulty thinking and concentrating at times, as well. Writing her journal entries had been less of a way to pass time, and more a method of keeping her sanity. She shuddered at the thought.

A sign caught Serah's attention out of the corner of her eye, taking her out of her introspection.

"That must be the market. So, I'm close, then?" she thought to herself. Ignoring the knot in her stomach, Serah continued on her way to the hospital.

**Wing:** R.J., on 25 Oct 2013 - 1:15 PM, said: 

"Do you know where I can find a cart for all that garbage over there?"

"That's a good question. To be honest, I'm not so sure. There aren't usually carts lying around. In principle, I could have some intern from the lab come over and collect the pieces up to drop off at the garage. It's really not an imposition at all. I cleared some space out to transfer one of my inventions to the national laboratory. That kind of freed up a lot of room, so I wouldn't mind some company filling the lonely space if need be." The pegasus squinted and glanced upwards to get a reference for the time of day. "I don't think I got your name," he spoke, a less than subtle inquiry into this stallion's identity.

He waited a few moments to give the visitor a chance to respond before brushing his mane.

"Again, my offer to help is quite sincere. Don't be afraid to take me up on it at all.

Unfortunately, I'm in a bit of a hurry as I promised my marefriend I would meet her at the library. She's quite cinnamony, so I don't want to keep her waiting. It was a pleasure to meet you, even under... the less than favorable circumstances. Just send a note my way or drop on by, and I'll set in motion whatever I can." He gave a courteous nod to Ratchet. "Either way, you don't have to stay a stranger."

With that, Wing unfurled his flying appendages and darted off into the sky. He had spent enough time meandering about the town. It was about time for him to enjoy his favorite part of the day. Within minutes, he landed before the structure. The library had always amazed him with its simple charm. It possessed a quaint feel that took Las Pegasus back to the days before it became a tourist attraction. A pony could make the claim that the whole area sprouted from its roots, but the West wasn't exactly won with just a good book. It was won with grit, cunning, ingenuity, and perseverance; all features that had been ingrained into every slab of wood and pane of glass that pieced together this monument.

The stallion pressed his hoof to the door and stepped inside. He figured he'd wander through the stacks for a bit while searching for Ambrosia. After all, he didn't just want to sit down empty-hoofed. It did not take long before Wing found himself in the science-fiction section. He had plucked a *Miraculous Adventures of Doctor Whooves* volume from the shelf before his brain

could consciously register it. "Time travel, such a powerful concept," he mumbled to himself before chuckling. "To the TARDIS..." he chanted in a triumphant whisper.

A familiar voice soon caught his attention, but it was the presence of another that made him freeze. Wing's eyes slowly drifted to the side as if he could peer past the wall of towering books to the table at which Ambrosia and Aiden congregated. The sounds at least made his search easy, but the recognition of the male's tone sent a shivering sense of curiosity down the physicist's spine. *How is that even possible?* he thought, momentarily perplexed. After the brief fermata, Wing's internal conductor finally gave the cue to trot forward. He rounded the corner, quickly catching sight of his special somepony somewhat emphatically professing her dream. It was adorable - to say the least, and there was no reason he could attain to justify interrupting the moment. Instead, the stallion decided to lean against the end of the stack in silence as the pair conversed. After all, his suspicion had been confirmed. The voice that belonged to the unicorn was recognized for a reason. It belonged to a friend, and by chance, fate had brought that friend straight to Amby. The thought left a grin plastered upon his muzzle. *I can wait my turn*, Wing thought. *Besides, watching you share your blossom with others is a special moment in and of itself.*

**Tich:** Tich had gotten somewhat fed up from swimming around, there was nothing much left to do, no one else was in the pool and he had grown tired. He waded towards the edge and got out of the pool. And pulled himself out of the water. As he got out, the tips of his hair and his t-shirt dripped water all over the deck, unceremoniously leaking water everywhere. He stumbled back towards where he placed his bags. Dragged his towel from his bags and patted himself down. He realized he'd not be able to completely dry himself off.

Once done, he pushed his large light blue towel back into his bag, stuffing it in, it didn't matter since there wasn't anything much of note inside. He grappled his bag and pulled it over his back, nudging another bag conveniently placed next to his. "Someone else might have thought this place was for storage," he muttered to himself. He looked around one last time, seeing everyone else interact, mostly just hanging beside the pool as he was the last to leave it.

He then turned round and exited the area. Slowly walking away, still dripping a bit of water. every few paces.

**Ambrosia:** Aiden, on 25 Oct 2013 - 06:01 AM, said: 

"W-Wow...help out...i-in a restaurant, eh? Can't really say that's always been on my career choice list." Aiden laughed quietly and rubbing his neck with his hoof.

The gaps in communication were becoming familiar, but they didn't irritate her. Ambrosia waited for Aiden to respond, showing no sign of impatience at all. When he finally spoke, her response was to beam at him. He had a wonderful laugh, and he looked silly rubbing his neck with a hoof. She did find it somewhat funny that it had taken so much time and thought for such a normal reaction. She had been expecting him to say something...

Aiden, on 25 Oct 2013 - 06:01 AM, said: 

"However," He looked down to the table with a serious manner before switching to one of sincerity, "I don't think an opportunity like this, would really ever come again. ... At this very moment, I may not be sure as to what I could bring to this dish, but..." Aiden looked to Ambrosia with confidence. "I am willing to lend any form of help you may require for your endeavor Ambrosia. So, with your acceptance, you can surely count me in."

She took a deep breath to avoid giggling unintentionally. This was more like what she had expected, almost too much so. Aiden was such a serious pony. In many ways, he reminded her of Springer. Still, she knew that Aiden wasn't simply serious. He was a pony with a heart and he was a dreamer. She could tell. It took an unusual type of thinking to agree to help a perfect stranger with a restaurant. This time, it was her turn to sit for a moment in contemplative silence. She brought a hoof to the side of her head as she thought. "Well, I accept!" She said, both resolutely and a little too loudly.

Lowering her voice, she continued. "I definitely accept, Aiden... This is something completely new for me. You seem like a calm, thoughtful pony. I don't really know much about a restaurant even now, but I am almost certain that a pony like you would be able to help. Maybe, you could help me right now, actually?" She pushed the books in front of her off to one side. "I think that the first thing that I need to do is to think of a name? I thought of a few names, but I tossed them all out because they had my own name in them. It just seemed... Vain?"

Ambrosia looked thoughtful. "I don't really want to have my name in the name of the

restaurant. I mean... It just seems like it would be a bit selfish. It's like we talked about. A restaurant is like a meal prepared from a recipe. There are so many ingredients, no one ingredient is really more important than any other. Naming a restaurant after its owner just seems like calling a chocolate cake "flour" instead of, well, chocolate cake. It wouldn't make much sense. A restaurant should have a name that makes sense..."

Much as she had been earlier, Ambrosia was lost in her thoughts, thinking out loud. "An ambrosia is a type of flower. I've always been interested in gardening. Just a bit, though. Not really enough to start a garden myself, but I think about plants a lot. I mean, a good cook really should... It helps to know about where food comes from. There are more than just flowers. There are trees, bushes, grass. Each and every one of them is beautiful in its own way, but they all have one thing in common. Roots."

She shook her head gently and blinked. "Oh dear... I think that my lack of sleep is getting to me a bit. I didn't really mean to ramble on like that. But, well... That is the one name that I have for a restaurant. Roots? A place where all ponies are welcome, no matter what type of ingredient they are. What do you think?" Her eyes twinkled and a broad, friendly smile graced her face.

**Deft Precision:** Legendary Emerald, on 25 Oct 2013 - 10:07 PM, said: 

"Okay. I'll be leaving now." Serah didn't explicitly thank Deft for her help, but she figured that tolerating her presence was thanks enough. "My name is Serah. But I probably won't be here long."

Deft's mind went blank. She had a strange feeling when she watched the other pony slowly pull herself out of the hot tub. The mare didn't look too much older than her own age, but she moved slowly. Too slowly. The response to Deft's friendliness had been remarkably blunt. Had she said something wrong? She lifted a hoof and waved goodbye, limply. A lump stayed in her throat.

*I should follow her... Wait. No, I really shouldn't. That wouldn't end well. But, why not... Hell, it's not like I have anything to do around here. Anywhere. What's the worst she could do... She could fry me. Well. Wouldn't be the first time. Things happened sometimes.* She winced at the memory of being hit by a

wide variety of spells came to her mind.

Her grandfather had often cautioned her to watch herself. She had the habit of getting into trouble. She shook her head and looked around the pool area. The stallion with the strange mane was gone. The small filly was still there, talking to a pegasus pony. She thought about introducing herself, but a look of disgust appeared on her face. What good would it do? *Well there are worse things... Like... Oh buck, I don't know.*

**@Dreamwalker, @Arcanel,**

Feeling, increasingly, like she was doing the wrong thing, she approached the pegasus stallion and filly. "Uh. Hey, how are you? I'm Deft, and... Ummm. Yeah. That's my name. Anything... Errr... Interesting going on here?" She couldn't even feign calmness. Her twitching returned and her smile was clearly strained. She cleared her throat nervously. *What's wrong with me... Am I getting sick?! Maybe that mare lied to me...* She took a deep breath...

**Veracity:** She was becoming quite used to the way that this stallion talked. In the back of her mind, she felt that she should be annoyed. It would be, she reasoned, the appropriate response to a pony that didn't follow any of the guidelines that normally governed communication. Instead, she felt a definite sense of being entertained. This stallion was, as he said, amusing. It was no wonder... What an unusual pony. She only knew of a few others with such a plainly stated policy on seeking amusement... Her grin faded into a smile.

He was still talking, but... His words on the subject of amusement seemed quite familiar to her. The words lingered. But, she let the similarity pass. There were other things to think about at that moment. She listened. It sounded as though there would be a choice to be made. She had expected for him to propose to take her to some other location, perhaps a cafe or something. After all, he had mentioned buying a strawberry smoothie. Now, he seemed to lean more in the direction of making one. Perhaps, she reasoned, it had been her mention of being able to make them herself.

The earlier offer, making something from fresh strawberries was her first inclination, but she felt an unusual feeling. It was a slight tinge of nervousness. The only reason that she was able to cook anything was because, in her own kitchen, she had everything laid out in a precise arrangement. She could find everything by touch. In an unfamiliar kitchen, she would be anything but graceful. She would be slow, it would be tedious. The nervousness was followed by a tinge of sadness. Nervousness and sadness, she thought, a recipe for regret. Her sadness

flashed across her eyes for just a moment, but she contained it.

She tilted her head, slightly. Her nervousness may not have appeared on her face, but it remained in her thoughts. Even going to a nearby place would be difficult. She always attracted so much attention, everywhere that she went. This day had, for the most part, been wonderful only because she had avoided being seen by others. "HmMMM..." She appeared to be deep in thought. Staying where they were was a possibility, but... She was becoming bored with the location. She shrugged as best as she could given the circumstance.

With a sigh, Veracity spoke indecisively. "I'm, sadly, not the best for picking a route." She smiled awkwardly. "I was just thinking about some things... I don't want to remain here, because I'm becoming bored with this location. I see with my ears, mostly, and the view isn't very interesting. Just grass and things. I suppose I want something more interesting... Maybe, something to do? I wouldn't mind going to a place nearby, but the problem is that I do tend to attract some attention wherever I go. I don't really like to be the focus point of too many other ponies... If I can avoid it."

She made an unusual noise. It sounded similar to the chirp of a bird. "I have the habit of thinking too much, sometimes. In this case, maybe the answer is simple? I would like to do something quiet and contemplative. Making strawberry smoothies from fresh strawberries sounds like it would be wonderful, yes? I would love to do this. I can't see, though, but if you could show me where things are at your place, then it would not be a problem. Well... I saw show me, but I suppose that you will have to guide my hoof. You seem patient... Maybe this would be okay? Could we do this? It would be amusing enough, I think?"

Veracity grinned, again. "Please... It would be fun, I think. Oh, but... Please... No practical jokes... I know that you would probably never think of such a thing, but maybe some other would. I can't see... This is sometimes taken advantage of in terrible ways. I know that I may not seem like it, but I wound easily. Some things that other ponies find funny, at my expense, hurt me quite considerably. It is for this reason that I prefer to avoid them. Amusement is fine... But, it is also important to allow others to retain their grace, yes?"

**Luminescence:** Tich Showers, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:43 AM, said: 

He then turned round and exited the area. Slowly walking away, still dripping a bit of water. every few paces.

There was a slight rustling in the stallion's bag. The bag opened, slightly, just enough for a filly's head to emerge. She was a unicorn filly with large red eyes and a silver coat. When they passed under a tree or into any other slight shade, the filly's coat could be seen to glow just

slightly. The eyes intently focused on the stallion. They seemed calm, carrying just the slightest hint of a mischievous nature.

She coughed. It was plainly a sound made to get the stallion's attention. "Hello. I am Luminescence. You are a soggy pegasus stallion. You are also not very efficient. Your towel was wet. I know this because I have it right here. You shoved it on my head. That was rude." She raised a small hoof, holding a section of the towel. "But, more importantly... You did not dry yourself off completely..." She trailed off. "Wait. Was this on purpose? You must have realized that you were still dripping wet."

The small silver head tilted comically to one side. "I seek amusement. I was watching you while you were at the pool. You failed to find amusement so this is why you left. That was a bad thing. It is also why I was going to leave. I failed to find amusement. I am quite disappointed in the ponies that were there. All of them talking about boring things. No fun at all. But. You are fun. You drip water. This is amusing, plainly."

"I find this bag to be uncomfortable. May I ride on your back? Will you carry me? I wish to go to the market. There are places there where we can find food. Surely, you are hungry. Swimming is tiring. I can only guess, though. I do not like the water very much. I hope this does not offend you. Even if it does, you should still carry me. I did not get much sleep last night. I am tired. I was busy. Doing things that were amusing. Perhaps, we can discuss things that are amusing. While you walk? Shall we seek amusement, friend?"

**Springsteps:** Springsteps grinned widely as Arcanel stuttered an explanation on the marefriend subject. Silly adults were always acting weird when asked about that particular subject. She was rather pleased that the question was enough to divert the stallion's line of thoughts, though. "I'm on a vacation! I guess you can say that, I'm never on anything else," Springsteps explained. "Yep, permanent vacation, at least for now. Dad said that I don't have to worry about school stuff until I'm older."

Deft, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:16 PM, said: 

"Uh. Hey, how are you? I'm Deft, and... Ummm. Yeah. That's my name. Anything... Errr... Interesting going on here?"

Springsteps nearly missed new arrival on the scene, but she was quick to perk her ears up into attention. She recognized the new pony as the young twitchy mare from before. For a moment Springsteps' face was contorted to that of a worry. Maybe the mare ate something bad? "Nothing interesting, really. We are just talking about marefriends and vacations!" Springsteps answered excitedly. Idly she tapped her hindhooves to the floor. Yep, they're good now! With one sudden jump she launched herself to the Deft's side. "Hello, Deft! I'm Springsteps. And, um, are you okay? If you're feeling jittery, how about a lap or two around the pool? I heard galloping around is good to take care of that," she offered, herself already bouncing on the spot, eager to test her speed against the young mare.

**Tich:** As soon as Tich heard the cough and the shifting in his bag he stopped dead in his tracks, standing stiff in a comical fashion with his right front hoof still raised as he was about to make a step. He turned his head to look at the filly's head popped out of his bag.

Luminescence, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:17 PM, said: 

"Hello. I am Luminescence. You are a soggy pegasus stallion. ... "Wait. Was this on purpose? You must have realized that you were still dripping wet."

"Hi.. yes... what?... uhhh," he replied, to the first inquiries, it was of no use, she kept talking and Tich was having trouble responding. "I realize I did a bit of a bodge job drying myself, miss." he smiled, sassily responding to her comments on how soaking wet he still was. "I just felt like a nice drip dry on such a sunny day."

Luminescence, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:17 PM, said: 

The small silver head tilted comically to one side. "I seek amusement. ... You are fun. You drip water. This is amusing, plainly." ... Shall we seek amusement, friend?"

"Well if horses were courses, is what mum always used to say." he responded sighing in a moment of resignation. "I am quite famished myself now that you say it, wouldn't mind some

company while I buy me some food." He looked at his wing, dripping water, realizing these would be of no use until they dried properly. He patted his back gesturing the filly to hop on. "You may wish to put my towel over me considering how well I dry myself off, if you don't like water." he grinned.

"I did find the others at the pool to be a bit dull, why would anyone go there and not have a good soak." he pondered to Lumi, "Oh bugger, I forgot, I am Tich, and I am a wet horse who likes to faff around pools and other places?"

Tich started trotting off. "Now let's go take a gander at the market then."

**Winged Ratchet:** "O-oh," Ratchet scratched the back of his neck and spoke sheepishly. How silly of him to forget to mention that little detail, especially after this stranger was so warm and open to him. "The name is Winged. Winged Ratchet. You can call me whatever, though..." WR's voice trailed off with his thoughts. He figured he should say something to try and break the awkward and upsetting feelings he had, but before he could do so, Wing was up, up, and away. Should he shout a word of thank you at the lavender pegasus? Ratchet shook his head to himself. He had made enough noise.

Why bother to offer help at all? Ratchet thought about it for a short while, and realized that the answer was simple: Because he would have done the same for Wing. It was simply the right thing to do.

Winged stood up and stretched his forelegs. He was done worrying about the bike and home and everything else. There was no sense in worrying anymore. He knew how to rebuild the bike, and if the worst came to be, then he could simply hop a train home. For now, he would enjoy his accidental vacation. He took a look around the park. It was a fairly wide open space. There was a rather pretty flower garden where Wing was standing earlier. Across the way he could hear the sounds of a pool; He heard the motor in the filter first, but the noise of splashing and laughter and fun gave it away as a pool. WR thought about swimming, but decided against it. Water didn't really agree with his 'coat'.

Ratchet was fairly certain he was forgetting some other detail. He turned to grab his satchel bag from the bench, but stopped roughly half way when a glint of sunlight caught his vision. There was still a turbine blade stuck in the tree where the two other ponies were conversing. As he walked over to collect the part, he dully turned his attention from the metal piece to the two ponies and nearly felt his eyes pop out of his head.

*One of these ponies is unlike the other...* Winged couldn't help the little kids song from popping into his head. The blue pegasus wasn't a pegasus at all! Well, maybe she was, but she certainly didn't look like a normal pegasus. She was significantly taller than the average mare, and more importantly, she had bat wings! *What kind of a pony has bat wings?!* Winged thought. There was nothing like this in Ponyville. Er... No one. After all, this 'pegasus' was still a pony with feelings... WR stared as she let out a cute laugh. It was a weird sort of cute. Not cute like a little filly is cute, but cute like... He wasn't sure. It was just a quiet little giggle of a laugh, revealing what would normally frighten any pony -fangs- but Ratchet found it adorable for some reason.

### ***Whack!***

Winged smacked the side of his head against the palm and fell down in front of the pink and blue pegasai. Stupid, he should have been paying more attention to where he was going. WR looked up at the two and let out an awkward laugh and shakily got back up on his hooves. "Heheh, uh, sorry for intruding, I just need to grab something real quick. I promise I won't stay long..." Ratchet reached behind the tree and yanked the part loose from the bark, the whole time still staring at the blue pegasus, "You know what they say... Two is company... *Tree* is a crowd," he put on a dopey smile and remained awkwardly in place. His legs screamed at him to walk away, especially after making a fool of himself not only by walking into the tree, but also by introducing himself with a hopeless excuse of a pun. However, WR could only stand there smiling like a featherbrain, staring at the blue pegasus.

Hopefully the two had a good sense of humor.

**Wing:** On second thought, Wing scratched his initial plan. While leaning against the stack and listening to Ambrosia and Aiden exchange various pleasantries was incredibly amusing to him, the lavender pegasus came to the realization that he could be standing there quite some time

before being noticed. He knew them both - albeit to varying degrees. Why was he waiting? Why wasn't he jumping into the fray - so to speak?

Once more, his frame had been moved into action without conscious thought. He stealthily crept towards the table, approaching from an angle slightly beyond the peripheral vision the yellow mare. Wing knew that eventually he would be spotted by Aiden, but he hoped that his angle of attack - coupled with those few moments of shock would buy him enough time. It really did not matter if it did. With a few steps, he slipped behind his marefriend and moved his hooves around her head to cover those green eyes of hers.

"Gotcha," he whispered before pushing his muzzle forward to give a gentle nibble to her ear. The impact of his grin might have reached unprecedented heights as his chocolate irides shifted upwards to outline the unicorn stallion. "Hey Aiden," he mumbled through his teeth, still sharing his selected choice of affection with his flower. "What brings you into town?"

**Arcanel:** Arcanel raised his eyebrow slightly, but simply chuckled at Springsteps response. *\*Temporary permanent vacation eh? I guess that's one reason to be rather happy about. Have all the time the world to do whatever you want.\** He pondered in amusement. However, his train of thought was interrupted when a crimson mare, one of the two he had seen before on the tub before, came towards them, in a rather strange way if he had to say so himself. *\*I wonder if she's just a bit... socially nervous...\** he thought, but before he could even speak to the earth pony, whom he now knew was called Deft, Springsteps had just answered before.

Dreamwalker, on 27 Oct 2013 - 05:11 AM, said: 

"Nothing interesting, really. ... I heard galloping around is good to take care of that,"

The mailpony couldn't help but give a rather nervous chuckle when the blue filly mentioned the word marefriends, as he'd think that it might give Deft the wrong impression. However, as soon as she presented herself and changed the subject, Arcanel gave a soft sigh in relief, and chuckled at Springsteps enthusiasm. *\*Seems like she's all ok now indeed.\** he thought once more in amusement. At that moment, he decided to introduce himself as well to Deft.

**@Luminescence,**

"Hey there Deft. My name is Arcanel and it's nice to meet you!" he greeted cheerfully. "And as for something interesting... well.. I suppose relaxing could be considered interesting depending on the circumstances, but maybe not now." He said with a laugh, albeit knowing that his attempt at humor was probably not good. *\*Next time, think a bit more your jokes before you tell them you dummy...\**

**Deft Precision:** Springsteps', on 27 Oct 2013 - 05:11 AM, said: 

For a moment Springsteps' face was contorted to that of a worry. Maybe the mare ate something bad? "Nothing interesting, really. We are just talking about marefriends and vacations!"

*Marefriends and vacations...* Deft stared at the apparently young filly, then she looked back at the apparently not-nearly-as-young pegasus stallion. It seemed like an odd topic of conversation for the two ponies to have. Unless the filly was older than she looked.. *Fine, none of my business, I have more important things to do. Like... Maybe... I could find out whatever the hell is bothering me...* Between her twitching and the odd feeling of nervousness, she was certain that there was something suddenly wrong with her.

'Springsteps', on 27 Oct 2013 - 05:11 AM, said: 

With one sudden jump she launched herself to the Deft's side. "Hello, Deft! I'm Springsteps. And, um, are you okay? If you're feeling jittery, how about a lap or two around the pool? I heard galloping around is good to take care of that," she offered, herself already bouncing on the spot, eager to test her speed against the young mare.

"Wah?" She took a step back and looked just slightly irritated at the filly's sudden approach. "Hey Springersteps, no, I'm not feeling okay. Yeah, I'm feeling jittery. Thanks for startling me! Really nice of you! Galloping around the pool?" Deft looked at the pool and then at her hooves. She didn't feel like galloping, she felt like she was falling ill. She wanted a warm blanket, a

warm meal, and a long nap. Her eyes darted back to the filly and twinkled. She also wanted to toss the filly into the pool, but that could wait.

'Arcanel', on 29 Oct 2013 - 1:17 PM, said: 

"Hey there Deft. My name is Arcanel and it's nice to meet you!" he greeted cheerfully. "And as for something interesting... well.. I suppose relaxing could be considered interesting depending on the circumstances, but maybe not now."

*Wait, what?* Her internal dialog picked up again. *Something interesting... Relaxing? How is relaxing interesting? Who comes to a pool to relax anyway? Pools are for doing pool things and... Relaxing. Okay, so maybe he's right, but... Wait... Why not now... Oh buck. Am I going to get thrown into the pool?!* Without moving her head, her eyes focused on the stallion.

"Hey. Why maybe not now? You aren't relaxing?!" She raised an eyebrow. "You look like you are... Maybe I am... Maybe Springersteps is... Sooooo... What could you be thinking that means that this isn't a time to relax?" She narrowed her eyes and locked them straight ahead. The twitching stopped and her voice lowered to a husky growl. "Arc, if you throw me in that pool, I may do something bad when I get out..."

**Luminescence:** Tich Showers, on 27 Oct 2013 - 06:07 AM, said: 

"I did find the others at the pool to be a bit dull, why would anyone go there and not have a good soak." he pondered to Lumi, "Oh bugger, I forgot, I am Tich, and I am a wet horse who likes to faff around pools and other places?"

Tich started trotting off. "Now let's go take a gander at the market then."

"Yes!" She blurted out before falling into silent contemplation. The filly seemed to consider everything that Tich had said. She remained in the bag for at least a good minute. Finally, she spoke. "Alright." She jumped on Tich's back and then started pulling the towel from the pack. "Offering your towel is considerate. But. Your towel is already wet. You used it to dry off. I

suppose you think that wet and dry are the same thing. Maybe they are? This means that both you and this towel can be dry."

Spinning gracefully, she wrapped herself in the towel and then settled on Tich's back. "Ignore what I just said. Everything is soaking. For today, I will be a soggy pony. I may not like water, but I can like it when I choose to. After all, I drink water. Now, to the market. For an adventure, which will hopefully be amusing. What kind of food shall we acquire? We should visit the fountain, first. It would be fun to go into a place to eat and drip all over. We may be thrown out. That would be even more fun."

She paused again, thinking. "And... I want a hat. Do you have a hat? Perhaps, we could acquire one... Food, water, hat. Yes. Not necessarily in this order. You should trot faster." Her previously blank expression morphed into a huge smile. "Towards adventure!" She dramatically pointed a hoof ahead.

**Dawn:** "Shhhh... Don't be scared..." The cat just stared at her, seemingly wondering why she didn't just use her magic and grab it. She was wondering that as well. Of course, the answer was obvious. She'd wanted to climb a tree, any tree. She had no idea why she wanted to do it, but she was willing to blame her boredom. So, she had put her cat on her head and started climbing. There was just one huge problem, the cat could climb better. Now she was in the tree, out on a branch, pursuing a cat that didn't seem to have any intent of cooperating. She sighed. Yup, it was boredom.

She was only in Las Pegasus because she was supposed to be helping out at the big hospital near the center of the city. It had also seemed like a great opportunity to visit some local friends. Instead, the entire thing had turned into a bit of a nightmare. The big hospital had a strict no pets policy. The ponies there had no patience for her sometimes odd antics and no love for her lightheartedness. A bunch of serious no fun ponies. It only took a few days for the head of the hospital to lose his temper and "banish" her to the outskirts of the city.

She hated him. He was a mean pony. Her cat had only managed to destroy a half dozen pillows. Apparently that was enough to ensure that she would never be welcomed to "the facility" again. She shook her head. What kind of boring pony would call a hospital a "facility". A look of fierce disapproval flashed across her face and the cat backed away. "Oh, darn it!" She

crawled after it, just a little further, stopping for a moment to look up (or rather down, since she was hanging from a tree limb).

'Serah', on 25 Oct 2013 - 10:07 PM, said: 

"That must be the market. So, I'm close, then?" she thought to herself. Ignoring the knot in her stomach, Serah continued on her way to the hospital.

In an instant, Dawn realized that there was something horribly wrong with the pony. She was a young unicorn mare, but she looked totally and completely miserable. Her movements were slow. As she approached, Dawn stared. She wondered where the pony was going. She shifted her weight a bit, intending to wave at the pony and ask where she was going and if anything was wrong with her. Just a slight shift and...

***\*SNAP\****

The tree branch had lost enough support to send it swinging towards the hefty trunk of the tree. The cat hissed, and Dawn squeaked in surprise. She was too startled to think of a spell to use, so she dove for her cat the moment that it looked like she could get to the ground safely. She caught the cat just before the branch hit the tree. To avoid harming her kitty, she rolled over and hit the ground with a thud, landing on her back just a few feet in front of the red unicorn.

The branch hit the tree and broke off, falling to the ground and landing with a crash of leaves and wood. At the nearby market, several ponies stared at the baby blue unicorn lying on the ground. Dawn held up a hoof. "I'll be fine! I'm a physician... And stuff..." She groaned... "That was.... Almost fun... Right until the end. Um." She looked up. "Hi there, I ummm... Noticed that you look unwell. Maybe you need to go to the hospital or something? I was..." Her cat jumped on her face.

Dawn sighed and gently moved the beige tabby cat. "Bad Flo... Anyways, I was just going there for myself to check on a few things. I was just distracted by climbing this tree, and then my cat climbed the tree, and then.... Wait... I'm chattering like a filly! Ahh! Nevermind." She leaped to

her hooves and talked fast. "Sorry, I'm not a crazy pony! I've just been bored. Not much to do out here. I only noticed that you didn't look well. I'm a visiting medic. Are you alright?" She smiled.

**Serah: \*SNAP\***

As soon as Serah heard the sound, she froze. At first she thought her legs had finally given out on her, but she wasn't yet rushing head-first to the ground. She looked behind herself see if anypony was following her, but there was nopony suspiciously close. Before she could face forward again, something had landed in front of her and struck the ground with a 'meow'.

Luminescence, on 30 Oct 2013 - 11:17 AM, said: 

Dawn held up a hoof. "I'll be fine! I'm a physician... And stuff..." She groaned... "That was.... Almost fun... Right until the end."

*"Hm. Blue unicorn mare with cat, fallen from sky. Odd."* That about summed up the situation for Serah.

Luminescence, on 30 Oct 2013 - 11:17 AM, said: 

She looked up. "Hi there, I ummm... Noticed that you look unwell. Maybe you need to go to the hospital or something? I was..." Her cat jumped on her face.

Dawn sighed and gently moved the beige tabby cat. "Bad Flo... Anyways, I was just going there for myself to check on a few things. I was just distracted by climbing this tree, and then my cat climbed the tree, and then.... Wait... I'm chattering like a filly! Ahh! Nevermind."

*"Rescuing her cat?"* Serah pondered. The blue unicorn showed initiative, at least. Serah never wanted to take part in that tired clique where a pony met another pony by helping them get their cat out of a tree. *"Wait, what was that about a hospital?"*

Luminescence, on 30 Oct 2013 - 11:17 AM, said: 

She leaped to her hooves and talked fast. "Sorry, I'm not a crazy pony! I've just been bored. Not much to do out here. I only noticed that you didn't look well. I'm a visiting medic. Are you alright?" She smiled.

"Is it that obvious?" Serah asked. She hadn't meant to ask that out loud. Her thoughts were still jumbled, and the sudden appearance of the other mare hadn't helped. She shook her head in an effort to clear it. "Yes. No. I'm... unwell."

"I was heading to the hospital just now," Serah sighed, concluding her explanation. She glanced at the perturbed looking tabby that sat on the ground. "Nice cat."

**Dawn:** Serah, on 30 Oct 2013 - 12:01 PM, said: 

"Is it that obvious?" Serah asked. She hadn't meant to ask that out loud. Her thoughts were still jumbled, and the sudden appearance of the other mare hadn't helped. She shook her head in an effort to clear it. "Yes. No. I'm... unwell."

Dawn's expression calmed instantly. She had come a long way since her days as a jittery young prodigy at Canterlot's finest medical training school. She didn't reply to the unicorn just then, instead she studied the red mare with an intense gaze. Her cat stared with an intense gaze as well, but its eyes were focused on Dawn herself.

**Serah,** on 30 Oct 2013 - 12:01 PM, said: 

"I was heading to the hospital just now," Serah sighed, concluding her explanation. She glanced at the perturbed looking tabby that sat on the ground. "Nice cat."

When she spoke again, her voice matched her expression - contained and thoughtful. "Awww, thank you!" Dawn smiled courteously. "Hey, why don't you follow me to the hospital. When we get there, I could probably get you some help pretty quickly, or I could just help you myself." She started for the hospital at a leisurely pace.

"So, if you don't mind, maybe we could speed up the process? What are your symptoms, exactly? When did they start? How much walking have you done, recently?" Her voice had

reverted further and was now vaguely cheerful but definitely professional. Her cat followed imperiously.

**Serah:** Luminescence, on 30 Oct 2013 - 12:27 PM, said: 

"Awww, thank you!" Dawn smiled courteously. "Hey, why don't you follow me to the hospital. When we get there, I could probably get you some help pretty quickly, or I could just help you myself." She started for the hospital at a leisurely

"Okay," Serah mumbled. She didn't want to risk getting lost in this town in her current condition, even if the directions she'd received from Deft had been helpful so far. She followed after the other mare and her cat.

Luminescence, on 30 Oct 2013 - 12:27 PM, said: 

"So, if you don't mind, maybe we could speed up the process? What are your symptoms, exactly? When did they start? How much walking have you done, recently?" Her voice had reverted further and was now vaguely cheerful but definitely professional. Her cat followed imperiously.

Despite her earlier rambling, the blue unicorn could certainly act professional when the time called for it. Perhaps there was just something about Serah's countenance that influenced other ponies to (mostly) stick to what was important when dealing with her. If so, it had been helpful so far.

"Symptoms. Headache, stomach pains, some discomfort in area between chest and left fore-leg joint. Started soon after I was injured. Been walking for..." Serah trailed off. She tried to work out how many of her days had been spent traveling, and how many had been spent hiding from the snowstorm, but her concentration was held by the cat's particular gait. It held itself in a regal manner, tail mostly straight and only occasionally flicking to the left or right. This was a tabby that exuded confidence.

**Aiden:** Luminescence, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:16 PM, said: 

Lowering her voice, she continued. "I definitely accept, Aiden... This is something completely new for me. You seem like a calm, thoughtful pony. I don't really know much about a restaurant even now, but I am almost certain that a pony like you would be able to help. Maybe, you could help me right now, actually?" She pushed the books in front of her off to one side. "I think that the first thing that I need to do is to think of a name? I thought of a few names, but I tossed them all out because they had my own name in them. It just seemed... Vain?"

A warm smile rose through Aiden's face, it was a simple expression, but it was what he was actually feeling. Not only did Ambrosia look better than how she did before, a partial success that typically led to a happiness slowly flowing through his body, but Ambrosia's words felt honest and sincere. Even though he may have considered himself to be thoughtful, in a few senses of the word, the thought of trying to build a restaurant gave him a slight fear, even if he wasn't doing the prime or majority aspect of it.

Aiden looked a bit shocked as Ambrosia asked for his help. He had thought the job for helping was already signed and accepted some time ago, however, the fact that she asked regardless gave him a bit more insight into Ambrosia. He wanted to jump into thought immediately upon the inquisition, trying to find the perfect name for Ambrosia's dream, but there was one fact that broke and derailed his train of thought; he had very little knowledge of what this restaurant would be like. Without the proper knowledge, Aiden kept his thoughts quiet as he listened to Ambrosia speak her mind.

Luminescence, on 26 Oct 2013 - 10:16 PM, said: 

She shook her head gently and blinked. "Oh dear... I think that my lack of sleep is getting to me a bit. I didn't really mean to ramble on like that. But, well... That is the one name that I have for a restaurant. Roots? A place were all ponies are welcome, no matter what type of ingredient they are. What do you think?" Her eyes twinkled and a broad, friendly smile graced her face.

*"Roots, huh? Simple...earthy...even a bit...homey. I like it..."* Aiden thought. Simplicity to him, usually meant comfort. Restaurants should always make the ponies who go there to eat, comfortable, or even better, relaxed. Aiden formed a light smile. "I think that name would suit it perfectly. Such a simplistic name, but still gives an overall feeling of comfort. I myself-"

Wing McCallister, on 28 Oct 2013 - 2:36 PM, said: 

With a few steps, he slipped behind his marefriend and moved his hooves around her head to cover those green eyes of hers.

"Gotcha," he whispered before pushing his muzzle forward to give a gentle nibble to her ear. The impact of his grin might have reached unprecedented heights as his chocolate irides shifted upwards to outline the unicorn stallion. "Hey Aiden," he mumbled through his teeth, still sharing his selected choice of affection with his flower. "What brings you into town?"

Aiden was cut off, bearing witness to a sight that froze his being and completely threw him off any sort of thought he had going. He held a limp hoof up at the lavender pegasus that stood in front of him, trying to fire off the rapidly increasing number of questions that began to fill and pack into his mind. He knew who this pegasus was, and he knew the sort of antics that the pegasus was capable of and was beginning to accept them no matter their oddness, but this knowledge was not enough to prepare him for the event that was transpiring before him.

He touched his hoof to the table and shook his head, as if trying to expel every ounce of thought that was blocking and preventing him from answering the simple question put onto him by the pegasus. After giving himself a moment to flush away everything, he took a deep breath and responded. "H-hey there Wing." Aiden was unable to shake off the slight shock he was still feeling from his voice. "I-I'm on actually on vacation and decided that today I would simply spend the hours relaxing in some books."

There was much more that he knew should have been said, but his mind kept throwing the words around and made him unable to place them into the proper order. He at least was able to give a slight explanation for his appearance in the library, but it did not suffice in detailing why he was talking to this mare who Wing was giving affection to. Though he rambled exceptionally fast in his mind, everything came to a crashing halt when another thought became apparent. "*Wait...if Wing is acting like this to Ambrosia..then tha-...*" Aiden ceased any movement and switched off being shocked, to just being disappointed and annoyed.

Since he wasn't one to assume things of personal matters, especially when he *thought* he barely knew the pony he may be helping, he never made the connection to the Ambrosia he had been told of, and the Ambrosia that was sitting right across from him. It had never occurred to him, and only then did he begin to match all the similarities. In feeling such disgust with himself, he brought up both hooves to his face and let out a very quiet groan, completely ignoring the two other ponies who were accompanying him.

**Springsteps:** Springsteps tilted her head in mild confusion at the young mare's seemingly random outburst. If the mare wasn't feeling like galloping around, she could understand that, what she couldn't get was why the mare said she would do something bad if Arcanel tossed her into the pool. Nopony said anything about tossing her into the pool. Deft sounded upset, and that made Springsteps lost her enthusiasm. She had stopped bouncing and now her ears fell.

"Okay, then..." Springsteps' eyes lowered and kicked at the floor with a forehoof. "Arcy means well, I'm sure of it. He's not trying to do anything, really. If you're feeling unwell, I can take you to somewhere with a warm bed for you to sleep on, or something like that." Her eyes lit up for a moment. "Or you can just sit here and I'll take some blanket and foodstuff for you? Sleeping around the pool sounds like a good relaxing thing to do!"

**Tich:** Tich trotted faster getting into somewhat of a stride, not quite running as more jolly quick paced movement. He giggled at Luminescence's comments on how wet his belongings were, especially himself. It reminded him of the fact that he was probably creating his own trail leading away from the pool from all of the dripping water. He felt a little bad for getting water all over the silver filly but remembered she was the one who crawled into his bag.

He pondered the food question a bit until she mentioned about a hat. "I don't really have a hat, except for these goggles," he said, "but it's a sunny day, maybe we could get a you summer straw hat, and some of your very own goggles!" He exclaimed moving up his pace. He briefly looked back to see how Luminescence responded.

"Oh and I do like me some lovely fruits to munch down on. Yes, some apples and bananas, everyone loves a banana..." he trailed arriving at the location. He stopped dead not too far from the fountain, his eyes transfixed on it. He remembered being here a long while ago, it seemed shorter than he remembered, but back then he was shorter as well. Now moving forward like a zombie, straight towards the fountain, not saying a word. his eyes as wide as could be.

**Arcanel:** Before, Arcanel was thinking that Deft was rather nervous, but not enough to think that she would be nervous wreck on her entirety. Now after what she said, he couldn't help but go wide eyed for a small moment. *\*W-Wha...? Why does she think that I would do that?\** he

pondered for a moment. However, before he could manage to make his actual thoughts known, Springsteps talked first.

When the filly spoke, the white pegasus couldn't help but chuckle at Springsteps' enthusiasm, and instantly tried to complement what she had said. "Ummm, yeah Deft... I didn't want you to throw you into the pool at all... ummm... that was my very poor attempt at making an amusing comment..." he said trailing off slightly as he grabbed the back of his head with one hoof in embarrassment. "I'm sorry if I made you think otherwise. However, I think somepony here has an idea to entertain you." He finished, chuckling slightly hoping to lighten up the mood as well.

**Ambrosia:** Aiden, on 30 Oct 2013 - 4:00 PM, said: 

Aiden formed a light smile. "I think that name would suit it perfectly. Such a simplistic name, but still gives an overall feeling of comfort. I myself-"

Ambrosia watched Aiden with an expression of expectation and interest. She grinned inwardly. The moment reminded her of the times when she was in cooking school and the instructor would taste the finished product, determining a grade. Aiden seemed like he was tasting the name. When he smiled, the look mirrored that of her instructors when she had done a marvelous job. She smiled as well when he began talking. Her smile widened with every word.

Wing, on 28 Oct 2013 - 1:36 PM, said: 

Wing knew that eventually he would be spotted by Aiden, but he hoped that his angle of attack - coupled with those few moments of shock would buy him enough time. It really did not matter if it did. With a few steps, he slipped behind his marefriend and moved his hooves around her head to cover those green eyes of hers.

Aiden had liked the name! She was so delighted that she was on the verge of clapping her hooves together, but the unicorn seemed to trail off strangely. Ambrosia raised an eyebrow, and her mouth opened to say something just as her vision was interrupted. She almost automatically recognized the silly maneuver. It was something that she often did on her own with ponies that she was familiar. She wondered who it could be? Of course, she knew...

Wing, on 28 Oct 2013 - 1:36 PM, said: 

"Gotcha," he whispered before pushing his muzzle forward to give a gentle nibble to her ear. The impact of his grin might have reached unprecedented heights as his chocolate irides shifted upwards to outline the unicorn stallion. "Hey Aiden," he mumbled through his teeth, still sharing his selected choice of affection with his flower. "What brings you into town?"

"So you did!" Ambrosia playfully whispered right back. Her voice didn't carry even a hint of surprise, only affection. She giggled at Wing's stunt and moved her own head to nuzzle him slightly while watching Aiden out of the corner of her eye. She blushed a bit with some embarrassment at how their conversation had been interrupted. Her mind started to review a few possible ways to possibly explain things to the unicorn. But, with a blink, she realized that Wing had greeted Aiden by name.

Aiden, on 30 Oct 2013 - 4:00 PM, said: 

In feeling such disgust with himself, he brought up both hooves to his face and let out a very quiet groan, completely ignoring the two other ponies who were accompanying him.

She took a quick breath at the sound of Aiden's groan. Had she or Wing somehow offended him? She glanced in his direction. It was impossible to tell with a glance, so she spoke while gently batting Wing away from her ear. "Aiden? Are you alright? I take it that you and Wing have already met? I hope that we haven't embarrassed you?" She did her best to wear a courteous expression while hoping that this wasn't the case.

**Deft Precision:** Her glance flickered towards the filly, her head somehow seemed to swim from just that small action. *She doesn't know any better. In fact, she probably doesn't know anything at all. You should never apologize for a total stranger. Not... When... Wait, what...* Deft blinked, taking in the filly's many offers to assist. *What kind of filly is this? Wait. Wrong question. Where do you find this kind of filly? Still the wrong question.* She took a hoof and hit the side of her head to stop her twitching. It worked but her head still felt fuzzy.

Deft glanced back at the stallion. *Sure, he would say that. No way to know for sure. Anypony can say anything at anytime. I sure do. Words don't mean anything.* She smiled, deciding to opt for friendliness. "Yeah, right. Sorry for throwing the accusation. I just thought that what you said and how you said it didn't make much sense. Actually, even right now... I can't... I don't think you're doing something right."

Arching an eyebrow, Deft gestured towards the filly. "I don't think that she wants to entertain me. I think that she wants to..." A look of confusion happened across her face. She hadn't thought that far. *A warm bed? Something like that? Bringing me a blanket and food?* She looked at

the filly. "Wait... Ummm... Springersteps? What exactly is it that you want to do, anyway? Ummm. You want to take care of me? Why?" Deft was thankful that she was already red. She could feel herself blushing fiercely.

The odd feeling, the feeling that she had somehow missed something important, remained. Even while she was speaking, her mind careened wildly. *Why can't I seem to think straight. I know that there was something, but I don't know anything about the something that I know that there was... Which doesn't make any sense at all. Maybe I should just ask this filly... Seems helpful enough... Too helpful. She must want something. Well, I won't be her mother. Can't be anyway.*

**Luminescence:** Luminescence blinked slowly and reached a hoof to her head. She felt around the air, seemingly measuring out the proportions of the perfect summer straw hat. While performing the strange gesture, she spoke idly. "I like Summer considerably. She is a wonderful pony. A summer straw hat would be a fitting tribute, I think. I am not sure how this would work with goggles? I suppose that the goggles are for wetness? Hmmm... I am willing to try this."

She nodded and closed her eyes in contemplation. "Apples are better. But bananas are lovely as well. They have the color of the sun..." They'd stopped moving. She opened her eyes and took a look around, before locking onto the fountain. Tich began to walk again, towards the fountain. "Yes." She spoke hypnotically, while staring towards the fountain. "Move forward. It might be destiny. The future is bright, Tich. Bright and soggy."

**Dawn:** To their right, the ponies in and around the market area continued to go about their business. Unlike the areas nearer to the center of the city, this small market had a sleepy small town atmosphere to it. To their left were some more residential areas, each home with a decent sized lawn. Some ponies milled around outside of their homes as well. The direction that they were heading seemed residential as well.

Dawn listened carefully while mentally going through a list of potential ailments that could be affecting her new charge. Aside from what Serah said, there was the obvious difficulty moving normally as well as... Dawn blinked and her coolness faltered. A look of tremendous concern briefly appeared, but it was suppressed. The answer to the question of how long the unicorn had been walking never arrived.

Her first instinct was to press for the answer to her last question, but she had learned to never trust her first instinct. Her next instinct was to say nothing. She had enough information to start her report when they reached the hospital, and with just a minute or so more, that's where they were. At first glance, it was just a normal, if somewhat large, home. A second glance

would reveal the building for what it was.

There was a blue sign in front, clearly marking it as a hospital. Outside of the hospital, there were some ponies talking. Clipboards and stethoscopes seemed to be in no short supply in the small group. One of them, an earth pony mare with seemingly permanent curious facial expression waved a hoof happily. "Hello Dawn!" Dawn waved in return but her attentions were focused elsewhere.

A large steel grey cat tumbled around with a small colt. It was difficult to tell if the tussle was intended to be play or combat. Dawn didn't take any chances. "Excuse me for just a moment." She stepped away for a second. Just the motion of her approach was enough to frighten the cat. It nimbly separated itself from the young pony and fled. Dawn sighed heavily. Flo, the imperious tabby, seemed to sigh as well.

Dawn smiled nervously at the red unicorn mare. "I'm sorry about that. Just follow me, please?" She led the way into the hospital. From the inside, it was obvious. Before the hospital had been repurposed, it had been a home, a large one. The lobby was, in fact, similar to a living room. The furniture was certainly equivalent. What seemed to be a nurse was asleep on a settee in one of the corners of the room. The overall atmosphere was cozy, relaxed.

Dawn collected a clipboard from a small round table and started scribbling, choosing to write by hoof rather than using her magic. After a second, she spoke. Her eyes scanned the red mare carefully. "Hmmm, feel free to have a seat for a moment. I don't think that I got your name? Also, could you tell me more about the circumstances of your injury?"

**Aiden:** Ambrosia's inquiry flew through Aiden's mind, connecting all the right dots and somehow helped to lessen his slight agitation. With a light sigh, he brought his hooves onto the table, away from his face and into a folded pattern. He wished to show a bit of relaxation, which, wasn't all that much of a lie, but he still had an urge to keep his hooves plastered to his face. A quizzical glance was shot to the physicist pony before returning right back onto Ambrosia, softened.

"Yes yes..I am alright." A chuckle formed in his voice while speaking. "I'm just rather disappointed in myself is all." Aiden used a hoof to motion to Wing before resuming speaking

once again. "Wing and I have indeed already met...and if I recall correctly...we met at a conference in Baltimore some short time ago. Accidental happenings and such occurred, and by the end of the whole ordeal, we have become decent friends."

Aiden closed his eyes and delicately shook his head. "And don't worry, you haven't embarrassed me. Though I was particularly put off by the sudden appearance of somepony I haven't seen much since the conference, I do find the small interaction a little on the cute side. Although..." He brought his glance to Wing once again. "I want to question why you would make such an appearance...but..knowing you..I think I already know THAT answer.."

**Wing:** Wing grinned and released his gentle hold on Ambrosia's ear. *Praise Celestia, does she smell like cinnamon!* he thought before centering his focus on the mare as well as the unicorn. To be blunt, the event played out in reality very much like it had in his head. He had a feeling Aiden would react in that manner, and he anticipated that Ambrosia's concern for the stallion would surface. It was worth it; he got his ear nibbles, and things were all in good fun - with sprinkles of affection and love tossed in for the added flavor. *So much cinnamon.*

"He's just upset because he didn't piece together that you are *the* Ambrosia," Wing commented, responding to the mare's nuzzle with one of his own. "And that conference was a hoot." The physicist let his forehooves fall from Amby's eyes and drape over her torso. "It's quite interesting that you two would meet up in a library under random circumstances though. Small Equestria, huh? As for my entrance, my apologies if it put you both on the spot, but... let's be honest, I don't think it caught anypony here by surprise."

He winked and tilted his muzzle towards Ambrosia, and his tone instantly shifted from something playful and moderately silly into a deep, sweet timbre that poured from his lips as he spoke. "As for you, beautiful, how have your restaurant endeavors gone today?"

**Springsteps:** Springsteps tilted her head when Deft replied to Arcanel and to her. Both older ponies were being silly. Trying to entertain? No pony's here trying to entertain or anything, she just wanted to have some fun, together with Deft if possible! Or with pretty much anypony, really. Fun was multi... multi whatever. Folded several times when it's done with somepony else!

The filly grinned widely, but the grin fell into a confused stare at the young mare in front of her. The mare had asked why she wanted to take care of her. It didn't even take one second for Springsteps to shrug and answered, "I have no idea!" She giggled for a moment before continuing. "Nearly everything is better when done with somepony else, I just thought that it would be fun if we can have some kind of... picnic around here." Springsteps grinned to Deft once again.

"And uh, well..." Springsteps looked uncertain for a moment. Picnic sounds good, but picnic means a whole lot of food. Or maybe some food and a lot of drinks, whichever works. She looked around the pool. Would the pool guy be okay if they had a picnic in here? It didn't seem to be very likely. For a moment Springsteps' ears fell, but her face lit up once more. There was a park not too far from here! "Oh! I have the greatest idea ever. There's this big nice green park beside this pool. How about we get a picnic going on there? Sounds good, right? Right right right? You guys can go there first and pick a nice spot under a tree, I'll go back home for a moment and bring back some foodstuff and other things!"

Before anypony could so much draw a breath to voice any answer they might have, Springsteps was already galloping away from the scene, her form quickly disappeared behind a fence. "Wait for me under the three!" she shouted, her voice slowly diminished. Along the way from the pool to the edge of the city, anypony could see a pale blue blur speeding up without any care to the surroundings.

**Serah:** In what seemed like no time at all, the other mare had led Serah to the hospital. If it weren't for the sign out front, Serah never would have guessed that the building was anything more than the home of a particularly wealthy Las Pegasusian. The architecture in this city was far different from what she was used to.

The inside of the establishment was as homey as its front; all the chairs in the world couldn't have made the 'waiting room' look less like a living room. If that weren't enough, cats were apparently free to roam through this area.

Serah had always been distrustful of hospitals. Beyond the complications during her birth, she was wary of governmental facilities. Serah and the law rarely got along well. However, the inviting domicile approach this hospital had taken set most of Serah's fears at ease.

*"As long as I can get out of here without signing any papers, I should be set,"* she thought to herself, following the other mare into what she presumed was an office. Serah was almost positive it had been a bedroom at one point.

"Name is Serah," she answered, taking a seat on what felt like an abnormally comfortable chair, by hospital standards. "As for circumstances..."

Again, Serah was faced with a dilemma. How much was practical, and safe, to reveal to this mare?

*"Not safe to leave out details. No need for life story, but I'll have to trust her with the specifics,"* was the conclusion Serah reached.

"Month or so ago, I got in a fight," Serah began, keeping her voice as monotone as possible. "Ended with a gunshot."

Serah gently touched a small dark area near her chest, long scabbed over. Because of her coat coloration and its length, the wound was less visible than it otherwise would have been.

"Skipped town, afterwards. Immediately afterwards. Closed the wound with a fire spell, and took the midnight train, going anywhere. Anywhere turned out to be here," she explained.

"Along the way... some point, I fell off the train. Stranded in Applewood mountains, snowed in, limited supplies, aversion to cold. When storm let up, made way down final stretch and arrived in city. That was just more than an hour ago."

*"That everything? I think so. Hope so. Now make me better, damn it."*

**Arcanel:** As Arcanel looked at Deft, the more he started thinking that he had underestimated just how nervous she was. *\*Ok, I know I phrased that wrong but... I have the slight feeling she might be taking this just a tad too serious...\** he pondered in slight worry. His current train of thought did not change when the moment Deft reacted to what had Springsteps said, chuckling at her miscall but also raising an eyebrow the moment the crimson earth pony blushed at the

same time. *\*Aaaaalright... that can't be a normal reaction, even though what Springsteps said is not exactly common... I find it rather cute myself...\** he thought, still slightly weirded out by Deft's expressions and reactions.

When the bluish unicorn filly spoke, he immediately turned to look at her and giggled himself once more at her antics. He was about to suggest himself that maybe the pool wasn't actually that bad of an idea if they could find a more properly dry place until suddenly Springsteps went to talk again.

The mailpony looked on as Springsteps quickly sped off outside the pool area, giving off a last shout to wait for her under a tree on the park. Once more, the filly brought up a smile on his face and a chuckle as well. *\*Well... if that's not a funny but cute invitation, I don't know what is.\** He thought in amusement. *\*Besides, I didn't really have much else to do, might as well go.\** And with that thought he turned towards Deft. "Well... I don't know about you but it sounds fun enough. However, I can see that you're not really very comfortable... you're welcome to join us if you wish." He told the mare before slowly walking out of the pool area himself and into the park not soon after, going at a simple normal pace.

After he reached a more clear zone in it, he started looking for a large enough tree with a good enough shade, finally finding one not far away from two ponies that were also around the park, and even another pony with what seemed to be a destroyed machine as well, and let off a long sigh when he relaxed his body against the trunk of the tree, awaiting for the return of Springsteps, and hopefully, also of Deft, also wondering what could have happened to the machine.

**Tich:** Tich moved ever closer to the fountain, stepping onto the ledge, with one swift motion of his back leg he unfastened the bag which slid off and fell to the floor in a light boring thump slumping on the floor. He places his first step in the slightly shallow water of the fountain. he moved forward a little more, carefully wading forward to the where the water streamed down. He stuck his head in the falling water, breaking the gentle stream soaking his face and having the water stream down his neck.

At that moment he realized he still had the silver filly on his back. He pulled himself back and looked at her. "My future is always wet." he smiled. realizing he stepped through the water in a

sort of trance. "Usually my friends stop me." he giggled. "Now about that hat." he asked. " we need to find a good shop." he looked around pondering.

**Keystone:** Keystone shifted his position slightly on top of the other pony as he waited patiently for her response. He was in no rush - it wasn't often that he found himself laying on top of exceptionally tall mares, after all, so he figured he may as well enjoy it while able to. She was, as he had decided just a short while ago, quite comfortable.

As a few seconds ticked by, he observed that his question appeared to have left her in unexpectedly deep thought. Keystone was no master of reading body language, but he thought he could detect a hint of unease in the mare. He considered saying something, but paused as she gave a shrug from beneath him, beginning to speak shortly afterward.

Keystone smiled warmly as she finished speaking, chuckling lightly. "Don't worry, I tend not to seek amusement from things like practical jokes. I find that they're often made in poor taste, anyhow... so don't worry, even a pony as graceless as I can agree with you on all that," he began. "As for attracting attention, I can't say that I'm terribly surprised by that - I daresay that any mare with a mane done up as masterfully as your own would attract no small amount of attention, after all. But, no worries - I live on a fairly quiet road not far from here that has few prying eyes; I'd love to have you over, and would be quite happy to guide your hooves however much you might need," he finished, a playful ring to his voice as he spoke, his attention firmly fixed on the mare's face beneath him as he playfully poked one of her hooves with one of his own as he made his final declaration, his smile widening a bit as he did so. "Sounds good to me. Does it sound good to you? I'll admit that I'm a bit of a strawberry aficionado, so I tend to keep quite the stash of strawberries around - I nibble on them quite frequently, so there should be plenty of raw material upon which you can freely work your magic."

So focused was he on his the conversation with the mare below that he had only vague awareness of a crashing noise nearby that had sounded somewhere in the midst of his short little speech, and what may have been a third party speaking into their general direction. He paid it no mind, however, his head tilting slightly as he waited for Veracity to respond with rapt attention.

**Ambrosia:** Aiden wasn't upset at all... The tiny flutter of worry that had landed in Ambrosia's stomach vanished. Her smile of courtesy became one of a pony that was genuinely comfortable. Here with Aiden and Wing, she was with the pony that she loved and another that was a friend to both of them. Her thoughts went back over the earlier conversation. It was really quite fortunate that she had managed to meet Aiden and to speak with him at that very moment.

She mused. If she had met him earlier, during her rush to get to the train station and back, then she would have just trotted right by him without stopping. The same applied to her short trip to the market. But, in the library, she was able to build an understanding of him beyond what could be learned simply through Wing's friendship with the unicorn. It was a strange coincidence but quite reassuring.

Wing, on 06 Nov 2013 - 9:46 PM, said: 

The physicist let his forehooves fall from Amby's eyes and drape over her torso. "It's quite interesting that you two would meet up in a library under random circumstances though. Small Equestria, huh? As for my entrance, my apologies if it put you both on the spot, but... let's be honest, I don't think it caught anypony here by surprise."

Ambrosia closed her eyes for a moment and relaxed further, savoring the contact with Wing. "Small Equestria, indeed." She spoke softly, her voice carrying the hint of her pleasant laughter. Her eyes opened at the mention of surprise. Wing was right. It had been such a long day... While she couldn't say that she had expected it, she had wanted to see him and there he was. It dulled the impact of whatever startling she might of otherwise had.

Wing, on 06 Nov 2013 - 9:46 PM, said: 

He winked and tilted his muzzle towards Ambrosia, and his tone instantly shifted from something playful and moderately silly into a deep, sweet timbre that poured from his lips as he spoke. "As for you, beautiful, how have your restaurant endeavors gone today?"

The timing of the question was perfect. She gently touched Wing's nose with her own. It was a restrained gesture of affection, ideal for the current location, but this in no way dimmed the action. It was a graceful movement. The touch was soft. "Well, handsome..." She held back a grin, but ended up beaming, instead. It was a cheesy thing to say, but she didn't care. She liked cheese. It added a flavor that few other ingredients could supply.

"My restaurant endeavors have gone better than I could have ever hoped for just the first day!" She nodded her head towards Aiden. "Thanks to my new friend and your old friend, I learned that I don't need to go through all of this in order to start a restaurant." She lifted a section of

the massive tome that she had been reading and let the pages drop. When the cover fell, she rested her hoof on it and turned to Wing with an expression of complete confidence.

"So... We discovered that starting a restaurant is just like creating a new dish. For me, I'm a creative cook. I only need a general outline of a recipe to know what I need to do to improve it or change it. Well, I just need a general idea of what to do for a restaurant. Then, I'll know where to go next. It's just like cooking. I will need the right ingredients, though. Hmmm..." She pursed her lips thoughtfully. "Aiden, do you think that you're a vegetable, a fruit, or a type of seasoning, perhaps?" Her eyes twinkled mischievously.

**Deft Precision:** *So... She wants to help me for no particular reason? That's... Odd.* Deft squinted at the filly as Springsteps continued talking. *Well, it's not odd. It just never happens to me...* Inside, she sighed. Deft had long ago reached the conclusion that her focus on competition and her drive to "win" had caused her to lose something. The filly's words were a reminder of that loss. But, as she reached for some explanation for her own feeling, Deft could feel herself losing something else - internal balance.

There was a certain carefree nature to the filly's words. It was a reminder to Deft, or at least, she thought that it was. But, as the filly spoke about fun and picnics, Deft realized that she had no idea what the reminder was for. She debated asking Springsteps to explain further. Surely, the filly had to have some motivation, some kind of drive for her actions? *Maybe not... She's just a normal filly. Maybe there is no motivation... Just... Friendliness?*

Springsteps, on 06 Nov 2013 - 10:10 PM, said: 

"Oh! I have the greatest idea ever. There's this big nice green park beside this pool. How about we get a picnic going on there? Sounds good, right? Right right right? You guys can go there first and pick a nice spot under a tree, I'll go back home for a moment and bring back some foodstuff and other things!"

As Springsteps continued, Deft thanked Celestia that the filly couldn't see her increasing awkwardness. In truth, Deft wasn't used to being immediately befriended by other ponies. She didn't have her grandfather's easy charm. Her own manner of communication was an awkward blend of study, measurement, and unreliable timing. A simple, friendly encounter like this, occurring randomly, was something outside of her comfort zone.

*Huh?* Deft blinked in confusion. *You guys... A spot under a tree... For a picnic? And, she doesn't even*

*have everything for the picnic right here? So, she just came up with this on the spot and now she's going to go running off? Almost imperceptibly, Deft raised an eyebrow and, with her peripheral vision, surveyed the stallion sitting next to her. She refocused back at the filly... Vacations and marefriends? ... Is this filly trying to... Nah.. Can't be... She's too impulsive to plan.*

Springsteps, on 06 Nov 2013 - 10:10 PM, said: 

Before anypony could so much draw a breath to voice any answer they might have, Springsteps was already galloping away from the scene, her form quickly disappeared behind a fence. "Wait for me under the three!"

Deft's eyes followed the filly. *For such a small thing... She's fast. Very fast. I'm faster though.* She had turned down a race earlier, but seeing the filly running away had a motivating effect on her. *Uh... Waiting under a tree? While she's off running. Waiting with some random stallion under a tree for a picnic?* Deft's nose scrunched up. She sat bolt upright as though somepony had splashed water in her face.

Arcanel, on 08 Nov 2013 - 4:00 PM, said: 

And with that thought he turned towards Deft. "Well... I don't know about you but it sounds fun enough. However, I can see that you're not really very comfortable... you're welcome to join us if you wish."

*He can see that I'm not comfortable? Really? And, he's stupid enough to say what he thinks of me out loud?* Deft's thoughts wandered back to her earlier discussion with the unicorn mare.

Undoubtedly, that pony had been analyzing Deft just as much as Deft had analyzed her. They had both been guarded. That was the kind of conversation that she liked, a fair exchange. This.. Stallion had just called her out. She felt a certain degree of distaste for him.

The thoughts had flown through her mind before the remainder of his words were spoken. When he said his last sentence, her sense of distaste became actual anger. Her eyes darted towards the pegasus stallion carrying the same hint of menace that they had held earlier, but he had already turned his back to her and was walking away. She shook with fury but held her tongue and her actions. *Welcome to join him... If I wish? Then... He just walks off without even trying to talk...* She shivered with frustration.

Her grandfather had once told her that a pony that wanted her company and was worth

spending time with would make an effort themselves. He had told her that she never needed to follow anypony, hoping to get their attention and talk to them. So, she hadn't. She never did. If a pony turned their back without a courteous end to a conversation, then that was a signal to Deft that they would only be worth her time if she could use them for some purpose. She couldn't think of a purpose for this stallion.

*Cater to no one... I'm my own pony.* Her own version of her grandfather's advice echoed once. It was good enough. Her frustration fed into action. She practically leaped to where her saddlebag was. In an instant, she had resealed it and thrown it on. She started in a brisk trot, while it had felt like forever, she was certain that less than 20 or 30 seconds had passed since Springsteps had left the area of the pool.

She could overtake the filly. Maybe a race had been a good idea, after all. Her anxious limbs always hated being motionless for too long. That conversation while sitting around in the hot tub had been a strain on her subconscious. Now, her earlier discomfort had, mostly, vanished. It was reduced to just an odd feeling in her stomach. A feeling that she ignored.

It felt great to move. She whisked by the pegasus stallion, speaking in a friendly shout as she passed by. "Sorry, I need to go meet up with a relative and stuff. Maybe I'll catch up with you both, later." *Yeah. I'll catch up with both of them - him and himself - they make a great crowd. Time to win!* Deft's hooves picked up speed the moment that she left the area of the pool. She pointed herself in the general direction that Springsteps had gone and poured every last ounce of her strength into speed.

She lowered her slightly head with both focus and determination. Her earlier frustrations became fuel. Thanks to the pegasus stallion, she had a lot of it. She didn't even think about the speed of her gallop. The residences began to pass by in a blur. She couldn't see Springsteps yet. *She is fast for a filly...* Deft grinned. Speed was good. She wouldn't be beaten by a filly, though, even one with a head start.

Her eyes narrowed with intensity. She pushed herself to gallop even faster. Her hooves were moving at an almost unreal speed. Yet, they were making contact with the ground with a certain softness. It was a trait that she had. She could gallop and produce less noise than a normal mare trotting. Her grandfather had often theorized that this was only to enable her

mouth to be heard loud and clear while she chased after him with some demand or another.

In school, a coach had once remarked that, when she galloped, it was though every hoof step was being controlled to the smallest degree of precision. No hoof hit the ground with any more force than she intended for it, and she retained an unusual agility while in motion. It was a useful skill, and it was displayed as she avoided a few ponies that had entered into her path. She preserved her speed through the maneuver, only altering the manner of her gallop for a brief second to zig slightly through the group.

She began to enjoy the speed. Pleasure had superseded anger as her primary driving force. The feeling of control that she had while in motion, it was beautiful and it was what she craved. Her breathing was rhythmic, a constant rhythm. Her hooves seemed to answer to even the smallest impulse of her thought. There was no need to think outright. Instead, every step, every motion was grace and ecstasy. She loved it. Galloping, Deft felt, was like a dance, only you could only move in one direction. Grace, power, and speed.

Absently, she noticed something in her field of vision. It was a smaller pony, and whoever they were, they were directly in her way. She was quickly overtaking the smaller pony, so she decided to demonstrate her philosophy on galloping. *Grace, power, and speed...* Deft pivoted slightly to the side and kicked off with audible force, it was a burst of explosive force despite her using only a single hind hoof.

She went airborne, flying a fast and at some height over the smaller pony. She tucked her hooves in and negotiated a rolling motion in midair, aiming to maintain her forward momentum and lower the apex of the maneuver. *If I'm going to lose time by showing off, it had better be a damned good show.* She grinned, completely losing herself in the moment. Right before landing, she span so that her hooves would catch the ground just right.

She hit the ground while in motion. She was no longer facing forwards, instead she was moving backwards while facing the filly in front of her in an odd combination of a trot and a slide. Her head was held proudly and high. Despite her exertion, her voice boomed triumphantly, even if it was heavily strained by the exertion.

Her voice boomed. "Who says that an earth pony can't fly!" She was grinning aggressively. But,

when she saw the identity of the younger pony, her expression fell just slightly. *I hadn't even noticed that it was her!!!* Deft berated herself. The pony that she had sailed over was none other than Springsteps. "Oh... Hi!!!" She stopped her backwards motion and disguised her surprise with the friendly greeting. "Soooo, where are we going!?"

**Luminescence:** Luminescence eyed the fountain with a carefully neutral expression, but she jumped slightly at the sound of the bag hitting the floor. The water had been hypnotizing to the filly. The sudden noise had interrupted her observation. Seemingly taking the action as a cue, she unravelled herself from the towel and ingloriously tossed it in the direction of the bag. The movement had been accomplished just in time. As Tich stuck his head into the falling water, the filly extended her own head to do the same.

She reacted nervously to the feeling of the water. The sudden coldness caused her eyes to shoot open with an equal mixture of panic and alarm. But, she closed her eyes again and smiled after a second. Tich was right, of course, water was a good thing. All around them, other ponies stopped and looked in confusion. There were a few muffled snickers in the crowd. The filly was unperturbed. Instead, she smiled even more broadly.

Tich, on 09 Nov 2013 - 10:55 AM, said: 

At that moment he realized he still had the silver filly on his back. He pulled himself back and looked at her. "My future is always wet." he smiled. realizing he stepped through the water in a sort of trance. "Usually my friends stop me." he giggled. "Now about that hat." he asked. " we need to find a good shop." he looked around pondering.

She opened her eyes again, and her smile fell away into an expression of neutrality. "Yes. Your future is both wet and apparently not very far away. This is good. Tich, you are a pony of immediate destiny. I am your friend." She said the last statement with a definitiveness that left no room for argument. "Oh. I saw no reason to stop you. It was amusing. I would like a summer hat... With a big red flower on it. I could be a summer pony. Pretty, graceful, well spoken. A filly of sophistication."

Her large red eyes seemed to quiver with anticipation. "Yes, that would be delightful. There is a shop that way." She pointed with a hoof, indicating a small building near the edge of the market on the other side of the open area. "I believe it may have the right thing. This would be a good place to go."

**Dawn:** Dawn wrote Serah's name and calmly continued to scribble on her pad. She made it halfway through the word "gunshot" before she blinked and stared at what she had just wrote. She slowly looked over at Serah. She shuddered at the thought of the violence that the other mare had just described. She could feel her own heartrate pickup. If Serah's current condition had been the result of this...

Serah, on 07 Nov 2013 - 2:48 PM, said: 

"Skipped town, afterwards. Immediately afterwards. Closed the wound with a fire spell, and took the midnight train, going anywhere. Anywhere turned out to be here," she explained. "Along the way... some point, I fell off the train. Stranded in Applewood mountains, snowed in, limited supplies, aversion to cold. When storm let up, made way down final stretch and arrived in city. That was just more than an hour ago."

Dawn looked away, and she resumed her writing even as her sense of unease grew. She strained to maintain the appearance of cool neutrality. The journey that Serah was describing was no ordinary journey and it was nothing that most ponies would consider an easy task. For a pony that had been shot... Dawn blinked. There was something missing from Serah's story. Her concern doubled.

It took a few long seconds after Serah had finished speaking for Dawn to find her own voice. When she spoke, she spoke extremely coolly. Her concern hid itself behind a tone that was purely clinical. "I see... I apologize for the questions, but... You say that you were shot by a gun?" Dawn glanced over at Serah, her eyes communicating the care and worry that her voice did not. "Could you describe the weapon? Show me where you were shot? Was the bullet ever removed?" Her tone wavered only for the last question. It was the most important.

**Springsteps:** If before this Springsteps hadn't noticed a presence behind her, she certainly had now. The sudden crack of a hoof hitting the ground with sheer force had made her noticeably surprised. Her jaw fell agape as Deft soared right over her and slammed to the ground, then preserved her momentum by literally galloping backward, all while staying in motion. Springsteps was nearly stunned in awe from the acrobatic maneuver. Her own hooves never slowed down, in fact she was slowly gaining speed since the start from the pool, how could Deft

caught up to her!? It was a question that soon grew moot as Springsteps was too busy staring at Deft's eyes and followed her tempo, eyes wide in amazement.

Deft, on 13 Nov 2013 - 12:52 AM, said: 

But, when she saw the identity of the younger pony, her expression fell just slightly. Deft berated herself. The pony that she had sailed over was none other than Springsteps. "Oh... Hi!!!" She stopped her backwards motion and disguised her surprise with the friendly greeting. "Soooo, where are we going!?"

Springsteps pretty much missed the brief sullen expression on Deft's face. "That's so awesome!" she exclaimed. "You were so fast and quick and... You just jumped over me like that, wow! You're so cool!" She squealed loudly. She tried to imitate the feat, but her hooves barely left the ground level. "How did you do that!? I mean, that's crazy! Usually ponies would just give up and they would accuse me cheating and whatever even when they were the one who's too lazy to move their hooves, but not you! You're... really something!"

Springsteps skipped and hopped alongside Deft, her original mission was nearly forgotten in her excitement. It's been a while since the last time she had a lot of fun running with somepony else. When other adults would berate her for galloping too soon or too fast, Deft instead followed and outright vaulted right over her. Yep, she liked Deft a lot now. As the two passed around a corner into an open field near the edge of the city, Springsteps quickly shoved her hooves to the ground and screeching to a sudden halt. She had arrived at her destination.

"That's my house there!" Springsteps pointed a hoof to a white caravan in the middle of the field. There were other, smaller caravans parked around it, forming a crude circle around the white caravan. Ponies mingled around the general area, and some waved a hoof to Springsteps, on which the filly happily waved back. She turned to Deft. "I take it you're going to help me preparing for the picnic? That's great! Now I just need to get into my house reaaaally fast, can you wait around here while I take the stuff?" she asked. She didn't really wait for a reply from the young mare before galloping to the caravan, giggling mischievously while doing so.

As she reached the white caravan's door, Springsteps became silent and slowly nudged the door open with a hoof. She peeked a head through and examined the surroundings. After she

was sure that the coast was clear, she lowered herself and crawled into the kitchen area. Inside, she couldn't really stop herself from smirking like a madpony. It was almost like one of those silly action film! Though she was sure those thick-jawed actors wouldn't be able to move as good as her. The thought was cut short as her tail idly swung and toppled a nearby jar from the corner.

From the outside, it was as if the white caravan suddenly gained sentience and decided that it had enough moment of peace and started rocking back and forth, its windows slammed themselves shut and back open as something blew up inside. When the commotion died down, a very flustered Springsteps barged out from the door and galloped to Deft's position, on her back there was a saddlebag filled to the brim with random assortment of food and a large basket of fruits. Springsteps quickly tossed the fruit basket onto Deft's back and spoke in a hurry, "Come on let's get back to the park now quick!" She then turned and darted to the direction of the park, simply assuming that Deft would instantly follow her lead.

An earth pony stallion jumped out of the caravan, wildly swinging a still steaming spatula in his mouth. "Get back here ye little demon!" he shouted.

**Aiden:** Glowing with a radiant aura, Aiden heard the words he loved to hear. Helping somepony in anyway typically made him feel well, but it was knowing that what had been discussed had actually helped them which sent him away feeling complete and successful. Just by listening to Ambrosia's voice, Aiden could easily tell how hard set she was in going through with this goal, no matter the obstacles she should face. But yet, he still wondered how he would play in the grand scheme of things, he kept the thought in the immediate background of his mind.

Luminescence, on 13 Nov 2013 - 12:43 AM, said: 

"Aiden, do you think that you're a vegetable, a fruit, or a type of seasoning, perhaps?" Her eyes twinkled mischievously.

A vegetable? A fruit? Seasoning? It took a small portion of time before he realized where Ambrosia was going with this. And yet, she still never missed a single moment to throw in an analogy or some way to connect what she was thinking about or wanted to ask with cooking, something that he found to be quite amusing. But truthfully, what was he? He brought one of his hooves up and rested his chin upon it, rubbing slightly as he thought.

He tried to match how each of the choices could fit into a type of personality, however, with each match, another would seem to fit as well. Fruits and vegetables...in some cases, they could be used almost interchangeably. But then again, fruit tend to fit more in refreshing, brighter things like a summer salad, while vegetables are more for things like soups...It took a bit of thought but he finally managed to come up with his choice.

The look of mischief that glittered from Ambrosia was noticed, but Aiden took nothing from it. With his expression locked in that of thought, "I guess I see myself more of a type of seasoning... At points, they play their parts quietly in the background, while in others, they shine through..." He dropped his hoof to the table, making a loud thud. He quickly looked side to side to see if he had disturbed anypony, mildly embarrassed by the action. Have to keep note of your surroundings, don't want to cause an unnecessary scene... Returning to the matter at hand, his eyes burned with a fire of certainty, "Yes...a seasoning is probably the better way to describe me!" Aiden wasn't sure why he was so fired up, but he took the chance to show some exuberance, even if the inquiry didn't quite require it.

**Serah:** Something in the doctor's eyes made Serah feel uncomfortable. It was a look she barely recognized, and not one she could remember being focused on herself since she was a foal. She turned her head away, avoiding the puzzling stare.

"Don't know the gun. Small, I guess? How should I know?" Slight aggravation crawled into her voice, and she didn't know why. She exhaled slowly, and evened out her tone. "Was shot here..."

Serah indicated the area she had pawed at before, and tried to spread the hair around it out so that it could be seen more clearly. Because of her coat coloration and its length, the wound was less visible than it otherwise would have been. It still wasn't something she was eager to show off to others, though. The bullet wound was a visual representation of all the mistakes she had catching up to her.

"And the bullet itself..." Serah's face scrunched up in confusion, and then her eyes widened. "I... I didn't take it out. Didn't think to. But, I don't think I feel it. Inside of me, I mean. Is that... shouldn't I feel it?"

**Tich:** (retires at this point)

**Wing:** Wing listened to Aiden while standing at Ambrosia's side. Her little nose boop was perfect, and the accompanying feeling of warmth that enveloped his essence was a source of happiness that even the scientist found difficult to quantitatively describe. Her handsome comment did not go unnoticed too - in fact, it just pushed him further off the edge into the tranquil sea of affection - and the added boost of appreciation led the pegasus stallion to continue the chain of nuzzles which she had begun.

Aiden's reaction was priceless as well, and what started out as just an idea that morning now seemed to have a bit more staying power. "Seasoning, huh?" he replied to the unicorn with a smirk on his face. "I guess that makes a lot of sense -- bringing a special flavor to the dish after all." His eyes shifted to the yellow mare and he chuckled. "I wonder what I am..." he thought aloud. "Ground pepper blend perhaps, bringing a little kick to the dish?" He nudged Amby playfully before allowing his thoughts to continue. "I guess I'll fill whatever part you want, Chef. I'll admit that I'm quite excited with this unforeseen appearance. Unexpected developments can lead to amazing things when used to their fullest extent. I take it that means you'll be sticking around a bit, eh Aiden?"

**Deft Precision:** Deft grinned awkwardly as the younger pony practically exploded with enthusiasm for the unintentional performance. She thought that she would need to intervene when Springsteps seemingly attempted to imitate her maneuver. "Hey, thanks!" Deft said, swallowing the word "kid" before it left her mouth. She remembered how much she had hated reminders of her youth when she was a younger pony. She trotted with the younger pony and tried to think of some way to continue the conversation, but the effort only served to remind her of why she was a terrible sitter for younger ponies.

Springsteps, on 13 Nov 2013 - 02:46 AM, said: 

"That's my house there!" Springsteps pointed a hoof to a white caravan in the middle of the field. There were other, smaller caravans parked around it, forming a crude circle around the white caravan. Ponies mingled around the general area, and some waved a hoof to Springsteps, on which the filly happily waved back. She turned to Deft. "I take it you're going to help me

preparing for the picnic? That's great! Now I just need to get into my house reaaaally fast, can you wait around here while I take the stuff?"

Springsteps stopped moving, so Deft looked around. Time had flown while they were travelling, and they were now in front of some type of mobile dwellings. Deft raised an eyebrow as she realized that she no longer had any clue what was going on. She stared in the direction that Springsteps had pointed a hoof at, all the while getting a terrible sinking feeling. "You know, that's not a house... I think..." Her voice was uncertain, but her words were wasted on thin air. The filly was already gone. Deft sighed with exasperation and hoped that Springsteps's idea of "reaaaally fast" matched her own ideas... She dropped to the ground and rested her head in her hooves.

Dreamwalker, on 13 Nov 2013 - 02:46 AM, said: 

From the outside, it was as if the white caravan suddenly gained sentience and decided that it had enough moment of peace and started rocking back and forth, its windows slammed themselves shut and back open as something blew up inside. ...

An earth pony stallion jumped out of the caravan, wildly swinging a still steaming spatula in his mouth. "Get back here ye little demon!" he shouted.

Deft had allowed herself to drift into an odd state between sleep and wakefulness. The sudden commotion was a violent interruption. "What the buck?!" Her eyes shot open and she stared wildly at the fast approaching figure of Springsteps. She leaped to her hooves. *Oh... Damn it... Did she steal something?! Am I in trouble? What's going on?* She glimpsed at the fruit basket on her back as though it was a cockatrice. "What?!" The sound of an angry shout stirred her into action. Making sure that she didn't topple anything, she started back in the direction that they had come from. "Spring, I hope that you didn't steal anything or do anything bad, did you?" Deft spoke loud enough for the younger pony to hear while they were galloping.

**Veracity:** More than she had before, Veracity felt at ease. He had given the right answer. To be mocked... It was the one thing that she could not tolerate, and many ponies had made the mistake of confusing her blindness for a weakness of some sort. It was, in some ways, and she was often regretful, this was true. However, her blindness was the result of a tradeoff that she had chosen to make consciously and not a natural condition. Because of this, she did not consider it to be a shortcoming... At least, not normally.

As an obvious advantage to her tradeoff, her loss of sight had brought with it a heightening of her other senses - touch, taste, smell, and hearing. At that moment, the last of these was bothering her slightly. She was aware of the presence of a rather discordant noise, another pony. She felt disdain rising inside of her, just from the sounds that she was hearing, this pony

was wasting the peace of the day by traipsing about, completely ignoring the beauty that surrounded him. What a foolish waste.

Zoop, on 13 Nov 2013 - 12:28 AM, said: 

"As for attracting attention, I can't say that I'm terribly surprised by that - I daresay that any mare with a mane done up as masterfully as your own would attract no small amount of attention, after all. ... I nibble on them quite frequently, so there should be plenty of raw material upon which you can freely work your magic."

Her mind idly wandered as he continued to speak. In truth, she had never thought about the contribution that her mane style made to her apparent strangeness to other ponies. She had kept the same style for so long that she hardly thought about it. But, Keystone seemed to like it to some degree. She smiled as she perceived the compliment. Her smile widened when he poked her hoof. It was an unexpected and amusing touch, and she quite welcomed the thought. It would seem that the outcome of her curiosity would be a pleasant evening. Before she could respond, her thoughts were interrupted.

R.J., on 27 Oct 2013 - 4:07 PM, said: 

Whack!

Winged smacked the side of his head against the palm and fell down in front of the pink and blue pegasai. ... However, WR could only stand there smiling like a featherbrain, staring at the blue pegasus.

Her face was unchanged at the sound of the loud noise, but her eyes flashed for a second, turning black before reverting to their normal silver. She listened carefully but didn't remark on the words of the pony that had arrived. *He isn't going away?* A look of confusion crossed her face, she turned to Keystone and spoke plainly. "Actually... It does sound good to me... In fact, I... I would rather like it if we could leave now? I can follow you by smell, feel free to lead the way." Her ears flicked nervously, and she ignored the new arrival.

**Dawn:** As she observed the area where the other unicorn had been shot, Dawn breathed an internal sigh of relief. If there had been a bullet still residing there, then Serah would certainly have known. The feeling would have been unmistakable. Her relief was limited, though. Despite her attempt to remain professional, she felt a horrible unease in her stomach. Just imagining the pain that being shot in such an area would have caused troubled her.

At least the gun had been a small gun, Dawn thought. It was an attempt to comfort herself that did very little good. It merely raised the specter of what an even more damaging weapon could have inflicted. Dawn winced and exhaled unsteadily. She had been holding her breath without realizing it. Her unease became disgust. How could a pony harm another pony in such a way? Her cat rubbed itself against her and meowed with concern.

**Serah, on 13 Nov 2013 - 6:26 PM, said:** 

"And the bullet itself..." Serah's face scrunched up in confusion, and then her eyes widened. "I... I didn't take it out. Didn't think to. But, I don't think I feel it. Inside of me, I mean. Is that... shouldn't I feel it?"

Dawn raised an eyebrow and did her best to speak calmly. Even still, her voice brimmed with both concern and her desire to comfort. "Well, even if you didn't take it out, I'm certain that you would feel it if it was there, so that can't be the problem." Her nose scrunched with thought. "But, that is odd. If it wasn't removed, and you're still alive, then it must have somehow disappeared, but a bullet can't just disappear... Well. It could have been magic. Perhaps a long distance teleportation spell had the side effect of leaving the bullet behind?"

Her face indicated that she wasn't convinced by her own theory, but her eyes showed that she was eager to move quickly to solving Serah's problem. "Serah, have you done any unusual teleportation spells recently? And, would you mind signing here and agreeing to allow me to use some diagnostic spells? My skills are significantly more advanced than a normal unicorn, but I promise that there will be no side effects and the spells are minimally invasive." She started to write something on the paper and then stopped, scratching something out before giving it to Serah directly. The paper contained only Serah's name, symptoms, and that her injury was the result of a scuffle. The word "gun" had been carefully scratched out.

Dawn cleared her throat and lowered her voice. "Actually... If you don't mind, I would rather leave the details of your injury off. A gunshot wound on record is likely to attract an inquiry, especially because I'm only a visiting medic and I really have no control over these records when I leave. And, I should be able to heal you myself, so nopony else would need to know.

Whatever is bothering you, I am certain that it's serious." She allowed a hint her real feelings to escape in her whisper. Her tone was motherly and compassionate but also forceful.

**Ambrosia:** She returned the nuzzles initially but then playfully swatted Wing away. She didn't want Aiden to feel as though he was the odd pony out, so she focused on him while he mused over her question, doing her best to both contain her own enthusiasm and let enough of it leak to show that she was interested in what he would say. In truth, she had absolutely no idea as to the significance of her own question. She had asked the question, hoping that Aiden would reveal more of his nature than he had so far. It was a wonderful question to learn more about another pony without being too prying.

**Aiden, on 13 Nov 2013 - 07:24 AM, said:** 

"I guess I see myself more of a type of seasoning... At points, they play their parts quietly in the background, while in others, they shine through..." ... Aiden wasn't sure why he was so fired up, but he took the chance to show some exuberance, even if the inquiry didn't quite require it.

She met his enthusiasm with a patient, introspective look that lasted for a few moments after he had finished speaking. Unconsciously, she duplicated his thinking pose from earlier, resting her chin on her hoof. Her eyes seemed to focus on him strangely, as though she could see straight through him. As quickly as the expression had come, it left again. She lowered her hoof and smiled pleasantly. "I agree..." She spoke the words with a distracted voice. It betrayed her still moving thoughts.

**Wing McCallister, on 16 Nov 2013 - 3:50 PM, said:** 

Aiden's reaction was priceless as well, and what started out as just an idea that morning now seemed to have a bit more staying power. "Seasoning, huh... Unexpected developments can lead to amazing things when used to their fullest extent. I take it that means you'll be sticking around a bit, eh Aiden?"

Wing's voice comically sidestepped her thoughts and caused them to be suspended where she had left them. "Oh, goodness!" She said somewhat loudly as a response to Wing's comment and nudge. Forgetting that she was in the library, she then laughed a loud, cheery laugh. It was a musical sound. She covered her mouth with a hoof, before managing to add something to Wing's statement. "Yes, please, Aiden. You should stick around, because if you have the time, I would like for you to help us. The seasoning may exist in the background, but without it, the flavor of any food is so much more bland. What do you think?" She smiled and ignored a concerned librarian that had hovered back to a corner of one of the shelves.

**Serah:** *"Teleportation spells?" Serah wondered dully. "That'd be a trick. Too bad skill-range only lies on the high end of the thermometer."*

*"Minimally invasive..."* It didn't take long for Serah's unease around hospitals to come back in full force. She'd never be treated by a unicorn physician before, and protocol seemed to be drastically different. For one, she wasn't just getting a bone moved back into place. And her doctor wasn't an underling that she could punish if he or she made a mistake.

Serah nodded at the physician's reasoning. She hadn't even thought about what a gunshot wound on her medical record could do to her in the future. Then again, she had planned not to leave any record at all.

*"So I can skip out now, limp through city until I collapse in the gutter, or put future in this mare's hooves,"* Serah thought to herself. Exhaling slowly, she picked up the pad of paper and signed her name, using the pen with her teeth. When she'd finished, she held both out to the other mare to take back.

"... Thank you," Serah said, the words feeling unfamiliar on her lips, "and I don't think teleportation has anything to do with it. Don't even know how to teleport."

**Aiden:** Oh right, housing. Surely if he was to help out here with the restaurant in Las Pegasus, he'd have to find a place nearby to reside. Despite living in Fillydelphia for quite a while, and growing quite accustomed to the area, moving, for this situation especially, had no downs. Not only would the restaurant be in close range, but he'd possibly be able to see Wing a bit more than he currently does. Could easily send a letter through the post telling his roommate about

his transfer, though, when he would get it would be unknown due to him constantly roaming. His current job was already well staffed, so him resigning from his position wouldn't hurt the business all that much. Any loose ends back home could easily be tied up and sent off; bills, funds, any other minuscule details. All simple.

"Heh, looks like my little vacation will be *quite an* extended one! If it's to help out here, then I will surely stay." Aiden's face, a current mix of confidence and humour, quickly changed to slight worried thought. He felt a slight unease, though unsure as to what could cause it. He was already staying in a hotel so he could extend his stay there while he house shopped. His thoughts, however, thought of both possible scenarios, in which he doesn't find a suitable place to reside. Nope, that wouldn't happen, so there's no reason to think like such! "Will definitely have to go around and search out some houses or apartments soon though. Hotels are nice in all, especially 'round this area. But, if I'm going to be staying, I'd rather have my own place." His voice naturally chuckled as he finished speaking.

Deep down, he couldn't wait. Primarily about what exactly he would be doing, but, that would come in due time. So much excitement, but quite a lot to do...but definitely more excitement. He didn't know what to expect in the coming days or weeks, planning ahead that far proved pointless due to his own lack of knowledge. Perhaps he too should delve into the...books...Ambrosia held. Why not? There'd always be that possibility in the future the info could prove wonderful. He tried to think of questions he could ask Ambrosia, but nothing came up. Perfect time to be drawing blanks...

**Wing:** "Okay, okay..." Wing answered with a laugh as he was batted away by the mare. "I get it. I get it; we don't want to scar poor Aiden for life with our incessant cuteness." He could not help but smile as another quintessential Wingly line popped into his head. "Of course, if we were going to assign blame based upon cuteness, I'm afraid it would be on you, Amby." He bit his lower lip and winked at the sheer shamelessness he had unleashed upon Equestria before exhaling a calming sigh.

His chocolate cores had shifted slowly to the stallion. It was obvious that the gears were turning in his brain. "Staying in a hotel for the long term is obviously unacceptable. However, spending another night paying for a room like that is pretty silly at this point. I have plenty of rooms at my place. When you converted your property into your own laboratory, you tend to have a lot

of space on hoof. There really is already a place you can crash at until you find a spot more suitable to your particular vibe." He paused and lowered his brow slightly. "And you know how it goes when it comes to Wing hospitality."

Much like his marefriend, Wing did a wonderful job earning the scorn of the librarian. He gave the pony a shy little wave, recognizing the scolding, and then quickly proceeded not to put another second into caring. "I've been spending my free time looking for a spot of land where we can set this restaurant up. It really depends on what sort of vibe Amby wants in the end: little nook, big plot, etc..." He rolled his shoulders back and plopped his flank on the ground. "Ahh well, I know it will all get figured out eventually. This mare has got mad skills, Aidenpony, and it's like I always say good things are good things. The talent of the dish will bring the ponies to the yard."

**Springsteps:** "Steal?" Springsteps replied without slowing down or even looking back. She was rather surprised that Deft was able to catch her up despite her early start, she actually had to remind herself that the young mare was a lot faster than other adults. She laughed. "It's not stealing, it's called extended borrowi- Ow wow!" The filly's eyes widened as her hooves reflexively swerved around a lamp post to avoid a collision. Her shoulder nearly bruised the metal pole. Looking around and giggled nervously, she decided to slow down her gaits and just canter alongside deft. "Sorry for not telling you about anything. That stallion back there is my pop! He might get a tiny-weeny upset later, but I'm sure everything's okay!" She smacked her lips together. The foodstuff on her back and Deft's should be more than enough for both of them to enjoy until it's dinnertime.

Springsteps looked at her surroundings for any familiar landmarks. She wasn't very familiar with Las Pegasus, but most of the time she only needed to walk through a neighborhood once to memorize it. Well, most of the time. She stopped on her track and scrunched her face. Was that lamp post supposed to be there? She didn't remember ever taking turns from the pool area to her house, but the buildings around her didn't look familiar at all. She shook her head and grinned sheepishly. "Um, can you lead the way? I kinda forgot how to get to the park."

**Winged Ratchet:** Winged remained awkwardly in existence for a few moments, his mind scrambling to think what to do next and how to respond. Why had he been ignored? Had he been rude? Maybe the mare simply didn't like puns- or at least, not to the extend Winged did.

He *loved* puns, and even that was an understatement. Surely he hadn't done anything worthy of being ignored, though. Then again, Ratchet did just walk himself into a tree. Who would want to be caught talking to someone silly enough to do that?

His thoughts came to a full stop. He could have sworn he saw something in the Mare's face... a look of confusion presently, but he was sure he just missed something...

Ratchet closed his mouth, realizing he had left it hanging just open. Now he was sure he looked silly, but he shook it off without a second thought. If he was going to remedy this he would do it now, before the two ponies left.

"Excuse me?" WR started with some uncertainty. Why? He wanted to be genuine with his apology, so why sound like he didn't mean it? Pausing to clear his throat, he began again "Listen, I didn't mean to be rude or interrupt something or anything like that - and even now I'm still doing that, but... I just wanted to say I'm sorry, for the horrible joke and for being rude."

Winged was hopeful he would be recognized this time around. *Why didn't I say this the first time?*

Ratchet extended his hoof and gave a friendly smile, "The name is Winged, by the way. Winged Ratchet." A brief introduction and he would be on his way! After all, he didn't need to keep these ponies; they were clearly more interested in doing something else, and WR wouldn't be the one responsible for keeping them from doing it.

**Ambrosia:** Ambrosia noticed Aiden's worried expression, and she guessed a possible reason for it. Whatever the stallion's plans had been, if he intended to stick around to help the restaurant, they would have to be put on hold. She nodded with understanding when he mentioned the importance of finding his own place, though in truth, it wasn't a feeling that she had ever really understood. She'd lived most of her life wandering from one place to another, staying with friends or, sometimes, with ponies she barely even knew.

Making an offer of hospitality to Aiden had been just on the tip of her tongue when Wing beat her to it. With a smile, she leaned back and let her eyes express her agreement with the idea. She certainly didn't mind, and it would make it easier for her to bounce ideas off of the

thoughtful stallion. She ignored the librarian that was increasingly expressing silent disapproval of the noise.

**'Wing McCallister', on 22 Dec 2013 - 6:50 PM, said:** 

This mare has got mad skills, Aidenpony, and it's like I always say good things are good things. The talent of the dish will bring the ponies to the yard.

Ambrosia blushed fiercely at the complement and covered her mouth with a hoof. She cleared her throat before speaking . "Well..." She was at a loss for words so a gentle shrug was all that she had. She let a few seconds of silence pass before she tried speaking again. "Hey, maybe we could check these books out and go some place that isn't quite so dusty?"

**Dawn:** "You're welcome..." Dawn said, distracted by something as her horn began to glow. After a second, she was done. A curious expression appeared on her face. "Well... Hmm... I just finished the diagnostic spell. Could you follow me this way?" She gently levitated the tablet and motioned towards a smaller adjoining room and wore her best comforting smile.

**Veracity:** *And, now he's speaking... Again...* Veracity wasn't good at this. She preferred social situations that were simple, direct, and easily navigated, by her. Failing that, she preferred to hammer them until they fit the criteria. It should have been obvious that the presence of the stallion was not appreciated. She didn't see why she needed to make this any more clear.

His uncertainty and slight hesitation seemed to indicate that he had at least thought that there was something wrong... Her ears flicked violently, and a certain curiosity gripped her. She wished dearly that she could see his face, read his expression. Instead, all she had was a smell that was decisively odd. Her passiveness had plainly failed to communicate and the stallion had cost her a moment of peace. The only thing that remained was to do something to redeem the moment.

She hissed softly and sat up. Quite gently and with no real effort, she lifted the pink stallion using her forelegs and set him gently to the side. She then stood and raised her head, she was a few inches taller than the stallion that she was addressing. She opened her mouth to speak but stopped, thinking. "We have two questions for you. One of them is more important than the other. First, what is a winged ratchet? Second, when is a tree not tree?"

**Deft Precision:** Deft liked to run, but what she didn't like was running while being chased. It typically meant that something was horribly, terribly wrong and she would never hear the end of it. The filly's comments on "extended borrowing" didn't make Deft feel any better. *Yup. I'm doomed. Totally and completely. Just wait until he hears about this... Wait... Her pop?! You can't steal from yourself, can you!?* Deft was caught off guard by the sudden stop, she managed to avoid spilling the food that she was carrying, though.

*Finally, a moment to think...* Think she did, and she thought fast but not faster than the words tumbling out of her mouth. "Well, Spring, how about another idea. Parks are boring, there's nothing there but leaves, bugs, and stuff. I've got a better idea for a place to eat. You wanna follow me? Then, follow me, and let's go somewhere that doesn't smell like dirt and grass." She shrugged. "I mean, those things have their place, but come on. I've got an idea for something better. You interested?" She started trotting in her intended direction without waiting for an answer.

**Serah:** "...Okay." Serah would have liked being told what the diagnostic spell had found out, but supposed the answer would come in time. She followed Dawn's motion and walked over to the other room.

*"Suppose this is where I'm cut open and she looks at my insides."* Serah did her best to suppress a shudder. *"Hopefully unicorn magic skips that step."*

**Dawn:** She followed Serah and shut the door behind her. "I didn't really want to be overheard. It would make a mess of my report if everypony knew that I was treating a wound from a gun. I really don't want anyone to know that I left some facts out of the report." She tilted her head. "So, the diagnostic... I didn't find any kind of bullet, so even if you didn't remove it, it's gone somehow. The damage that it inflicted to you, physically, seems to have somewhat healed."

"That's the good news. The bad news is that you're still not doing very well." She paused and cleared her throat. "Sorry for saying the obvious..." She paused again and her eyes locked straight ahead. For almost an entire minute, she was frozen like a statue. She continued as though she had never stopped talking. "You know, there are some materials that, even after they're removed, still have lingering effects, but for a bullet... It shouldn't be this serious."

She tilted her head the other way. "Unless, of course, the bullet never actually left." She blinked owlishly. "Maybe your body somehow naturally discarded the bullet. Somehow... And... Maybe the process wasn't very effective. Like a wound that heals, leaving something inside. Only, in your case it wasn't there, not in the way that it should be. Hmm. It could be another form, somehow a part of you... Rather like some spells can backfire badly, leaving the magic 'active'."

Dawn's hooves clapped together with a loud pop. Her horn started to glow and an excited twinkle came to her eyes. "I think I can fix this! Maybe even right now... Well, hmmm... Maybe no. I need to double check." Her horn stopped glowing. "Let me check for something else." It glowed again, much brighter. "Uh huh... Nope. Not that. Uh. Oh, of course." Her horn's magic changed to a purely white light. "Now, that would be it, I think. Yes, you're poisoned, metallic substances, probably dying."

She shook her head. "Well, if you weren't in such a bad shape right now, I could just try an extraction spell. Ponies shouldn't normally have the substance that bullets have in them, so that might work nicely. But, it won't now. I could try to restore you and then extract but the damage caused by the poison isn't really very symmetrical. So, it could be problematic to rush things. Uh, I could try something more conventional, just chemical treatment. It would be slower though." She smiled in an attempt to be comforting, but it was a strained expression. "Uh... I suppose I should tell you that you have a choice. Or, I could think up another solution?"

**Wing:** The physicist grinned and winked at the mare. "Made ya blush," he commented before stacking the books up neatly to carry them himself. "That sounds like a good plan to me, my dear. Perhaps we should let Aiden decide a suitable destination. He is our guest after all, and this is technically a vacation for him. He's the new colt on the block." Wing paused and released an exasperated sigh. "Plus, I think we're driving the librarian crazy." He smiled sheepishly and cradled the stack in his forelegs before hovering above the ground.

He turned his attention to the stallion. "Any places you would like to see on this little outing?" he asked, his attention divided between paying attention to the ponies and maintaining control of the heavy books. "If anything, home is always an option. I could bust out my triple crusted pizzas." He shot a playful, memory-drenched look to his marefriend. "They are pretty well vetted if everypony is okay with that."

**Serah:** Dawn had lost Serah again. Perhaps if she had stayed in school longer, she could have followed along with what the doctor was saying, but all she could make out now was that there was no bullet inside of her, but something else was, and it might be related to magic.

Serah rapidly blinked her eyes to negate the effects of the impromptu light show.

*"Wait... what was that last... dying?"*

*"I'm dying?!"*

Serah leapt forward and grabbed onto Dawn's shoulders with her front hooves.

"I'm not going to die!" Serah shouted, her voice cracking. Suddenly, she felt very dizzy, and stumbled backwards before hitting the floor. She didn't bother to try standing; she let her head hang down as she stared at the floor and said, "Can't die now. Only just escaped."

*"Those rotten bastards! Made me think I still had a chance! Just disappear!"* Serah limply struck the ground with her hoof. Her headache intensified, and she felt herself growing warm. *"Come all this way, just to lose my life again? Can't even fill my first journal?!"*

Serah grabbed her pack, ignoring Dawn, and took out the diary. The December 22nd entry jumped to her mind.

Suddenly, the pieces clicked. A bullet in her body, now gone. Poisonous metal, flowing through her bloodstream. Her special talent, killing somepony from the inside...

*"My fault. It's always been my damn fault!"* Serah hurled the journal away as her body was consumed by flames of her own unwilling creation. She screamed out in pain, not from the heat, but from the strain of her magic on her weakened body. Her consciousness began to slip away.

*"Cards I've been dealt... need another hand."*

The roaring of her fire faded, and the hospital room was replaced with darkness.

**Springsteps:** "But... Dirt and grass are nice!" Springsteps blurted out. She hesitated for a moment before eventually trotted following Deft's new direction. She didn't really share Deft's opinion on the boringness of parks. City parks can be fun! As long as there's no loud adults nearby, that is. The filly shrugged. If Deft said she got a better idea, then she would just tag along. The unexpected can be nice!

"Where are we going, anyway?" Springsteps asked as she looked around her, taking in the unfamiliar neighborhood. She had never walked around this area, and that made her a tiny weeny bit excited. Her saddlebag and its content rattled as her hooves gained more spring in each steps. "Are we going to eat on a rooftop? In a barn? Maybe you have a workshop or a house nearby? Oh! Where do you live?"

**Aiden:** Well that settled that... Not too far in the back of his mind did Aiden have the thought that Wing would extend an invitation to his place. In addition to that, he also knew that declining said invite was also out of the question. Wing's hospitality knew no bounds and would probably drag him by the tail to his house were he to refuse a few times. That would be quite funny though and hey! He wouldn't have to walk. With most silliness pushed aside from his mind, more serious thoughts and actions took their place. Aiden would take Wing up on his offer, and of course, having Ambrosia's consent lessened the amount of burden he would feel regardless a fair bit.

He offered the two a warm and grateful smile upon accepting their offer. "Looks like I will be rooming with you two then. Thank you." The overall aid of housing gave Aiden quite a bit of relief. Though he would give his share of bits for his stay, it probably would not be as much as he would be paying for hotels here. Surely houses of his style wouldn't come cheap, so the more bits he could budget out the better. Perhaps making it up to Ambrosia and Wing would be a nice thing to do? Will have to give that proper thought later... For now, there was still quite a bit of things that needed to be discussed. What exactly? He hadn't the slightest...but he felt as though Ambrosia would have more things in mind.

Aiden gave a slight nod in approval. Rotating his head around, he took in the overall feel of the library and, to him, just didn't feel like the place to "discuss" a restaurant, let alone talk freely in the first place.. He waited to see if Wing would have a place in mind.

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Then it was put onto him, no matter. To him, any place would offer better opportunities that here. The first place he thought of would be a park or someplace like it. He turned his head to look at the clock again and noticed it was getting rather late. Parks are more suitable for noon or early morning activities that would last a while. Cross that off the list. Hmm...home. That

is an option yes...quite a favourable one too. Not having much else in thought, guess Wing's home would be the next destination.

Aiden took a stand, grabbing the magazine he kept with him the entire time, deciding he would check something out as well or even... He flipped to the back cover and checked the price, may as well just buy it! Set with his goods he looked to Ambrosia and Wing and motioned towards the librarian who had to deal with the trio. "Your house sounds like a good plan. I have something I'll be purchasing as well so I won't be going there empty hoofed either. Let's head on to your home then." Knowing he was leaving, there was no restraint on his voice, nor did he even care. He would finally be getting out of the poor librarian's mane and be on his way. He lifted a hoof and allowed both Wing and Ambrosia to begin the walk ahead of him, allowing him to follow suit.

**Yoyo:** *"Um, this one would cost about two bits per unit, excluding shipping costs. And yes, that would include the detachable parts."*

*"Warning stickers? Like one of those 'choke hazard' thing? Of course! All of my stuff have all the standard stuff. They won't let me sell anything without those, hehe."*

*"Oh, you mean the doors will have to be able to open themselves, followed with the ding dong and flashy lights? I can do that! The extra parts would cost an extra... a third of a bit, I think. So, how many would you take?"*

*"Only twenty...? Oh! No no no, twenty is good! It's good enough! So to recap... Twenty of this, fifty of this, and a hundred of these coupled with these in one set. Is that right?"*

*"Um, yeah. I guess the payment can wait a little bit. I know how hard it is to sell toys these days, eheheh... Yeah. I can definitely understand that"*

*"And of course, the little baby can have that. It's uh... free of charge. See you later!"*

...

Yoyo walked out of the small convenience store, her face contorted into a curious mixture of sadness and relief. She forced a smile and looked back for a moment to wave a hoof to the shopkeeper and her little colt, before trotting briskly out of the view. Once her buyer could no longer see her, her shoulders sagged down. There goes the prototype, she lamented. Sparing a

time to go as far as Las Pegasus, to see and try if she could get a partnership running, but all she could find was some cheap liquor store and idle mothers working behind the counters. And colts that won't let go of her samples. That little car was supposed to be her next presentation!

The unicorn mare sighed as her hooves idly brought herself to the general direction of her hotel. She couldn't really pay any attention to where she was going at the moment. At least she got something out of it all, right? After all of those hours of extremely cramped train ride and sleeping on itchy bed? Three new costumers, and one potential monthly buyers. The initial orders themselves could net her about... Seventy bits of net profit. Wow. That was certainly a lot of money she could feel her head spin.

"I need some rest," she muttered under her breath. The rest of her agreed. Without any further orders she took a couple of turns around the intersections and made her way into the park she saw yesterday. She was carrying a saddlebag full of trinkets and tools, but she doubted anypony in the park, if there were any, would be disturbed by their soft clinking whenever she move about. "Hm, where's the ice cream guy...?" Yoyo was busy scanning the horizon when she overheard something weird.

One eyebrow instantly raised, her hooves pulled themselves into a full stop. Winged ratchet? How can you install a wing on the pawl? Do you solder them onto the gear? Yoyo quickly shook her head to shove away the ridiculous thought. No, it couldn't be that kind of ratchet. Curiously she walked around a tree and peeked her head around it. What she saw was a rather peculiar gathering of ponies.

There were three pegasi gathering around a rather large tree, and the one who'd asked the question looked to be rather peeved by something. Wait, is that a batpony? Yoyo wondered. There was a yellow stallion one, and a pink mare one, and a bat mare one. What kind of conversation would go into the philosophical-sounding question of 'a tree is not a tree'? There more she thought about it, the more curious she became, the one part about a ratchet had her hooked in. Not wanting to disturb a seemingly ongoing debate, but too interested just to go away, the pink unicorn decided just to nonchalantly sat there in a distance behind her tree and hoped the group wouldn't mind her eavesdropping.

**Flynn:** *I know that by the time you're reading this, you should be settled in quite nicely into the Las Pegasus atmosphere. When we heard your decision to leave Baltimare for a while, I was*

*kind of surprised; I mean, who was I gonna get to help out here at work? Anyway, I just wanted to send you off with something a little bit close to home so that you won't forget us for a while, yeah?*

*We'll see you soon Flynn.*

*S.T.*

*p.s. HEY BUD! Fletcher here! Don't you think you escaped from us silly fillies just yet! I meant it at the train station when I said you gotta find some interesting people to hang around with! And don't you think that you can ignore me, because I'll know. And you know what happens if I find out. Right? **RIIIIIIIGHT?***

"This is by far, the worst good bye letter I've ever gotten in my life." A distressed unicorn said, staring with wide eyes at the written letter. It hadn't been too long since he left his home - about a week or so - to go house sit at a friend's place, but who knew that he would still be saddled with the task of being put on these stupid missions by a crazy pegasus and her doormat pony friend? Flynn sighed as he looked up at the library ceiling, irritated at what he was tasked with.

The last time he went against Fletcher's ideas, she wound up filling his work locker with snakes and toads from the Hayseed Swamps. Who has time to do that kind of stuff?! Feeling the beads of sweat run down his forehead, the note held by his magic was becoming inconsistent and flickering about. Who would be nuts enough to let some bald dude with a weird name and a blank fl-

"Excuse me sir?"

Cricket let a yelp out, recoiling before making eye contact with a young mare and a few foals around. "Would you be willing to let us use this table?"

Still wide eyed and speechless, he nodded before putting the letter back in his bag and leaving the four to use the table. He walked around aimlessly, picking out random books to kill time as he thought about the letter. He had searched around town for any interesting sightings or exciting opportunities to come by, but the most he gotten away with was helping out a florist

one day and babysitting someone's pet when they went to the store. Hardly anything worth being amazed at.

Cricket sighed and slumped over near one of the bookcases as he popped open one of the stories he picked out - *Paranoia and You! How the Pony Inside Can Rest Easy!*, which is pretty fitting as far as his current situation goes - and started reading one random chapter. Until his ears perked up at the sound of a few others.

Ambrosia, on 13 Nov 2013 - 12:43 AM, said: 

"My restaurant endeavors have gone better than I could have ever hoped for just the first day!"

Cricket blinked. After days of walking around without finding something worth being interested in doing, did he finally come across an opportunity worth engaging in? He put down his book and listened in more carefully.

Wing McCallister, on 22 Dec 2013 - 6:50 PM, said: 

"The talent of the dish will bring the ponies to the yard."

"I think I just found my silver lining..." He muttered, smiling to himself as he paid closer attention to the three.

**Winged Ratchet:** *I wonder how much worse I can fudge up the day today.* Winged's sense of 'Nope' had started kicking into high gear. He felt like he was being treated like a colt, what with the mare staring him down and making him feel uncomfortable. He *was* being treated like a colt. He was sure of it. After all, he had acted like one... right? How bad would it be if he simply turned and left? Sure, it would amplify the scale of how rude he had been, but... maybe it would be better? Las Pegasus was a huge city after all, surely he would never see this mare again.

WR remembered that he had been asked a question. Questions must be answered. Even odd ones like this. What was a Winged Ratchet anyway? He always hated that name. It roll off the tongue at all. It was awkward, complicated, goofy - maybe cool? It suited him.

"I'm fairly sure a winged ratchet would be a nuisance, flying around the workshop. It's a good thing I can't, then, isn't it?" He paused for a brief moment and considered the second question. Was it a pun or sarcasm? Odds are it was leaning toward the second bit. Ratchet would have to fall on the sword a bit. He had goofed bad by the look of the batmare, and any insult coming was well earned.

"As for that second question, I'm afraid I don't know much about trees... When is a tree not a tree?" Winged made his inquisition with both curiosity and preparation for whatever this mare had for him.

For once, WR felt only a few feet tall, and it wasn't because the mare was taller than him.

## Chapter Ten - An Engagement in Las Pegasus

About damn time...

[2:39:09 PM] Wing: Hmmmm.... I seem to be picking up a scent of cinnamon.

[2:39:22 PM] Ambrosia: I hope so. :)

[2:39:31 PM] Ambrosia: ... I think (chuckle)

[2:39:42 PM] Ambrosia: I haven't actually done any cooking today. (wasntme)

[2:40:07 PM] Luminescence: This is fine! It's your birthday after all...

[2:40:20 PM] Wing: Wing grins and hugs Amby.

[2:40:34 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia returns the hug! :)

[2:40:51 PM] Wing: Happy Birthday! :3

[2:41:00 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, Wing! (chuckle)

[2:41:06 PM] Trigger: "And you don't even have to worry about baking."

[2:41:11 PM] Ambrosia: Oh really? :O

[2:41:49 PM] Trigger: Trots around and grins. "Well, Softy mastered the pizza, but I mastered..." Pulls out an apple pie. "This..."

[2:41:59 PM] Ambrosia: Oh my... :O

[2:42:05 PM] Wing: o.O Seriously?

[2:42:20 PM] Ambrosia: I didn't know you could cook, too. (chuckle)

[2:42:34 PM] Ambrosia: But, this calls for something...

[2:42:46 PM] Luminescence: Eating! :D

[2:42:48 PM] Trigger: "Oh, this is it. Anything else... pfft."

[2:43:00 PM] Ambrosia: Well, it's a great start :P

[2:43:16 PM] Ambrosia: Hmmmm

[2:43:35 PM] Luminescence: Hmmmmm, indeed... (think)

[2:43:59 PM] Wing: Well.. that is a surprise. :D

[2:45:16 PM] Trigger cuts the pie with a dagger and dishes up slices onto plates. "I guess that falls into amusement I seek. As for thread parties. People would just troll it anyway. Better off a small, super special party if you ask me...."

[2:47:09 PM] Light Trick: I agree with you!

[2:49:17 PM] Trigger: Munches down his pie and smirks. "Well, I'm off for now. Gotta get a new job application in, but don't you fret, you'll be hearing from me again. Wing's got plans." Poofs.

Wing: o.o That one... never ceases to amaze me. Clearly gets it from Little Squirt.

\*lightly nudges Amby\* So birthday girl... how are you feeling?

[2:52:24 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia takes a slice of pie and smiles.

[2:52:49 PM] Ambrosia: I feel a bit tired, but other than that pretty good. ^^

[2:52:56 PM] Ambrosia: Much better than last time, for certain

[2:53:01 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[2:53:14 PM] Ambrosia: And, this pie is really good, actually...

[2:54:01 PM] Wing: Wing bites into his slice.

Mmm... you're right.

[2:54:29 PM] Ambrosia: How do you feel, Wing? Busy week with science, I'm thinking? (chuckle)

[2:55:23 PM] Wing: It was... but... this day means a whole lot more than any of that.

[2:56:13 PM] Ambrosia: I like birthdays... Not so much for the food or even for anything else... It's just that it means that I've had another year of fun with friends and the ponies that I care for. ^^

[2:56:59 PM] Wing: I like them too... because it means I get to do something special.

[2:57:23 PM] Ambrosia: Something special? (think) You mean more special than apple pie? (chuckle)

[2:58:25 PM] Wing: Wing slips into his liberty blue attire and brushes back his mane.

I have to do something more special than apple pie for my special somepony.

[2:59:10 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[2:59:26 PM] Ambrosia: Oh wow... :D

[2:59:46 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, you look amazing. ^^;

[3:01:20 PM] Wing: Wing presses his nose to hers and smiles.

I have two things to give you today, Ambrosia.

[3:02:41 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia smiles and moves her head back before kissing your nose gently.

I guess I couldn't resist giving you something first, Wing? (chuckle)

[3:03:58 PM] Wing: o///o Oh my. :3

[3:04:41 PM] Ambrosia: Now, Wing, come on, you know my curiosity is really hard for me to deal with. (chuckle)

[3:04:51 PM] Ambrosia: ^^;;;

[3:04:53 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:05:15 PM] Wing: Well... the first... is a song. o///o

[3:05:19 PM] Ambrosia: :O

[3:05:23 PM] Ambrosia: Yay! :D

[3:05:27 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[3:06:26 PM] Trigger: Poofs back in. "Oh .. is it time for the song already?"

[3:06:41 PM] Ambrosia: A duet? o\_o

[3:07:28 PM] Trigger: "I have a few lines." X3 "But this is mostly Wingpony being Wingpony."

[3:07:50 PM] Ambrosia: Sounds cute to me :P

[3:08:12 PM] \*\*\* Wing sent RBFinal.wmv \*\*\*

[3:08:38 PM] Wing: o////o Well... you know...

[3:09:06 PM] Wing: The way you make me feel ;)

[3:12:08 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[3:12:11 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:13:24 PM] Wing: Wing smiles and blushes. ^-^

[3:13:35 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:13:43 PM] Ambrosia: Oh goodness... (chuckle)

[3:13:52 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, this is delightful. =D

[3:14:13 PM] Ambrosia: Much better than Keystone's strange birthday composition. ^^;,,,,,,,,,,,,,

[3:15:06 PM] Wing: Yeah? o////o I'm glad you like it Amby.

[3:15:26 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs you and laughs cheerfully. :D

[3:16:28 PM] Wing: Wing returns the hugs and brushes your mane lightly.

[3:16:39 PM] Ambrosia: ^^

[3:17:40 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nuzzles (chuckle)

[3:18:29 PM] Wing: Wing nuzzles back and takes a deep breath.

Which brings me to gift number two.

[3:19:50 PM] Ambrosia: Yay! :D

[3:26:31 PM] Wing: I shouldn't take as long as the colts, huh? \*reaches into his vest\* You know Ambrosia.... it's been almost nine months since I met you. And I really don't need another day to conclude that you are my definition of special somepony. \*plucks a box from his vest pocket and lowers his flank. He opens the box, revealing a gold band alloyed to match your coat, with a jeweled flower composed of amethyst petals, an emerald ring, and a diamond core.\* Well, hey there Ms. Ambrosia. I heard you wanted to break me with feels, but... if I can give you me for a birthday present, do you think you'd marry me instead?

[3:27:35 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia 's mouth falls open and tears appear in her eyes.

[3:28:20 PM] Ambrosia: Wing...

[3:28:50 PM] Wing: Wing stares and smiles.

You shouldn't cry, laser cinnamon pony.

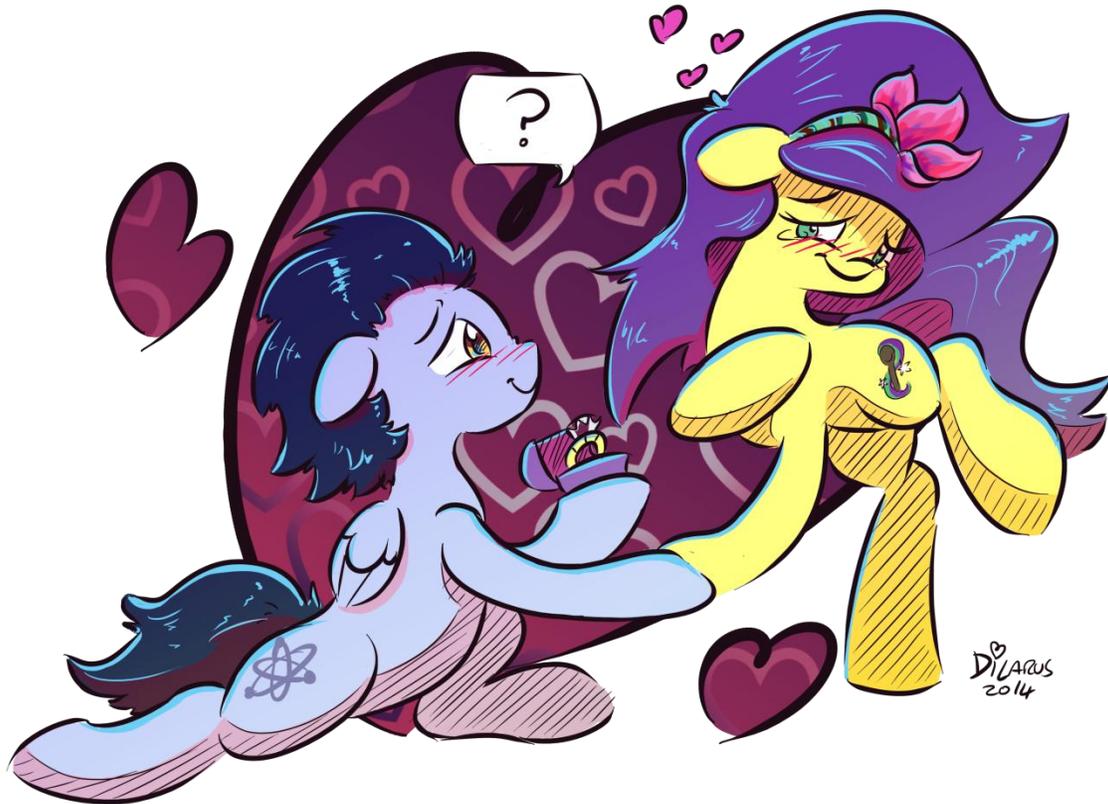
[3:29:16 PM] Ambrosia: I know... But...

[3:29:25 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia looks away and then looks back...

[3:29:30 PM] Ambrosia: Yes. :)

[3:29:50 PM] Ambrosia: I... I. I don't know what else to say except yes, Wing. ^^;





[3:30:23 PM] Ambrosia: This is the most beautiful moment of my life, and... I can't think of anything... It's almost funny. (chuckle)

[3:30:37 PM] Wing: Wing slides the ring over her hoof and hugs her tightly.

[3:30:50 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia hugs back tightly.

[3:31:10 PM] Ambrosia: Wing, I love you. :)

[3:31:23 PM] Ambrosia: And... I didn't faint this time. ^^

[3:31:31 PM] Wing: I love you too, Ambrosia. I know!

[3:31:34 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:31:56 PM] Ambrosia: Well, now I know why I was so excited this week... Even if I didn't know why. (chuckle)

[3:32:22 PM] Wing: I told you that I would make it a day you didn't forget.

[3:32:51 PM] Trigger: Poofs back in and hugs them both, fake crying. "Oh my Luna, it's so beautiful."

[3:34:44 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia boops Trigger's nose

[3:34:48 PM] Ambrosia: You silly pony :P

[3:34:57 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[3:35:30 PM] Trigger: Smiles and suddenly shifts to a really serious express. "But for reals... welcome to the family. Not like it was any surprise to me."

[3:35:52 PM] Ambrosia: Thank you, it's good to be here. (chuckle)

[3:35:59 PM] Ambrosia: I guess it wasn't a surprise. :P

[3:36:20 PM] Ambrosia: Lumi told Keystone this, and he only had a funny image to show. He says this is for you, Wing -> <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/73230601/tribesgifs/b14.jpg>

[3:36:23 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[3:36:49 PM] Wing: (rofl)

[3:37:04 PM] Wing: Oh pink one....

[3:38:06 PM] Wing: That is really quite like him, isn't it?

[3:38:31 PM] Ambrosia: It is! :D

[3:38:39 PM] Ambrosia: But, that's okay. (chuckle)

[3:38:45 PM] Ambrosia: I think your timing was perfect. :)

[3:39:20 PM] Wing: And you know what the best part is?

[3:41:54 PM] Wing: I heard that the stallion of this union gives amazing thigh benefits to special somepony mare.

[3:42:54 PM] Ambrosia: I've heard that too. ;)

[3:43:11 PM] Ambrosia: If we've both heard this, then it simply must be true, I think. :D

[3:44:15 PM] Wing: :D

[3:44:36 PM] Wing: Wing nuzzles lightly.

I really am the luckiest stallion in Equestria.

[3:45:16 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia nuzzles back.

And, I'm the luckiest mare in Equestria. (chuckle)

[3:46:18 PM] Wing: Wing steals a kiss and grins.

I had a feeling you were going to say that.

[3:46:23 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:47:53 PM] Wing: Wing wraps his hooves around you and squeezes.

[3:49:36 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia squeezes back.

[3:49:55 PM] Ambrosia: I think it goes without saying, this is the best birthday that I've ever had, Wing. :)

[3:50:54 PM] Wing: You deserve it... ya put some light in me girl. :3

[3:51:54 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[3:52:10 PM] Ambrosia: And, I think that you put a fire for existing back into me, Wing. :)

[3:52:22 PM] Ambrosia: I didn't have that before you appeared in my life... Not really.

[3:52:33 PM] Ambrosia: I was just content to wander. Now, I don't have to. ^^

[3:52:51 PM] Ambrosia: You're my anchor, Wing, and I wouldn't have it any other way. :)

[3:53:06 PM] Wing: o//////////o \*pomfs\* Oh my.

[3:55:14 PM] Wing: You certainly have your way with words, Amby. It's like you practically stole my heart with them. ;)

[3:55:56 PM] Ambrosia: ;)

[3:56:23 PM] Ambrosia: Stole it again, you mean. (chuckle)

[3:57:20 PM] Wing: You can steal it whenever you like... although I guess that isn't really stealing. :P

[3:58:29 PM] Wing: However my dear, there is unfinished business ahoof. Today is your birthday... so whatever birthday wishes you have... let me know. ^-^

[4:02:02 PM] Ambrosia: Well, I guess the only birthday wish that I have isn't really something that could be kept within a single day... I wish for a better tomorrow, for the restaurant to open, for everypony to be happy, for good things to happen... And, for Lumi and I to have less unusual incidents. (chuckle)

[4:02:48 PM] Wing: Those are the type of things that happen one day at a time.

[4:02:51 PM] Wing: (chuckle)

[4:03:20 PM] Wing: Think it would freak people out if A Restaurant in Las Pegasus became A Restaurant and Wedding in Las Pegasus? X3

[4:03:28 PM] Ambrosia: It probably would. (chuckle)

[4:03:43 PM] Ambrosia: A day at a time is a good pace for that, as well. (chuckle)

[4:04:18 PM] Wing: I think the restaurant will be fantastic.

[4:08:49 PM] Ambrosia: I think that you're right. :)

[4:09:20 PM] Wing: After all the ingredients are superb and the owner-to-be has excellent tastes.

[4:20:17 PM] Wing: And there might be... a second song. \*looks around and whistles innocently.\*

[4:23:46 PM] Ambrosia: I would like that :D

[4:24:51 PM] Wing: I had a Ray Charles moment one day... but... your name just kept filling in, so I had to record it. :3

[4:27:10 PM] \*\*\* Wing sent Ambrosia.mp3 \*\*\*

[4:38:51 PM] Ambrosia: :D

[4:39:01 PM] Ambrosia: That was really lovely. :)

[4:40:31 PM] Wing: Wing smiles and ruffles his wings.

[4:43:56 PM] Wing: As long as you enjoy it, that's what matters to me. :3

[4:44:37 PM] Ambrosia: (chuckle)

[4:44:57 PM] Ambrosia: I think that I need to go now, though. Lumi is getting tired... ^^;

[4:47:11 PM] Wing: Wing kisses again and smiles. You have a great birthday, Amby. I love you a lot. And yes.. we don't want the Little Squirt to get tired.

[4:48:12 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia gives a hug and nods.

I love you too, Wing. I'll be around. :)

[4:48:36 PM] Wing: Wing returns the hug and waves, one giddy pony.

[4:49:31 PM] Ambrosia: Ambrosia waves and departs, for now. ;)

## Chapter Eleven - A Restaurant in Las Pegasus II

Back to the board...

**Tea Leaf:** Tea Leaf walked out of her house. "See ya, Sis!" she said as she closed the door behind her. She flew up into the vast sky, and looking down at Las Pegasus, Tea Leaf saw busy ponies running around, others standing, talking, and doing all sorts of things. Quickly, she dove to the ground, landing. *I wonder what I should do...* she thought, wandering around. Starting to walk in the direction of the nearest park, her favorite place, Tea Leaf remembered she had to get a book for his sister. She groaned, *I don't even like libraries! So quiet! Can't Sis do it herself...?* She hesitated, but changed directions and went over to the library. She pushed the door opened, and stood at the entry of the library. *It sure is noisier than usual today. . .*

'NeverNeverland', on 05 Feb 2014 - 8:11 PM, said: 

"I think I just found my silver lining..." He muttered, smiling to himself as he paid closer attention to the three.

When Tea Leaf heard that, she walked over to the stallion and asked, "Your silver what?" She looked at the unicorn and then at the book he had put down. "Paranoia and you. . ." Tea Leaf read. She realized she hadn't introduced herself yet. "My name is Tea Leaf, what's yours?" She waited a few seconds and continued, "Hope you don't mind I'm talking to you, if you want me to go away just say it." Tea Leaf smiled.

## Chapter Twelve - Until We Meet Again

### Letter VI...

Dearest Ambrosia,

Well howdy! I heard you wanted to break me with feels... How about we start with the thigh? And now it's in writing, Laser Cinnamon Pony. :P ... I have some things to tell you :)

- When I told you that you that you are special, I meant it. Your kindness can be felt, Sharper. It's charming, warming, and it gave me a reason to be. ... That letter from long ago, about saving from the darkness, was completely and utterly true.

- You're insightful. Remember that conversation about appreciating the simple things? Couldn't be more true.

- Have I mentioned the part about the glorious amount of happiness you bring me? \*Sincere, serious WP look, activate\* I love you, Ambrosia. And no amount of time/dist separation, character box mechanics ... etc... is ever going to change that.

Things are crystal clear: this stallion is yours - and you don't even have to steal me. Although, you can if you want. \*Tapes gold coin to thigh\* Incentives. :rofl: :P I am Wing after all. Oh yeah </wingvoice>.

Now, there's more. I have a gift for you too, Amby. Every chef should have one: a pro chef spoon for my pro chef. :3 There is something else though... This spoon has a twin... one which I will keep always - a connection in cookware... Well, I have to try when I can. Have to embrace the talents of my special somepony, right? ....

Take care of yourself, Ambrosia. Until we meet again, at which point this stallion will be a true gentlecolt.

Eternally yours with love,  
Dr. Wing

## Chapter Thirteen - Cages in Manehattan

**This changes almost everything...**

Note: In Spring 2014, Lumi began a new set of roleplays meant as continuations to the universe created through Exit Trixie. It quickly became evident that sustaining A Restaurant in Las Pegasus was an infeasible task, and that roleplay was sadly shuttered. I could probably go into great detail here, but I do not think it is necessary. Ambrosia and Wing simply moved to Cages. RootBeer lives on. The continuity set by their engagement is still in place. Canon! The purpose of this note is to address the weak discontinuities generated by the shift and to state that RootBeer themed posts from Cages will be added into this log.

Here is my list of presumed discontinuities and my take on how they should be sorted / interpreted:

**1) And suddenly, there is no restaurant:** This one seems pretty big, but it really is not. I introduce a simple explanation. Some time following the acquisition of reading materials in Las Pegasus, Amby realized that she required a hooves-on perspective to build the dream. Sitting in one place was not going to do that for her, but neither was a train job. It is in her nature to wander, and that is a great way to gather experience. In that regard, it makes sense that she would end up in one of Equestria's largest cities perhaps as a means to expand horizons. Wing would obviously support this. I am pretty sure somewhere in this log he had even stated that as long as she was happy, he would support whatever her dream happened to be -- because, you know, that is exactly what a special somepony should do.

**2) In the early section of this log, Wing stated that he was from here, and technically here would be Las Pegasus. However, in Cages, his backstory is that he is from Manehattan:** Simple fix, this is retcon'd. Wing is from West Manehattan.

And now I return you to our regularly scheduled programming...

**Wing:** The features of the skyline were finally visible now. The flight from Las Pegasus had been a long one, but the lavender stallion had made a habit of making any trip to this particular location a manual one. Covering his eyes were a pair of liberty blue tinted goggles that matched the color of his atomic

cutie mark, and behind the panes, two chocolate brown cores glimmered at the sight of what he considered the best city in the world.

He pitched his wings and began the descent towards Bright Sea. Somewhere down there was home: a familiar community of emotions and vibes that sparked his heart to beat with anticipation and in time with each and every flap of his feathery appendages. The contents of his saddlebag shifted to the sudden shift in velocity, and a gentle grin curved the corners of Wing's lips. "Please take care while opening the overhead compartment as contents may have shifted during the duration of the flight."

The physicist pegasus chuckled. There was nothing in there that he considered fragile: just a few odd trinkets and the usual fare. Something, however, was far from usual about this trip. There was no official reason for him to come - no lecture series, no planned family reunion, no business... perhaps not even pleasure. He came solely because a feeling drew him here, and such senses were usually not misplaced.

He couldn't think about that now. Upon landing, the soil of home clung to his hooves like a long-missed relative wishing to hug its kin. Wing pushed the specs from his eyes and let the goggles cling to his forehead and mane. He drew the scent of the city in with a deep breath and exhaled a sigh of nostalgic satisfaction. There was not really much else he could say. After such a long time, he had returned home. "Oh yeah..."

**Revenant:** "Oh yeah..." An echo seemed to almost mockingly whisper the stallion's words back to him, carried on some non-existent wind. The leaves of a nearby tree rustled, making a sound that, too an imaginative listener, would have resembled the innocent laughter of a young child. A shadow near the tree seemed to dance apart from any visible shape, before subsiding back into the dying evening's light.

On the ground where the shadow had danced, there was now a single sheet of paper. It was ragged and worn, but the markings were schematics of some kind. The rustling laughter could be heard again, and the schematics seemed to move themselves, altering in complexity and shape. In fact, the paper itself seemed almost unstable, as though it was no more than a mere illusion.

**Wing:** Wing's eyes locked onto the sheet of paper as the lines redrew themselves. He registered each mark as the suspicions for his journey began to creep back to the forefront of his awareness. There were several possibilities that could explain what he was seeing, ranging from the innocent to the not-so-great to the absolutely fantastic. At the moment, however, the stallion did not have enough information. He took a few steps towards the paper and plopped his flank to the ground. He was by the

water after all; there was enough moisture in the air to pluck if he needed it. For now, he would do what he always did.

"Why hello there, Echoing Schematic." He pulled a can of Coke and two small glasses, which he set down between himself and the paper. "Would you care for a beverage this fine evening?" The pegasus smiled. "My name is Wing. I can't say I've been welcomed home by a sheet of paper before, and your diagrams are quite appealing to a scientist such as myself. One just has to appreciate the curves, yes?" He coughed out a statement of thighs before continuing. "Forgive my rudeness. Do you happen to have a name too? And if you don't mind me being so bold, do you need some assistance? Your parchment seems a bit.. causality violating? I happen to have a dry tube in my saddlebag if you'd be so inclined."

**Stryker:** If it was at all possible, the sheet of paper seemed pleased. The gentle sound of rustling laughter intensified, but a direct answer to the physicist did not occur. Instead, the paper's diagram simply swirled into a variety of complex geometric patterns, before reverting to a single, large question mark at the mention of 'thighs'. The question mark lingered. The rustling sound took on that of a gentle murmur of confusion.

"Yes..." It was a feminine sound, working its way through the rustle. The voice was forceful as it cut through the confused laughter, pleading. The sound of wings nearby caused the strange rustling to fall into silence. The paper erased itself. Behind the physicist, some meters away, a rather uncanny creature had landed. At first, it seemed to be a griffon. The head was undoubtedly so, but... There were hooves on its hind legs.

The creature cleared its throat. "Ah... Forgive me if I startle you." He spoke with an scholarly voice, as if giving a lecture on some esoteric subject. "Ah, in the way of introductions, I am called Stryker... I suppose that you have some knowledge of mechanics? My friend... Ah... Whom you have just met... She said that she would request assistance from someone? I suppose you were somehow called here?" His black eyes calmly searched the world in front of him, focused on nothing and everything at once.

**Wing:** Wing's ears perked the rustling. The mechanics of flight were clear, and drilled into the back of his mind as though they may have well been carved in stone. He had not really been started at all. There were only a set number of possibilities for such an event: either he was being set up, witnessing a harmless prank, or some really trippy shit was going on. Frankly, none of the outcomes left him feeling the need for much concern. He was a physicist after all with a lab filled with crazy things that made most people in the nation tilt their heads and give confused gazes with a healthy dose of 'huh?'

Upon Stryker's landing, the pegasus merely shifted his stare. His smile was unwavering as he opted to take a sip from that delicious Coke nectar. "The name is Wing," he replied, "and yes, I have quite a bit of knowledge when it comes to mechanics and fabrication." Wing held back his desire to chuckle at the overabundant lecturing tone of the newest arrival. Once upon a time, he had found such things annoying, but since he took up his post-doctorate position, he found them to be quite silly. It usually amounted to one of two things after all: just an inherent personality trait or a bit of posturing. Wing had high variance after all, and thus, he had grown to get the buck over it.

"I take it that means I was somehow summoned by Echoing Schematic then? How peculiar, but also how interesting. And she's a she. Also quite interesting. Would you care for some of this beverage? I'm sure I have another glass in my saddlebag. I guess I picked up the habit from a close friend of mine, but I prefer to share a drink with those I presume to be working with in the soon-to-be-present."

**Stryker:** Stryker practically beamed. An unspoken sigh of relief expressed itself on his features. His thoughts swirled pleasantly. *So, she was right then. Seems a nice fellow as well, which is good. I doubt that I could deal with more arrogance in this place... So many that think so much of themselves, and yet, think so little in general. The world is such a bigger place than just this island...* Put at ease by Wing's greetings, he approached calmly.

Standing, it was readily apparent that Stryker would have been a burly stallion if he had been a normal pony. There was a certain power in his movements, and he didn't walk or trot like a normal stallion. Instead, he moved in a steady, methodical fashion - as though he was a stone statue brought to life.

"Echoing Schematic?" Stryker raised his eyebrows pleasantly. His eyes twinkled. "I suppose she wouldn't mind this title, and I wouldn't mind a drink at all. This climate doesn't quite agree with me, in honesty. I'm accustomed to cooler temperatures at this time of year. It's not so bad, but it does strain my voice. Some liquid would be appreciated." He nodded his head with eyes closed. "And, I do have some talking to do, though not so much tonight, I think."

"Tonight, I think it's enough to say that my friend's normal name is Revenant, but she isn't quite particular about this. Forgive her silence right now, she spent quite a bit of her force to speak with you. It's harder for her to talk to strangers than it is for her to talk to me. I'm an independent researcher from Kismet. It's a larger city where I'm from, which isn't Equestria or even the, rather descriptively named, Griffon Territories." He opened his eyes.

"My friend is a pony... Or, she once was, anyway. I believe that she still is. Well. Some time ago, through an accident involving the application of magic... She somehow voided her own ability to exist in this world. I found her while on an expedition some years ago. She's quite brilliant, really..." He stopped and chuckled softly. "This must seem quite random... And, I know I have no right to your help or even trust, but if you promise to be discreet, then I promise to explain quickly and truthfully. Further, I can promise my gratitude..."

**Wing:** Wing paid no mind to the manner in which Stryker approached. It was certainly unusual, to say the least, but again, who was he to judge? After all, he had just been speaking with a piece of paper. A randomly appearing, statuesque hippogriff was frankly not even on the radar of worry to him. Actually, the lavender pegasus found the entire chain of events maximally amusing. "Weather can be a pain..." he replied while pouring a glass for his newest guest. *Although, I guess I'm really the guest.* He chuckled softly and extended his hoof towards Stryker. "Here you are..."

Wing blinked and pondered this one in silence for a few seconds. Internally, his imagination was pulsing with activity. There were so many questions and potential avenues flowing that he began to ramble. "So... Ms. Revenant voided her ability to exist on this plane..." He lifted his muzzle and peered into the sky. "Variant gauge coupling..." Wing proceeded to mumble a few additional sentences before snapping back to attention. He promptly lifted one of his forehooves, scratched the back of his head, and released a laugh to the winds. "Sorry about that. I have a tendency to kind of go off the deep end every now and then." He smiled. "I can be discreet when I have to be, and I don't think it's right for your friend to be trapped out of existence. Just going to have to do something about that, now aren't we?"

**Stryker:** While Wing was speaking, Stryker sniffed the drink that Wing had provided him. Evidently pleased by the smell, he tentatively lifted the glass for a taste. After the first sip, he lowered the glass with a confused expression on his face. His head tilted to the side for a moment. It was a very birdlike movement, performed at a strangely slow speed. After just a second in closed eye concentration, the tilt vanished and the confusion rapidly melted away into a beaky smile of satisfaction. He continued to drink.

He shook his head gently when Wing apologized, but waited until the stallion had finished speaking to answer. "I don't think that should worry about going 'off the deep' around me... I have the habit of doing this as well, so it is a trait that we have in common. Though, I think that I'm sometimes worse about this than most ponies would be. The culture of my home is one of speaking more than listening, I'm afraid. It's a terrible habit that I've worked hard to balance within myself, over the years."

Another drink was taken from his glass, then Stryker continued. "It isn't right for her to be like this, no... She was a researcher, seeking knowledge and the improvement of this world through its accumulation. It was a simple goal, really, but... Well, their methods were unrefined, and they reached a level of practice that exceeded the theories that had existed up until that point in time. I think that... Yes, if you're willing, then we should do something about this..."

"But, the time to talk about this is tomorrow, and... The place to speak of it is... Not here. " His dark eyes roamed the area around them, making a piercing inspection, before settling back on Wing. They glimmered with the evidence of both kindness and trust. "I recall you mentioned having a container for my friend? If I may ask a favor, I have found myself involved with some rather... Curious locals. If you could keep her until our paths cross again, then you would have my gratitude..."

**Wing:** "Curious locals, huh?" Wing smirked and plucked the poster tube from his saddlebag. There weren't too many categories of individuals his friend could be describing. Most Manehattan ponies just left the tourists alone, which meant something else was likely going on behind the scenes. He considered the options: guards, investors, over-the-top collectors... The physicist was already running out of ideas. His clearance could probably handle the first, but the others were more in another's area of expertise. "Well, it ain't my first fucking rodeo," he continued before plucking the cap off the tube and extending the end in Stryker's direction.

"I'm going to take a guess that Revvy here knows a rendez-vous spot. That would make sense to me. If something comes up before then, my first lab is at 49 Armistice Avenue. Just look for the bunker door around back, and if you happen to run into some eccentric family members, just say you're a friend of mine." He chuckled and waited for the deposition of the parchment. "Until then, I think I'm up for giving Ms. Echoing Schematic here a proper tour of my old neighborhood."

**Stryker:** The hippogriff drank the remainder of his drink and then blinked calmly for a moment. "You'll have to tell me, one day, what a rodeo is?" He smiled in a self-consciously polite way. It was a silly expression on a normally serious face. He cleared his throat and then reached for the piece of sentient paper. It quickly fluttered away. Unperturbed, Stryker sighed and shook his head.

While Wing spoke, the paper rolled itself up neatly and fled into the container. Unable to help himself, Stryker chuckled lightly. "Well, I'll keep your address in mind, and I'll trust you to take care of my friend. She certainly seems to... I suppose that I should warn you, though I don't

view it as a terrible thing. Just something to keep in mind." He tilted his head slowly. "Revenant has the habit of sometimes being inappropriately playful. I suppose it's a combination of bad timing and curious taste in humor."

He shrugged, the gesture was glacial. "I suppose that if my humor was over a thousand years out of date, then it might strike others as odd as well." A slight chuckle could be heard, but it wasn't from Stryker. It was a harsh but recognizably feminine laugh, carried lightly through the air. "You mentioned that you have some eccentric family members. I suppose they would be alright with the occasional bit of oddness?"

**Wing:** Wing chuckled and nodded. "Yeah, they put up with me don't they? Nothing quite like a scientist right. I've had my fair share of dealing with inappropriate playfulness." Wing gently set the occupied tube back into his saddlebag, "Given the vibe I had about this day, I am completely not surprised. "If you need anything, don't be afraid to come find me either. I may have been away for quite a while, but this is still my hometown." A grin appeared as flashbacks from his youth seeped into the pony's mind. It certainly had been a while since he had been home. Perhaps it was time for him to get a fresh view of his colthood home.

"Well, Ms. Revenant, why don't we stop beating around the bush. What would you like to do: go for a little sightseeing or get the refreshing view of my first lab table. It frankly doesn't matter much to me. Either way, it's going to be a blast from the past. Albeit, not quite as substantial as yours."

**Stryker:** Stryker took a deep breath, and listened to Wing speak. The words of the pegasus were a reassurance to him, much more so than anything else that he had heard since arriving in Manehattan. The pegasus was a bit flashy, definitely confident, but also... Stryker felt that he could trust this Wing with his life. "Alright then, Wing. Take care of my friend, and we will speak again. Another day... Another time." He turned slowly and began to walk away, stopping momentarily to wipe a tear from his eye, taking to the sky shortly afterwards, his massive wings flapping slowly.

**Wing:** "Don't worry. I will." He watched as Stryker departed into the sky before turning his gaze towards the parchment tube. "No comment, huh? Well, I guess we'll take a stroll back to the lab then. Place is probably going to need a dusting, ya know? It's been quite a few years since I've been down there." The pegasus narrowed his stare and continued to eye the tube. "Also, I'm not going to expect you to answer this now. We've just met after all - kind of - Ms. Echoing Schematic. Still, sooner or later, I'm going to want to know just who's giving you both a hard time - and what exactly you did to push yourself out of existence from this plane."

His irides glimmered in a slightly shifted shade to their usual chocolate. "Eventually, I'd also like to know why me, but I figure with a thousand years, you probably know all of this already." He smirked and turned his head back to its forward-facing position before releasing a gentle chuckle. "Regardless, I'll try my best to get you back in one, non-paper piece."

**Spiritual Essence:** She was lost in the world of a book as the day faded into night. Time escaped her as her mind crept down the midway painted by this wonderful author. It was a gorgeous scene, wrapped neatly in an element of mystery. The world flowed through her, completely, wholeheartedly, as though she could feel the road's gravel beneath her hooves as she trotted calmly though the plot line that had been placed before her. And then the image was gone...

She was back in her living room, sitting beneath a hand-stitched blanket. That spot in the room was her alcove. It had been for years - just as it was the day she heard that same key slide into the lock of the front door. He still fuddled with it - a fact which brought a tad of amusement to the curling corners of her lips - and she wasted little time in climbing from her cushioned chair and trotting to the entry way.

The white pegasus played anxiously as she brushed her liberty blue mane, and a part of her still expected an excited school colt to come tumbling into view. Instead, a grown stallion stood before her with numerous trinkets thrown into his saddle bag and his own lifetime of memories to share.

"Welcome home," she spoke softly, a maternal calmness ever present in her words. "I guess I should start making a homemade pizza, and you're going to have to tell me everything, young man. I'm still your mother after all."

**Wing:** Wing chuckled. "Do you even need to ask, Mom? Of course I want homemade pizza. And you know... it's all the usual stuff with me. Engaged, science, random visit...." He paused and shrugged. "I'm going to be using the bunker lab for a while again. It seems as though I've been given a special assignment. Don't worry though, I'm just going to reconstruct a soul voided from physical existence and pushed into a sheet of talking paper. Typical things..." He smiled broadly as his mom floated past into the kitchen. It was just like old times: short and sweet, and a little bit of uncertainty. Was he serious, or was he just being Wing? It was all part of who he was and all part of the plan.

He would get to restoring the laboratory tomorrow morning. For now, he would enjoy the pizza, his family, atypical dinner guest, and some well-deserved overdue sleep.

**Ambrosia:** Housesitting, he had told her. What Vim hadn't told her was that the house would be occupied. He'd done it on purpose, of course. She knew that the older stallion had a particularly curious sense of humor. He was probably laughing at that moment, imagining her discomfort as she struggled to match wits with and contain the bad behavior of the younger mare. Earlier in life, she had thought of Deft as a sister. Now, she had learned better. She thought of Deft as a crazy sister.

Ambrosia continued her rapid trot through Port Beryl, controlling her worries and her breathing with delicate precision. It hadn't always been this way. Just ten years ago, she had been the force of chaos; wild, untamable, and completely without apology. She had only changed when she had realized that a wild lifestyle was incompatible with achieving her goals in life. That didn't mean that she had completely given up on her old ways. They had simply found new outlets.

She was trotting faster. Finding out where the event would be had been a cakewalk. She was familiar enough with the Manehattan night life to know where to ask, and Deft was loud. The other mare had made no secret of her actions... Ambrosia's thoughts and progress were interrupted. A sudden, harsh mechanical sound practically split the air in front of her. Her hooves scrambled to halt her forward momentum as a massive shadow sped across her path. Instinctively, she span around, checking her surroundings. Nothing was there.

Her trot was replaced by a hectic gallop, and a strange sense of unease formed in her stomach. The sight of wild flickering lights in the distance did nothing to ease her concern. There was another mechanical sound behind her, it was some distance away and a different pitch from the earlier sound. She felt the strongest urge to turn and investigate, but it was overcome by her desire to get back safely to her bed and whatever could be salvaged of the night's sleep.

She was close enough to hear the music. It rumbled, shrieked, groaned, and gibbered in the distance. It wasn't a bad sound, but she'd heard better, which meant that Deft wasn't the DJ. She could see Beryl residents, standing outside of their homes. Some of them seemed to be fairly enthused about making their way towards the party. Others simply gawked. A few seemed angry enough to think about interrupting, a thought that was deterred from becoming action by the sheer number of young ponies congregating around the residence.

With a sigh, Ambrosia stopped. She judged that she was far enough into the Residential area to be safe from whatever it was that had been following her. She was also close enough to the party that she would be noticed if she came any closer. Most of Deft's friends knew her as the "buzzkill bee", an unfriendly reference to her fur and their assumptions of her strength. She didn't mind the insulting reference. What she minded was encountering the harsher of Deft's friends without having the younger mare around to defuse a conflict.

If Deft wasn't the DJ, then there was no real certainty that she would even be present at all. What would cause her to leave her mic and exit center stage at an event like this? A confused sigh from somewhere

above stopped Ambrosia's thoughts completely. She looked up to see a griffon perched in a tree, surveying the same party that she was watching. From where she was, its position, awkwardly hanging from a number of different branches, looked almost comical.

"You're not like the others." The figure in the tree spoke with a rich, calm voice. The head moved, and Ambrosia found herself staring into an intense orange gaze. She didn't look away, nor did she blink. She didn't answer the voice, either, but only because she wasn't sure how to answer. He continued to speak. "You came here with purpose, then you stopped, right here. I take it that you are not here to partake in this... Ritual?" He uttered the last word without judgment as he left his tree perch.

The griffon landed almost directly in front of her, not making a sound. With a closer look, she concluded that he seemed more like a bear with wings than a normal griffon. He was the largest griffon that she had seen in her life. Yet, as he idly lowered himself to the ground in front of her, he moved with such grace. She found words. "It's not really a ritual. It's a bunch of ponies having fun. Just... Errr. Not in a good way. It's a party, a wild one." She smiled pleasantly.

The griffon's expression didn't change, but he smiled with his eyes. "Fearsomely wild, if you ask me. This is... So far removed from what I would call a 'party', that... I have no understanding of how to approach this situation. This being the reason that I'm here... I am not familiar with the culture or customs of this place. I only know what I know and that is so little that I dared not interrupt this... Party." He hesitated, and she recognized the unspoken cry for help. She matched his posture, her smile faded into a neutral expression.

She waited patiently for him to continue. The expression of complete peace on her face conflicted with the increasing discordance in the background. He spoke with a disappointed tone. "I was hoping the local guards would arrive, but... Ah. I was able to ascertain that this will not be a possibility." He sighed gruffly. "I suppose you are hoping to attend?" Ambrosia shook her head and took her chance to speak again. "I'm afraid not, I would much rather get sleep at this hour. I am actually here to retrieve a pony that I am responsible for." She saw a change in his expression and added, "A sister..."

The griffon's eyes narrowed fiercely before reverting to a look of bemusement. "I see... That is... Quite the coincidence. I too am here to retrieve a sister. What stops you from entry?" She looked down. "Well... I'm afraid that I don't have many friends in this group. I hesitated because I didn't expect this many of them to be here." She met his gaze just in time to catch his eyes lingering on the purple flower that she customarily wore over her ear. "My name is Ambrosia." The griffon nodded and answered. "I am called Mizar, though my friends call me Treeclimber."

Despite herself, Ambrosia raised an eyebrow. Mizars's eyes twinkled. "It was a joke. Somewhat." He coughed and looked away, towards the party. "Perhaps what neither of us could do alone, we could find the courage to do as a hunting party?" Ambrosia's entire form tensed. Without looking back at her, the griffon started moving towards the house. "Forgive my terminology. As I said, I am not familiar with

ponies, but I can promise that no one will bother you in my presence." He looked back at her with the same curious twinkle in his eyes.

Ambrosia trotted forwards. Despite her implied feelings of reluctance, she took the lead. Trotting with a quiet grace, she approached the house. Behind her, Mizar moved with the same assurance, spreading his wings just slightly, exaggerating his size. In front of them, ponies stepped aside while staring. Ambrosia ignored them completely, advancing into the front door and slowing to a walk. The song had changed to something softer, and she decided to take advantage of the change in music. With her head raised high, she entered the party as though she was its queen.

She stepped casually, in tune with the music, taking a direct approach to the back door, speaking to no one. Behind her, Mizar watched with respect as ponies caught sight of the yellow mare and cleared the way. When they caught sight of him, they fell even further back. Ambrosia nodded her head along with the song. It was a song that she had heard before, an old one but still a good one. It was something that she had introduced to Deft quite some time ago, in a seemingly failed attempt to broaden the musical horizons of a furious red filly. She smiled majestically.

With a backwards glance and a motion with her hoof, she signaled for Mizar to wait and she entered the backyard. The griffon shook his head, marveling at the strange creature that he seemed to have encountered. He turned to a pony that was close to him and asked, speaking in a soft voice. "Do you know this yellow pony?" The young stallion that he had spoken to chuckled a bit before answering. "Uh... No... Thought she was with you? You two going to dance right?" Mizar's eye twitched. "No. I'm here to retrieve my sister. And leave." The young stallion shrugged and offered, "Alright... I think she's out back." Mizar sighed.

Ambrosia slipped into the backyard, and found a darker area to settle in. After a few moments, she spotted Deft. Keeping a low profile, Ambrosia approached the younger mare. She stopped when she was within hearing range, and she listened and watched. With patience and calmness, Deft was apparently instructing another pony in dance. It wasn't how she had expected to find Deft, and it was a vast improvement over the last time something like this had happened. Ambrosia was impressed...

Keystone, on 08 May 2014 - 9:42 PM, said: 

"As for myself, the name's Keystone."

Deft didn't answer immediately, and Ambrosia took the opportunity to complete her approach. Still smiling, she stepped out of the shadows and approached Deft. She was close enough to reach them within just a few steps, and Deft's attention was wholly on the pony in front of her, just watching him. Ambrosia spoke. "Hello Deft." The effect was immediate but subtle. Deft froze but didn't visibly jump, instead her head turned just enough to verify who was speaking to her. Deft spoke brusquely, "Yeah, what?"

It was about the greeting that she had expected. Ambrosia shrugged and spoke with a friendly tone, her

smile unwavering. "I ran into something on my way here, I thought about calling a guard. It was a bit frightening. I don't think it has any connection to you or this event, but if I thought about calling a guard, then others would as well. It was near this residential district..." Ambrosia watched Deft while she spoke. She saw the other mare flinch and knew that she was on the right track.

Ambrosia asked, "You know about it?" Deft turned fully to face Ambrosia, her blue eyes plead with her caretaker. She didn't answer the question but pointed towards the pink stallion behind her. "Uh... Ambrosia, this is Keystone. Keystone, this is Ambrosia. She's a friend of mine, and a friend of my family..." Deft looked from one to the other. Ambrosia received the message and gave her terms. "Alright, Deft... But, you need to end this party. Now... And, next time, invite me. You might be surprised." Deft caught her breath and scrambled to arrange to close things out.

After watching Deft for a few moments, Ambrosia turned to Keystone. At a glance, she could tell that the stallion was a bit older than most of the other ponies present. "Sorry for crashing the party..." She began, apologizing in earnest but stopped at the sight of a griffon to her right. She looked back at Keystone. "You know, it normally isn't that easy for me to break these things up. Usually, we argue a bit, at least. Not this time... And... Usually... She's going insane by the time I arrive. This is such a calm end to things, though. You're a strange stallion, I think? A local?" She caught herself rambling and stopped. "Well, it's nice to meet you..." She held out a hoof.

**Keystone:** Keystone accepted the hoof and gave it a shake before chuckling and scratching the back of his head briefly. "No need to apologize to me for that... I actually live next door and came over here planning on doing the same, myself. Didn't quite go as I expected, as you can probably imagine." he said, laughing a bit. "As for being strange, I suppose I might qualify in some respects, though as I told Deft just a few minutes ago, most would be more likely to describe me as being a bit on the boring side, I suspect. At any rate, it's nice to meet you, as well!"

Stopping a moment to stretch after having stood around largely during idle during conversing with Deft, Keystone continued, "I'm guessing that the two of you will be off shortly, then?" he asked, thinking back to Ambrosia asking if he were a 'local', "Think you'll need any help making your way back to wherever the two of you are staying? I'm pretty familiar with the area around here."

**Ambrosia:** Ambrosia watched Keystone while the stallion spoke, fixing him with a discerning gaze. He seemed like a decent pony, though perhaps not one as normal as he believed himself to be. A normal pony would, she reasoned, not have been so easily distracted by Deft. While Keystone spoke, the griffon that had been on the dance floor wandered over to them and watched in silence. Ambrosia nodded towards the new arrival in greeting before answering Keystone. "Yes, we really should return. It's so late, and I don't think this would be the ideal place to spend too much time..."

No longer standing in silence, Deft's friend locked eyes with Ambrosia. The yellow mare continued

speaking to Keystone despite the distraction. "As far as returning... Well, I think we have arrangements, already, but thank you for offering... It was quite kind of you..." Deft's friend cut her off. "Your eyes are a lovely shade of green, Ms. Ambrosia. I take it that you're here with my brother? My name is Alkaid... If you wish, we could just fly you home." Ambrosia looked at the griffon and spoke courteously. "I don't really like to fly, much. Not at all really. But, thank you for offering as well. I should get Mizar..."

She had been surprised by Alkaid's politeness. *A book should never be judged by its cover.* She thought to herself, as she trotted to the backdoor of the house and opened it, waving a hoof at Mizar, who had remained unmoving from where his earlier position. She returned back to Keystone and Alkaid with the large brown griffon in tow. "Keystone, this is Mizar, he's a friend..." Mizar nodded towards Keystone and then directed a curious, confused gaze towards his sister. "Alkaid..." He stopped and shook his head. "Ah... I'm not quite sure what I should say in this circumstance, but, I do think that we should go home?"

Alkaid gave a griffon approximation of a silly grin. She laughed cheerily. "Sure, brother... Though, it's a pity, really. If you had been here sooner, then I could have shown you a few dance moves." Mizar cleared his throat and looked away, speaking distantly. "I don't think so..." He directed his attention to Ambrosia. "I actually heard you turn down the offer for flight, so I will not press you. However, I do feel that I owe you my assistance at some point, a favor for saving some hours of my time and, perhaps, some embarrassment on my part." He gave a pointed sidelong glance towards his sister.

Ambrosia smiled. "Well, there's always dinner, maybe?" She looked around at the griffons and held out a hoof to Keystone. "I'm actually a capable cook. It would be a pleasure to make something for everyone to enjoy, and maybe we could talk and have a much smaller party... Legal and without the need for any distractions." Ambrosia watched Alkaid's reaction while she spoke. The griffon looked away. She continued. "Just a pleasant evening." Mizar answered, slightly bemused. "Ah... It would be a delight... Such an unusual coincidence that I know of someone that did exactly this... Perhaps it's a common custom?"

After a soft, musical chuckle, Ambrosia nodded. "It is, yes. I think you could say that." Deft had rejoined the group, standing off to one side and staring at Mizar appraisingly. Mizar glanced at the mare and nodded curtly before speaking again. "Then, I think this is goodbye... If you ever wish to invite me to a gathering, you need only ask for me at the Golden Feather. It's where we're staying. I would linger more, but sleep is important for the senses. I wish you all a pleasant remainder of the night... Or, morning..." He glanced up at the sky and his wings unfurled. In an instant, he had launched himself airborne.

Alkaid shook her head, "See ya soon, Deft." She winked at the red pony, who gave a mischievous grin in response. "Ambrosia, Keystone. Nice meeting you both..." Her sharp green eyes locked onto the pink pegasus stallion. "What a pleasant shade of pink... Good evening, ponies." She laughed and took off after her brother, electing to leap first and then unfurl her wings for a showier departure. Ambrosia watched the griffons ascend and then gave the backyard a quick glance. "Deft, I don't think they're finished, yet?" Deft spoke without concern. "Nah, but they will be. They don't need me here for that."

The red mare poked Keystone in the side. "Hey, thanks for not being too upset about the whole party thing. I kinda overheard that you were the neighbor." She smiled pleasantly. "Sorry if I woke you up with the craziness, but hey, free dancing lessons?" She winked, and laughed. "That's cool, right? The other cool thing is that I know where you live. Maybe I can crash your place for a party one day?" Deft could almost physically feel Ambrosia's eyebrow raise. She hastily added, "For a smaller party... With like softer music and stuff like that..." She trailed off, lost in thought.

The sound of Ambrosia's throat clearing pulled Deft out of her musings. She continued, idly. "Ah yeah, and I've learned an important lesson, tonight... The next time I do have a party like this, here... I'm gonna apply for a noise permit, invite all the locals, invite Ambrosia, have a bunch of free food and stuff cooked up, cookies, loads of cookies, more griffons, louder music, may need two noise permits, have the party at Keystone's. It'll be a blast." Deft rubbed her hooves together and grinned in a mock villainous fashion.

Ambrosia coughed awkwardly and glanced at Keystone. Deft stopped, shrugged, and relocated, planting herself directly in front of the stallion. "I'd never do that." She sighed. "Good night, then?" Ambrosia chimed in with just a note of nervousness, "Deft, at this rate, it may be a good evening... Or, maybe a 'hello Beryl guard, yes this is my party'. So, yes, it should be a good night... Good night, Keystone." Ambrosia's tone was apologetic. Deft shrugged and echoed most of Ambrosia's words. "Good night... Friend?" The red mare's eyes sparkled weirdly.

**Deft:** Keystone, on 09 May 2014 - 9:35 PM, said: 

Keystone smiled and nodded at Deft. "Yeah, I think Ambrosia is right - I can't imagine the guard force being in a good mood tonight, given what they told me on the phone about being completely tied up and swamped with calls and reports tonight. I mean really, tonight of all nights. Weird stuff, huh? Perfect timing for the party and all..." he said playfully, the earlier exchange between Ambrosia and Deft coming back to his mind. "But yes, friends and all that good stuff! Good night to both of you... and thanks for the dance lesson, Deft."

Deft ran a hoof through her mane and looked away at the mention of the guard being swamped by calls, but she didn't manage to contain her smile. "Yeah, weird stuff... Perfect timing..." She looked back and winked. Behind her, Ambrosia gave a sigh of resignation and laughed. It was a soft laugh, but loud enough for Deft to hear it. When Keystone finished speaking, Deft felt a pang of realization. It really was the end of the night. No guard had shown up, instead Ambrosia had arrived and brought about a gentle end to a wild evening.

She checked herself, listening to her inner thoughts, but they had nothing useful to offer her. In fact, she realized with a start, they were deathly silent. She decided to go with instinct, a frequent occurrence that night. Deft leaned forward, planted a quick kiss on the stallion, and then backpedaled. She waved a hoof. "Goodnight, Keystone, and no problem. Anytime..." She span on a hoof and practically vanished,

leaving behind a softly giggling Ambrosia. She could barely speak, but she still managed to wish him a pleasant remainder of the night. "Goodnight, Keystone."

Ambrosia mimicked Deft's high speed escape in a slower, more graceful fashion. Deft had slowed down outside of the house, so Ambrosia was able to catch up. She didn't need to see the yellow mare to know that Ambrosia was wearing that smile. Her deeply red fur hid her blush well, but she couldn't find her tongue. Deft sputtered while trotting towards Central Manhattan. "I... That... Uh... Right... Nevermind. Whatever you're thinking, it's so wrong." Ambrosia shrugged, "Deft, the only thing that I'm thinking is that I've never seen you so very... Normal?"

Deft stopped abruptly and turned to stare at Ambrosia. The other mare was wearing a completely blank expression. Deft sniffed and growled out a response. "So what?" Ambrosia shrugged and kept trotting, going right by Deft without replying. Deft saw the smile, and followed her caretaker. "Ambrosia... No... Nope. Uh uh. No! Hey... Hey, come on!" Ambrosia broke into a gallop and didn't bother restraining her odd giggle. Deft pursued, but kept at a bit of distance, enjoying the somewhat rare glimpse of her friend's playful side. They managed to reach home without incident, arriving just in time to beat the rain.

**Wing:** He was bleeding, but there was no pain. Color had been indescribably replaced with grayscale as he continued to drag his body down some random, unrecognizable alleyway. He had no idea where he was, but Wing knew he had to get somewhere. No, that wasn't it at all. He was looking for someone, someone incredibly important. Rain drenched his coat and dragged locks of his mane over his forehead and muzzle. His typically swept back manecut succumbed to the downpour and dangled in a pattern he had not pursued in at least a dozen years. *Why is there no pain?*

He stopped and took in his surroundings. Everything was immaculately detailed. The residue of the raindrops glistened off the brick structures around him. Even the road beneath his hooves captured a certain film noir look that made his ears perk. *Film noir...* He paused the chain and grinned. *An injured hero making that last, crazy effort to make it to the soothing light at the end of the tunnel.* He departed the alley and turned the corner. There was nothing there to greet him but the alabaster expanse that was his sleeping imagination and a note seemingly hovering just out of reach. Written on it was a phone number he had taken down before making the impromptu flight to the big city, and he figured - judging by the loud repetitive whining that swelled - that it was certainly a number he was supposed to call. The noise grew, its cadence refusing to submit to Wing's attempts to change the landscape. "I see," he spoke with sudden clarity. "Clever girl... I guess it's time to get up...."

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"Mmmgmmmmhmmm...." Wing slammed his hoof down on the stupid alarm clock. It had been his nemesis for years, and today was no different. On top of that, who knew what the obnoxious storm in the night had done to warp his mind, but he did know that his awakening had been far less cool than the badassity of that exiting dream sequence. Somewhere on his bedroom nightstand was a phone, and he would find it. Nothing under Celestia's pupil-cursing sun would stop him from getting that device. Still groggy, and with eyes clenched shut, he searched for the contraption until he finally corralled it.

The clinging morning haze was swept further and further away by each passing second, and Wing's purpose became ever more clear. He was in Manehattan; she was in Manehattan. It was time to act. The stallion finally opted to glance around his bedroom and quickly noted that nothing had changed. It was as if he had never moved away. "That's kind of damn creepy," he uttered quietly before shifting his focus back to the phone. He did not need to look up the number again, and his hoof, completely unaffected by the uncaffeinated state of the pegasus, swiftly moved across the dial. "Hello," he spoke following the connection's trademark click, "is Ambrosia there?"

**Deft Precision:** Deft cradled her headset and stared at the ceiling. She had managed only a couple of hours of sleep before waking up, her hooves feeling uneasy. The rain hadn't helped. "The curse of being a Precision." She mumbled, thinking about her family and its reputation for work. Despite the accident that had taken an entire branch of the family, its legacy as a name associated with early mornings, late nights, and steady labor was impressive. She didn't get it. Every fibre of her being craved laziness, but the trait somehow managed to evade her.

A large part of the reason that she was such a well regarded DJ and party organizer was simply the massive amount of time that she invested into the activity. To her, it wasn't just something that she did for fun, it was a lifestyle. She closed her eyes, again. It was a lifestyle that she sometimes wished she could take a break from. Manehattan was her home and her prison. As a filly, she had been able to join her grandfather on his many adventures. Vim was commonly believed to be the greatest conductor in Equestria. She had seen so many amazing things.

That was all in the past. Ever since his return from that one odd journey to Las Pegasus, he had never been the same. She had even heard him talk about retirement. Before that journey, it was a word that would have never left the older stallion's mouth. She had read some of the stories about the events and heard other things that Ambrosia had shared with her. Deft was certain that she was missing so many details though. She had heard nothing that would explain why her grandfather basically forbade her to

journey with him.

A tear fell down the side of her face. She would have traded everything to do something exciting and meaningful. The parties, the late nights - they were only a way to fill the time. They weren't a challenge. They didn't push her to any meaningful limit. She had tried sports, but it seemed so pointless to her. At the end of it all, nothing of value was either created or produced. Deft slammed a hoof down onto her bed with startling force. The only pony that seemed to care about her situation was Ambrosia. Deft may have given the mare a hard time, but she valued Ambrosia's care more than almost... The phone was ringing.

Wing McCallister, on 10 May 2014 - 12:14 AM, said: 

"That's kind of damn creepy," he uttered quietly before shifting his focus back to the phone. He did not need to look up the number again, and his hoof, completely unaffected by the uncaffeinated state of the pegasus, swiftly moved across the dial. "Hello," he spoke following the connection's trademark click, "is Ambrosia there?"

Deft couldn't muster up the enthusiasm for a grin, but she felt her spirits lift all the same. She was certain that the voice on the other end of the phone was Ambrosia's fiance. At long last, she had a chance to speak with the strange stallion that had captivated her friend. She decided to try her impression of Ambrosia's voice. It was terrible, of course. Deft's voice was a bit lower than the other mare's, and she carried none of Ambrosia's hints of rural accent. Still, it would be worth the laugh, if nothing else. "Hey baby..."

It sounded horrible, even to her own ears. Deft chortled merrily. "Yeah, no. I'm not your baby." She laughed, again, and sat up in bed. "But, I could be if you adopted me." She twirled her hoof in the phone cable. "You ever thought about how weird it was, you know? Baby as a term of endearment for a significant other? Doesn't make a lot of sense... Oh hey, by the way... Ambrosia's not here, but I guess you figured that out by now. I know where she is, but my memory's failing me and stuff. I need cookies. Yeah, cookies and milk. That'll help my memory. Lots of them. You know where this place is, right?"

**Ambrosia:** The barkeep returned, with a yellow mare following closely behind him. Freewheel shrugged apologetically at Reroll, "Ah just wanted to let you know that we've got our stand-in cook for the day. Old Grey somehow managed to come down with some kinda sickness, so we brought the card player back for a bit, since she was in town and all." The news didn't bother Reroll, his expression remained pleased as he replied to the barkeep, "I know Ambrosia, and... Actually, she's a better cook than Grey,

and I think you know it." He smiled at the flash of annoyance on Freewheel's face.

The yellow mare gave a pleasant smile and then returned to the kitchen, stopping just once to turn around and take another look at Reroll's guest. Her green eyes betrayed nothing of her thoughts, but her smile fell just slightly. The barkeep cleared his throat, leaned towards Hemera and grinned. "So, a drink, then? Like I said, anything would do, and the crazier the better. You know, I get so bored with Reroll and his endless waters and lemonades." Reroll's infinite calm was tempered by a slight blush. He chuckled and ran a hoof awkwardly through his mane.

**Wing:** "Cookies and milk, huh?" Wing responded to the sly ultimatum with a chuckle. "I'm sure I can find something like that. The best part in all of this - of course - is that I am actually in Manehattan right now. It was one of those random, out of the blue, vibe kind of things. Ya know what I'm talking about, right? Just bam... I'm going to fly east on a whim, and then you meet talking objects, and the next thing you know you're speaking to a pony who wants cookies. I'll see what I can do, and why the hay not? You're a DJ too, yeah? Maybe I'll swing down in the old bunker on the way and pluck out some tracks from my youth - when the wavy manes and junk were still hip to be square. Plus, it would just be damn rude to not accept an invitation from somepony Ambrosia cares about."

The stallion brushed his mane back and rolled onto three hooves while maintaining a firm grip on the telephone. "I'll try not to keep you waiting too long. That bunker might need a bit more work than I expect, though. We'll see. Couple of questions first..." He paused and eyed the tube containing Revenant. "What kind of milk do you like, and do you mind if I bring an atypical guest if the stars align?"

**Deft Precision:** Deft pulled the phone away from her head and stared at it as the pony on the other end of the line began to ramble. *What. He's actually here? What!? He's actually serious... What... What the hell is he talking about.* She shook her head, in complete disbelief. *Maybe he's not a morning sort, but still... This is...* He mentioned 'DJ' and Deft's attention was back on the conversation. "Yeah, you've got some tracks? I wouldn't mind that at all... Right, it'd be pretty rude." Her confusion was wearing off, her earlier confidence returning.

Wing, on 13 May 2014 - 9:49 PM, said: 

"I'll try not to keep you waiting too long. That bunker might need a bit more work than I expect, though. We'll see. Couple of questions first..." He paused and eyed the tube containing Revenant. "What kind of milk do you like, and do you mind if I bring an atypical guest if the stars align?"

The first question made sense. The second question made no sense at all. She paused and thought about the possibility that he was just being silly. She shrugged. If he failed to bring cookies and milk,

then maybe he'd bring the tracks. Maybe both. Weighing the pros and cons, she concluded that there was no downside. The worst possible case was that his "atypical guest" was a Port Beryl guard. Even if that happened, windows were made to be opened and conveniently placed for awkward escapes.

She cleared her throat, interrupting several moments of contemplative silence. "I dunno, I never really think about types of milk. Milk's milk, right? Uhhh... As far as your guest, good luck seeing stars, because I think it's raining out there. I don't really care much about it, you know? Just keep them out of my cookies, and I don't think they'll be any problems. That cool?"

**Wing:** "I don't think that'll be a problem," Wing replied as a smirk crept along his muzzle. "And I'm fairly certain I can find some thrilling 80's beats buried away." The stallion paused and stretched, feeling a bit of glorious relief from the lingering bed pain that resided in his frame. "I guess I had better get on it, huh? Well, I'll try not to keep you apart from your cookies for long. I'd bet my mom has something legit around here. I'll see you in a bit... Oh, and by the way, if Ambrosia returns before I get there, would you please let her know that I'm in town. I'd really appreciate it."

He waited for the proper goodbye sequence before placing the phone back on its base and turning his attention to Echoing Schematic. "Well Ms. Revenant, would you care to join me for a little meetup with my fiance's friend later? Could be a lot of fun. I've never met her, but I have heard a few things from Ambrosia. That mare sounds quite interesting." The physicist gently plucked the parchment tube and lifted it up to his eye level. "But before we get to that, how about the two of us head down to my lab and get things ready for science?"

**Revenant:** The container began to glow with a soft blue light that quickly darkened into a strange blackness. As soon as it arrived, the glow was gone, but the form of a pony now stood beside Wing. She was a young mare, just slightly shorter than average. She had fur that was richly purple, while her mane and tail were a softer shade of the same color. The wings that were folded against her side were plainly webbed. Her mane was neat and tidy, carefully maintained and well styled. Her tail was braided. She stared directly ahead for some moments, her eyes closed.

When they opened, they revealed themselves to be dark grey, and they trembled with a mixture of excitement and unquenchable curiosity. The figure took a deep breath before speaking in an accented and slightly scratchy voice. She spoke in such a way that each word was carefully said, like a child uncertain of her own voice. "You may call me Revenant, or if friend, you may call me Reve. Can science wait? I am more interested... In cookies. I can taste them, you know. Small things like this... They amuse me. I have been bored." Her eyes flashed with a laughter that her expression did not convey.

She stared at the ceiling. "I am well rested. For this day, I have made certain to be so, you see. You may need me? Maybe. Would you much mind if we meet your friend now than later? I think it is what I want to do, if you do not mind much... Could be a lot of fun, as you said." She directed an unblinking gaze towards him, glancing sidelong towards Wing. Her face was expressionless. "Ah, and you snore horribly in your sleep. I can tell you the approximate percentage of time that this is so. You are also a boring sleeper, your dreams are uninteresting. Do I offend you?"

**Wing:** Wing chuckled as he returned the sidelong glance. "Offend me?" he replied with a slight elevation in tone - as though the hidden humor had sunk right into his being. "Please Revvy.... it takes more than an assessment on my sleeping habits to offend me. But if you wanted more exciting dreams, you should have popped up about 20 years ago. And yes, science can wait. I was more concerned with your schedule and if you wanted me to move quickly. Meeting Deft would be interesting though. We can grab some milk, cookies, and a few of my old music tapes on the way out."

He stopped for a few seconds and turned his head to face her, making a silent observation of the purple mare that had suddenly manifested in his room. She was certainly different than most ponies he had met in the past, but she possessed a certain demeanor about her that was undoubtedly familiar. It was, frankly, an unearthly aura. In the midst of his thinking, his facial expression had morphed into something profoundly serious in appearance. He raised his left forehoof gradually and gestured to the pony. "And what do you mean I snore a lot? Is it really that bad?" Wing titled his head and flicked an ear, holding the pose for a moment before a grin reclaimed his countenance.

**Revenant:** When he first began to speak, Revenant had wondered if his elevated tone was, indeed, a sign of offense. Her disappointment had flickered in her eyes before being replaced by curiosity and merriment as he clarified. Finally, she smiled in understanding at the mention of her schedule. She stood to her hooves and prepared to leave, but stopped when Wing's demeanor seemed to change. "What's wrong?" She asked, speaking with an exaggerated, playful uncertainty. Her smile faded away, remaining only in her dark eyes.

Wing McCallister, on 17 May 2014 - 10:41 PM, said: 

"And what do you mean I snore a lot? Is it really that bad?" Wing titled his head and flicked an ear, holding the pose for a moment before a grin reclaimed his countenance.

"Oh that." She frowned. When she continued to speak, every trace of her accent was gone, and her

voice was soft, casual. "I lied. I couldn't hear you, I could only see. That may be a lie as well. You have no way of really confirming. You could simply trust me, instead, especially on a matter of such small consequence. If not, then that is fine as well. I don't need to be trusted, only entertained." She paused and rolled her eyes, opening her mouth for a silent sigh and revealing a hint of her sharp teeth. She concluded the movement suddenly, snapping her mouth shut with an odd clicking sound.

She sniffed and tapped the side of her face with a hoof. "You're very entertaining, Wing. Far more entertaining than Stryker, though his lack of humor is humorous in itself. Can we leave now? Would you prefer that I hide myself? I would rather not. I like being here. It has been some time..." She started to move towards the door but stopped. "Oh. Do I disturb you?" She looked at him with a searching gaze, every trace of amusement gone from her eyes.

**Wing:** Wing shrugged at her statements about his snoring. "It could be a lie; it might not be. I certainly don't know because I wasn't awake, so I don't really have any other option than to trust you. I frankly don't have a reason not to trust you either. So I guess that means either I am a horrible snorer, bent on ruining nights for generations to come, or I'm not - but I have something to laugh about. It's a win-win anyway, at least in terms of something humorous."

He paused and scratched his head. "Yeah, we can leave now. I'll just grab the stuff on our way out. As for hiding or not... you're your own person. I'm not in charge of you. If you wish to hold that form as opposed to hiding, then it's fine with me. I have no problem with it whatsoever." The physicist took a few steps and blinked at her last question. "Revvv, I've seen a lot of disturbing shit in my day. You're far from it and don't disturb me at all." Wing beamed, tilting his head slightly. "Besides, purple is one of my favorite colors." He took a few more steps forward - until he pulled along side the mare - and pushed open the door. "We'll go with whole milk and chocolate cream sandwich cookies." He quickly reversed his direction with a quarter step moonwalk before holding the pop-princely pose. "Now how about you and I make like Smooth Criminal and Beat It? Ooo! That's the album I'm going to grab. Drop some old-school beats on this young generation." The pony started laughing, having internally reached the conclusion that Revenant probably had no idea what the buck he was going on about. A carefree tone drifted through the stallion's decaying laughter as he continued, "It might also be an exercise in catching you up on existing in this realm."

**Revenant:** She found Wing's answers to be acceptable. Even more than this, though, there was a discordant edge to the stallion that Revenant found to be both familiar and comforting. It was a good thing, because it made it easier for her to deal with the sense of worry that was weaving its way through

her entire being. *Now, of all times. I am so close, and yet far. All that I really want...* She discontinued the thought, it was doing her no good. It would only interfere with what she needed to accomplish that day.

She stared down at her own fur when Wing mentioned that purple was one of his favorite colors. She hadn't seen her own fur in such a long time that its appearance was almost a marvel to her. *It isn't real.* The disappointed realization struck her in that moment. Though she could feel, taste, and traverse as a normal living creature, it wasn't really her. It was a product of magic, and it was as ephemeral as a sunny day. It was the paper that held her true physical being, an unfortunately ironic fate for a scribe.

Everything that Wing said from "Smooth" onwards seemed like gibberish to her. Revenant scrunched her entire face in a comical fashion, hoping with each passing moment that he would begin speaking Common again. Finally, some degree of sensibility returned to his words, but she was terrified by what he said. She shook her head aggressively, as though trying to throw something bothersome out of her mane. She spoke softly but excitedly, "No, Wing. I would rather not complete this exercise. Can we leave now? Just lead, I'll follow."

**Wing:** The stallion flicked his saddlebag over his back on the way out of his bedroom. "Off we go then," he spoke prior to a quick trot downstairs to scavenge the kitchen. He was a bit surprised that neither of his parents seemed to be around. His mother was usually up before the rest of the known universe - a.k.a. the sunrise, and his dad - well if Revvy thought his snoring was a problem - she was in for a morning-long concert level treat from the elder researcher. He wasn't surprised to find that his father had a plentiful stash of the cookies he had preselected and the whole milk he demanded. Wing tossed one of the packs of cookies into his bag and followed it up with a carton of milk and an ice pack to keep things nice and cool. Warm milk was disgusting to him after all.

He flashed a gentle smile to Revenant as he made his way out to the backyard. The distinctive smell of rain hit his muzzle and made the lavender pegasus give a quick, little shake of his head. Things were not all that problematic in Bright Sea. Droplets fell gently upon his coat, and there was certainly a chill in the air, but the state of affairs was not unbearable. A quick gaze to Central, however, showed a mess of a different sort. "Bucking shit," he muttered quietly, "I guess we get to trot into that crap." His eyelids fell gradually as he examined the dark tempest of the storm cell. There was something off-putting about it - a unnatural caliber to the cloud shape and shade that brought threads of consideration to the forefront of his mind, but there was no time for that. His guest was clearly in a hurry to get out and about, and her feelings - both covered and projected - were pouring into his hidden sense. "Oh well, that'll happen in a seaside city."

He made his way out onto the lawn, where a cement block rested as a monument of spite towards all grass-cutting ponies. A set of stairs were cut into the structure, and Wing made his way into the depths of the aforementioned bunker laboratory. The door to this scientific sanctuary was a large iron slab that looked as though it came straight out of a bank. Even the opening mechanism looked something like a vault. He placed his forehooves on the couple and popped the latch before applying his weight to open the massive gate. Angered by the assault on its impedance, the iron whined, but the pegasus would have none of it. This was his lab after all, and nothing would stand in his way from entering the presumably dusty hellhole that he had once... *The buck...* his thoughts cut through the narration and left his mouth agape. The lab was spotless, organized, and prepared for his arrival. All of the lights hanging from the ceiling were changed - producing a unpolarized sea of white that was almost criminal. Even the album he figured he would have had to dig through piles for was sitting on the closest desks, inanimately staring at him.

Wing glanced back at Revenant with a perplexed expression. "Erm... welcome to my messy lab," he stated with a still-curious tone break woven into his voice. He took a few steps towards the desk and brushed the worn wood with one of his hooves. A note rested on the table next to the Beat It cassette. "I had a feeling, L.C." He read the words aloud and chuckled. "Well, that makes sense." Upon dropping the musical wonderment into his bag, Wing spun around to the purple parchment mare. "Sister..." he uttered with a shrug before moving on. "It looks like we're going to be heading into an intense spot of rain. Do you need me to carry that tube of yours in my bag?"

**Revenant:** Revenant followed Wing and watched his movements with a highly dispassionate expression, only breaking her mask for a moment, at the sight of cookies and milk. His smile was greeted by an almost comically contemplative look. In the backyard, she looked up at the sky when he muttered an expletive. It was raining, yes, and at first, that seemed to be all that was happening. With a shudder, she looked back down when she realized that there was more to it. While she had been limited to primitive instruments, she had studied enough to know what she was seeing, and it worried her.

Wing McCallister, on 25 May 2014 - 1:07 PM, said: 

Wing glanced back at Revenant with a perplexed expression. "Erm... welcome to my messy lab," he stated with a still-curious tone break woven into his voice.

The lab didn't look messy at all. She raised an eyebrow and allowed her gaze to drift across the fairly immaculate interior of the facility. "I see," was all that she could manage to say in reply. In truth, she was disturbed. If this was messy, then she wondered what exactly would qualify as clean. What she

could see looked almost clean enough to be an operating room. Her nose twitched, and memories from a bygone time tried to flood her mind. She froze in an attempt to control the torrent.

Wing McCallister, on 25 May 2014 - 1:07 PM, said: 

"Sister..." he uttered with a shrug before moving on. "It looks like we're going to be heading into an intense spot of rain. Do you need me to carry that tube of yours in my bag?"

She caught her breath sharply and stared at the pony in front of her. Her mind reeled with the confusion that his words caused, "What?" She spoke and decided, right then, to not bother waiting for things to make sense. Instead, stopping her confusion in its tracks, she replied using the first words that came to mind, "We can't be siblings. I'm older than you, significantly older, improbably older. However, I can be your mother, instead. Not by direct genealogical connection, of course."

Her mouth made a funny, organic clicking sound, like a sound that a bird might make. "Yes. It would not be a good thing if I am drenched and then fade to nothing. That would be a rather anticlimactic end to my journey. Ensuring that this does not happen would be beneficial to me. Now, can we go? I'm getting bored, again. It's a tragedy when this happens." She glanced in mock apprehension.

**Wing:** Wing opened his saddlebag once more for a quick deposition of the tube. He made sure to assign its location to the opposite side from the milk pack. It'd be most unfortunate to have a cause of disappearance be vanished by cow. He chuckled a bit at her antics. She was certainly quick to bore, or perhaps that had nothing to do with it at all, and her quips and shenanigans were all just little tests meant to probe his quips and antics -- because that wouldn't make any sense at all right? "Great Aunt sounds more appropriate," he responded in a playful tone. "Great Aunt Revvy, Regal Traveler of Time and Space - Uniter of Generations. And yes, of course we can go, but are you sure you don't want to hear me recite some physics textbooks first? That could be really captivating." He waved his hoof dismissively at his own nonsensical idea and trotted towards the door. "Of course we may go. I want some of these cookies too."

He stood outside the door and turned his head back towards the sky. He could not hold back his narrowing gaze at the spectacle. It bothered him. He hadn't been born over a thousand years ago, but he wasn't born yesterday either. Typically storms of such caliber were handled by a squadron of pegasi. Why hadn't it? Why was a storm of such severity allowed to persist. It only added up to one conclusion: because they weren't able to deal with it. The line of thought brought about a natural consequence: why not? He did not want to dwell on it. He wanted to get to Deft's, have a good time, get to know his new friend a bit better, and hopefully see his special somepony. "I need to stop dawdling," he spoke,

breaking the silence he had created. He waited for Revenant to exit the lab before closing the door and trotted back up. "Hopefully we won't be too drenched by the time we get there."

Wing started off towards Central. His head remained swung over his shoulder, and his chocolate-iris gaze was affixed to the purple mare. "So Revvy..." he continued with some idle chit-chat, "why don't you tell me a little bit about what interests you?"

**Revenant:** As they exited the lab, the sound of the rain was a distraction to her. It was, at once, both beautiful and dangerous. In her heart, it made sense, complete sense, of course. The rain fed life. Without it, plants would die and perhaps a drought would lead to some ponies suffering. Yet, the rain could also kill, in the cruelest of ways. A pony could lose their life, swept away by a mudslide or simply drowning due to some misread feature of the terrain. Even a pegasus wouldn't be safe, lightning respected no one, and its power could be beyond understanding.

Well, perhaps beyond the understanding of some, but only because they weren't willing to brave the risks involved with experimentation. She understood its power. Revenant had never been troubled by risks. Early on, with another that she trusted with her life, she had made a pact of death. There was a certain truth in the world around them, an elegant, graceful structure of understanding. It was hidden, by those burdened with ignorant superstitions and unwilling to challenge their own narrow worldview.

After the fear of death was gone, she and her trusted friend had chipped away at the ignorance. They were not killed, even if they were never regarded as the heroes that they had imagined themselves to be. The world was, they thought, changed forever. She blinked back tears as her memories went back unwanted, to the moment of failure. They had no fear of death, but the fear of living forever was something that their hearts had never known. The rain fell on that day as well, and it was a dark day.

Wing's words drifted through her ears without registering in her thoughts. The images that she had managed to control, just moments before, tore through her thoughts, threatening to steal away her concentration and presence. She shook her head as the rain continued to fall, it felt as though the water was trying to drown her in sad memories and loss. Her face remained just as it had before and her hooves moved forward, but she began to drift. She wished, more than anything that they were already at the destination, that there was some distraction, or even

that...

'Wing McCallister', on 26 May 2014 - 7:47 PM, said: 

Wing started off towards Central. His head remained swung over his shoulder, and his chocolate-iris gaze was affixed to the purple mare. "So Revvy..." he continued with some idle chit-chat, "why don't you tell me a little bit about what interests you?"

She stopped trotting forward, and stared at the one that had spoken, his identity temporarily unreachable. It took some seconds before she had rescued herself from the brink, then she thought of his question in earnest. Her hooves began to move again, "I like death. It presents an end to things, a sense of finality that gives meaning to the actions that led to the single point. It interests me, because it is magical and yet grounded in simple rules and principles. A mystery in plain sight, why and how. When and where. Death fascinates me."

Her voice and tone were analytical, but her eyes betrayed her feelings. "Of course, it would, wouldn't it? Am I alive? Yes, I am alive. Each and every day, I can feel the passage of time. I can sense the world around me. My interactions, though, they are limited to only a moment here, a moment there. Each and every interaction just a single moment in a flow, and they all cost me so much... I was so young when this happened to me... I have missed out on life by living too much. The full experience was denied to me by my own actions and those of another."

"Of course, death would interest me. I would rather have nothing than to have the misery that I have had. You see how I am now? Able to walk with you and speak with you plainly? I can only do this for a short time. After each time, not again in that life. I have to leave and return. The process can take more than a single century. Right now, I am strong. Later? I do not know how I will be. I only know that I have at least a day, perhaps more. Stryker knew this. I had to argue with him to allow this course of action. It is the only way that I'll have a chance to reclaim what I once had - the ability to live, the ability to die."

**Wing:** Her words were profoundly sad to him. Immediately, he wondered how many times she had had this conversation in the past, only to have it reboot. He wondered how many other ponies had heard the same words and considered them morbid, when they were in fact beautifully disguised truths. His gaze narrowed, not in judgment, but in that look he gained when he was thinking - turning the dials in search

of a solution. "Life and death are worth reclaiming." His voice emerged in an atypically soft tone. It was a sign that his emotions were peaked. He was invested, thoroughly. He could not be another pony in her agonizing cycle of centuries.

"I guess that means I had better not fail then, huh?" he asked, pausing for a moment before continuing. "Maybe you've heard it from another in the past, but ... despite your current situation, you're still alive right now. You can experience things, feelings, and others. I imagine it's not the same, kind of like looking through a window." The gears in his brain snapped forward another peg, and his voice trailed off. "Somepony just needs to open it." The pegasus gave a few quick shakes of his head. They were closing in on their destination, the rain was utterly soaking, and she had already made it clear that she was not in the mood for science. Still, something clicked in his thoughts. Somewhere along the line, she had opened a window and it had closed on her. The walls were out of sync, and the windows only lined up in intervals. Was this the analogy needed to break the enigma? "I guess it doesn't mean a whole lot coming from someone that is probably like an infant to you, but ... try to enjoy what you can experience today. I'll do what I can to make sure that you don't have to wait another century." He smirked and hopped up a few steps towards a front door. "And I'll make sure we don't have to spend another minute in the rain." He lifted a leg and knocked on the entryway. It was time for a little amusement.

**Deft Precision:** After hanging up the phone, Deft had rolled out of bed and paced the room. At first, she fished for an idea, some type of mischief or fun that could be made with the unexpected circumstance. After a few minutes, though, she had thought of nothing. There was too much unknown information. Wing, she knew very little about. His unknown friend was a complete wildcard. Her pacing came to a halt. She would have to wait until Wing arrived. She had nothing to do until then, so she grabbed her headset and a cassette player and made her way downstairs.

She opened the door experimentally to take in the sight of the rainy day. To Deft, the rain was beautiful in moderation but frightening in excess. She decided to listen to something that fit the weather - soft rock ballads. She shut the door, but focused on the sound of the rain outside. It merged with the music in her ears, creating a trancelike state in her mind. Time passed quickly...

'Wing McCallister', on 31 May 2014 - 5:56 PM, said: 

He lifted a leg and knocked on the entryway. It was time for a little amusement.

Deft stirred, gracefully rising from a slumped position by the door. Regretfully, she took her headset off and forced her mind out of its haze. Either Ambrosia or Wing were at the door, neither one required much caution. She threw the door open and silently waved a hoof inside. Her eyes fiercely scanned the light purple stallion. "Come in... Errr, hey..." She started but trailed off as her eyes found Wing's unknown friend. The mare was a deep, rich purple and a bat pony of some type. It was her eyes that distracted Deft. They seemed to be remarkably dark, yet glowing.

The strange bat pony opened its mouth and made a subtle clicking sound, while showing a substantial number of teeth. Sharp teeth. Deft raised an eyebrow and continued staring for another second before turning to Wing, "Yeah, hey, Wing... Buddy, if your creepy pal here has eaten all of my cookies, then I'm gonna be a sad Deft. You don't want me to be sad, trust me. Tears, buddy, tears and agony. Speaking of that, you did bring my cookies, right? Milk, too? This is serious stuff." She wasn't smiling while she spoke, but there was a laughter in her eyes.

**Wing:** Wing glanced back and forth between Revvy and Deft before speaking. "We're gathered here today, to mourn the loss of the delicious cookies." A smile wrapped around his muzzle before he plucked the cookies and whole milk from his saddlebag. "Or at least we will celebrate the loss of them once we eat them." He gave the foodstuffs to Deft before gesturing his hoof towards the purple mare. "Deft, this is Revenant. She's a sciencepony like myself, so I don't think you have much creepiness to worry about unless the unrelenting onslaught of mathematics we could drop in rhyme would make your universe totally rhombus. That sounds boring though. I'd much rather enjoy the beats and the cookies - and perhaps pizza."

With a wink, he looked back at Revenant and pointed towards Deft. "Revvy, this is Deft... Hoofstyle... Precision. She's musically inclined as clearly evidenced by those epic headphones that clearly yearn to return atop her head and DJ name of Hoofstyle. According to Ambrosia, she is quite the party animal. Now apparently, she has shared her love of cookies and milk with us, but we'll have to see how that develops." He could sense the amusement in the air and could not contain the instinctual growth of his smile. "And... we also have some mad old school tracks to listen to."

**Deft Precision:** After a moment of indecision, Deft snatched the cookies away from Wing, and quickly munched one. They were decent, very decent. She wasn't a cook or a foodsnob, so the difference between decent and excellent was lost on her. She shrugged and chomped on another, while nodding to Revenant. The other mare said nothing, didn't move, and maintained an empty expression. The eyes though, told a different story. Deft's chewing slowed and she gave a few cookies to the suddenly

outstretched hoof of the purple mare. Deft asked incredulously, "Science, huh?"

Her grades in school had been pretty good in her science courses, but nearly everything was forgotten now. There was no need to remember it, so she didn't bother. The thought of listening to Wing and Revenant go back and forth talking mathematics was enough to make her frown. "That sounds bo... Yeah, you got it." She had been preempted. Deft shrugged and squinted at Wing. *Beats? Really?* She was going to ask, but Wing kept talking. Deft glanced at Revenant as the two were introduced. With a fairly uninterested expression, the batpony mare was staring at her while eating slowly. *I don't care what he says. She's creepy, which is kinda cool.*

Deft felt an odd feeling of unease in her stomach, it felt like butterflies. The conversation was going too fast and she was definitely not the driving force. It irked her but only slightly. Suddenly, she wondered what else Ambrosia had told Wing. She disguised her unease with an easygoing grin and a friendly drawl. "I'm a party animal, ey? Well, that may be true, but mostly in a big crowd. Smaller groups? I like to just take it easy, you know?" Her tone shifted to one that was almost challenging. Her grin became more vibrant as some fun came to mind. "So, what kind of tracks did you bring, huh? Wait, don't tell me. I've got a better idea." She pointed a hoof towards a set of speakers and some audio equipment. "Show me?"

**Wing:** "I'm down with taking it easy." He smirked at the audio challenge and took a quick glance at Revenant before digging out the album from his saddlebag. "Let's kick it like it's '85 again." The lavender pegasus wasted little time making his way to the equipment. The DJ had certainly collected a nice collection of sweet gear, but he figured that should not come as a surprise. Music was her thing after all. It would be silly to expect anything other than an array of melody-blazing, beat-dropping electronics.

Wing plucked the cassette from its case and slid the plastic cartridge into the tape player. It was one of those moments that he felt old and dated. He could have at least gone for the CD, but nope, he plucked the relic of his youth. Oh well, things from the past were meant to be remembered and appreciated when they could. He shut the lid and hit play, all the while waiting for the first driving chord of Beat It to grace his ears. One of his hooves was already prepared for the tempo of the song and made claim to the floor beneath with gentle strikes that beckoned the melody.

**Deft Precision:** Her eyes followed Wing's to Revenant, but the bat pony was just watching them both with an expression of deep curiosity. Deft glanced back at Wing at the mention of a specific year. *What? How about no. That's too damn far back.* Deft thought to herself as she prepared for an exaggerated facehoof. Another thought went through her mind as she saw him pull out a cassette tape. *Just how old is this guy, again? If nothing else, I'll get a hell of a laugh. Laughter goes great with cookies, you know...*

The music started to play, and Deft canceled all plans for laughter. It wasn't that bad, in fact it was

actually a song that she recognized. *Geeze, all of that ceremony for this? I didn't even know it was that old.* She munched a cookie and smirked. The heavy sound of the music was causing her hooves to feel like moving, but she contained it. Instead, she spoke and her mouth outpaced her thoughts, "Not bad, not bad at all. Hey, I've got an idea, why don't we have a dance off? Your creepy purple friend with the teeth can judge?"

Deft shot a glance towards Revenant, "You okay with that, Rev?" The bat pony's curiosity became tinged with amusement. Her reply was offered in an interested sing-song voice, just loud enough to be heard over the music, "No problems at all, I make a good judge of many things." Deft looked back towards Wing, "What about you? You think you can beat me in a fair competition with an unbiased judge?" She did a quick cartwheel, rebounding off of a single forehoof and landing neatly.

**Wing:** Wing tilted his head at the challenge from Deft. "Filly, your name is Deft 'Hoofstyle' Precision." He chuckled and waved his hoof absentmindedly. "I'm a 28 year old scientist with no chance whatsoever..." He paused and reached into his saddlebag once more to retrieve his shades from younger days. "...but maybe Atomic Caliber does." His laughter decayed as he flipped the sunglasses over his eyes and promptly transitioned into a moonwalk. He carried the move to Deft and popped up on his hindlegs to allow a forehoof access to one of the cookies. He flicked the dessert into his mouth and released a satisfied hum in tune with the track. He munched down the delicious snack, lowered the frame of his specs, and gradually revealed his chocolaty gaze to the mare. "It is on," he answered dramatically. It was probably more dramatic than the situation warranted, but he had a feeling that Deft would appreciate the added effort - and he certainly needed a reason to unwind. Work had been an absolute pain the last few months. The random-not-so-random escape to Manehattan turned out not to be a bad thing; a little dancing would simply add to the fun.

### **Deft Precision:**

*Yeah, I know my name.* It took everything within her to not say the thought out-loud. Thankfully, Wing continued, as she was becoming accustomed to him doing. *Only 28? That's still what... Ten years older than me, but not too bad. Either way, I'll probably still... Huh. Wait, wait, wait... What? Atomic... What?* Deft's face alternated between bemusement and the beginning of a giggle. In the back of her mind, she was trying, really hard, to picture Ambrosia with the silly creature in front of her. She gave up, it simply wasn't possible.

The giggle won out. Despite the music and her every effort at self control, Deft fell over and hit the floor, collapsing into a giggle fit, making the most curious sounds of amusement until tears rolled from her eyes. She gasped for air and kicked her hooves wildly. It took her a full minute to regain control of herself, and then, she only recovered due to a pair of dark eyes that suddenly seemed to take up her entire field of vision. "Hey, come on! Personal space!" Deft reached a hoof to poke the bat pony's nose but was deterred by the sight of teeth and the sound of the clicking from earlier.

It was enough to sober Deft, completely, "Alright, fine, you know what. I'll give you your personal space. What's up with you, anyway?" Her tone was confrontational, but in truth, she didn't care. There had been a strange playfulness in Revenant's dark eyes. Though she didn't think of it, Deft could feel the other mare's request to be included in the fun. Revenant had shrugged in answer to her inquiry. Now the bat pony spoke, maintaining a careful monotone, "Hello Deft. I neglected to greet you earlier. Now, I must regretfully inform you that my judgement is complete. I am not sure what manner of dance that was, but... It was thoroughly unsatisfactory."

Deft blinked and stared at Revenant's deathly serious expression. Her own thoughts slowly caught up to the bat pony's words. As everything slowly synchronized in her mind, the pang of realization found its way to her face. "You're kidding me, right? I lost?" Revenant nodded, Deft's expression fell and she turned to Wing, "Alllllright. That was really clever, Atomic Fireball, or whatever your name is. Now, this time, I go first. Give me another beat and make it good, and we'll try for best two out of three." She sniffed imperiously and crossed her hooves.

**Wing:** Wing trotted back over to the cassette player and fast-forwarded the tape until 'Wanna Be Startin' Something' started blasting through the speakers. "I'd like to announce my retirement from dance..." he responded with a laugh before beaming. "Nah... that'd be chicken crap. You're on... again." He repositioned himself against the wall, leaning up like a cool kid straight out of the 80s before crossing his hooves as well and adding an emphatic, "Blow my mind Precision."

The physicist shifted his gaze to Revvy and took a few minutes to observe. She seemed to be having some fun as well. It was probably good for the mare who had been lost to the sands of time. Her situation bothered him immensely. Even though they were out having fun now, he allowed his mind to ponder the burdensome issue in parallel. He'd find a way to align those windows, and Deft's pending dance round gave him another brief period to weigh some options against the intoxicating pull of the beat and whatever moves the DJ decided to unveil.

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# RODENT & ER

## *RESPICED*

### *The Bridge World Adventures of Ambrosia & Wing*

**Wine:** Once again, we find ourselves faced with a brave, new world. External circumstances have changed the tide, producing yet another plot shift much like the one seen between the Restaurant and Cages in Manehattan roleplays. However, this transition is more drastic. We are now in a futuristic setting far removed from the confines of Equestria. The Bridge World has resurfaced, and it is a complex realm filled with politics, turmoil, action, and plenty of adventure. Despite this, there is one thing that remains constant. The universe itself can be torn away, reality can bleed into a dreamscape, Cages can become a House, and that can become something new. The feelings built in the previous 238 pages remain, more will be made; I will find her, and all promises will be kept. A flower needs to be cherished, and I am always up for refills.

### *Chapter 14 - The House*

**Star Dusk:** *The lights danced. It was hard to mourn what was never lost, what one had never held, what had never existed. She sat as a tiny child, on the border in age between foal and filly, surrounded by those that wept. Her eyes cried with them, though she was not quite sure why. Some wished her well, others pledged some empty words. She was confused, completely lacking in understanding of the situation.*

*The world span, and she was whisked away, to live a life of privilege. She grew, the years passed. The confusion of that day was never healed by explanation, but as she gained in awareness, she realized that she had no parents. She had caretakers, certainly. They kept her company and tended to her needs, but she never really connected to them nor them to her. She was above them, though not by choice.*

*Darkness rose. A crimson fog of loneliness and despair. With only one life to live, why not live it in the way that seemed most fulfilling? The caretakers were set free, now wealthy from the one that they had once watched over. She walked off into the fog in the dead of night, only stopping to gaze upon a star, shining bright. It guided her long path, towards learning the secrets of a sage.*

Her life replayed itself before her eyes. "Am I dead?" She spoke out loud, but there was no answer. She felt as though she was falling, away from herself. With each passing second, a new scene from her past drifted through her mind's eye. As quickly as they came, they were taken away and she could remember them no more. "I'm dying..." She whispered and tried to stand but found no ground to stand on.

"Am I even awake?" She slugged her face with a hoof. "Ouch!" She yelped, and then rolled her eyes. "You promised some kind of adventure!" She shouted out into the darkness, hoping the strange unicorn mare would hear her. "I was in the middle of a show!" She shouted again, and heard her words echo back to her. "This isn't funny!" She flailed her hooves into the darkness before calming to a defiant sulk. "This is boring."

Soon, she fell asleep...

She was lying on a cold wooden floor, sprawled on her side as though she had fallen over. Her eyes slowly drifted open, and her mind slowly stirred to life. The room was bathed in absolute darkness. "Hello?" She muttered weakly, while trying to remember how she had ended up in such a state. She could only remember her name. "My name is Star Dusk. Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me?"

**Key Gear:** *Her ears filled with the clattering of a thousand mechanical parts. The shadows were an ally, a shy friend to those hiding from light, and the ultimate cover in darkness. Her hoofsteps were as silent as the world around her as she slipped through the window and out into the courtyard. Her heart was bathed in a wild fury, it was the reason that she was leaving her home and its comforts.*

*The noise went away, replaced by a single sound. The life of a politician would never be hers, no matter how diligently her mother attempted to train her. She was free and could never be constrained. She swore silently to herself. Never again would she be forced to endure the boredom of a useless life sheltered by protocol and false niceties. She would take her life into her own hooves and set it free to fly among the stars of the Bridge.*

*The sound fell to a near silent whir as a beautiful machine stirred to life. Theft, violent assault, and deception. Hers was a name synonymous with seemingly all that was rotten on New Terra. There were prices on her head from a variety of sources. She didn't let that bother her. They would have to catch her first, a nearly impossible task. Until, of course, she got sloppy. It happened to everyone.*

*The machine began to drift, moving through the void of darkness. She cursed herself for the simple oversight. She had forgotten her cardinal rule. If something seemed too easy, it was probably devilishly complex. By the time the mistake was apparent, it was far too late to escape. Her heart rate picked up. It had to be the militants, which meant that a trial was likely out of the question... A stranger approached, with a flower in her mane...*

She sniffed in annoyance and irritation at the memories that had come to her unbidden. It had been some kind of energy field, probably a controlled mechanism that leveraged the Bridge as its fuel. There was no telling how long it would last or the effects that it would have on them both. "I hope..." She spoke to no one in particular, while realizing, at the same time, that she didn't really feel much hope in that moment. It was over. Surely. She settled, closed her eyes, and waited.

Her eyes opened before she hit the ground. "What the hell..." She muttered and struggled to get back to her hooves. "Where am I?" Her eyes, normally quite attuned to the darkness, could see nothing. She spun around in place and then froze. While she couldn't see them, she was certain that she was not alone. There were others there with her, somewhere in the darkness. She searched her memory for how she could have ended up in such a place but found nothing.

**Keystone:** Keystone's eyes slowly drifted open as the sound of something falling nearby pulled him from his sleep. He was tired, felt strangely like he'd just been hit by a truck, and his mind was strangely murky. So murky, in fact, that the strangeness of his circumstances and surroundings hadn't even properly registered until the sound of a muttered voice, one that was completely unfamiliar, reached his ears.

*"What the hell..." it muttered, "Where am I?"*

The voice kick started Keystone's brain and brought him back to awareness as his sleep-filled eyes shot open and took in what little of his unfamiliar surroundings as they could make out in the darkness. He had no knowledge of where he was, nor did he have any memory of how he had arrived there. Not only that, but based on what he'd just heard, it seemed as though the other that was here with him - a mare, by the sound of her voice - was in a similar predicament.

After a moment of agonizing as to whether or not it would be better to make himself known or to stay hidden from the other pony, Keystone slowly brought himself up into a sitting position and opened his mouth to speak,

"Not only where are we..." he began, trying to hide the uncertainty in his voice, and wanting to let the other pony know right off the bat that he was in the same boat that she seemed to be in, "but how did we get here? Also too, who in their right mind allows their floors to get so blasted cold? Furnaces exist for a reason... carpets too, for that matter!"

**Trigger:** He was drifting... drifting way too much. He opened his eyes, but there was nothing there to be seen, at least not yet. Trigger felt like he was falling, passing through a threshold all too familiar to a place that he had ventured through once upon a time. However, just because such feelings were similar did not mean the situation was anywhere near the same. He pondered just what had come to pass before those moments, but anamneses were but a fog to him. Certain things bled through, like thick molasses *running* - whatever the buck that meant - from a jar. *Twins, lavender, protection...* more fog.

Finally, the midnight stallion's hooves found a surface upon which to stand. There was nothing. Even the floor beneath him felt like a perception and utterly surreal. There was still nothing to be seen, nothing worth feeling, nothing worth thinking about... until the sounds of a filly's voice yanked his ears to attention. Like a beacon, those words stabbed through the darkness with an extravagant radiance that pulled back the curtain from the strange stage upon which he had been tossed. *A filly*, he thought as his mind pondered this voice. "Dark in here, ain't it?" he called back, trying to repress his otherwise gritty timbre. "Name's Trigger. How's it hanging, kid?"

**Barberry:** With a shuddering start, greyish green eyes sparked to life. The owner of the pair blinked several times before groping around in the dark, as though missing something very important. He took a moment before realizing what it was that had brought him to whatever state of consciousness he was in right now. Someone had called out in hopes that someone might answer.

"I'm here, I can hear you." he said slowly, unsure of his own voice, "Barberry's my name, but I don't know if that's all there is to it." Around the same time, another voice spoke, this one more gruff, that of a stallion. Barberry began feeling around himself idly, trying to recall who he was. He knew he was a pony. The much was certain from the way he felt. An inspection of head and body revealed him to be a unicorn. Though something told him he should be able to do magic, the horn on his head felt as though it was for decoration.

Around him, Barberry could feel as though there was someone other than him and the yet unseen Star Dusk and Trigger. The hairs on the back of his neck were tingling. That probably meant what he thought it did. "Well, it would seem we are lost. Or trapped. Or simply confused. Either way, I would very much like to know why I can't see..." the stallion murmured.

**Silver Colt:** Without any sort of trigger, nor having any real reason to other than the end of her sleep cycle, Silver's eyes jolted open and she shot up to a sitting position. It was normal for her to wake up hyper-alert, but today was . . . different. When Silver woke up, all she could see was an endless

darkness around her, spanning from where she was to infinity. Her thoughts were foggy and her vision blurred, along with the fact that her senses were dulled, and these were all things Silver could notice in her present condition. The mare reached to her side, instinctively, for her hammer, which always sat on the side of her work-belt no matter where she was. Thankfully. . . it was still there. While Silver did calm down a little, her mind rushed with thoughts on what was going on, where she was, and how she had somehow ended up here. *'Was I drugged somehow? It's unlikely . . . but possible. Who would have broken into my house to do such a thing? Wha. . . '* In the midst of her thoughts, Silver heard faint voices in the distance. Her ears perks up, and she listened to try and find out where they were. Maybe, just maybe, she could find and get out of here with them, or at least find out if they were hostile or not. Silver got up, brushing any dirt or grime or dust on her coat, and trotted off in the direction of the voices, her eyes scanning the edge of the darkness for any signs of life.

"Helllllo?" she called out into the darkness. "Is anyone here? I could hear you earlier. Please speak up!"

**Starshine:** The unicorn colt was acutely aware of his own body long before he made any indication that he was awake. He fidgeted slightly in his crouched position, checking for each of his limbs and ears. There were noises, unfamiliar voices. He made a conscious effort not to make any sounds, instead he craned his ears to better listen at the voices. Who were they and how could they... No, something was horribly wrong. The colt's left eye twitched as he couldn't recall the circumstances of his surroundings just before he went to sleep. He wasn't even sure if he was asleep before this. Worry crept into his heart as he fluttered his eyes open just slightly.

There were three, perhaps four presence nearby, the colt silently noted. He waited until the last sliver of drowsiness left his system before he looked at his surrounding, or the sheer lack thereof. He could tell that his vision was perfect, but everything was shrouded in darkness. This is definitely not an alley, the colt inwardly mused as he stared at the inky black around him. Now who were these ponies? There were two mares and one stallion, all indicated clear confusion in their voices. The colt furrowed his eyebrows as he tried to remember what could've led into this situation.

Starshine. Yes, Starshine was his name. He was thankful that at least he could remember that lucidly, though he couldn't remember much of anything else. This is almost like a dream, he thought. A hoofful of confused ponies, stranded in the darkness. Whatever it might be, Starshine didn't feel like sitting idly waiting for something to happen in such a situation. "Hello? Anypony there?" he called out as he rose to his haunches, there was a brief moment of relief as he felt the familiar tug of his saddlebag around his midsection. "Does anypony have a lighter?"

**Wing:** Wing did not know if his eyes were opened or closed, and frankly, he did not really care. He didn't know where he was either, and certainly didn't know how he had gotten there, but he had the vague sense that this sort of thing happened to him a lot. The stallion was falling, and while he had wings, they appeared not to make a bit of difference. "Interesting," he spoke quietly as another familiar pull tugged at the strings of his mind only to come up short. He was baffled and could sense a strong internal desire to put all the pieces together. Yet, the sense of uncertainty did not seem to phase his will. Chill's bite increased its vigor as the pegasus continued to descend, and it was in that instant that Wing realized he was wearing a quite comfortable jacket. *Did I know?* he thought - his default mode of thought briefly resurfacing before he threw the idea aside. It was not time for that; he was experiencing *something* - whatever that happened to be, and he had a feeling that time was definitive separator.

With that, lyrics spontaneously emerged from his throat. He had no idea why that was happening either, but it brought a swelling torrent of amusement to his predicament for sure. "Have mercy baby, on a poor pony like me.... Ya know I'm fallin' fallin' and can't really see a thing. I'm tingling right from head to my hooves, and despite this mystery, it seems I can keep a groove." He paused his song and reflected a bit, stating aloud that it was all a matter of perception before turning his body upside-down. "Now once, down and brokenhearted, disappointment was my closest friend. I arrived here and descended for no reason, but it's the season to face the world again. Now your love... keeps on liftin...."

Wing halted his song abruptly as his back finally made contact with the ground. There were other things talking; other entities clearly filled with the same confusion he was feeling. "Hello voices in the dark," he called to them. "I am Wing. What brings you all to this.... captivating locale? I have no idea why I am here myself, and apologies if my singing disturbed you. I thought I was alone for quite some time."

**Wolfram:** Wolfram lifted his head from the cold, wooden floor it had been resting on, opening his eyes only to reveal that more darkness was shrouding him. The stallion blinked a few more times, with frail wonder if his eyes were simply, or...rather...completely unadjusted to their environment. With energy breathed into his being, a small quiver of curiosity was woven into his core. His setting was curious, and it caused a pulsating headache to wonder how he came to be where he was.

Sitting up on his flank, the stallion ran a hoof through his mane, reacquainting himself with his forgotten figure. As the appendage retreated to rest back on the floor, it bumped a hard object on his head. Briefly inspecting the object, it was thought to be a horn. *I'm a unicorn it seems.* Bits of memory and knowledge started becoming recollected, but something felt wrong. He knew unicorns had magic...he knew **he** had

magic, well..at some point, and yet, the horn adorned atop his forehead felt hollow and more of a burdening accessory.

Respiring a soft breath from his rigid stance, he ears flicked as they picked up sounds. Voices. All of which, were drastically different from the others. Through pitch of voice, one was obviously a filly, while the other two had to be stallions. The deeper toned voice set an odd sense through his being, not the most *welcoming* voice, especially with all the current situations and possible ones. Wolfram didn't want to be sat like it much longer. He called out to the others with another question of his own, "Would the group of you sirs, and young madam, be able to indicate where we reside?" He wondered if getting up and moving onward to search for the group would be a wise choice, simply following their voices? Wolf simply waited to hopefully learn more and rendezvous with these strangers.

### **Key Gear: 'Keystone'**

*\*Shit.\** The mare swore violently in her own mind. The stranger was right, the room was by far the least comfortable that she could... She squinted, unable to remember ever having been in any room. *\*Can this get better...\** Her heartbeat picked up as others spoke.

### **'Starshine' + 'Silver Colt'**

More voices. Excitedly, Key Gear ran her hoof around her own form, looking for something familiar. Soon, she had found it. The small bag wrapped around her hind leg contained something, she guessed, something useful. She was just about to speak hopefully when the sound of some horrible discordant noise reached her ears. It was followed by another sound.

### **'Wing McCallister'**

"That was singing? Sounded like... Something. Eh. Screw it, and screw the apology. Who was looking for a light? I think I've got something." She moderated her breathing to control her rising heartbeat.

**Ambrosia:** *The Council had told her not to do it. This action had merely increased her desire to do it, of course. She danced in the field of flowers, hooves moving to the gentle melody of the rustling wind, the leaves, the whole of the world around her seemed to join in the joyous dance. She was a filly, born to a life constrained by Traditionalist law, Traditionalist lore. She paid it no heed. Hers was not a spirit to be constrained by trivial, base rules.*

*The Dancer, they called her this, and the Council gave up trying to stop her. She was in combat training, now, and her dancing hooves proved to be remarkably nimble when confronting opponents. She ran circles around most opponents. While she hardly won every encounter, she gained a reputation for a disarmingly soft motion that disguised a relentlessly cruel nature. She was respected.*

*Impressed by her efforts, the Council gave her an initial assignment. It was a simple task - to watch over a local provinces leader, making note of occurrences. She was talented in finances, so she choose to make an investigation of their spending and record-keeping. The findings horrified her. Currency appropriated for the purpose of helping the poor and weak was simply being taken and spent on lavish expenses. The youth went without education, the hungry were not fed.*

*The young mare would not allow it to stand. She approached the Council and was immediately rebuffed. It was not the place of a Traditionalist to do any more than observe. It was an unacceptable guideline. As with dancing, their words had merely caused a burning in her heart. She defied the Council and publicly confronted the province leader. When his guards attempted to subdue her, she fought them off, wielding her blade mercilessly, badly injuring more than a few of them.*

*Exiled. She was now an outlaw. It made no difference to her, so long as her path was right. She made it her personal mission, now, to interfere in all matters that the Council deemed significant. Appearing like a phantom, she would strike and withdraw, using her talents with words and blade to strike back where she saw the weak becoming disenfranchised under the oppressive neutrality of the Traditionalists, a neutrality that didn't stop them from collecting payments and aiding the crooked where it suited them.*

"I would do it... Again..." She whispered in silent defiance with her green eyes filled with an icy calm. The visions meant nothing to her, nor did their disappearance. Her heart was filled with calm and her mind was filled with a calm ease. She let the moment pass and then drifted through emptiness, settling upside down, on a chilly, hardened surface. There were voices in the room, friendly but confused. "Hello?" She spoke.

**Star Dusk:** The filly caught her breath as the first pony spoke, the voice was quickly joined by another. There were other ponies. She smiled, some confidence returning now that she wasn't alone. A final voice spoke. After it had finished speaking, she waited for a time, allowing his question to course through her heart. *\*Where are we.\** She didn't know where they were, but she could feel a strange tingling in her heart, an uncanny excitement.

Clumsily, she staggered to her hooves and span around full circle, before falling over again. She giggled at her own unsteadiness. The excitement in her heart bubbled over and she giggled again. She followed

the sound with words that came to her mouth naturally, though they seemed alien to her mind. "When did the dream fade? When did the darkness give to light? Where are the shadows filled with light? How the days became darkest night?"

She rose to her hooves, managing to stand this time. "The world turns on itself, rending asunder all that had once fallen into ashes and despair. They reveal the reality of void... Dancing back and forth upon itself, a thousand fierce stars in the dusk of day, giving way to night. Let the purest essence alight the gentle rose of life..." She trailed off and then stared off into the darkness, her nose scrunched in confusion. "That's where we are, but I don't know what it means."

A tear welled in her eyes. "I feel alone... But, you're all here. Can we find a way out? Will we stay here forever. I don't wanna be here anymore. It's dark..." She scraped a hoof against the wood planks underneath them. "We can make fire with this floor..." The phrase was spoken in hope and misery.

**Crow:** *They say that beauty fell that day, a gift from the heavens to the world below. The foal, as dark as the darkest night, was born despite her mother's sickness. The mare had recovered almost instantly. The golden eyed pegasus became the jewel of her parents' eyes, their youngest child by some years. They raised as an only child, owing to the gap between her and her much older siblings.*

*She had her mother's wings and her father's grace. The filly was an athlete, through and through. In competition, she was as strong and fast as any stallion. She practiced at night, they say for the sheer joy of whirling and twirling in the night's sky, her glowing golden eyes like shooting stars in the infinite cloudscape of New Terra. She lived to be their joy, lived by their praise.*

*It was only with their blessing that she joined the Confederacy, training to become a pilot. In training, she distinguished herself for both tenacity and diligence. She was never the strongest, but she knew what made them strong. She was never the fastest, but she knew what made them fast. She was never the first one, but those behind knew they could depend on her to guard against pursuit.*

*For a time, her fortunes rose as did the regard held towards her by others. A routine flight became more than it was supposed to be. The research colony had been devastated. She landed to investigate, calling for assistance but receiving no answer. Through open doors, she found nothing but death, bodies of ponies strewn without regard or decency. Walking the halls in total darkness, she soon came upon a single living pony.*

*The door opened, revealing the last survivor, a mumbling wreck of a pony, his coat tainted by blood and scars. She was carrying the stallion back to her ship when the creature attacked them both. It moved like nothing she had ever seen, picking a seemingly random pattern to approach them. The thing itself was indescribable void, living and breathing nothingness. Around it, a fell light glowed, as though even darkness itself couldn't dare be in its presence.*

*She threw down her burden and blocked the path of the monster. The stallion fled in terror as the nothingness attacked his rescuer. A team arrived within another few minutes, but she was gone. There was no trace of the monster. A thorough investigation was made, but there was nothing to be discovered. She was, due to her valorous death, awarded the highest honor available to a pilot of the Confederacy.*

*Weeks passed, her parents wept until they had no more tears to cry. It was then that she returned,*

*staggering out of apparent nothingness, into one of the older research facilities. She had been terribly wounded. What was once beauty had become the unspeakable grotesque. She was given medical care and debriefed immediately, but she had no words to utter. She sat in silence, her eyes frozen into an unblinking stare. Her parents had no more tears left to shed.*

*Even the sight of her parents did nothing to shake her from her stupor. Her record was hastily classified, and she was placed under surveillance in the same research facility where she had initially disappeared. So she remained, living like a dead pony walking. By her haggard demeanor and her horrifying injuries, the ponies of the research station gave her a name that seemed more suiting for her nature.*

*The scientists powered up the experiment, another attempt to create a more effective bridge drive. The lights dimmed and flickered throughout the facility. As they did so, the shadows seemed to drink in the darkness. The mare shifted restlessly, an unusually random movement. Her caretakers jumped. It was then, for the first time in some months, she spoke. "Bridge distortions. Living bridge distortions. I killed..."*

*She looked up, her golden eyes glowing. In an instant she was mobile, trotting the halls of the facility, heading straight for the experiment chamber. There, the slaughter had already begun. Hapless scientists were being cut down like mere pests. Without hesitation, mechanically, she picked up a bolt rifle and began firing into the room. Though seemingly aiming at nothingness rather than the creatures, her aim was uncanny. The monsters were slaughtered.*

*Another debriefing took place. This time she spoke. While being careful to avoid the specifics of her survival, she communicated the nature of a strange new threat as well as its weaknesses. With the threat revealed, it gave up all attempts at subtlety. At the most advanced research facilities throughout New Terra, the monsters manifested in hordes. War was waged, silently, so as not to alarm either the politicians or the citizens.*

*Casualties were "research and construction accidents". Equipment loss was written off as "thefts". The destruction of research facilities was "demolition" and "renovation". Throughout it all, the golden eyed mare became more than a mere pony. Hers was a name whispered in legend among the Wardens, the elite soldiers selected to contain and eliminate the threat. She was the Warden, the first and the greatest, the only one to be captured by the distortions and to return alive, a feat accomplished without the aid of any weapon.*

*She was admired, but she had no time for their legends, no hunger for their admiration. She didn't stop for that, nor did she stop to reassure her parents as to her survival. Whatever drives and needs she had were met by death. Where she went, it went with her, sweeping across the enemy like a tireless plague. She was tireless, seeming to require neither sleep nor sustenance.*

*The last action in the campaign against the bridge distortions had taken place at Alpha Colony. A trap had been created, a field designed expressly for the purpose of luring as many of the distortions to it as possible. When they began to appear, the allied forces quickly realized that they were badly outmatched. The distortions were legion in number, tumbling over themselves like waves of massive lice to feed on the energy source.*

*Undaunted by the teeming masses of nothing, she opened fire with a casually genocidal fury, and they began to die. Enemies and allies alike fled from the mare, as she spread her damaged wings and gave a harsh, primal roar, a sound that seemed as though it could never be emitted by any living creature. As*

*terrifying as the creatures of void were to the ponies, she had become something beyond even them.*

*At the close of the day, there were some that said that the single mare herself was easily responsible for more than half of the dead, on both sides of the conflict. She herself said nothing but calmly resigned, announcing that her purpose in existence had been fulfilled. Eschewing both praise and public recognition, she returned home to her parents and took care of them both as they aged.*

Crow smiled as the image of her parents' smiling faces played across her vision and then faded, as the other memories had, into nothing. She felt a pang in her heart at the years she had spent away from them. Another year of time spent in their calming, loving presences. She would have given anything for such a moment to be restored. A rare tear slid down her face, she blinked it away. "Beaty in death as in life." She whispered to herself as the memories of their passage drifted away.

She fell. For how long or at what speed, she knew nothing. She had no more real purpose, if this was the void reclaiming her as an act of vengeance then so be it. Regardless, she would not allow them to break her so easily. Once before, once again. Age had not dimmed the light of her golden eyes, nor had it considerably weakened her considerable resolve. She would beat them. She would save Glint, if the mare was still alive. A younger one than her, someone to carry the legacy...

Her eyes closed unbidden and she inhaled. As she exhaled, she became aware that she was no longer where she had been. Voices spoke in the darkness. None of them were familiar, but they all sounded confused rather than terrified. Slowly, moving with practiced deliberation, she stood to her hooves. "I'm sorry. I seem to have just awakened. I am a member of..." She blinked, unable to recall. "An organization of protectors. I live to serve. May I protect you?"

**Starshine:** There was a singing. Starshine's fur stood on its end as he slowly lowered himself, legs crouched into position just in case something decided it was a good idea to pounce on him. He silently scolded himself from being so paranoid, but what kind of pony would break into a song in this kind of situation? He took one step backward as he kept his ears trained to the direction of the singing voice. He didn't take down his guard even when the singing pony apologized.

One of the mare voices answered, said that she might got something. Starshine instantly perked up. Finally, a positive answer! "Hold on, I'll get to you." He took deliberate steps toward the mare's voice, taking care to slightly avoid the singing pony's direction. If his ears didn't betray him, everypony was practically within spitting distance of each other. Did somepony kidnapped them all into this place? The question was put aside as soon as his sweeping hooves touched what could only be a bag. This must be belonged to the mare, he thought. "Excuse me," said Starshine as he flipped the bag open and rummaged for the promised lighter.

When he found the lighter, Starshine tried to use his magic to lit it away from his face, but nothing came up. He blinked in the darkness. Another attempt at calling for his magic gave the same result. He groaned. With a hoof he flicked the lighter and shied away as the warm light flooded the room. He

quickly readjusted his grip as not to lit the room too bright. "I can't use magic," he announced to no pony in particular. "Whoever did this had a lot of money to afford the dampener." He swept the lighter in a wide circle until he could get a good look on every pony in the... room. There was a door not too far from his location.

Starshine was painfully aware that he was the smallest pony in the room, and also the only unicorn. This is a good thing, he thought, less one freaked out unicorn that couldn't use their magic. He put down the lighter close to the blue mare and looked around the room for a moment -and shot a disapproving look on the stallion who presumably did the singing- before he walked toward the door. A simple shove informed him that it was indeed locked. He frowned, of course it wouldn't ever be that easy. Without a word he slid closer and pressed his ear to the door, trying to listen if there was anything behind it.

**Barberry:** Another voice in the darkness spoke up, just as confused sounding as Barberry felt. Wherever they were, there sure were a lot of them. Barberry hoped they weren't in a very small room. Star Dusk spoke again, and Barberry expected her to answered the question, but she started rambling on about dreams, darkness, shadows and night. With a soft *clip-clop*, it sounded as though someone was getting up, most likely Star Dusk. The young voiced mare, or perhaps filly, continued her oddly poetic explanation, since that was what it was as she concluded.

None of it made much sense to Barberry. Did Star Dusk mean to say they were in a dream, or perhaps some sort of world within worlds, or maybe it was all just metaphorical? The filly's voice began to sound sad, causing a pang of sympathy within Barberry's heart. He didn't want to be here anymore than the rest of them, but it seemed Star Dusk was having a harder time of it. "I don't think starting a fire will help us any. Just stay calm. If we stay calm, we can think." Barberry said, groping around on the floor again.

He knew he was missing something, this time he was certain. As soon as he found it, he'd feel better. A voice suddenly cut through the darkness, this time that of a mare, one with an air of mature authority. She seemed to be offering help, or protection specifically. Barberry remained silent as he resumed searching, not wishing to be distracted. Behind him, his hoof made contact with something. A bag of some sort. Familiarity coursed through it to his mind, though he couldn't recall why.

It was his, he was almost certain. He went through it, feeling his way around inside in hopes of locating something useful. *\*Books, binoculars, wrapped snacks, measuring stick. Why in the world would I have packed all this junk into a bag?\** he pondered, curious as to who he was and why any of it was relevant

to his identity. Resisting the urge to dump out the contents, Barberry found something oblong and slightly heavy. It seemed to have a crank of some sort attached to it. He pushed the crank, rotating it a few times before it flashed suddenly.

Shocked, Barberry stopped, only to realize it was a flashlight. Without wasting a moment, he cranked the light once more until the light was bright enough to look around himself. He made note of his fellow roommates, Star Dusk probably being the filly-looking one, the mare being the mare. One of the two stallions had to be Trigger while the other one the polite-sounding one. Barberry smiled to himself with slight embarrassment, realizing that he could now see and that his flashlight may have made him the center of attention for the time being. He looked around, quickly spotting a door. Cranking the flashlight a few extra times, he put it down and inspected the door. Pulling and pushing did nothing. "I think it is locked." Barberry said in a matter-of-fact way before taking the flashlight back off the ground.

**Key Gear:** Her eyes went wide as the stranger started digging through the contents of her bag. She started to growl menacingly, but then realized that the situation would likely improve if there was light. Of course, the added illumination would also ensure that she would be able to crack his face with a more precise strike. Thankfully, he found what he was looking for quickly enough. She went behind him and rechecked the contents of her pouch. Her hoof felt the reassuring presence of a lockpicking set...

The moment that there was light, her eyes hastily scanned the ponies in the room. The rummager was a colt, a unicorn colt. *\*No magic? Eh. Hope we don't have a fight. Probably useless.\** There was a particularly sturdy looking mare, carrying a large hammer. *\*Now, that's more like it.\** She smiled in approval at the mare and her eyes went to the pony that she presumed was the "singer" by his location and the direction that the noise had arisen from. A curious stallion. *\*Probably as useless as the colt in combat, but with more experience. Maybe.\**

Her eyes glanced to next pony. A pink stallion. *\*Shit. They're just getting more and more pathetic.\** She turned to the next pony, another mare, only to find the mare's eyes already staring at her. The yellow mare was standing proudly but without a trace of either judgment or haughtiness. The green eyes had a strange intensity to their depths and Key felt some kind of connection. She turned away, confused. *\*What is wrong with me. Why can't I remember... I'm sure I've seen her before, that's it, I'm sure of it. I just...\**

Her heartbeat was increasing, again. As though having thoughts of their own, her eyes darted wildly around the rather plain room that she was in. The floor was clean but clearly aged. The walls were plain, brick. She couldn't remember the last time that she had seen actual bricks used in a modern construction. The building was probably very old. There was no window to the outside, no furniture, and nothing on the walls. It was fairly large, but she felt breathless. Even prisons were less sparse than this.

Dimly, she was aware of the colt's attempt to open the door. It must have been locked. Acting mostly on instinct, she cautiously approached the door and pulled out some small, fragile-looking tools. With a precision that was uncanny for an earth pony, she began working on the mechanism while hissing words to the others. "I'm not good in closed spaces. I hate locked doors. I need some fresh air not the stuff all of you are breathing out. This door is opening, don't care what's on the other side."

True to her words, she unlocked the door in just seconds. It opened easily, and she jumped into the next room, panting for breath and looking around. She found herself standing in the middle of a grand hall. The floor was carpeted with a softly beige carpet. The walls were dimly lit by fairly underpowered lanterns. It was an L-shaped hall, two floors high. A wooden guardrail for an upper pathway was visible in the dim lights. Aside from their room, there were no other doors visible.

She squinted and whispered, her mind filling with confusion. Her eyes darted to the door that she had just opened and then back into the hall. "If there were lights out here, before... Why didn't I see them under the door... Even as dim as these are, they..." She paused, fairly certain that she could hear heavy steps in the distance. "What the hell is all of this..." Looking into the shadows, she realized that the sound was coming from around the bend. "Why aren't there any more doors..."

**Ambrosia:** She sighed softly when there was no immediate greeting. Of course, in the darkness, cordiality could hardly have been expected. There were two ponies that seemed more active than the others. One of them seemed task-oriented, looking for some means of light. The other was different, filled with a nervous, violent energy. Ambrosia closed her eyes. As unpleasant as it seemed, there was something familiar to her about the feeling.

There was another pony present, she was certain. In the darkness, she was certain that she sensed something of a friendly, amiable presence from this pony. A creative spirit. She could also sense something else, another familiar presence. Intelligent and warm. There was another pony with them as well, understated and friendly. *\*What an interesting group.\** She thought to herself, smiling now that she was certain there was no malice to be found.

When the light came on, she found herself studying the young blue mare that was the source of most of the anxiety in the room. She was certain that they had met and were, perhaps, friends or associates of some kind. However, she was also positive that it was not the time for attempting to understand their pasts. The room that they were in more than resembled some kind of trap. The realization didn't bother her, she could feel another presence, something strong and positive.

The blue mare went to the door and opened it, leaping out without a care. The mare was soft-hooved Ambrosia noted, but her recklessness probably canceled out the advantages that stealth afforded her. She would need guidance, but a direct approach would probably be explosive. Calmly, Ambrosia waited for the other mare to finish stumbling through her frustration. Then, she spoke, her own voice soft but filled with both force and assurance.

"This is probably some kind of trap. Whoever put us here likely knows that we're here and expects our actions. Furthermore, some of my memories are missing, I'm certain of it. We may be friends, we may be enemies. I don't know. We could just be toys for some bored magistrate..." She paused to dwell on her own words, the sound and the content. She heard something of a rural accent on her tongue and she felt her anger rise at the thought of being played with by some miserable well-off insect.

She continued, with more assurance than before, "Before we proceed, I think that we need to introduce ourselves." The blue mare shot a look of complete disdain at her. Ambrosia met the look with a focused stare, forcing the other mare to look away for the second time. "I am Ambrosia. I... Don't remember much about myself. However, I think that I'm used to situations like this in some way. I feel no fear. Who are you all? What can you contribute?"

**Star Dusk:** The voice that spoke was filled with a comforting strength. "Yes." The filly answered without hesitation as she wiped away her tears.

*\*But, I am calm.\** The fact that she didn't sound particularly calm meant nothing to the filly. Instead, she wondered if perhaps the stallion what had spoken had meant "stay quiet" rather than "stay calm". It sounded like he was doing something. If he had a light or a way out, she didn't want to upset him. She inhaled and held her breath, if she didn't move or breath, it'll be more than quiet enough for the stallion to do whatever it was that he was hoping to do.

Before long, she was thankful to hear a strange noise coming from the same general direction that the reassuring voice had. Soon, there was a flickering light in the darkness. "Magic..." She whispered, exhaling at the same time. With her mouth wide open, she locked her eyes on the stallion with the unusual noisy light. "Glorious!" She clapped her hooves uproariously as he smiled.

Filled with excitement, she turned her gaze to the other ponies in the room. There were two rather strong-looking stallions present and a mare that, while older, looked quite intimidating in her own right. Starlight raised her hooves and squeaked with laughter. "More glorious! I'm safe!" She paused and placed a hoof under her chin in thought. "I'll hide behind all of you." She added pensively.

Star Dusk grinned and hopped over to the door. After tapping it with a hoof, she turned to Barberry and beamed. "Not a problem, Noisy Purple Light." She pointed at one grey stallion and then the other. "You and you, break this thing down." She sat on her haunches and cackled with delight while rubbing her forehooves together. "Such delightful crashing and crushing!" From behind her, the older mare's voice piped up, "Negative."

The filly turned to the mare with a confused expression. "No. Things aren't that bad. We're in this icky room, but what if it's actually something nice, like a candy store storage room... Maybe there's candy on the other side." She held a hoof up in seriousness as she made her point. "I think we should stay positive." She offered. The mare's golden eyes locked onto the filly with a mixture of mild annoyance, sheer frustration, and the faintest hint of amusement. Star Dusk tilted her head to the side and said appreciatively, "You have such pretty sparkly eyes. Would you smile so I can see them glow?"

**Crow:** Crow nodded gently, an acknowledgement of the filly's agreement to accept her assistance. She blinked as she realized, by the noises behind her, that she was likely facing a wall. She turned around and, with some concern, noted that she couldn't see the light of the other's eyes. Another pony spoke, this one a stallion. She inhaled purposefully and flicked her tongue outside of her mouth for just a moment, tasting the air.

There were three stallions in the room, two more stallion than the other one. With the addition of herself and the filly, there was no others present, though strangely, she felt as though their group was incomplete. The filly's presence felt like one of almost pure chaos, but it wasn't an unpleasant sort of chaos. Crow wrinkled her nose. The room was somewhat dusty and probably somewhat weatherworn.

None of the other ponies in the room felt like threats to her. As the stallion's light flickered to life, she looked towards the shadows to give her vision time to adjust. The filly was proving to be uproariously loud, but the child had a strangely endearing presence. Endearing and commanding, Crow thought to

herself as the filly ordered the stallions to destroy the door. Shaking her head, Crow immediately voiced dissent.

Crow took a moment to absorb the strange request and then shook her head, very slowly, from side to side. "Negative." She repeated and had to resist the urge to smile as understanding twinkled explosively in the filly's eyes. Crow made her way towards the door with a deliberate motion. As she moved, she partially dragged her left hind leg, creating an awkward shambling motion.

Upon reaching it, she placed a hoof gently on the door and applied pressure. "Destroying this door would make enough noise to let everyone within a mile or two know that we're here. Filly, you're already noisy enough to alert everyone within a half-mile. Let's not expand our field anymore than that half-mile. For now." She continued to study the door. "It's well built, but this lock is pathetic." She turned to the purple stallion. "I need a screwdriver or some similar instrument. Do you have one in your assortment?"

**Keystone:** There was the sound of movement, noise, words, and more as Keystone sat, watching and listening, though mostly listening due to the lack of visibility. More ponies were making themselves known as the general level of activity around him increased. Not having much to offer himself, he remained where he was and simply took things in, pondering on the situation and trying without success to remember where he had been before he had found himself in the dark room.

Keystone blinked as the room lit up, raising a hoof to his face to block the surge of light, and observed a young colt holding a lighter. Scanning the room with his eyes, he took inventory of his fellow occupants, watching a blue mare pick through a locked door in almost no time at all. Another mare began to speak, musing on the situation and introducing herself. Realizing that there was no sense in simply sitting idle and keeping to himself in such a situation, Keystone let off a quiet sigh and began to speak,

"I'm Keystone. I... don't really have much I can say about myself either, I'm afraid... my mind and memory are both a bit of a jumble. As for what I can contribute..." he began, shrugging, "I don't rightfully know? I get the feeling that I'm a bit outside of my element here. Even if my memories aren't quite all there, I don't think I've ever been the sort to find myself laying around in a dark and most likely mysterious place like this. I am a locksmith by trade, but I don't really know what good that will be in this sort of situation... I'm good with picking, but..." he continued on, glancing over to the blue mare of the group, whose voice he recognized as being the first that he had heard upon waking, "she seems to be quite decent at that, herself."

Rising up from his sitting position, Keystone slowly moved toward the door, looking at the door's lock somewhat distastefully, "Though, having said that... who the hell would try to lock anyone into a room with a lock like this? It's bloody shameful."

**Wing:** Wing took a few moments to glance at each of the ponies as the light came on. The blue mare seemed quite annoyed and quick to jump the gun. She had already picked the lock on the door and pushed into the next room before he even had time to ponder a response. Still, he could understand her emotions. They had just appeared in some random place and memories were fleeting. He could not remember how he had gotten there himself. There were vague flashes of things, bits drowned out by light, but he could not put his hoof on it.

Meanwhile, his eyes had drifted to the young colt that had shot him the stare. *Quick to judge, perhaps nervous. Who wouldn't be? Unicorn... no magic. There's no magic.* The restatement of the thought sent a jolt through Wing's spine and he promptly rolled onto his hooves. There it was again, a pang of familiarity but fleeting. He was indeed wearing a jacket of a liberty blue shade. It was quite comfortable and had a bomber type appearance. *Am I a pilot?* he asked himself, but something about that internal claim felt wrong. He turned his attention briefly to the pink pegasus stallion. *Nice coat.*

There were two other mares with them. One that had called out hello some time ago and another that had already begun the process of calmly introducing herself and delivering sane ideas in the midst of the insanity. He stared at this yellow earth pony for quite some time. While his mind had been teetering on the brink of lost thoughts, staring at her yielded quite a different response. His heart burned - utterly burned - to the extent where he could feel himself tightening up just from her presence. The feeling continued to jab at him relentlessly - as though his body itself had manifested its own conscience to demand that some amount of clarity to pierce the fog.

He flicked his ear, having found himself staring with shrunken irides for far too long. *She's gorgeous,* he contemplated while silently pleading with himself to calm the hell down. Now was not the time to get wrapped up in emotions that could not yet be understood. There were immediately pressing matters: the questions about what they were doing here, how they would get the heck out, and - of course - those requested introductions. "I'm Wing," he stated aloud before giving a wave to all those present. "I'm not really sure yet what I do. This jacket looks like it is a pilot's, but... I just don't think that's my purpose." He looked over the coat a few moments longer, spotting the flower patch on the sleeve. "It does have a nice accessory though, and I think it has a slight scent of cinnamon, which I definitely enjoy. Either way, I also do not feel much fear in this place. When I was falling.... it felt like I was on a familiar path, and even now.... I have a sense that I am in good company regardless of my ability to remember all of the circumstances. Hmm, I'm pretty sure I like to think about things.... and I think the current assessment is pretty spot on. We're likely here for a reason and should take care to cooperate. Other things can be settled later... Besides, wouldn't want to pull a thigh or something..."

**Silver Colt:** "Lighter? I... think I have one." Silver thought aloud, instinctively reaching for her hammer on her belt. She unhooked it with ease, the muscle memory of a million or so prior reaches to the same spot, and brought it in front of her. As all hammers were, it was incredibly unbalanced, yet Silver had no issues balancing it with her own strength by using just her leg. Silver pointed the hammer up, and away from her face, and pushed a small button on its hilt. A small set of runes began to light up on it, and within moments a small blowtorch ignited itself on the head of the hammer. Initially frightened at the fact that she had just created fire, she quickly pushed the button again to stop the torch. Yet, after a few moments her familiarity of it, despite her absolute lack of memory of such a feature, caused her to once again push the button to recreate the light. While not incredibly loud, it was noisy. . . noisy enough to have her stop her blowtorch in order to listen to whoever's singing that was. It was soothing, to a degree, and calmed her thoughts a bit in order to allow Silver to take a better look at the situation she was in. For one, she had little to no memory of who she was, or what she was, but by the hammer Silver assumed she was some sort of engineer.

True to her words, she unlocked the door in just seconds. It opened easily, and she jumped into the next room, panting for breath and looking around. She found herself standing in the middle of a grand hall. The floor was carpeted with a softly beige carpet. The walls were dimly lit by fairly under-powered lanterns. It was an L-shaped hall, two floors high. A wooden guardrail for an upper pathway was visible in the dim lights. Aside from their room, there were no other doors visible.

She squinted and whispered, her mind filling with confusion. Her eyes darted to the door that she had just opened and then back into the hall. "If there were lights out here, before... Why didn't I see them under the door... Even as dim as these are, they..." She paused, fairly certain that she could hear heavy steps in the distance. "What the hell is all of this..." Looking into the shadows, she realized that the sound was coming from around the bend. "Why aren't there any more doors..."

Silver was, at first, walking towards the singer, but now she found herself drawn towards the open door. A thought of escape, although unlikely as it was, took over her. While rude, the blue earth pony was indeed right. They were all trapped in a dimly-lit room and for all they knew the air could be indeed running out. However, the next room banished these thoughts. There were light sources here, and a grand hall large enough to probably fit all of Silver's now dead extended family, but she didn't realize it

at the time (  ).

"I'm Silver ... Colt." She hazily remembered her own name, her memories nothing but a muddle of thoughts and passions, all mixed and meshed with blankness. "I make things, probably big ones, I think... and I'm glad to know that at least I'm not the only one who seems to be suffering from amnesia. Let's just hope this all goes away... eventually." she replied generally to Ambrosia's words rather than directly to her. She was hoping that others would join into the conversation, simply because Silver enjoyed the thought of getting to know just who she would probably be spending some time with. Within the darkness, she had counted. . . roughly five. For all she knew, there could be more.

"Hey, having two of something useful is better than having one of something that cannot be used. . . . yet I think." silver replied. "You can work with locks, and chances are there will be more of those coming up. As for myself? I need things to put together in order to actually be of much use here." she replied to Keystone's comments, trying to give him a little self worth by degrading her own use to the group. "I guess... I could hit things? I don't think I know how to fight much though." Silver admitted to the group.

Silver's eyes slowly wandered, a bit against her conscious will, to the pony-in-questions' flank, where there was a kind of symbol. She didn't know what it was off the top of her head, but it looked incredibly familiar. Within moments her eyes had darted to everypony's flanks, and even her own. *'So our uses are tattooed on our flanks hmm? I wonder what his means...'* Silver thought. "Maybe your tattoo could give us a hint? It looks like some sort of whatchamacallit... a thing? no... an object? no.... an atom i think?" she was spit-balling at first, but the right words came instinctively, and Silver had scarcely known what she had said when the words came out of her mouth. "An atom... Yes, it's an atom." she realized. "Could you possibly have the ability to shrink to very, very, very small sizes? Or maybe make minor nuclear explosions?" she blinked again, her mind going to places she realized that, after the fact, were unreasonable. ". . . how about just being able to manipulate them? Atoms I mean?"

**Trigger:** *Who the fuck carries a crank flashlight?* Trigger pondered as soon as the light came on. It was - of course - helpful to their aims but still, the thought lingered in his mind. What type of pony would just have that equipment lingering about. *Come to think of it...* He halted his thought train and moved a forehoof to the vest he was wearing. He also had a saddlebag of his own. And the immediate analysis of its contents left Trigger blinking. Weapons, lots and lots of weapons. *Well that's bucking great.... How about I introduce myself with, 'Hey everypony, my name is Trigger and I think I'm a killer?'*

He pulled his hoof from his equipment cache and glanced around. His amber cores slid beneath the brim of his trademark hat, and while it was by far the most flamboyant accessory in the room, he felt just right in the rustic gear. Trigger did not waste much time contemplating each of his companions. There was no time for that. They had shit to do after all. He had been a bit internally critical of Barberry off the bat, but a stallion with tools was still useful given their situation. The filly was next: cute, demanding, direct. He liked it; 10/10 would foalsit. Wolfram, overly polite. *He called me sir. Way too bucking polite. Oh well, shit happens where shit.*

His eyes fell upon Crow. This mare sat just right with him. Alpha type, smart, tactical. She exuded experience and confidence even in the face of jack shit memories. There was something familiar about that particular statement that left him with a bit of a thrill rush. They were on an assignment no matter how he looked at it. The circumstances really didn't mean bucking shit. "Protection is a two way street," he spoke. "I am equipped if the moment comes to pass."

**Wing:** Wing tilted his head at Silver Colt's assessment. "I don't think it's specific," he responded, tapping his muzzle lightly. "Like I said, I have a feeling I like to think, and some events have already got

the gears turning even with the uncertainty. The colt's statement about magic got me thinking, and Blue over there said there weren't any doors..." His voice trailed off before something sparked within him. " Speaking about uncertainty, ya know, nature can be an unbelievable tool? Even a perfect measurement has some intrinsic uncertainty because the universe deems it so. You just can never get rid of it. It's the Pandora of quantum... mechanics... You want something perfect that you can never have, and if we lived in a universe where you could get it, then it wouldn't be our universe at all. Such a temperamental creature... Back to the point, why would the door out of this place lead to an exitless state? Why can't the colt use magic?" The lavender pegasus trotted towards the door as thoughts poured from him like water from a leaky faucet. "The lock on this thing sucked right? You opened it with ease... probably because it was meant for us to open it." He lifted his hoof and peered inside the grand hall to gaze at Key Gear. "Such a wavefunction, is it not? And this is the only door... at least the only one we can see... I imagine either another door has been hidden - explaining why magic has been barred here. That'd be too easy wouldn't it? Or perhaps this door is a product of science and it's meant to be traversed, closed, and opened again."

**Barberry:** Barberry watched with some amusement as Star Dusk hopped towards the door. He wasn't too fond of being called "Noisy Purple Light", but he shrugged it off. But was he really that loud? Barberry stared blankly as the filly immediately took charge and ordered the other two stallion to ram the door. That really didn't seem like a very good idea, since there would probably a loud explosion of splinters. A terribly insane idea.

Thankfully, the mare stepped in with a firm "negative", though the filly quickly rebuffed her with some sort of nonsense about there being a candy store on the other side. It was a strange idea, the possibility of it being exceptionally low. There was always the chance that it was true, sure, but how did they get in here if that was the case? Barberry supposed positivity in the face of adversity was a good policy for the time being. Star Dusk said that the mare's eyes were sparkly out of the blue, prompting the stallion to take a quick look. Sure enough, they were a nice dark yellow, ones that shone like gold.

The mare repeated herself and then made her way to the door while dragging one of her legs. Barberry guessed that she was either injured recently or it was some sort of old one. Either way, he did nothing to make note of it. The mare didn't seem bothered by it. As she spoke, it was with a very precise efficiency, marking her as a commander of some kind. The mare analyzed the door, remarking that the door itself was sturdy, but the lock was of a lower quality. The mare turned towards Barberry and addressed him, asking if he had a screwdriver or something similar.

Barberry nodded with some nervousness and trotted back to his bag. Using the light, he could tell there were a few tools and items inside beyond what he had felt earlier. Not one of them were anything remarkable. Basic things one might need if they got lost or needed to fix something. He assumed he was either a hiker, a repair pony or just generally paranoid. Regardless, there was a screwdriver tucked into

one of the side pouches. The stallion grabbed it and trotted back to the door, passing it to the mare. "Here you are... ma'am." he said struggling briefly for a name he didn't know. Barberry then returned to his bag and replaced it on his back. He also cranked the flashlight a few more times just to be sure.

**Starshine:** Starshine watched in rapt interest as the blue mare worked on the door. He hadn't missed her displeasure on him taking out her lighter without her consent, but he didn't do anything to apologize, or make his case as it were. Good chance we will never see each other as soon as we find a way out, he inwardly mused. One thing for sure, he wouldn't stay in the city for one second longer knowing there's a kidnapper with magic dampener wandering in its tunnels. He looked around and studied the rest of the ponies. Pink stallion who cracked a joke on the state of the room, an off-white stallion who sang some of the weirdest tune he had ever heard, a lemony yellow mare who looked... different, and one burly mare with a huge hammer. Starshine's eyes lit up as he noticed the many patterns on its surface. *Perhaps, this ragtag of a group can get out of this place unscathed.*

The mare had successfully unlocked the door and wasted no time surging forward. Starshine tentatively followed suit, his eyes darted left and right scanning the room as he walked behind the blue mare. The room behind the door was... interesting. Big, long hall with an upper floor with lanterns that was barely lit. There were no more doors. Starshine looked back and compared the first room and the hall. The building blocks was unfamiliar to him, but it was clear that the two rooms were built with very different purposes in mind, and if there was ever a purpose on attaching them together in a way like this, he couldn't think what could it be.

The blue mare commented on how the lantern lights was not visible from behind the locked door, and the lemon mare chimed in how it looked like a trap. She also added that she was losing some of her memories. Memories, Starshine's eyes widened at that word. He could recall his name, but nothing on what happened before this. Silently he tried to remember farther things, deeper into the recess of his brain, and found that everything was patchy at best. He could remember what city he was in and the general state of things, but...

*I can't remember her name*

For that one second, his eyes lost focus and his ears drooped backward. He didn't realize he had fallen onto his haunches until nearly everypony finished introducing themselves. The singing stallion and the hammer mare started a side conversation, and Starshine found his breath getting shallower and shallower. His eyes reduced to a tiny pinprick. I can't remember her name, how could I not remember

her name, the panicked thoughts swirled inside him. She was somepony very important, that much he could remember, but not her name. Why...? We need to get out of here. He violently shook his head to bring himself back to focus, rattling the content of his saddlebag.

"Whoever did this, I hope they have a very, very good reason to." Starshine spat. The lemon mare, Ambrosia her name, could be right in her suspicion that everything was a very elaborate setup just to play with them. He stood up and took a deep breath, puffing his chest. It wouldn't do him any good to delve on what he couldn't remember at this point. "The name's Shine. As you may have heard, I can't use magic in this environment. I'll try not to get in anypony's way," he added without a flourish. No need for his actual name, or so he had thought. He could remember clearly what manner of things he had in his saddlebag, and quite frankly without his magic, he was somewhat of a dead weight. He silently gritted his teeth.

Once more he looked around the hall. The small unlit room, the enormous space with lights in them that didn't seep through the cracks in the previous room, lack of magic and any further doors for the blue mare to pick, and the peculiar building materials used in the construction. Starshine hummed himself as he pondered these little bits. The singing stallion chimed in with his observations on the rooms. While he found half of the stallion's words to be rather out of place, the other half was actually on the spot.

"Perhaps everything in these rooms was the result of a complicated spell? Elaborate illusions, coupled with some reactive enchantments placed on the door to light the lanterns as soon as the blue mare opened the door. Tampering with our memories like this, and dampening unicorn magic without any sort of visible equipments nearby, but without any sort of restraint placed on our person, I have this suspicions that somepony, or something, wanted us to do something in this place. They might have a plan, or like miss Ambrosia here said, they want to play with us and are currently watching from a CCTV."

He sighed and shook his head. "Can anypony tell what's the similarities between us? I can't imagine they picked us at random. As for myself I'm just a homeless colt, without any relatives or even a contact." Starshine looked at the gathered ponies. He wasn't even sure that everypony here came from the same city as him.

**Derry:** I stirred and felt being somewhere. I didn't remember coming here, nor actually falling asleep in a black room, which may be the same thing. I don't know, I was confused. Putting a hoof down onto the floor, yes I had to actively do that, I felt that it was made out of wood. It creaked too which made me

retreat it quite quickly. I toppled over, landing on the dusty planks which sent me coughing. For pony's sake, what's going on?

As I tried to calm down I thought I felt something brush over my coat and my leathery wings. It was... cold. My neck hair already stood as straight as it could, as I realized that it was just a draft created by some crack I could only negligibly calm down. This place freaked me out. But that didn't matter right now, I just shouldn't scream if suddenly a bloody head falls into my lap, that would be quite inconvenient.

I tried my second take at getting up, this time succeeding. I then realized that others were there, talking. Hadn't they seen me? I wondered, but instinctively called out: "Hey! You there!" I didn't feel like being particularly welcoming right now, there were more important things. But what, I didn't know, I just hoped it wasn't them who brought me here.

**Trigger:** A bristling chill ran up the length of Trigger's spine as a newcomer made his presence known. There was a particular tint in this one's tone that immediately set the onyx stallion on edge. All the other ponies had at least made an attempt to make the best of the absolute shit situation. *Politey* over there had tried; *Toolbox* had delivered some useful equipment and brought some light to the room; *Crow* - he tried to think up a nickname for her but... *Oh, Blackbird. Such Swag...* had a tactical edge; and the precocious purple ball of filly - *Double P* - demanded action. This new pony came off as abrasive to say the least. There wasn't even an attempt anywhere in his voice, and his three words seemed cold, cutting, and borderline accusatory. It did not take long before it dawned on Trigger what exactly rubbed him the wrong way. "There are two types of ponies in this world... those that start...." he muttered the phrase under his breath before opting to snap his head in the direction the recent arrival. "We don't know either," he responded, "so cool your damn biscuits and be thankful that at least we have light now."

**Wolfram:** The clang and clattering of the falling debris easily caught Wolfram's visual attention, or, where his ears led him to believe the sound originated from. Like no little doubt resided within him... he could have been a mile away and known where it came from. As the newcomer spoke, his unprocured question was answered by the gritty-voiced one. Continuing his silence, Wolf examined the areas lit up by the decent flashlight, in addition to processing the current situation. *5, hopefully pure, equines...huddled within this room. This cold, the sense of it feels off..* Wolfram watched the fierce mare with a lightly wavering stare.

The more he thought, the more inquisitive Wolfram became. Attempting to recollect the moments before ascending to this place of existence, he was only met with a blank memory. Surveying his immediate proximity, he tried to find a bag of his own. With some luck, one was uncovered, and upon searching was met with some coins, a couple food rations whose writing was far too worn to be legible and some black box with no button or apparent functionality. Beyond a few grooves, there was no use for it. A bit disappointed, the stallion dropped the object back into his satchel and tugged at his only piece of clothing, some mix of an olive cape and scarf.

Standing up, Wolf gave his neck and forehooves a strong stretch, the aches that had built up being audibly released. With some mildly nimble hooves, he moved himself towards the light to convene with some of the group. Despite a rather peculiar entrance, the dark mare had a deep trusting aura... odd, but somewhat trusting.

**Crow:** Ignoring the new arrival and the conversation behind her, she accepted the tool from the stallion and then gently tossed it in the air once, then twice. As it fell the second time, she didn't catch it. Instead, she smashed it into the handle of the door and then firmly rotated it to the right. Two quick movements. The strike was explosive, the rotation was silent and quick. Behind her, the filly squeaked with surprise at the sound.

The screwdriver shook loose easily. The fragments of the door's aging handle and locking mechanism clattered noisily as they fell free. She placed the tool on the floor next to her and spoke calmly. "Don't call me ma'am. It makes me feel old. My name..." She paused and sniffed the air. "Call me Crow." The phrase was an afterthought, spoken as she turned to open the door. On her face was an expression of bemusement.

The door whisked open, filling the room with a peculiar dim light. The room in front of them was filled with shelves, the shelves were clean aside from their contents, their contents were jars and other various containers. Everything was neatly labeled. The labels specified flavors - watermelon, spice apple, wild berries, and more. They also specified types - hard, soft, chewy. An impossibly sweet aroma drifted around the ponies present.

Crow slowly moved into the room, blinking owlishly as she surveyed the room's contents. It wasn't a particularly large room, though it was roomy enough. Its shape was narrow and long. Other than the door that they had entered from, it had two other doors. One of the other doors had a sign above it reading, '**Storage**'. The other door read, '**Exit**.' It was old and weathered, while the first door, the one to the storage room, was relatively modern.

She turned around to look above the door that they had just left. It too was labeled, with two words, '**Unfortunate Guests**.' The mare nodded, looked at the now excited filly and said simply, "I see." Noting that the contents on the shelves were ordered alphabetically, she sauntered to a particular shelf and rolled against it, into a sitting position. The entire shelf was filled with containers containing purple candies - grape chews, according to the label. Crow grabbed a hoof full and started to snack.

**Star Dusk:** Star Dusk hopped in place and resisted the urge to demand that everyone move a bit faster. The room that they were in felt small, despite its size. There was nothing worth doing in it, nothing for her to play with or inspect other than the others. Her mind was a mass of conflicting thoughts. She felt vaguely slighted, though she wasn't sure of by who or what. She scrunched her nose as she continued to think. The hopping intensified.

Perry Er, on 20 Oct 2014 - 12:39 PM, said: 

"Hey! You there!"

She stumbled over her own hooves at the noise, and her heart jumped into her mouth. With a single, awkward motion, she rolled herself up into her cape and rolled off into the shadows. Her dark eyes stared wildly at the source of the random noise. He was a batpony, not a particularly scary looking one at that. She unrolled from her cape-ball and stood on her hooves again, surveying the new arrival. She looked from Crow to the newcomer. *\*More wings...\**

Trigger, on 20 Oct 2014 - 3:29 PM, said: 

"There are two types of ponies in this world... those that start...." he muttered the phrase under his breath before opting to snap his head in the direction the recent arrival. "We don't know either," he responded, "so cool your damn biscuits and be thankful that at least we have light now."

The voice of the stallion that was speaking, she recognized it as the pony that had spoken to her first. His words were gruff but they amused her. Still, they were not pleasant. She coughed and spoke, "He's Trigger. I like him." She pointed at the pony in the hat, an object that now brought a twinkle of envy to her eyes. "I also like his hat..." She allowed a meaningful silence before redirecting to the newcomer. "And, we welcome you to our small group of... Happy prisoners." She beamed. "What's your na..."

Crow said

Instead, she smashed it into the handle of the door and then firmly rotated it to the right.

"NAME!" Star Dusk squeaked, making a noise that was at least as explosive as the sound of the lock being destroyed. She froze in place. Her immediate desire was to lecture Crow about the half-mile noise limit, but there was something about the demeanor of the mare that gave her pause. After a moment, she decided that the speech would have been ill received. Instead, she decided to take a different approach - an approach that was promptly forgotten as a certain scent reached her nose.

Crow said

The door whisked open...

The filly wandered to the doorway and stood some feet away. "Ma..." She shivered, violently. "Magic... Magic? Magic!? Magic!" Her eyes had widened to the size of saucers as she took in the shelves upon shelves filled with sweets. She licked her lips but didn't move an inch as Crow drifted further into the unusual light. The filly squinted. "This isn't my candy store... It's hers... Maybe half mine."

She pointed a hoof at the endless shelves and sniffed importantly. "Stallions. One of you taste this. If you don't die then it's safe." She heard the sound of Crow chomping on something and licked her lips again. Her face scrunched into an impossible expression for just a few moments before she settled down and stared into the strange candy store.

**Ambrosia:** Ambrosia's cool green eyes roved the room. From his words, the pink stallion was uncertain. It was a good trait to have in this kind of situation she mused, better to be cautious and

frightened than overly aggressive. She shot an agitated glance to both of the blue ponies, whom were already peering into the next area. She felt the fur rise on the back of her neck. *\*They need to slow down...\**

As the other ponies spoke, she was distracted by a strange but familiar feeling. The strange pegasus stallion was staring at her. She didn't glance back. Instead, hoping to avoid eye contact with the stallion, she directed her attention towards the mare carrying the hammer. She only chanced a glance at the stallion when she heard his name. "Wing." She mouthed the word as though learning to speak for the first time. She closed her eyes for a moment, allowing the distraction to pass. *\*Whatever it is, this is not the moment. I need to think...\**

Silver Colt + Wing McCallister

"What the fuck." Her calm demeanor was slightly shaken. She had absolutely no clue what they were talking about. Her head began to swim and she felt a vague sense of panic. Her eyes went around the room again and settled on the blue colt. Her breathing returned to normal, her eyes narrowed. *\*Did I just... Feel... What he felt? Or, something else?\** She calmed as he spoke.

Starshine

She straightened herself up and reassumed her earlier confidence. No matter what they brought to the group, she was certain that every member had something to offer. It was the only explanation for why they could have been there. Destiny had brought them together, no matter who or what was behind this. They would overcome anything that sought to do them harm, but they had to stick together...

A strange thing caught her eye - a flower on the funny pegasus stallion... Wing's jacket, illuminated by the light. Instinctively, she reached to her mane, her hoof touched something soft, familiar. She removed her hairband and looked from it to the badge. Desperately, she searched through her memory, but she could find nothing other than a strong feeling of comfort and trust. She blinked slowly and replaced the accessory. *\*By my ancestors...\**

A pang of fury shot through her and her focus returned. "The similarity between us is that we're all here, now, and it's only by relying on each other that we'll be able to escape from here. Other than that, I don't know, and I'm not certain that it would be important even if I did know. I suppose the best course of action from here is to explore the next room?"

**Key Gear:** Key Gear stood in the doorway, her ears fully alert for even the slightest noise that could come from outside of the room that she began in. While the others spoke, she listened. Her thoughts initially span violently, but calmed. The openness of the room behind her had a soothing effect on her nerves. It also seemed to invite her further in, an invitation that made her all the more reluctant to leave the group.

A cool breeze brushed against her fur. Her eyes clouded over and her thoughts spoke. *\*But. I could leave them. I... I think that I'm strong. I'm strong enough to make it on my own. I'm certain that I've done it. That's who I am... I'm free, I'm strong... I'm... Me... Who am I? I'm Key Gear, I used to be someone important... Pathetic. I'm Key Gear. I'm... A... Criminal... Pathetic. I'm pathetic...*

She winced. *\*Shut the hell up.\**

## Starshine + Ambrosia

"You didn't wait for me to speak." It was an emotionless utterance, but Key could feel the yellow mare blanch. *\*Good.\** She ran a hoof through her ragged grey mane as she turned back to face the group. Her blue eyes seemed to glow violently against the backdrop of the open door. "I'm Key Gear. I like to keep things simple. I want my memories, my life, and my revenge... I'm also in charge of this group, if anyone has a problem with that..." She smiled charmlessly and then scowled.

"Now, business. You." She pointed at the pink stallion. "Keystone. Take this." She threw her pouch at him. "Your job is to unlock shit and think like a normal pony. I don't need to waste time on either of those things when I may need to waste time on smacking stuff around." She looked at the mare with the hammer. "You. Silver Colt. Use your thing. Hit stuff. You can start on this wall. I don't care about noise. We need to know what's under these bricks."

She pointed at the other pegasus. "You. Wing. Don't ever sing again until we get out of this hellhole. Then, you can sing my anthem. It's fucking glorious. You'll get rich off the record sales, then you can upgrade your fashion to whatever era we're in." She pointed at the yellow mare and held the pose for a moment. A silent chuckle escaped her lips at the mad fire she saw in Ambrosia's eyes, "You. Flower girl."

Key Gear shrugged and dropped her hoof. She smiled. "You're in charge now. Do whatever. I'm too crazy for this gig. Just be careful. If you need me, I'll be in the pleasantly utopian paradise behind me. It's a big hall. No entrances on this side, but it curves around a bend, probably something there. I'll float around and give the all clear if we're good. We cool?" Ambrosia nodded, her eyes conveying a mixture of mild confusion and familiarity. Key smiled, "Good."

She gently poked the blue colt. "Shine, I'll need a good partner, if you don't mind. You look like a pony that has some common sense and knows how to move around without being obvious about it. If I'm right. Then, follow me." Without another word, she stepped out into the open hall, and took a few steps forward, lowering her head and inhaling the strangely pure air. *\*Well. At least, I won't be bored. Hopefully... Won't be alone either...\** She waited.

**Wing:** Wing wanted to giggle. There was something just uncanny about the whole scenario. It was as though condensed *deja vu* was just shoved into his system. The blue one was bossing around the pink one in a way that just made his lips curl into a slight smile. The same fury was eventually directed at him in a way that felt like how a cousin with bring some grief upon one's soul for the heck of it. And then there was *the flower girl*. He felt it again, that undeniable feeling that set his heartbeat into an

unfathomable frenzy. The lavender pegasus glanced as she examined her hairband. Something familiar resided there as well, and he could not help but also notice that its flower bore a great resemblance to the patch on his jacket. He released a single breath chuckle in that moment as the pangs scouring about every pulse contentedly subsided into a far more pleasant sensation of warmth.

He took a deep breath and surveyed the surroundings once more, fairly certain that his sudden scientific outburst probably made himself sound nuts. Part of him even believed that script, but... it felt right to him in the end. That was his purpose. He was a scholar, a researcher... or something close enough to make him feel somewhat content with that conclusion. "I look forward to making the demo track," he responded to Key Gear calmly before turning his address to the group as a whole. "Indeed, we are all here now, and I agree that moving on a united path is wise." He peeked further into the grand hall and took some steps into that abyss. "I still wonder why anypony would build a room with no exit unless there is something special to find.

"I don't think I'd ordinarily find just hitting shit randomly wise. There could be traps. We could be stuck with hostile elements as well. Perhaps those that put us here wouldn't take to kindly to us wrecking their stuff. Then again, I'm going to assume we were placed here against our wills. From what I feel, I don't think I would give up my memories willingly unless there was a profound reason to do so. Just being in your company is bringing confusing shades of familiarity to the surface. My mind wants to know things it isn't being allowed to know, and that is frankly a bit challenging to cope with; however, that is the situation that we are in." He glanced at Silver Colt. "That being said, Miss, I'd appreciate it if you hit shit with a bit of architectural finesse, but if that's what we have to do to find our way out, then that's what we have to do."

**Starshine:** A well of unfamiliar emotion swelled inside the blue colt. It was pushing upward from his stomach ending just under his throat, and Starshine tried his best to suppress it. Could it be fear, panic, or perhaps anger? He couldn't tell, only that he understood enough not to let it overwhelm him. There would be time to write this on his journal later. The errant thought made him blink in confusion. What journal? He took a curious glance on his own saddlebag.

There was a faint hoofstep. Starshine quickly directed both of his ears to the far side of the hall, concentrating on the slightest of sounds, but there was none. Could it be just his imagination. No, it was a hoofstep alright, but something about it didn't seem to be right. Perhaps something with a different kind of footing, he thought, but what? He kept an eye on the corner cautiously.

Starshine jumped a little when somepony sat down next to him. It was the blue mare. He was about to ask what's the matter, but stopped himself after noticing the posture of the young mare. He tilted his head in slight confusion. What could've made her sad like this? His hoof inched closer to the young mare before retreating once more.

His attention snapped back to the group as Ambrosia declared that everypony will have to rely on each other to escape from here. Starshine nodded in approval. While the idea of wholly relying on others to keep his flank safe didn't sit right with him, in the current circumstances it was the best option. If the sheer lack of his own memories was to go by, all of these ponies would hold a mostly neutral opinion on everything, thus there wouldn't be any political bickering and whatnot. At least, that was what he had hoped.

The young mare, Key Gear was her name, then claimed leadership of the group. Starshine couldn't help but to raise an intrigued eyebrow. Key Gear wasted no breath before assigning personal tasks to each of everypony. The first two made sense, but the next two seemed to be out of place. Telling the pegasus stallion to be the singer of the group? Before he could raise his concern Key Gear had tagged him to follow her to investigate the bend. Starshine's eyes widened.

"W-Wait a minute! Do you think it's a good idea to split up like this?" he stuttered for a moment. He could vaguely recall that it was an immensely terrible idea. Seeing Key Gear didn't flatter in her steps, he could only shrug internally while flashing a meaningful look on the rest of the group. "Stick together, guys," he whispered. He then followed closely behind Key Gear, taking smooth steady steps as silent as he could.

When Key Gear briefly stopped not too far away, Starshine idly turned around to his saddlebag and fished out knife. It was a rusty knife with a slightly chipped handle. It felt unusual for the colt to hold the knife with his mouth instead of his magic, but he was confident enough to be able to use it when necessary. It wasn't too sharp, but brittle enough that he could snap the handle off to leave the blade painfully embedded in something. Satisfied that it was usable, he slipped it back into his saddlebag, leaving the handle jutting slightly for ease of access.

Starshine's eyes darted around the open space twice before he finally poked Key Gear. "Well then, shall we?" He motioned to the far side of the hall. He would be lying if he said he wasn't curious on what could be hidden behind the bend. Perhaps we could find a set of stairs to the second level, he mused.

**Derry:** Happily the troupe answered, or at least one of them answered right away. I was happy to know they meant me now harm, at least they didn't show it.

I would just take in the answer and think about it, what did that mean? Several ponies, thrown together into a dark... room? I couldn't help but smirk at the notion, some things are better left unsaid, and that's what I did. I left the pony and his commands in his corner and instead started to walk around, trying to get an idea of where they were. It didn't seem like it was made for anything specifically. Although the meager light wasn't helping much.

The strike made me jump, I mean, what the hay? It's not like we were all on edge anyway, at least the sane ones. I then folded my wings back to my sides and looked over to the filly that had started asking me a question before she got interrupted.

The filly seemed way too cheery for what I thought the situation asked for. Perhaps it was what I needed at the time, but all I knew was that it didn't help me thinking. And why would I need to know who they all were...

Without thinking I answered, "Perry's the name."

In the meantime the door had been opened, I later saw that it was a candy store. It was kind of surprising. Even more so with how the room we seemed to wake in was labeled. Quite unfortunate indeed. I just hoped that the company I was forced to be with wouldn't be all so grumpy as the hatted one.

As the little mare asked for something to be tasted, while I didn't feel like doing it, I still raised my voice and announced to try. My reasoning was simple. I didn't know how I got here, nor anything before that, and I just know my name. My instinct told me that this must be done by someone or something. And that *thing* also should know what is going on. If it had wanted to kill me, it could have done so. If it wants to torture me, it could have done so, and if it wants to test me, it could have done so.

I wasn't hungry yet I plunged my hooves into one of the sweets bowls, unwrapping it it turned out to be a purple lollipop. My whole body was telling me to not put my tongue against it, yet, I just did it. Seriously, I was already tired of *not* knowing, so at least I would know if this would kill me, and if not, I would have a nice lollipop, so I got that going for me.

**Silver Colt:** Silver took a look back at the 'Ambrosia' pony, a look of . "Let's not get too angry at each other. We're probably going to be here a while, so. . . playing nice and working together would be our best option for now-.."

While Silver did have objections to the clearly violent mare taking charge, she didn't have the immediate presence of mind to outright deny her control of the group. Silver was just out of it, generally and mentally. Her mind was nothing more than a mush of thoughts and passions and sudden urges to do things she couldn't quite explain, but still felt a need to do. Like, for one, she felt the need to stay near the Wing pony, for whatever reason. Maybe it had something to do with his singing, which, to a degree, she longed for. Still, being violent would have no place here. Silver waited for the mare to pause before she opened her mouth to speak...

Silver's eyes flashed just slightly at Key Gear for ordering her around, her mouth still open, but not wanting to seem a hypocrite she silently walked over to the wall. "You know, saying 'please' and 'thank you' are still customs that, although ancient, were still used back on my home-..." She spoke to Key Gear, generally, as she raised her hammer, mindlessly twirling it backwards once without even realizing it. However, Silver half paused on her third-to- last word before speaking it. She meant to say 'orbiting satellite', which was her original home-place in truth, but for some odd reason Silver ended up saying "-home world." Regardless of her thoughts, Silver's strike came moments later, right on a spot where three bricks were touching. The result of the strike were three damaged bricks, but Silver didn't stop there. Key Gear had asked something of her, and Silver was not a pony who naturally sought to disappoint others, even if they were being rude. She struck the same spot with well trained accuracy until the three bricks were nothing but small pieces on the floor. Silver observed the surrounding damaged bricks and carefully knocked them out, one at a time, till they were all on the floor. She then found herself staring face to face with a dark grey material.

A once-over of the substance revealed it to have no weak points, unlike bricks. Silver rose her hammer and struck it, several times in fact, to little use. "It's tough, unbreakable for me. . . . and strikingly familiar." she replied to Key Gear, her voice calm and composed, despite the effort she put into her strikes. Silver placed a hoof on the surface, peering into it as if it were some part of her past. . . unreachable and yet right in front of her. The memory loss, albeit bearable for now, was starting to frustrate her.

**Trigger:** Trigger smirked at the filly's comments before he trotted into the next room. There was definitely something off about the place, and the fact that candy had just been left out for them made him feel undoubtedly awkward. Star Dusk hit it right on the head with her demand that he eat the shit to test if it was poisonous. Internally, he thought buck that, but externally, he put on a bit of a show. "Ya like my hat, huh?" he asked while closely looking over the jars.

He reached his hoof to the accessory slowly and blinked. There was something hard under there, and particularly pointy. It was unexpected. He didn't dress all that elegantly. He didn't carry the regal or magical demeanors that most unicorns seemed to have; he also felt strong - physically - more of a rough

and tumble earth pony type, but there was no mistaking that appendage: it was a horn. Part of him felt upset that it was present - as though it was something that he normally liked to hide.

The circumstances in this place, however, were quite different, and something about the situation in general spoke to him in ways that whispered hints that *it* inevitably did not mean a damn. He lifted the hat from his head and shook out his unbridled silver mane before brushing the rebellious locks with his foreleg. Leisurely, he strolled past the filly and plopped the hat upon her crown before a chuckle escaped his muzzle. "Such swag, but I'm afraid I'm not one for taking candy from strangers. Something about this room... is out of place."

**Wolfram:** Wolfram's ear gave a flicker as the lock that barricaded the group in the frigid room was shattered off. With the new room becoming visually apparent, he felt a bit delighted to see there was some form of automated light. The purple stallion's light was useful, but having one that could, at least decently, illuminate a room was better. However, the light was the only thing about this room that gave good hopes to his soul. *Just a moment ago, the young one hypothesized this place to be a candy storage room...* There was a tingle to his heart, something was completely off about this room. Painfully walking into the next room with some of the others, Wolf gazed around, trying to find the source of his confusion. *Surely...it was always a possibility...but...to be correct in such a darkened environment?* Positive suspicions about the filly wandered through Wolfram's mind as he ambled through the narrow paths.

Star Dusk

The stallion's slate eyes briefly looked over to Crow, the mare simply sitting against the shelf and seeming to be relaxed as she chewed on some of the candies. He had some questions on her, but the room was a far stronger inquiry and desire. Turning back from whence he came, his eyes fell upon the label. "*Unfortunate Guests*"... Wolfram read aloud in his mind. The two words alone were enough to send a sense that perhaps that somepony was watching them. In regards to the filly's command, Wolf politely declined with a wave of his hoof, "My comforts are similar to the vested one. The risks here are quite, insurmountable, considering it all." With the question put to rest, Wolfram turned and faced the other doors, walking towards the one labeled as '**Storage**', standing halted at its face.

As if trying to ascertain the contents and design of the room beyond the door, Wolf blinked a few times, but felt nothing. Curing another series of aches in his hind legs and back, the stallion gave more strings of stretches to his body, sweet release coming with each crack to the joints. Venturing back towards the

group, Wolfram took and turn and sat down next to Crow, whispering not a sound as his mind jumbled around with all the information and questions he had acquired.

**Keystone:** "Being well equipped to hit things is a useful thing in this sort of situation, I think," Keystone began, eyeing the hammer, "Given that we've all apparently been kidnapped and had our brains tampered with, I'd say that there are probably a few folks somewhere in this place that will be more than deserving of a few whacks of that thing," he continued, his frustration with the situation bubbling beneath the surface, causing him to raise a hoof to rub at his forehead, sighing as he heard one of the other ponies rattle off what sounded suspiciously like random jargon. His moment of silent frustration toward the universe in general was interrupted though, as another pony spoke up, introducing herself as Key Gear, and going on a bit of a rant that he found honestly refreshing, even if she had taken to throwing orders - and a hastily caught pick set - at him.

"Unlock shit and think like a normal pony?" He asked, a small chuckle escaping him as he did so, "Sounds good to me, especially the bit about smacking any folks we find that might be responsible for this whole situation... though we might want to be a bit careful about that, given that for all we know, there could always be other folks like us wandering around, tossed in here against their wi--" he continued, before being cut off by the sound of Silver's hammer strike, wincing slightly at the noise.

**Barberry:** Barberry heard a new voice call out, which was answered immediately by Trigger with a bit of bite. The purple stallion turned just in time to see the mare break the lock with great precision. Barberry was quite impressed with her eye to hoof coordination. As she opened the door, the mare revealed her name to be Crow, but she was more focused on the room beyond the door. Inside, to Barberry stunned surprise, was what appeared to be a candy store, or more likely the back room of one. Except one door was clearly marked "Exit", another "Storage". So this was the store part. The stallion retrieved his screwdriver and placed it along with the flashlight into his bag.

Star Dusk had been saying something about the candy store, and how it belonged to someone else or was half hers? Very confusing. Then the filly ordered them to try one of the candies to see if they were poison, but Crow had already taken some herself. Barberry was beginning to worry about Star Dusk. Why exactly was she issuing orders? The newcomer had also begun to consume some of the candy, clearly wishing to fulfill the filly's command. Trigger spoke next, commenting that the room seemed out of place. Perhaps he was right, but then again, there weren't any predetermined set of expectations for this situation as of yet. Barberry needed more data.

Barberry followed the polite pony into the room, looking back at the room they came from as he did, noting the odd title of it. What about them made them unfortunate? Because they were trapped here for the time being? Or what? Barberry looked around, taking in all the shelves. Nothing particular stuck out, other than the inherent strangeness. The delicious aroma began to be too much for the stallion, so

he decided he might as well try something in the name of curiosity. Selecting something chewy and fruity, Barberry consumed a sweet that tasted rather lovely. The stallion considered taking a few with him, but a quick search of his bag revealed nothing suitable for storage.

Barberry began to think on the doors next. There were two of them. One said Storage, the other Exit. Considering that it would be too easy if they could just leave, and the fact that the Exit door looked much older, it might not be the right way to go. One, it could be a trap, plain and simple. Or two, the room beyond that door was as old as the door itself, most likely making travel difficult. Barberry tried to think of a three, but nothing came. In any case, either one or two, the Exit didn't seem viable. Then again, the Storage door might be a reverse trap, one which is wrong because you thought the obvious choice was wrong when it was in fact right. But that seemed fairly complicated. Unless either both or neither were traps. Barberry decided that the Storage door was the best choice given the circumstances.

Standing fairly in the middle, Barberry spoke aloud, "Okay, folks, what do we do next? If possible, I'd like for someone to be leader, or we form some sort of way to make decision. Of course, I don't mean to make the decision that we make a decision, but I don't think any of you wish to live in a candy store. In any case, we should at least choose a door, right?"

**Star Dusk:** The strange batpony rambled into the room and almost immediately began munching candies. His gesture was not enough to convince her, and Star Dusk observed him and the others from the safety of the open doorway. Trigger and the other gray stallion had ventured in, but neither of them really seemed to be accepting of the idea of tasting the candy. Trigger seemed the most likely to, by his actions, and the filly's eyes locked onto him with anxious study.

Barberry wandered into the room next, seeming to be lost in thought. The filly sighed internally. In just the few moments that she had known him, Barberry seemed to have thought enough for at least a year of proper schooling. She squinted as a sudden, vague thought developed into a memory. She had never finished her own schooling, instead... She had done something else. A question and an action interrupted her thought.

Her eyes glowed darkly into the room and she nodded furiously, receiving the hat distracted her from Barberry's snack sampling. When the stallion placed the hat on her head, she felt strangely different, as though she had gained courage from some unknown place. As Trigger and then the other stallion spoke, she held her head high and ventured into the room. She took a deep breath and resolved to remain, despite both the unpleasant feeling that the room gave her and the sudden, considerable weight of Crow's stare.

"I should lead." She said the phrase with a boldness that went beyond her hat-courage. Looking from one pony in the group to the next, she adjusted her hat before speaking again. "I should lead." Her eyes twinkled and a spark alit from the inside of her heart. She reached in vain for the memories that would explain her words. Failing to find them, she simply opened her mouth and began to speak.

"I told you all that this would be a candy store and it is one. What if I can do it again? Well, and I think I'm a leader." Her confidence faltered. The more she tried to search her own memories, the hazier they seemed to become. "I'm pretty sure of it, anyway, that I'm a leader." She paused and looked down at herself, tugging at her cape with a hoof. "But, maybe not. I'm so small."

She looked around at the others. "Actually, I'm quite small, and I'm wearing rather ridiculous things. I'm also loud, like Crow said. Besides that, not very smart. I don't think that I finished school... I'm young, too. I'm a filly." She removed her hat and sat down, rotating it idly in her hooves. "I'm not sure why I'm here. I'm a magician. That's why I wear this cape... I always wear my cape... Because..." She trailed off and stared into space.

**Crow:** Crow sat in the room, slowing munching candy in silence. Her eyes were seemingly half-closed and locked ahead, but she watched the others enter the room from her peripheral vision. The bat pony entered next and almost immediately grabbed a candy. *\*Spirited.\** The pony with the hat entered the room next. He browsed the candies but his real interest seemed to be the filly. *\*Caring.\**

The other gray stallion entered the room next, making cool observation of the settings. *\*Effective.\** The purple stallion entered next, peering thoughtfully behind him. *\*Thinking.\** She didn't acknowledge the gray stallion's presence as he sat next to her. The filly entered the room last of all, seemingly empowered by her new hat. More steps into the room. Crow's eyes opened from their half-closed state and locked onto the tiny figure.

The filly began with the air of regal authority but became more uncertain with every sentence. She finished her words on a confused, frightened note. Crow closed her eyes and opened them slowly, slowly allowing her thoughts to form and un-form in her mind. *\*Deceptive.\** "I agree." Her voice was clear and precise as she explained her reasoning. "It is clear to me, by your actions and demeanor, that you, either consciously or unconsciously, have information that is beyond my own."

It was now the filly's turn to stare. Crow munched another candy before continuing, her own eyes meeting the filly's stare with complete calm. "You mentioned this room being 'hers'. I doubt that you meant me. This candy store is not a vision of my own, it's entirely yours. These particular things..." She waved a hoof at the shelf with the grape chews. "...they are the favorite of another, not mine. I take it that this is whom you referred to?" The filly nodded slowly.

Crow blinked slowly and then continued. "You're afraid. You're afraid of this room, likely because you're afraid of the one who played a role in its creation. You perhaps know, to some degree, whom that is. I don't. All that I have are the vaguest of feelings and sensations, and to be honest..." She paused and looked up at the ceiling. "I feel afraid of them as well. Something good, once corrupted, can become the purest of evils."

Her gaze fell back downward to the filly. "You say that you are a magician? I believe you. I look at you

and I see a pony whose ability to conceal far exceeds that which her youth would suggest. Perhaps, you even have the ability to trick yourself? If you're this complex a puzzle, then it may be the case that the procedure that was used on our memories was not as effective on you? Still. If you, yourself, don't know what you know..." She shrugged and slowly stood.

"Uncertain information is better than certain lack of information. I speak for myself, but I am willing to take the associated risks in the hopes of receiving a more enlightened path. This is my way. It is always my way. I was willing to take the risk offered by consuming this candy to learn more about all of you. Now, I have information. I suggest that we proceed based on information, that which we can gain from each other and our surroundings."

Star Dusk spoke, speaking in a voice that was soft but forceful, "You should lead." Crow shook her head and looked at the filly. Her answer was offered in monotone. "Negative. My task, as stated, is to protect, not to lead. As to you, I recall that you agreed to accept my protection. Without adequate information, my ability to guard is limited. You endanger your life, my own, and those of our companions by withholding information."

Crow smiled at Star Dusk. As she did so, the contrast between the darkness of her fur and the brightness of her eyes seemed to magnify. "Don't withhold information again." The filly recoiled as though struck and opened her mouth wordlessly. Crow closed her eyes and looked away. When she continued, her normally precise voice had more than a trace of care. "Now, why don't you put your hat back on and get some candy?"

Star Dusk breathed a sigh of relief and, studying the floor intently, did as instructed. With her eyes still closed, Crow breathed silently. "The rest of you. Tell me what you know about yourselves. While I am pleased with the outcome of my experiment, I would now like your words. Tell me all that you can recall of yourselves that seems measurably important, include any relevant skills or training."

She opened her eyes. "Before we choose a path, we need additional information. I will answer first. I am a protector. My name is Night's Flight. I am called Crow. I can remember very little, but I have seen evidence based on my own actions and nature. I am fit despite my age. I have some abilities in combat. By my diction, I assume that I have been involved in a regimental environment. I suspect that I am militarily trained. I am aware that I have a friend in this place, but they have fallen. This is all, and I have already explained the filly. Anyone else?"

**Ambrosia:** Ambrosia's head jerked to acknowledge Key Gear's words. She grit her teeth as the mare proceeded to seize control of the group and issue orders with what Ambrosia viewed as counterproductive harshness. When her turn to receive orders arrived, she had made up her mind that she would challenge the crazy blue mare to a duel. Her limbs burned with a desire to flail at something in frustration, and the feeling somehow felt both familiar and right to her.

Key Gear's conclusion disarmed Ambrosia's increasing rage. That too felt both familiar and right, as did

the feeling of comfort that she had with relying on the mare to go ahead. In fact, the entire exchange had felt remarkably familiar. It was almost like a feeling of *deja vu*, but not quite... *\*It was a memory, one that I had lost. It just repeated again, possibly?\** She reached for the original memory, listening but not listening to the chatter around her.

The mare with the hammer had followed Key Gear's instructions. Without forgetting her earlier thought, Ambrosia stirred to approach and study the now visible substance. She herself had not even the slightest recollection of what it was. To her eyes, it seemed completely unnatural. She glanced sidelong at Silver Colt. "You've seen something like this before, maybe? You said that you make things? If this isn't something that's unbreakable, then it probably wasn't something you made?"

She sniffed as her head started to hurt. "If this isn't breakable... It can't be... An ingredient? It's not an ingredient... Maybe, it's more like the steam from when you're cooking... I mean... It could be made by something you made? So, maybe it's being created by something? Maybe... It's something around here somewhere? We can just look for it... Find it... Uh... Stop it?" She sighed and smiled apologetically. "That's probably all nonsense. I'm not a very smart pony, I think..."

**Key Gear:** Key Gear shuffled back and forth on her hooves while listening to the noise coming from the other room. *\*It was getting too cluttered in there anyway. If three's a crowd then six's probably total overpopulation.\** She became aware of a set of light hoofsteps behind her. *\*He is quiet, probably as much as I am.\**

Key Gear smiled as the sound of hammering broke out behind her. It was both cover and a lure for anything that could have been drawn by the sound. In the relative dimness, she felt confident that she could subdue any creature curious enough to investigate the loud noise. She glanced at Shine and nodded, before beginning a silent, well-paced movement to reach the wall across from the room's door. It felt like a far longer distance than it actually was.

As she moved, the noise of the hammer seemed to distort. When she reached the wall, she began moving towards the far end of the hall. The sounds from the room behind her fell into total and complete silence. *\*It's far too soon for that... We're not that far away.\** She looked behind her and was still able to see the room clearly. *\*Shit.\** Still, she continued forward.

Her ears were fully alert. Her posture was low to the ground as she moved forward. The silence was deafening, almost literally. Her eyes carefully scanned the area in front of them. There were no other doors. The lights seemed to have a certain peculiar luminescence to them, appearing as unnatural as the silence. It was taking far too long to reach her destination.

She froze. *\*If I couldn't hear anything in the room, and I was that close to it... Then, I shouldn't have been able to hear anything out here when I was there... Unless... What I heard was...\** "This isn't right..." She whispered softly. Her eyes filled with confusion and sought out the colt that had accompanied her.

**Silver Colt:** Silver placed her hoof on the substance, staring deep into it as if it held some secret hidden to the world. For all she knew, another thing could very well be staring back, and the thought

scared her a little. She retreated back from the wall just in time to find the yellow mare, Ambrosia, coming near her.

Silver chuckled a little, her old cheerful self now starting to bubble to the surface now that enough time had passed from her awakening. "I think I was more of the 'metal-oriented' kind of craftmare." she told Ambrosia, casually bringing her hammer up so that the yellow mare could see. "The blow-torch inside this hammer can attest for that." Silver brought the hammer away from them to a safe distance and pointed it at the wall. She then pressed the hilt to activate the blowtorch for a few seconds, its red flames licking the indestructible wall with glee.. Silver didn't know how much fuel this hammer had, if it even ran on fuel. She didn't want to waste it when she could possibly need it later on. "I think . . . I have seen these things used before, possibly but. . . agh the name of this thing is I can't remember it because of this damnable amnesia!" she let out frustratingly, but then let out an exasperated sigh.

"It'll come to me eventually, I suppose."

Silver's face lit up when she started being reminded of. . . foood~. Ingredients and steam and cooking and jogged sudden memories of delicious foods Silver had eaten over her lifetime, but she could only remember just the sensations. She couldn't even remember the names of the food she ate, and this saddened her slightly. Still, her mood was improved overall from the foody memories. "Huh? wha? oh, of course you are!" Silver shot back to Ambrosia. "Everypony's intelligent in their own way, some are just a bit more proactive than others in using it." She told Ambrosia with a big grin on her face, but that grin soon fell into an odd expression of confusion. Oddly enough to Silver, those words felt rehearsed, even to herself. Silver blinked a few times, her grin going to a more of a crinkled muzzle before she spoke her mind. "That felt. . . rehearsed." she spoke without thinking, but shook her head to focus on the current situation. She guessed that, if she was making rehearsed statements, then at some point or another she must have spoken them aloooot to other ponies.

"I think we should go ask the atom-jacket pony about this. I think that, out of our group, he'd probably be able to identify this a bit mor-...." Silver had begun walking towards Wing, but she stopped in her tracks as her memories started to reconnect with each other. A single thought of her group as a whole jogged something else within her, an unknown sensation of, to say it in the simplest words possible, other ponies. She stood there for a few seconds, her expression contorting to that of a realization. "We're not alone in here, our group." she suddenly blurted out, blinking after a few moments. She searched for Key Gear, taking a few steps towards her, then realizing that she needed the jacket-pony for something as well, and then started to walk towards him as well, and then ended up doing a full circle around Ambrosia out of simple indecision before rushing to Wing.

"Wing! I think this substance may be something you can identify, or at least help me do so." she told the winged pony before making her way to Key Gear to tell her the news, attempting to motion the rest of the ponies to follow her a little bit forward.

**Wing:** Wing was gazing upon this mystery substance before his train of thought ground to a halt. Well, it was more like whatever train of thought he had got utterly derailed by the words that trickled into his ears. *I'm not a very smart pony...* Another chain that made something ignite in him that could not be quelled. He spun around to face the mare in a somewhat clumsy fashion. The lavender pegasus was not exactly the definition of grace by any stretch of the imagination, but when something got to him, he made a move regardless.

"Everypony is smart in some way, Ms. Ambrosia." He blinked when the words leapt from his tongue, absolutely positive that he had spoken them before. The motion of his speech was remembered, even though there was nothing in his catalog to match to it. "Muscle memory..." he whispered conclusively, casually, curiously before blinking again in the mare's direction. He could sense his brow contorting to reflect his growing uncertainty before he took a breath, relaxed, and moved on. "Gosh that's odd..."

"Seriously though," he continued a bit louder, "please don't sell yourself short. Intelligence arises in many forms. I know I believe that. I don't need to know my entire past to get when I passionately feel something. No pony should ever sell themselves short, and certainly not you - not any of us. Besides..." He gestured to his own head with a somewhat dramatically flailing hoof. "Stuff here is all jumbled and scrambled up. If we sell ourselves short now, how can we hope to get things straightened out in our own minds?"

"I'm not sure that we actually can... just like how Ms. Silver Colt over here seems frustrated with the recent discovery from nonchalantly smashing the crap out of the wall. It all rolls back to what I said earlier. The universe is a temperamental creature that sometimes allows us to see things that we really can't quite see. We can probe with a hammer all we want but unless we have the means to bridge the obser..." He froze and twirled back to Silver Colt, who had essentially delivered a similar address and then called for him. "Bridge material," he blurted with a deep twinge of excitement.

With that, the pace began - a scientific trot as Wing constantly poked and repoked his mind for a clue to what that exactly meant. "It's something massive... spacious. Space..." He sounded as though doubt had been injected straight into his brain, but he powered through it. "No, I think that's right. Bridge material. Bridge field? Does that sound familiar to anypony?" He tilted his head, "And can someone perhaps explain why I have the sudden urge for cinnamon cookies?"

**Starshine:** The sound of Colt's hammer striking the ground was somewhat distracting, but Starshine kept his focus onward. He wouldn't expect anything worthwhile out of digging a hole like that, but pretty much anything was a go in this kind of situation, or so he thought. The idea of wanton destruction didn't sit well with him. What if there was something stored under the floor?

Starshine followed Key Gear in silence, taking great care not to make any sound and scan all of his surrounding for anything. His ears flicked whenever Colt's hammer struck the floor, and soon he found his ears flicked no more. He blinked in brief confusion. He tried craning his ears around, and silence greeted him. He looked down at his hoof and lifted one of them out of curiosity. He hadn't counted his steps, but something felt... off.

They were already at the wall, and Key Gear had crouched low to the ground, an example that Starshine quickly followed. He tilted his head in concern when Key Gear muttered something wasn't right. The colt was inclined to agree. The early silence that fell, the distance they had trotted, and there was another thing that had been tugging behind his head. What could it be? His left ear twitched in annoyance. The sensation had only gotten stronger as the time passed. At this time he finally noticed something from the lights emitted by the lanterns above.

"Space distortion," Starshine blurted out, almost without thinking. His eyes mirrored the same confusion in Key Gear's eyes. It was an afterthought, but it didn't seem to be all that impossible. "Somepony, or something, has been actively manipulating the environment around us, that much was clear. I heard stepping sound before this, and now the lack of noise from Colt's hammer and the stretched distance..."

Starshine fished a silver coin out of his saddlebag. It was small thing, a little bit smaller than the cup of his underhoof. There were unfamiliar markings on the face of the coin, but he could tell it was quite common back in the place of its origin. This would do, he thought. With a flick of his hoof he launched it to the air, and whipped at it with his tail as it came down, shooting it across the room and to the wall on his left. He watched as the coin soared, and if his aim was true the coin should reach the group, but not before bouncing across the room at least a couple of times.

"Key Gear, forgive my early assumption, and I hope I was wrong, but I think we may have fallen into a trap," he said sternly. His legs grew tense as he slid closer to Key Gear, all too ready to make run for it should the need ever arise, but not before Key Gear took the first step. He was not going to leave her.

**Barberry:** Almost immediately, Star Dusk announced that she should be leader. Not something unexpected, completely within prediction patterns. The filly eyed all the ponies before repeating herself. Then she started explaining the reasoning behind her right to leadership, which Barberry found both endearing and a bit silly. But his heart sunk a little as Star Dusk lost confidence in herself. In all honesty, anyone who was willing to lead when no one else would and really gave it their all was all Barberry thought it took to make a leader. Especially in this case where anyone of them would be able to.

As Star Dusk faltered, Crow soon filled the filly's silence with a simple affirmative, then followed with evidence to support the filly's claim to leadership. Crow was rather informative in shedding light on aspects of this puzzle Barberry didn't give much thought to. He'd been more preoccupied with door analyzation. Crow continued, clearly trying to show Star Dusk she was fit to lead, perhaps the best of them to do so. Softly yet strongly, the filly tried to rebuff the mare by saying she was better to lead the group, to which Crow replied again the negative then an outlining of roles between the two of them.

Crow insisted Star Dusk not withhold any more information, then treated her like a filly by offering Star Dusk to replace her hat and to take a sampling of candy. Turning her attention to the rest of the group, she instructed them relate any relevant details that they could recall about themselves. She then made her own attempt to impart what she knew about herself. Barberry rummaged through his bag quickly before speaking, in hopes something would jog his memory.

“My name is Barberry, I think I go by a few nicknames, but Barberry is my actual one. Judging from my stature and the sense of limited strength I feel, I can say I most likely work indoors. Taking that into account with the contents of my bag, I do not believe I carry it around for my job or hobby. Inside were books, tools, and random odds and ends, leading me to believe I am paranoid about getting into a situation where I lack something useful to use, since I cannot fathom any other reason for my carrying of it. The books may mean I am a librarian, or simply an avid reader. Most likely the latter or a combination of the two, but that seems less likely. I have a tendency to think things over and consider multiple possibilities until I arrive at a solution, seemingly supported by the puzzle piece mark on my flank. Beyond this, I cannot accurately expand the details.” Barberry said, twisting his features now and then to dig for more information from his mind.

**Trigger:** Trigger watched in silence as the scenario unfolded. There it was: that quintessential moment of any disaster when the question of who was in charge slipped from somepony. He could tell from the disgust sitting in his gut that the whole premise bothered him. Frankly, he wondered who gave a two shits - and also came to the conclusion that whatever *control* established in these walls would likely be completely superficial. The filly and Crow engaged in another loop; although something else emerged from that that pinged Trigger's interests. He reflected on the candies, wondering if his favorite was indeed present.

While his mind was hazy, something about the apple ones struck a chord with him. He felt compelled to eat them, despite the fact that every internal alarm was signaling that this place was filled with negative vibes. *They're my favorite*, he concluded, but that thought led to something far more sinister. How was it possible for his favorite to be there. Tactically speaking, it meant one of two possibilities: those responsible had been tailing him before the memory wipe - perhaps even knew him - or the memories he had lost were somehow being projected for him to see - like some sort of taunting game meant to buck with them.

He set his mind back to the business at hoof and waited for a pause to slip into the conversation. "I don't rightfully give a damn who is in charge," he began before opening his vest to reveal fragments of the

arsenal he had been carrying around the whole time. His twin revolvers glimmered in the space, as though they flaunted in the face of danger with their luminescent silver glows. A set of daggers - putting on their own poignant performances - lined the interior of the vest as well. And with that demonstration, another piece of a growing puzzle fell in place in the stallion's combat driven mind.

"I am a shield, and I will protect what needs protecting. That being said, are your favorite candies actually here? If they are, if you can remember them, then that is pretty bucking disturbing to me. How could that information be known unless someone else gathered intelligence or if it has something to do with our memories being jacked? Also, what sort of mastermind would let the captives carry the tools, whether it be literal or weaponry, to aid in escape? That seems really buckin' stupid to me."

His eyes shifted to Crow as he continued. "Why would someone surrender such an advantage? Either they are looking for a challenge, none of this crap even matters, or we're here to do a job." He gestured towards the marked exit and scowled. "Another example of who the hell does that? There's a lot more going on here and I want to know what and why. I don't really give two shits about which one of us takes point, and I don't know which one of us is even most qualified. What I do know is that whatever I did outside of this place, I must have needed this gear for a reason. I can feel fighting... the urge to defend... pulsing through my veins, and it's time to put it to use."