

Getting Lucky

By Chicken Vortex



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Chapter 1:

The Equinox

"I'M SO HAPPY!" yelled Lucky, running around like an idiot.

It had been almost a month ago that an exciting contest was announced by Princess Celestia for Canterlot and the surrounding towns. A drawing was to be held for three tickets to see a presentation by a pony named Nokota Terska on the famous cruise ship "The Equinox". Coconut had never heard of him before, but apparently Dr. Whoof had. He had practically started foaming at the mouth when he was told about it, and demanded that Coconut and Lucky enter the contest with him so that he could increase his chances of getting at least one ticket. Lucky hadn't wanted to for some reason, but Dr. Whoof had punched him in the arm and Lucky quickly changed his mind. They entered their names into the contest, and a few nights later they were headed to Canterlot to hear the winners.

When they arrived there was a huge crowd gathered in the center of town under the stars. They had tried to shove their way to the front, but apparently everyone was trying to do that, and they were only able to shove their way to the middle. As the announcer on the large stage in front of them cleared his throat, the mass of ponies fell silent. He tore open a small envelope and removed three pieces of paper.

"And the first pony to win a ticket, allowing them entry to The Equinox is..." he said in a tone that had the entire crowd leaning forward with anticipation, "Lucky!"

The crowd cheered as a firework was shot into the sky, exploding in a burst of orange and purple light and spelling out his name. Dr. Whoof and Coconut had both looked over at Lucky happily, but were surprised to see that he was looking quite worried and attempting to slink away.

"And the second winner..." the announcer said in an equally enticing voice as he looked at the next piece of paper. For a moment his eyes went wide, then he started laughing. "Looks like somepony's about to become a celebrity folks! The second winner of the Equinox cruise... is once again, Lucky!"

This time it wasn't just the neon blue and green firework that exploded in his name, but the crowd as well. Cheers of congratulations for him, and confusion at this almost impossible turn of events erupted from all directions, echoing off the surrounding buildings. Eyes started to search the crowd in hopes of finding the winner. None were successful however, seeing as Lucky was lying flat on the ground with his arms over his head.

"Settle down folks!" Announced the announcer very appropriately. "We've got one winner left, and it could still be anypony's ticket!" The crowd quieted, but mummers could still be heard drifting through them.

"And the last winner...." The announcer looked at the last piece of paper. He stopped, then flipped back to the previous paper, then to the first piece and back to the last. "Well I'll be Celestia's great grandpa, folks! The third winner, by no fault of his own, is once again Lucky!" as the last firework was shot into the air, exploding in a shower of rainbow sparks that spelled out his name for the third time, Lucky fell to his side and groaned.

"What's wrong?" Coconut hollered over the crowd.

"I knew this would happen!" replied Lucky. "This always happens when I enter contests!"

"Are you Lucky?!" shouted a nearby pony quite suddenly. "I wish I were you bro! You'd better get up there and claim your prize before you get trampled!"

Lucky was about to decline, but before he could, the rather muscular pony picked him up off the ground and raised him above the crowd. All eyes turned toward him, causing him to roll into a ball in an attempt to disappear.

"Get this dude up to the stage everypony!" hollered the abnormally strong pony as he passed the unhappy Lucky forward. The crowd obliged, and soon Lucky had ridden them all the way to the stage, where he was roughly tossed up onto it. He climbed to his feet and did his best to smile as the announcer handed him the tickets, but his friends could tell that he wasn't at all pleased.

There was quite a bit of celebration afterwards. Everyone had crowded around Lucky, attempting to convince him to give them one of his tickets, but he always told them that he already had two friends he was taking. There was a big feast prepared with three chairs set up at the end of the table for the three winners, which were now stacked on top of each other for Lucky, and at the end of the night Celestia had even congratulated Lucky personally before she raised the sun. After it was all over a royal chariot flew the three of them back to Ponyville so they could pack. By the next dawn they had arrived at The Equinox. Whatever had gotten Lucky so down before had apparently been forgotten as they took in all the sights of the enormous ship. Lucky had bolted off almost immediately, shouting incoherently. Coconut and Dr. Whoof now sat next to each other in a pair of folding deck chairs, watching him go.

"Lucky gets excited about the weirdest things," said Coconut, taking a sip of his fancy tropical beverage.

"I hate him so much," replied the Doctor.

"So Dr. Whoof, who's this Nokota Terska guy anyway?" Coconut asked.

"Why do you two always call me that?" he replied.

"Calling you what?"

"Doctor."

"Oh. After we started calling you that it just seemed to stick."

"But what's the reason behind it?"

"I don't know. I guess it's the same reason we call Lucky 'Lucky' instead of his real name, or how you call me Coconut instead of *my* real name."

"Wait, your name isn't Coconut?!"

Coconut looked over at the doctor in surprise. "You didn't know that?"

"Of course not! That's all Lucky's ever called you. How *could* I have known?"

"I guess I always just assumed you did," replied Coconut. "I got that nickname a long time ago because of my cutie mark and how I always get those sudden bursts of inspiration, like I was hit in the head by a coconut. The same with Lucky over there, being lucky and all."

"Well, that makes sense," said Dr. Whoof, looking over at Lucky, who was running dangerously fast around the edge of the pool. That was going to end badly. "So why 'Dr. Whoof' for me then? I don't see the relation there."

"I guess... well I guess it's because you're so smart, like a doctor," shrugged Coconut.

"And the 'Whoof' part?"

"Don't ask me. Lucky came up with it."

"Well then I doubt anyone will ever understand," said Dr. Whoof as he watched Lucky trip and go flying head over hooves into the deep end of the pool, barely missing the wall by a few inches. As he did, all the girls around the pool gasped. Their eyes followed him with concern as he flailed for several seconds. Once he managed to climb back out they collectively sighed with relief. He waved happily at his friends before starting to run again.

"There's something wrong with that pony."

"Yeah," agreed Coconut. "He's got a way with the ladies though."

"That he does, the jerk...."

"Dr. Whoof!" yelled Lucky, "Come hold me up while I do that thing where I stand on two legs at the front of the boat and pretend I'm flying!"

"Sure thing!" said Dr. Whoof, grabbing a life preserver from the wall before following after Lucky, who had giddily started galloping toward the front of the ship the moment Dr. Whoof had agreed.

"What do you need that for?" asked Coconut.

"Just to make sure Lucky doesn't get hurt while I'm entertaining myself. Could you go tell the captain that we have a pony overboard?"

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One long fall and routine medical checkup later, Lucky, Coconut and Dr. Whoof were all sitting in the ship hospital together. Lucky was wrapped in a towel and lying in a bed, even though he felt fine. It was the nurse that had refused to let him leave until she was sure he was alright.

"The ocean is cold!" Lucky laughed, remembering back on the experience.

"Well I'm glad you had fun," smiled Dr. Whoof. "It was the least I could do."

Just then the nurse walked into the room with three foam cups filled with a steaming liquid. She was a friendly mare with a soft blue coat and a yellow mane. She was about the same age as Coconut and Lucky, maybe a few years older, and since seeing Lucky she hadn't stopped smiling. "Hello again you two!" she said cheerily. "Hello Lucky!"

"Hello," they all responded.

"I've brought you all something warm to drink. Wouldn't want you getting sick, right?" she laughed pleasantly as she handed a cup to Coconut and Dr. Whoof, then turned and handed the third cup to Lucky with a meaningful stare.

"Thanks!" Lucky replied, "What's this written on the side of it?"

"Ah! Oh, nothing!" she hastily replied, blushing slightly as she averted her eyes from the three of them. "I just thought that in case you, you know, needed more help or... something, you could, you know, if you *wanted* to.... That's *my* room number, so anytime day or night if you... well I've got lots of work to do! You're free to go. I hope you all have a pleasant rest of your day!" Dr. Whoof and Coconut watched in disbelief as she fled the room. Lucky was enjoying his drink.

"It's hot cocoa!" he said in delight.

"Are you serious?!" demanded the Doctor.

"Yeah! It's really good too."

"I'm not talking about the cocoa! How in Equestria did you get that nurse's room number without even trying?"

"What do you mean?"

"The number she wrote on your drink cup!"

"This?" asked Lucky, spinning the cup around so that his friends could see it. Dr. Whoof noted that a small heart had been drawn next to the number as well. "You heard

her. In case I get injured again she can help me. Lots of nurses do that. Back in Ponyville it happened practically every time I went to the hospital."

Dr. Whoof shoved his face into his hooves. "Are you really too stupid to realize what's going on? What type of cruel trick is that?"

"*Every time* you go to the hospital?" exclaimed Coconut. "That's like, once a week at least!"

Lucky raised an eyebrow suspiciously at them. "Why are you two acting so weird?"

"Because she *likes* you!" yelled Dr. Whoof in frustration. "Girls always *like* you! Why?!"

"Because I'm adorable?"

Dr. Whoof lunged toward Lucky, but Coconut caught him. "Calm down Doctor!"

"I'll kill him!" Dr. Whoof yelled.

"Don't kill me! I want to live!" yelled Lucky.

*Cough.*

All three of them looked toward the door. A pony wearing a lab coat was standing in the hall staring at them.

"This isn't what it looks like," Dr. Whoof quickly said.

"Uh, yeah," replied Coconut.

"He's not a real Doctor," Lucky added. The pony quickly walked away. Once he was out of view they heard him start running.

"Well, at least they can't kick us off of a ship," said Coconut, trying to look on the bright side.

"Yes. That's always comforting," said Dr. Whoof. "We should probably get out of here."

The three of them quickly got up and headed out the door. A few seconds later Lucky ran back in and grabbed his cocoa before turning back around and bolting from the room.

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"So about this Terska pony?" asked Coconut, sitting in a jacuzzi and taking a swig of one of the complimentary drinks the cruise ship had supplied for them. After escaping the hospital and laying low for a while, all of them had met later that night in Lucky's room. Although they all got first class tickets, Lucky's room was the only one with a built in Jacuzzi, and they were looking forward to relaxing a little.

"Ah yes, the infamous Mr. Terska," said Dr. Whoof, smiling. "A genius inventor. He's made more discoveries in his field than any other scientist in history. Some of his discoveries were so bold as a matter of fact, that they got him run out of town. That's probably why he's being so secretive about this presentation. I can't wait to see it."

"Wow," responded Coconut, "I never knew. What about you Lucky? Have you ever heard of him before?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

Both Coconut and the Doctor gave Lucky confused looks. "Not talk about what?" they asked.

"The Terskas. They don't like me."

"Wait wait wait!" Dr. Whoof said, getting to his feet. "*They?* What do you mean they? And if they don't like you that means they must have met you! Have you met Nokota Terska?"

Lucky began pouting. "Maybe...."

Suddenly Dr. Whoof lunged forward, grabbing Lucky by the throat. "When did you meet Mr. Terska?! Tell me everything!" he yelled, lost in his overpowering fan-based enthusiasm.

"I said I don't want to talk about it!"

Dr. Whoof moved his hooves to the top of Lucky's head and shoved him underwater, holding him there for several seconds before letting him resurface, coughing and sputtering. "Tell me or I'll dunk you again!"

"Guys guys!" Coconut screamed over their arguing. "No using the Jacuzzi for interrogations! That was one of our rules!"

Dr. Whoof turned toward Coconut for a moment, then back toward Lucky. He took a deep breath and slowly removed his hooves from his head. "You're right. I'm sorry for breaking the rules. I was just...I never expected to *know* somepony who knows Nokota Terska personally. I got carried away," he waded back over to his seat in the Jacuzzi and picked up his drink. "I still expect Lucky to talk though."

"No!" said Lucky, folding his arms.

"Oh come on Lucky," said Coconut. "It's probably not that bad."

"Only the worst experience of my life."

"Well now I *need* to hear it," said Dr. Whoof.

"...Fine," Lucky finally said, "but only because you're so concerned. You remember how I used to not live in Ponyville?"

"Yes," Said Dr. Whoof. "Those were good days."

"Well... before I moved I used to date this... *girl*."

"Well that's a relief," said Dr. Whoof. Lucky didn't get it, so he continued.

"We had been friends forever, and we dated for a pretty long time, like two weeks. One day she got really mad at me though, and she said she never wanted to see me again, then a few days later we moved and that was the last I saw of her." Lucky slammed his hooves through the water in frustration and looked away.

"Um..." started Coconut, "what exactly does that have to do with meeting Mr. Terska?"

"Oh right!" said Lucky. "She was Mr. Terska's daughter."

"HNNNG!" exclaimed Dr. Whoof as soon as the words escaped Lucky's lips. "*You dated his daughter?*"

"Yeah," replied Lucky defensively. "Are you going to make fun of me for it?"

"No! That's just so... unfair! It's like everything good that should happen to me happens to you!"

"It wasn't good!" insisted Lucky. "That's why I didn't want to win those tickets in the first place! Now I'm stuck here on the ship with them again."

"I would give anything to be able to meet them personally..." mused Dr. Whoof as he leaned back in the Jacuzzi.

Coconut had become unusually quiet all of a sudden, and his friends looked over at him. A blank expression covered his face. The same one he got when he was lost in

thought. His friends only waited quietly. They knew what was happening, and had learned from experience not to interrupt it. After a minute he finally spoke.

"Guys... I have an idea of how to make this the best cruise ever."

"Yes!" exclaimed Lucky.

"We're going to hook Lucky back up with Nokota Terska's daughter!"

"No!" exclaimed Lucky.

"Of course!" said Dr. Whoof. "If we can work things out between Lucky and his girlfriend then we can convince her to introduce us to her dad! I *will* be able to meet him face to face!"

"She's not my girlfriend!"

"Not only that," continued Coconut, "but if we fix their relationship then we might be able to find out what the presentation is about early!"

"This plan is genius!" cheered Dr. Whoof, slapping his hooves on the water.

"Come on guys!" Lucky tried to interrupt. "You don't know what she's like!"

"We will soon!" cheered Dr. Whoof again.

As Coconut and Dr. Whoof jumped up and down in the Jacuzzi, splashing water everywhere, Lucky slowly sank under the surface. A few seconds later his hoof reemerged and picked up his drink, pulling it down into the depths as well.

Chapter 2:

Tough Love

The next day the three of them met on the upper deck of the ship. Lucky had begrudgingly told them that Nokota Terska's daughter was named Joule, and since then they had been asking everyone they saw if they knew where she could be found. So far the only hint they had received was that she was seen every now and then at a table near the tennis courts, so the search began there.

"I don't want to talk to her!" whined Lucky, but his friends ignored him. He had whined when they made him brush his mane that morning. He had whined when they forced him to put on the tie they had found for him. This was important, and they weren't going to let something like whining get in the way of love.

"Listen Lucky," said Dr. Whoof, "Once we find Jewel-"

"It's Joule," Lucky corrected.

"That's what I said. Once we find Jewel-"

"*Joule.*"

"We're saying the same thing Lucky! Just listen! Once we find her, all you need to do is figure out if she's still mad at you or not. Once we have that information we can come up with a plan. Understand?"

"Of course she's still mad at me," said Lucky dejectedly. "She said she would never forgive me."

"Well," said Dr. Whoof, "maybe if you weren't so ugly she would. Have you tried that?"

"I have, but I don't think- oh!" Lucky suddenly stopped, then spun around 180 degrees. "I believe I left something... in the *ocean*. I'll be right back!" He suddenly started running toward the deck's railing, but Coconut and Dr. Whoof were able to catch up with him and tackle him to the ground just in time.

"Where is she Lucky?" asked Dr. Whoof, trying to catch his breath. Lucky was a fast runner.

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Come on Lucky," said Coconut reassuringly, "just talk to her. We'll be in earshot in case you need help."

"Can't we do something else instead? Like, anything? I'm up for anything guys. Who likes locking themselves in their room and hiding under the bed? Cause that's what I'm in the mood for!" Lucky tried to get up, but they held him down until he stopped struggling.

"Just do it," Dr. Whoof said sternly.

"It'll be worth it," added Coconut.

"...Only if you promise we can get snow cones afterwards."

Coconut and Dr. Whoof exchanged glances, then nodded and let Lucky up. He dusted himself off, and, giving one last longing look over the edge of the ship, turned back around.

"She's sitting over there."

Coconut looked in the direction that Lucky was pointing, and saw a unicorn off in the distance. How Lucky had managed to spot her from so far away he wasn't sure. He could barely make her out at all. As they got closer her details became clearer however. She had a fancy hat on. Black locks of her mane fell from underneath it and rested neatly on her neck. When the light hit them right they seemed to reflect blue. Her fur was a pale white that contrasted her mane nicely. Her cutie mark was a crystal glass that was exactly half full (or half empty depending on how you looked at it) with a blue liquid. She was sipping a drink while quietly reading a book.

"There's no way Lucky dated her," whispered Dr. Whoof.

"OK," said Coconut as they reached the point of no return, "we'll be at the table right there. Good luck!"

"I don't think luck is going to help me this time," he squeaked. His two friends nonchalantly sat down as he approached her.

"I'm not interested," said Joule, not even turning around. Lucky stopped in place, then turned to walk away, but his friends glared at him, and he turned back.

"Um... hello."

At his voice, Joule raised her head from her book. She slowly turned toward him, just far enough that she could see him out of the corner of her eye. She didn't say a word for the longest time. Lucky wondered if she was stalling for something. He looked around, trying to spot approaching guards, but didn't see anything. He jumped as she suddenly kicked the chair across from her away from the table. Lucky quickly sat down. For a long time they just sat and stared at each other. Joule's face showed no emotion. Lucky had the strange sensation that he was falling, and was about to hit the ground.

"I love you!" he suddenly blurted out. Both Coconut and Dr. Whoof's eyes widened, then Dr. Whoof slammed his head down on the table. Joule didn't move a muscle.

"The last time we met you threw my cat out the second story window of my house," she said coolly.

"It was on fire! What was I supposed to do?!"

"That day I swore your every action would be returned to you tenfold."

"Yeah?" said Lucky angrily, "well what if I were to do something nice?!"

Joule paused for a moment, caught off guard by his remark, but then regained her composure. "Tenfold!"

Lucky suddenly leaned across the table and grabbed Joule's face, pressing his lips to hers for a solid ten seconds before letting go. When he released her she looked furious. She grabbed Lucky's arms and twisted them around, slamming him on his back over the table, then forcibly began to make out with him in retribution.

"I'm confused." Coconut whispered to Dr. Whoof. "Are they fighting? Is that what's going on here?"

"I don't even... this is *extremely awkward*."

Over a minute passed before Joule relented. As she removed her face from Lucky's he gasped for air and rolled toward his friends. "Come on guys! Get over here and help me!"

"NO!" they shouted in unison, backing away.

Joule grabbed the edge of the table and spun the entire thing around, orienting Lucky toward her. She grabbed his tie and roughly yanked him up into a sitting position.

"Why are you wearing a tie?" she asked threateningly.

"They said it would impress you," replied Lucky, pointing at his friends, but refusing to stop glaring at Joule.

"Well it did!" she yelled. "So much in fact, that I thought you might have changed!"

"Well? Have I?!"

"I'm not sure!" she grabbed onto his tie with both hooves and slid him across the table until their eyes were practically touching. "I'm going to ask you a simple question Lucky. Answer carefully, because if the answer is 'yes' I'm going to beat the ever living *manure* out of you."

"Go for it," said Lucky, not even flinching.

"Do you want to have dinner with me tonight?"

Lucky didn't speak for several seconds. "You're putting me in a very difficult situation Joule."

"Answer the question Lucky...."

Lucky gritted his teeth, still refusing to break eye contact with her. "Yes," he finally said, much in the same way a pony might make a final request at his execution. Suddenly Joule reached down and grabbed the edge of the table. She tilted the whole thing backwards, causing Lucky to go crashing to the ground, her book bouncing off of his face perfectly. She reached down and picked it up.

"Seven o' clock. The main dining hall. Clean yourself up first." With that she turned around and started walking away.

"Oh yeah?" yelled Lucky, without getting up, "well... what drink did you order?"

"What do you care?" she yelled back.

"Because it tasted good, and I think I might want to *get one for myself!*"

Joule spun around angrily and yelled, "It was a cherry plum blender!" before storming away.

"Thanks!" Lucky yelled.

"You're welcome!!!" she screeched before disappearing around a corner.

After she was gone things got very quiet. Everyone around had watched the previous events occur, and they all seemed to be just as lost as Coconut and Dr. Whoof on what exactly those events were.

"Are you alright Lucky?" asked Coconut warily.

"Of course he is!" exclaimed Dr. Whoof. "I mean look at him. He's so happy he's bleeding!"

"Am I?" asked Lucky.

"Oh yeah. You're ecstatic," replied Dr. Whoof, helping him up. "Well I think that went about as well as any of us could have expected! Now let's go get you taken care of so you can make that date!"

"OK..." muttered Lucky, grabbing his sore back, "but snow cones first. You promised."

"That we did," said Dr. Whoof cheerily. "And might I just add, I think you've earned it this time."

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After their snow cones and second trip to the hospital, the three of them went and rented tuxedos. Lucky was of course against such a thing, but Dr. Whoof insisted that they do it in case Mr. Terska showed up. He wanted to make sure that they made a good first impression no matter what.

By seven o' clock they were all standing in the enormous dining hall of The Equinox. It was all fancy wallpaper and oak tables and chandeliers. Exotic hors d'oeuvres of every sort were displayed across a ten foot long table on one side of the room. A live orchestra played soothing music from a large stage in front of them. It was quite a sight to behold. Lucky pulled at his collar nervously.

"I'm uncomfortable."

"Good," replied Dr. Whoof. "Now, where's Jewel?"

"It's Joule, and I don't see her anywhere. Maybe she ditched us."

"Would Joule do that?" asked Coconut. "I mean, she seemed angry earlier, but she didn't strike me as dishonest."

"...No. She wouldn't," admitted Lucky unhappily. "You're right. She never lies. She's probably just hiding to make me feel bad."

Dr. Whoof stared at Lucky expectantly.

"What?"

"Well? Aren't you going to correct Coconut?"

"Correct him about what?"

"About Jewel's name!"

"No. He's saying it right."

"We're saying it the same!" yelled Dr. Whoof, grabbing Lucky by his tuxedo jacket. Just then a waiter approached them.

"Excuse me...sirs," said the waiter, eyeing them suspiciously, "does one of you go by the name of 'Lucky'?"

"I'm Lucky," said Lucky. Dr. Whoof quickly let him go and stood up straight.

"Um... yes. He's Lucky and we're his... associates."

"Ah, good. Miss Terska has been asking about you. She's been waiting in the ocean view section for some time now. If you would follow me, I'll take you to her." The waiter bowed and began to walk away. The three of them quickly followed, Lucky at the back of the line.

The waiter weaved through several tables and led them to a large glass door. Through it they could see the orange rays of the setting sun seeping through the ocean. There was one large table set up outside which Joule was sitting at, reading the same book she had been before. She had made quite a bit of progress since earlier that day. As the waiter opened the door and ushered them through, she looked up and smiled.

"Lucky! I'm so glad to see you, and so soon! You're usually much later than this."

"Eep!" Lucky squeaked. The others gave him an odd look, but they didn't understand. Joule *never* smiled.

"Please, sit down. I was expecting only you, but your friends are perfectly welcome as well. Mr. Cumberbund? Please bring more chairs for Lucky's guests."

"Right away," said the waiter, turning and quickly leaving, then returning a moment later with two more chairs. He set them up around the table and bid the three of them to sit down. "Enjoy your evening," he said, bowing one last time before heading back inside and closing the door.

Once he was gone the four of them sat in silence. After about a minute Joule suddenly reached across the table toward Lucky. Coconut and Dr. Whoof immediately slid back in their chairs, and Lucky outright screamed, but she just laughed lightly.

"Oh don't worry, silly. Your bow tie is just a little crooked, that's all. Let me fix it for you." Joule grabbed on to Lucky's bow tie and tilted it slightly, tugging on it a few times in order to make sure it stayed in place, then leaned back and sat down. After another awkward pause, Dr. Whoof and Coconut slowly slid their chairs back to the table. "I'm sorry if I scared you earlier," she said, looking at them. "Emotions were high, and I simply couldn't control my outburst. You'll forgive me won't you?"

"Um... yeah, of course," said Coconut.

"How could we hold something like that against a pony as charming as you?" said Dr. Whoof, smiling slyly.

"Your friends are such gentleponies Lucky! Where ever did you find them?"

Lucky slanted his eyes and stared hard at Joule. "What's going on here? Why aren't you trying to hurt me like normal?"

"What do you mean Lucky? I'm just being polite."

"You've never not beaten me up before."

"Well, this is a special occasion isn't it?" she said.

"Is it?!" demanded Lucky.

"It is!" she said in a pleasant tone. "You see, we have a special guest that will be eating with us this evening...."

In Lucky's mind, fire suddenly burst from the ground behind Joule, casting horrifying shadows on her as she grew to twice her size and sprouted fangs. "Please no..." he whimpered.



"My *father* is coming! He should be here any minute now!"

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" Lucky yelled, raising his hooves to the heavens. His reaction was in stark contrast to Dr. Whoof's, who had started smiling so hard that Coconut was afraid the top half of his head would fall off.

"What an honor," said Coconut, putting a hoof on Lucky's shoulder. "I'm sure he'll be *super* excited to see how much Lucky has changed. We should all make sure to be on our *best* behavior."

"Yes Lucky," said Dr. Whoof. "This is a rare opportunity. We wouldn't want you to mess it up!" *or else* he mentally added.

"Oh. I... I guess we wouldn't," agreed Lucky. He hadn't remembered his Tuxedo being so warm a moment ago, but he tried to ignore it.

"So, introduce me to your friends Lucky. I feel so *girlishly* uninformed!"

"That's a lie!" yelled Lucky. "You have never been *either* of those things!"

An evil smirk flashed across Joule's face for a billionth of a second before it was replaced with a look of surprise and sadness. Maybe Lucky had just imagined it. "What... what do you mean?" she said. "I try to be nice and all I get in return is hostility? It's the dress isn't it? I knew it was too much. I just wanted to impress you was all. I mean, after so long being apart, I was hoping we could... make amends... as it were? I'm sorry about how I treated you this morning. I was just so flustered to see you again!"

"Did you just... *apologize*?"

"Lucky!" scolded Dr. Whoof, smacking him upside the head. "I can't believe how rude you're being!" The Doctor quickly turned toward Joule. "I'm so sorry for Lucky's behavior. My name is- uh... my name is *Dr. Whoof*. I'm a *doctor*."

"Oh a doctor!" she replied. "How very prestigious. Tell me Doctor," she said, glancing down at his cutie mark, "what does an hourglass have to do with saving ponies' lives?"

"That? Oh, well it's... as a doctor I try to... turn back the sands of time for my patients. Every grain counts after all!" he laughed nervously.

"Yes I'm sure," replied Joule, smiling smugly. "And you?" she asked, turning to Coconut.

"Me? My name's Coconut."

"And? What is it that you do?"

"Well... nothing really," he answered honestly. "I'm just Coconut, professional dreamer."

"How... very *interesting*..." said Joule, her expression becoming more sincere. "It's refreshing to meet such an honest pony as you Coconut. Tell me, how did you meet Lucky?"

"I met him right after he moved, so I guess that would be right after he moved away from you? He's a great guy. I've never had a friend so willing to help me out all the time. He's never let me down. It must have been pretty hard for you to lose him all that time ago."

Joule just stared at Coconut in shock for a moment, before snapping back to reality. "What? Oh. Yes. It was quite... difficult. I'm glad though Coconut, to know that he found friends like you and the good Doctor here so quickly."

For a moment it looked like Joule was going to smile again, but the glass doors suddenly flew open as a large pony burst through them. He had a dark brown coat of fur, and a pitch black mane and mustache. His cutie mark was a magnifying glass being held over a puzzle piece, which was at head level with the ponies at the table due to his impressive height.

"Daddy!" exclaimed Joule, getting up from her seat and running over to him.

"My little spark! How are you being this evening!" he replied in a thick foreign accent as he gave her a hearty hug. Lucky sunk down in his chair.

"Come daddy, sit. These are some friends who I want you to meet. This is Dr. Whoof, and Coconut, and... Lucky, whom I'm sure you remember."

"Lucky?" said Mr. Terska in surprise as he looked down at the back of Lucky's head. "Why this is much a surprise. I do remember the boy Lucky," he placed a large hoof on his shoulder, "and I must say, it is... brave... of you to dine with us this evening."

"Thank you!" Lucky squeaked as the muscles in his shoulders tightened.

"It is an *honor* to meet you Mr. Terska," said Dr. Whoof, quickly getting to his feet. "I've read all your books and articles. I can't thank you enough for all the good you've done for pony-kind."

“Bah! You flatter me on an empty stomach!” laughed Mr. Terska. “Let us feast before we let such conversation distract us. Waiter! Bring us food!”

# Chapter 3:

## Just Desserts

The remainder of that evening went unexpectedly well. The food was fantastic of course, and thanks to Dr. Whoof's constant questions, Nokota Terska hardly gave Lucky any attention at all. There was never an awkward pause from that time on, and everyone but Lucky seemed to be genuinely enjoying themselves. The only thing that seemed out of place was that Joule kept sneaking short glances at Coconut, a strange prying expression covering her face each time.

They had continued to talk long after the sun set, but eventually they got tired and decided to depart to their rooms. Mr. Terska was the first to go, saying that he had many details still to work out in preparation for his presentation in a few days. Dr. Whoof had almost fainted when he suggested that he might let them help him set things up ahead of time. Once he had left, the four of them soon followed. As they got up from their seats and began heading their separate ways, Joule grabbed on to Lucky's mane, yanking him back. Once his friends noticed that he wasn't with them they turned around.

"You two go on ahead!" called Joule, waving at them. "I just want to have a small word with Lucky in private."

"Don't leave me alone with her..." Lucky pleaded, reaching a hoof toward his friends, but they just shrugged.

"Alright!" called Coconut. "We'll see you later Lucky!" As the dining hall doors closed behind them, Joule let go of Lucky's hair.

"Follow me," she said, the previous pleasantness disappearing from her voice, replaced with the familiar neutral, slightly irritated one Lucky remembered. She turned and began to walk away. Lucky hesitated for a split second, so she grabbed his arm and began dragging him along.

"I knew it!" said Lucky. "You were just pretending to be nice to convince my friends to let you take me away! You can't do this! Ponies will start asking questions after a few days!"

"Stop talking."

"Okay."

She continued to drag Lucky through the kitchens and down a hallway, then down a set of stairs to a lobby. She picked up a key from the desk and then dragged Lucky up a different staircase and down another hall until they came to a door. When they had reached it she stopped and handed the key to Lucky before folding her arms and staring at him.

"Aren't you going to open the door for me?" she said expectantly.

"Is this some kind of sick game to you?!" Lucky whispered back. "You listen to me. I know that *technically* you can make me do whatever you want, and *technically* there's nothing I can do to stop you, but I still have my dignity, and I *won't do it without complaining!*"

Joule let out a frustrated sigh and snatched the key back from Lucky, opening the door herself and stepping through. Lucky considered running while her attention was elsewhere, but she was faster (and stronger) than him. It would be no use. He swallowed hard as he stepped through the door after her. To Lucky's surprise, the room he entered was quite the opposite that he had expected. No swinging lanterns or cold metal tables at all. As a matter of fact it looked completely normal.

"Where are we?" he asked in confusion.

"This is *my* room," Joule answered flatly. "Help me get this dress off. It's intolerable."

Lucky walked over and cautiously undid the zipper on her dress, then jumped back, not wanting his face to be within range of whatever she was planning. She quickly slipped the dress off and threw it on the bed, then turned to face him.

"Sit down," she commanded, pointing to a comfy looking chair across the room. Lucky walked over and sat down. It seemed *too* comfy. A moment later she pulled a chair over and joined him. She folded her arms and stared at him angrily. The longer she stared the more Lucky sunk into the chair. This was probably what torture was like. After what seemed like a week of her eyes boring into his skull she finally spoke.

"So did you have a nice evening?"

"What are you going to do to me?!"

"I haven't decided yet!" she yelled, jumping forward and grabbing the arms of the chair. "Can we *please* put our past experiences behind us just this once and talk like normal ponies?"

"F-fine," whimpered Lucky, only now realizing that he had instinctively rolled into the fetal position. He slowly returned to the sitting position as Joule leaned back.

"So... did you have a nice evening?" she repeated calmly.

"I guess so? I mean, it went better than I expected. A lot better."

"I could have made it much worse," she coldly replied. "I could have had daddy throw you over the side of the ship. Do you know what it's like to hit water from that height?"

"Yes!" said Lucky excitedly, finally feeling like he was getting the upper hoof. He wasn't.

"You're missing the point Lucky. That's what I had planned to do. I planned to humiliate you in front of your friends, then throw you off the side of the boat to get eaten by sharks."

"That's not very nice...."

"No it isn't, which is why I was so excited about it, but then something made me change my mind."

"Since when has anything been able to do that?" asked Lucky skeptically.

"It was a first," she replied. "It was your friend Coconut."

"You leave Coconut out of this!"

"Calm down Lucky," she insisted, pushing him back into his chair. "Let me explain." Joule got up and walked over to a small barrel in her room, turning a nozzle on the front of it. A creamy purple liquid poured out of it and into a cup that she was holding. Lucky recognized it as the cherry plum drink from before.

"Can I have some?"

"No. Just listen."

"Can I have some... after?"

Joule sighed as she sat back down. "Maybe, but only if you behave," Lucky nodded and sat patiently. After a moment Joule began. "I'm smarter than you Lucky."

Lucky almost said something, but he held his tongue. That juice looked delicious.

"As far as I know I've always been smarter than you, and although that has been... *advantageous* under many circumstances, I have only recently comprehended that it may have caused me to hold you to a substantially higher standard than that which you were qualified."

Lucky's eyes darted from the juice to Joule, and he slowly raised his hoof.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Could I ask you something?"

"Go ahead."

"Could... you use smaller words? Please?"

"Sure," Joule sighed, wiping her hoof across her face. "When we were young, you and I got in a lot of trouble. It was fun, but you personally destroyed more of my things than I thought possible by one pony."

"Sorry," Lucky whispered, but Joule just waved dismissively.

"I was always under the supposition- er... I always thought that you were doing it on purpose. I don't know if you realized, but I didn't have many other friends than you. All my others were the fillies of friends of daddy, who were all on the same intellectual- who were just as smart as me. When I would do things with them they never broke anything. They were always careful, and responsible, and boring.

"I started dating you first of all because you're attractive, and second of all because you're a *miraculous* kisser, but thirdly it was because I thought that if we were in a relationship you would... change, I suppose the word would be. I expected you to become as careful and responsible as my other friends while remaining as entertaining as before, but when you didn't, I assumed that you knew exactly what you were doing, and you were doing it just to upset me. The day you threw my cat out the window was the last straw. I never wanted to see you again, and when you moved I couldn't have cared less. I was happy as a matter of fact, because you would be somepony else's problem, then tonight I meet Coconut." Joule took a swig of the juice, savoring the flavor, but wishing it was something stronger.

"I had hoped to steer the conversation toward you in order to turn them against you. I had hoped that they would say that they were just as frustrated with you as I was, and that you would realize how horrible of a friend you were and feel terrible."

"That's *really* mean!" commented Lucky.

"It was, but when Coconut started saying all those things about you being reliable and kind and... whatever, I realized that you were never the asinine jerk I assumed you were. You were actually just stupid. A really nice, trustworthy, honorable, handsome, idiot. Now I understand, and realize that even with the way I treated you, you just... *kept being nice*. Even with my superior knowledge of the universe, I can't understand why. Can you explain it to me?"

Lucky sat in silence for a moment. "Could I have some juice first?"

"Explain it to me and you can have all the juice you want."

"Well..." he began carefully, "brains, they have... chemicals in them that do... stuff."

"Don't try to sound smart Lucky, just tell me in your own words and I'll *intellectualize* it later."

"Oh. OK. Um... I guess it was because I liked you, and you don't *do* mean things to ponies you like."

"...and?"

"And... uh... I'm sorry?"

"Sorry for what?!" Joule demanded, leaning forward so quickly she almost spilled her drink. "What would *you* possibly feel like you need to apologize for?"

"For not being smart, I guess? I always thought we were getting along really well, but now... I guess we weren't. I didn't understand why you got so mad at me. I assumed you really liked your cat. I've always considered you my friend, just the type that beats me up whenever they see me. I never knew I was making you feel bad, so... I'm sorry."

Joule suddenly looked like someone had smacked her. She wiped her eye and stood up, quickly turning away from Lucky. "Get a hold of yourself," Lucky heard her muttering. "Just think of something else... The Shockley equation. 'I' minus the reverse bias saturation current ten to the negative fifteenth to ten to the negative twelfth. Voltage drop in volts. Thermal voltage point zero two six at room temperature... OK. OK." When she turned back around her face was once again neutral.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"It's nothing. I guess there's just... more to a pony than intelligence, and I didn't quite understand that until now." She grabbed another glass and filled it with juice, then handed it to Lucky.

"Thanks," he said happily as he began to drink.

"Take off your tuxedo."

"Pfffft- what?!" coughed Lucky, spraying the juice everywhere.

"We're going for a walk, and I don't want you showing me up in public." Joule quickly opened the door, glancing back for a split second before walking through it. Lucky quickly unbuttoned his suit jacket and dress shirt and threw them onto the bed (happy to be rid of them) before following her out.

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An hour later Lucky and Joule were leaning against the railing of the ship, looking out over the glassy ocean as it reflected the pale moonlight up to them, each holding a snow cone in their hooves.

"So this is really all you do with your friends?" Joule asked.

"Well not the *only* thing. Coconut is the idea guy. When we hang out he usually comes up with something crazy to do, but this is usually how it ends. With snow cones." Lucky carefully licked his snow cone. He had gotten a rainbow one, and was trying very hard to eat it just right so that his tongue would end up having all seven distinct colors lined up on it.

"So what was the latest crazy idea Coconut came up with?" asked Joule, trying to keep the conversation going.

"He wanted you and I to hook up so that we could get a sneak peak at your dad's presentation ahead of time and be popular."

Joule stared blankly at Lucky for a few seconds, but he didn't notice. He was too focused on his snow cone. A moment later she looked back out over the ocean. "Normally I would be offended by something like that, but because it's you, I'll let it go. I've got to give Coconut credit. It's a bold plan." She idly took a bite of her own snow cone. Lucky had suggested she get something called "avocadonana", and upon trying it she had to say that she wasn't disappointed at all.

"So do you think it will work?" Lucky asked Joule.

"It might," she replied. "I don't think daddy would be too happy. What I'm curious about is why you agreed to go along with it. Are you really that interested in my father's work?"

"No, not really. I probably won't even understand it when I see it, but you know. It was for friends, plus... it was kind of nice to see you again, even though you slammed me on to a table, then slammed a table on to me."

"Yeah. It was nice seeing you too," she reminisced. "You look just as good as ever by the way."

"Really? Cause Dr. Whoof always says I'm ugly."

"He's probably just jealous."

"You think Dr. Whoof is jealous of *me*?" said Lucky in surprise.

"Well you've got him beat in the looks department in my opinion," she said, smiling.

"Sweet! Wait till I tell him that!"

"Actually," Joule said warily, "you probably shouldn't tell him. Let's just... keep it a secret between you and me alright?"

Lucky shrugged as he finished off his snow cone. "Alright."

"So, was it good?"

"Oh yeah. Rainbow's one of my favorites. Did you like yours?"

"It was alright, but I must admit I'm curious about what yours tasted like."

"You should have told me sooner!" exclaimed Lucky sorrowfully. "I could have shared."

"Can't you still share?" asked Joule, smiling mischievously.

"Well..." said Lucky, picking up on what she was hinting at, but not knowing if it would be worth messing up his tongue rainbow for, "I guess so," he finally agreed, smiling back. It was for a friend after all.

Chapter 4:

A Modest Proposal

“Guess what everypony?” yelled Lucky as he burst through the door of his room. Coconut was lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling with his eyes half open, and Dr. Whoof was leaning back on a chair in the corner of the room. When they both saw Lucky they perked up. It was always more fun when he was around.

“Hey Lucky!” replied Coconut.

“Do we need to make a late night trip to the hospital, or did things go better than you planned?” asked Dr. Whoof.

“Things went great!”

“Where’s your tuxedo?” asked Coconut.

“I accidentally left it in Joule’s room!”

“What?!” his friends both exclaimed at once.

“How did your tuxedo end up in her room?” asked Coconut.

“Because I just had snow cones with her!”

There was an awkward pause. Dr. Whoof finally spoke.

“You know you said ‘snow cones’ right?”

“Yeah! And they were fantastic! Which reminds me....” Lucky quickly walked over to his mirror and stuck his tongue out, which was now a general brownish green color instead of the perfect rainbow it had been before. “Aw! Ith like thee wath twrying to thmear it!”

“Listen Lucky,” continued Dr. Whoof, “I know that you’re tiny brain is excited, but try to tell us what happened in a way that makes at least some sense.”

“OK,” said Lucky, slipping his tongue back into his mouth. “So, you remember how Joule dragged me away?”

“Yes....”

"Well, after that she took me to her room, and made me sit in a chair. I thought she was going to kill me, but instead we got snow cones and made out!"

"That's great! I guess..." said Coconut, still rather confused, "but why? What caused her to like you again?"

"I've got you guys to thank for that. She said that after she met you she realized how stupid I am, and that she wasn't mad at me anymore. She also started talking about math or something, which was weird, but the point is that everything is great, because I'm back in the friend zone!"

"Well, even though that's not at all what that expression means, and I have no idea how you managed to pull it off, I guess I should be happy for you," said Dr. Whoof.

"Now all we need to do is find out what Mr. Terska is working on, and our mission will be accomplished!" cheered Coconut.

"Ooo! I have news about that too. When I told her about our plan she said that we should meet her tomorrow morning in the auditorium where her dad will be giving his presentation from! Isn't that great?"

Both of Lucky's friends stared at him in shock. "You told *her*?" said Dr. Whoof.

"I'm... not sure that was the best idea," said Coconut, looking around nervously. "I mean, the idea was to find out secretly. What if she tells her dad? What will happen then?"

"Huh," replied Lucky. "I guess I hadn't thought about that. If she *were* to tell her dad, he would probably get really mad, then he might do all sorts of horrible things to us. Did you know I once saw him bend a metal bar in half, just for fun?"

"Alright. We're not going," said Dr. Whoof decisively.

"What? Oh come on guys, she's my friend," argued Lucky. "She wouldn't tell on us."

"I think I'm with the Doctor on this one," said Coconut. "It's not worth getting bent in half over."

"We *won't* get bent in half though, because she won't tell anyone! Don't you guys trust her?"

Lucky stared angrily at his friends. They both suddenly seemed more interested in the patterns on the ceiling or threads on the bed though, and refused to return his gaze.

"Well I trust her," said Lucky, "and I'm going to go, no matter what happens, because she was willing to help us, and I don't let friends down."

Lucky spun around and quickly stormed out, slamming the door behind him. Coconut and the Doctor gave each other concerned looks. They had never seen Lucky so offended before, especially with them. Coconut sighed and fell back on the bed, and Dr. Whoof returned to his chair.

"I think Lucky's right," said Coconut. "We *are* letting a friend down."

"Of course Lucky's right," said Dr. Whoof, "but what are we supposed to do about it? I personally don't have any desire to get beaten mercilessly by my mentor."

"I don't want to get beaten by your mentor either, but I think it might be worth it, you know, to support Lucky. I mean, would you rather get your flank handed to you alone, or with friends?"

Dr. Whoof groaned in agreement. "Perhaps I should reserve our hospital beds now."

Coconut laughed. "Cheer up Doctor. If anything it's going to make a good story when we get home."

"I... suppose that's true. So how long do you think it will take Lucky to realize he stormed out of his own room?"

"Maybe an hour."

"I say two."

"Whoever's closest gets the last bag of barley chips?"

"Deal."

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It was three hours later that Lucky quietly opened the door of his room. The soft glow of the sun rising in the distance was already visible through the window. By then Dr. Whoof had already finished off the bag of chips and was now asleep, his chair still leaning back precariously. Coconut had fallen asleep on Lucky's bed, leaving him the floor.

As Lucky lay down on the soft carpet of his room, he wondered what exactly he was going to do about his friends. Dr. Whoof and Coconut had always been there for him, but Joule was relying on him now. He didn't want them to dislike each other. If only there was a way to make everypony get along....

As Lucky pondered, he took a deep, sorrowful breath. As he did so, he accidentally inhaled a small ball of dust lying next to him. As it rushed into his lungs he started coughing uncontrollably. There was a loud *crash* as his friends jolted awake and Dr. Whoof fell backwards in his chair.

"Wha- Lucky?" said Coconut in surprise. "When did you get back? What are you doing on the floor?"

"Just- *cough*- thinking."

"I doubt that," muttered Dr. Whoof grumpily as he rolled over and tried to fall back asleep.

"Listen," said Coconut, "we're sorry about not wanting to go with you earlier. The Doctor and I both talked about it and decided that if you're going, then we are too."

"Really? You guys would- *cough*- do that for me?"

"Coconut would do it for you," said Dr. Whoof. "I'm doing it for science."

"We're a team," asserted Coconut. "We'll stick with you no matter what."

"Thanks. That- *cough*- really means a lot to me. You guys are really goo- *cough*- friends."

"You know it!" said Coconut. "We'd all better try to get some good rest though. There's not much time before we're supposed to meet her after all."

"I'm on it," muttered Dr. Whoof again.

"Come on Doctor," said Coconut, attempting to pull Dr. Whoof to his feet. "Let Lucky have his room back."

Dr. Whoof was notorious for being difficult to wake up. "Lucky can use my room," he growled. "Just leave me alone. I'm comfortable."

"You're laying half way on top of an overturned chair. Just, help me out a little. Move your legs and you can go back to sleep in your own bed in a matter of seconds."

"That's not soon enough," replied Dr. Whoof, but he complied nonetheless, slowly dragging himself to a standing position as if his body were weighed down with lead bricks.

"Wow, you're really heavy," commented Coconut.

"Only when I want to be," Dr. Whoof replied as he exited Lucky's room.

"We'll see you in a few hours Lucky," said Coconut. "I doubt that Dr. Whoof is going to remember any of this, so I'll make sure to check on him. You get some good rest alright?"

"OK. Goodnight," replied Lucky, smiling and climbing to his feet as Coconut closed the door. Once he was gone Lucky quietly walked over and opened his closet. He had a plan of his own. Reaching into the darkness, he removed the tie that he had

worn when he first met Joule and held it in front of him, scratching his head. Walking over to the mirror, he wrapped it around his neck. He had never actually figured out how to tie one of these, but it was now or never. He would have to learn fast if he wanted to impress her again.

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“Go away!”

“It’s time to get up!” yelled Coconut, pounding on Dr. Whoof’s door. It was silent for a several seconds before the door suddenly swung open.

“Don’t you tell me what time it is,” he grumbled incoherently. His eyes were still mostly closed and his mane was sticking out messily in all directions, causing it to look like there was some sort of mangy woodland creature clinging to him. He shook his head vigorously in an attempt to straighten it out, but it only made things worse. “What are we doing again?”

“We’re meeting Joule in the auditorium.”

“Ah yes. The death sentence. Where’s Lucky?”

“I haven’t gotten him yet.”

Dr. Whoof and Coconut walked down the hall to Lucky’s room and knocked loudly. “Lucky? Are you awake? It’s time to meet Joule!” Coconut was surprised when Lucky immediately responded in a lively voice.

“Just a minute!” he said. “I’m just trying to do... something.”

“Lucky?” Coconut said in a concerned tone, “Are you still awake? Did you sleep at all?”

“I would have,” he called back, “but I needed to get ready, and I wouldn’t have had enough time!” The door suddenly opened, and Lucky’s friends stepped back in shock. While the two of them had been sleeping, Lucky had been making himself as presentable as possible. His hair had all been thoroughly washed and brushed. His mane and tail were styled. His coat was smooth and shiny, and he was wearing a tie of his own free will.

“Wow Lucky, what’s the occasion?” asked Coconut.

“It’s obvious,” replied Dr. Whoof. “He’s trying to make me look bad in front of Jewel.”

“It’s *Joule*, and no,” said Lucky. “I just... wanted to look nice today is all, in case something important were to happen.”

"Well good job," said Coconut. "You... may want to let me redo that tie knot though."

"Oh thank you," said Lucky with a sigh of relief, pulling the tie off and handing it to him. "I worked on it for *hours*, but I just couldn't get the two parts to face the same direction!"

Once Lucky's tie had been redone by Coconut, the three of them made their way through the ship to the meeting place. In the early morning hours hardly anyone else was out of their room yet, and it seemed eerily abandoned. As they walked across the empty tennis courts where they had first encountered Joule, Lucky started feeling nervous. He remembered the words he had said, wondering if Joule had taken him seriously at the time.

Soon they were heading down a set of stairs that lead to the ship's stern. A large outdoor theatre was located there that could accommodate thousands of ponies. As the stage came into view the three of them could make out a single unicorn sitting in the front row. She got up when she noticed them and walked over to meet them.

"Hello Doctor, Coconut, and... Lucky? I hardly recognize you."

"Thanks," he replied awkwardly.

"So you're going to help us?" asked Coconut.

"In a manner of speaking, yes," she replied.

"What does *that* mean?" Coconut asked hesitantly.

"Whatever the lady means," interrupted Dr. Whoof, "we will graciously accept."

"Always the gentlepony, I see," Joule replied. Dr. Whoof smiled and bowed politely. She politely bowed back before saying, "Please follow me."

The three of them followed Joule onto the stage and off to the side. A sturdy metal door was there that she unlocked with a key before holding it open for them. Coconut was the first to enter, followed by the Doctor. Lucky was last. As he walked by he smiled weakly at Joule. She smiled back. As she followed them through the door she closed it behind her and locked it again.

"So is this where your dad is keeping his invention?" asked Coconut excitedly.

"Oh, there's no invention," Joule replied.

"No invention?" said Coconut. "Then what's the big presentation for?"

"A question many have asked me," replied a deep voice as the door to a small office opened, which none of them had noticed until now, "though none have gone

through such lengths to discover the answer.” Through it stepped Nokota Terska, just as Lucky’s friends had feared.

“What?!” Lucky exclaimed, being the only one truly surprised by this turn of events. “I thought you said you were going to help us!”

“I am helping you,” Joule insisted. “In a much better way than your original plan would have resulted in.”

“How is telling your dad about our plan better?”

“She has told me much more than just your plan, Lucky,” said Mr. Terska. “She has told me about you and her as well, and I believe we have matters to discuss.” Lucky shrunk before these words, his ears turning bright red. “That is a conversation for later however. For now, I wish to speak with Coconut in private.”

“Wait, why Coconut?” asked Dr. Whoof defensively.

“It was his plan, was it not?” asked Terska.

“Yes, but we all agreed to it. There’s no reason that he should be singled out.”

“A pony must take responsibility for his own ideas. As it is, I plan on fulfilling his wish. I shall talk to him in private, then I will allow him to decide on his own what to do with the information. Does this sound fair to you?”

“What purpose is there in that? If you’re trying something-“

“It’s fine!” interrupted Coconut, putting a hoof on the Doctor’s shoulder. “I’ll talk with Mr. Terska.”

“Good,” Terska replied. “Please step into my office.” Coconut walked into the office behind Mr. Terska, his head held low. Joule followed him.

“Don’t worry,” she said, seeing the distressed looks on his friend’s faces, “he’ll be fine.” She closed the door behind her.

Dr. Whoof and Lucky just stood there and waited. A long time passed, and nothing happened. Occasionally they could hear a small noise from somewhere off in the distance, but that was all. After what felt like an eternity, Dr. Whoof finally said something.

“Well, you killed Coconut.”

“What?!” exclaimed Lucky. “What did I do?”

“If you hadn’t told your girlfriend about our plan then this never would have happened!”

"I had to tell her!"

"You *had* to? Oh, I'm sure. Every simpleton uses that excuse to explain why they do stupid things."

"You don't understand!" said Lucky in an angry tone. He folded his arms and sat down on the floor, refusing to look at the Doctor. Even before he looked away, the Dr. Whoof saw his expression change from one of anger to one of sadness. He sighed and rolled his eyes as he started feeling bad.

"I'm... sorry," Dr. Whoof forced himself to say. "I didn't mean to snap at you like that, what's wrong?"

"I just want everyone to get along," said Lucky. "I like Joule. Like, *really* like her. I like her so much that... I might even like her more than that. She asked me what the plan was, and even though I didn't want to tell her, I had to, because I couldn't keep it a secret. I thought it would be OK though, because then she would be part of the group! Then we could all be friends because we all trusted each other, and then I wouldn't feel weird when I ask her..." Lucky's voice trailed off.

"Ask her what now?" said the Doctor hesitantly.

"N-nothing."

Lucky jumped as Dr. Whoof sat down next to him and very uncharacteristically patted him on the back. "Listen Lucky," he began, "I hardly believe I'm saying this, but it seems like you've actually put some thought into this. This whole time I just assumed you had no idea what was going on. That you were just living in your own little world, filled with candy and rainbows, drifting along without a care."

"That only happens when the hospital gives me morphine."

"What I'm trying to say is that I didn't know you liked her that much. I'm sorry I didn't get it. Now it makes sense why you got dressed up so fancy this morning."

Lucky paused before speaking again. "...Do you think she'll say yes?"

"Knowing you? Probably," said Dr. Whoof, adding, "you lucky jackass," under his breath.

Chapter 5:

Better Left Unsaid

It was a long time still, before the door to the office opened and Coconut stepped out, followed closely by Mr. Terska and Joule. Lucky and the Doctor jumped to their feet, happy to see that he was still in one piece, not to mention looking much more upbeat than when he had entered. They quickly ran over to meet him.

"Hey guys!" he said.

"Hey!" replied Dr. Whoof. "So how'd it go?"

"It went quite well!" responded Mr. Terska. "Your friend Coconut is a very bright fellow."

"Can he tell us what you talked about now?" asked Lucky.

"Ah, I'm afraid I cannot say. It is up to him for deciding after all. I would ask you though Coconut, please be selective in what you say, and where you say it. With as many ears as are on this ship, there are bound to always be a few unnoticed ones lying around!"

"Don't worry Mr. Terska!" said Coconut reassuringly. "I'll be careful."

"Good lad. Now, if you will excuse Joule and I, we must get back to work. Only two days before the big announcement!" Coconut walked over to his friends and Mr. Terska and Joule returned to the office. As the door began to close Lucky nervously stepped forward.

"Um... Joule?"

"Yes Lucky?"

"I was hoping that I could talk to you in private too. There's something I wanted to ask you. You *and* your dad I guess. Is that OK?"

"Actually, now isn't the best time," she replied. "We really *do* have a lot of work to get done. Perhaps we could schedule something later? I believe I have some free time tomorrow."

"Oh. OK then. That... that's fine," said Lucky sheepishly.

"Alright..." replied Joule, looking a bit worried by Lucky's sudden change in attitude. "I had a really good time last night." She was happy to see him perk up a bit at this comment, and she quickly closed the door.

A short while later the three of them once again entered into Lucky's room with snow cones. Lucky quickly removed his tie and dove into the Jacuzzi, breaking the surface a few second later and shaking his head, flinging droplets of water everywhere. Coconut jumped in after him, followed by the Doctor.

"So, what did you and Mr. Terska talk about?" asked Dr. Whoof.

"We talked about all sorts of stuff. You were right Doctor. He's super smart. About his presentation though... I don't think I should say."

"What?" exclaimed Dr. Whoof. "After all of that you're not going to tell us? Surely you're joking."

"Sorry guys! It's just not the type of thing you tell ponies. I feel like it would be disrespectful if I did. I'm surprised he even told me."

"Argh. Fine. Well I guess it still counts as a mission accomplished," said Dr. Whoof, leaning back and relaxing a little more. "But you may be interested to know that while you were talking with the Terskas, some other... *news* was brought to my attention."

"Really? What?"

"Would you care to enlighten him Lucky?"

Coconut looked toward Lucky in anticipation. Lucky looked back with an equal amount of embarrassment. "Um... yeah. Well, you know how Joule and I are friends again?"

"Yeah?"

"Weeeeeeeell... I'm going to ask her to marry me!" Lucky quickly began devouring his snow cone as Coconut's expression turned to one of complete, unadulterated, mortified, shock.

Dr. Whoof started laughing. "I bet you never thought you'd hear little Lucky say those words did you Coconut!"

"No... that was... *really* not what I expected."

"I was going to tell her today, but I didn't get to, so I guess I'll ask her tomorrow," said Lucky, still blushing slightly. "Is there anything I'm supposed to do for that? Like buy her a present or something?"

"Well there's a ring."

"A what?"

"No!" Coconut suddenly yelled. His friends both looked at him in surprise. "I mean, um, this is a pretty serious decision. Are you really prepared to make it Lucky? Shouldn't you wait? I think you should wait."

"Nope! I'm sure."

"Oh come on," Coconut laughed nervously. "At least wait until after the announcement. Give yourself a *couple* days to think about it. Maybe do some planning with us first? I'm sure we could come up with something... *fantastic*."

"Really?" said Lucky excitedly. "You guy will help me propose to her?"

"Of course we-" began Dr. Whoof, but Coconut interrupted him.

"No! Actually, maybe we shouldn't. That was a bad idea. Actually maybe we should keep it a secret and not tell anyone. That way it will be a surprise! And that will be... much... better."

"You're acting kind of weird Coconut," observed Lucky. "Is something wrong?"

"Um... I think I have snow cone poisoning. I'll see you guys later." Coconut quickly hopped out of the Jacuzzi and ran from the room. Dr. Whoof and Lucky watched him go in confusion.

"Well that was... odd," said Dr. Whoof suspiciously.

"Yeah. More for me though!" replied Lucky, reaching over and grabbing the snow cone that Coconut had abandoned.

"You heard him say he had snow cone poisoning right?"

"Mhmm!" answered Lucky, as he took a bite out of it. It was piña colada. "Totally worth it!"

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The next day Joule happily headed to her favorite table near the tennis courts. In all honesty she had liked sitting there before because there was a very... masculine pony tennis player whom she enjoyed observing, but today she was happy because Lucky was there to meet her.

"Hello Lucky!" she said pleasantly as she sat down. "You're early! I never thought I would see the day."

"Well, tada!" he replied, pushing a drink over to her.

"What's this?"

"It's a cherry plum blender, like you like."

"Thank you," she replied, happy to know that he remembered what she liked.  
"So, what did Coconut tell you?"

"Nothing actually. He said it was disrespectful to tell us."

"Did he? I'm surprised. Not in a bad way of course. Daddy suggested he keep it secret, but I thought that he would at least tell his good friends. I'm very impressed by his willingness to respect other's wishes over his own."

"Yeah. That's a good thing about Coconut. Always... doing all those things you said. Say, do you remember the first thing I said to you when we met?"

"Wasn't it 'ouch'?"

"No, not when we *first* met, I mean here on the ship."

"You mean when you kissed me?"

"Before that. The very first thing."

"Hello?"

"Oh, well, OK, not the *very* first thing. The first thing after I sat down."

"What are you getting at Lucky?"

"It was 'I love you'."

"Oh! Yes, I do remember. What about it?"

"Well... what did you think?"

Joule took a sip of her drink as she recalled the event to her mind. It was delicious. They must have used fresh cherries. "Honestly I didn't think too much of it. I assumed you were just being ridiculous, as usual. Is there a reason you wanted to know?"

"Oh, no reason. I just like hearing what you think about things. That's all."

"Well, that's very sweet of you," Joule replied, taking another sip of her drink.  
"Now, wasn't there something that you wanted to talk to me about? You seemed somewhat upset yesterday when I said I was busy."

"Oh that! Right, well, I was going to talk to you about it, but then I decided not to."

"Why not?"

"Coconut told me not to, and like you said, it's good to respect your friends."

"Hmmm, well I suppose that's true, but you know that if you really want to talk to me about something you can, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know, but I think I should wait. There's something else I'd like to ask you though! I'm sure you could help because of how smart you are."

"Well I'll try my best," she said, smiling at the compliment.

"When you make a big decision, how do you usually do it?"

Joule was a bit surprised by Lucky's question, and took a moment to think before responding. "Well, it depends what the decision is about. With daddy for example, when trying out new inventions, it's always important that all the details are worked out first. You always need to make sure you know the layout of the machines, so that it works right the first time. Even then, if something were to go wrong you would be able to find out quickly because you could recognize what was amiss."

"What about bigger decisions?"

"Bigger than trying a new invention? What could possibly be a bigger decision than that?"

"I don't know. I was hoping *you* could think of something."

"Are you talking about philosophical decisions?"

"I don't know what that means."

"Well, are you wondering how to solve moral and emotional dilemmas, or physical and mathematical ones?"

"More emotional I guess."

"Well... if that's the case, there was the time that daddy was run out of town," Joule took another swig of her juice. "That was a troubling day for him. He had just discovered a way to tune into resonant frequencies of certain molecules-" Joule stopped as she saw Lucky's attention begin to slip away. "Well, I'll spare you the details, but when he shared his invention with the townsfolk, they didn't understand. The test run had caused some... structural damage, to be fair, but the *real* problem was that they simply weren't ready for such a thing. Daddy wanted to help the world by changing it too suddenly, and as a result, he was rejected."

"Oh. I... see," said Lucky, looking down.

"Oh Lucky, I'm afraid I may be discouraging you unintentionally. Won't you tell me what's wrong?"

"It's nothing to worry about. Not right now anyway." Lucky suddenly brightened up. "Hey, do you want to do something fun?"

"Why that sounds wonderful! What do you want to do?"

"I don't know! Come on!" he exclaimed, grabbing her hoof. She laughed and tried to keep up as he galloped toward a destination not even Lucky himself was sure of.

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"Room number six."

"Thank you."

"Hey Coconut! Hey Dr. Whoof!" Lucky called from his hospital bed.

"So, you and Jewel had a magical evening I take it?" replied Dr. Whoof, sitting down in his usual chair.

"*Joule*, and yeah. Only a small tear in the medial collateral ligament of my right foreleg. I should be fine." For not being the most well spoken pony, Lucky knew his medical terms.

"Still," said Coconut, "three visits in one week, that's a lot, even for you!"

"Well it's a special week!" Lucky happily replied. "And tomorrow is Mr. Terska's presentation! You know what that means!"

"Yeah... about that," said Coconut. "I still think you should think about this a little more."

"What's up with you lately?" asked Dr. Whoof. "You're always supportive, and now that Lucky's actually doing something that matters you keep telling him not to?"

"It's not that I don't think you should! It's just, really bad timing."

"What's so timing about it?" asked Lucky.

"What are you not telling us?" asked Dr. Whoof.

"I can't tell you what I'm not telling you! I just need you guys to trust me. It'll make sense later."

"How can we trust you if you don't trust us?" argued Dr. Whoof.

"I trust him," replied Lucky, but Dr. Whoof shushed him.

"Whatever you're hiding is hindering what could be Lucky's only chance at happiness."

"I'm happy all the time though."

"Would you be quiet Lucky?! This doesn't concern you. As I was saying, friends don't keep secrets from each other. Now, are you going to tell us what you and Mr. Terska talked about, or are we not good enough friends to be trusted?"

"I..." said Coconut, "I just can't! It wouldn't be right of me. I'm sorry." Looking rather upset, he spun around and left the room.

Dr. Whoof stood up from his chair. "Why are you discouraging Lucky?!" he yelled one last time before Coconut disappeared down the hall. After he was gone Dr. Whoof quickly sat down with a huff. "I just don't get it! Why won't he tell us?"

"I don't know," said Lucky. He was starting to wonder himself, but it didn't matter. There was only one thing that was important right now. Mustering up his courage, he looked at Dr. Whoof as sternly as he could. "You shouldn't be so mean to him though."

Dr. Whoof looked over at Lucky in surprise. "What?"

"I said you shouldn't be so mean to Coconut, because sometimes we have to respect other pony's wishes, even if we don't want to."

"Oh come on Lucky! The presentation is tomorrow. What would it even matter if he told us now?"

"Don't rush him! You need to wait until he's ready to tell us, and he will." Dr. Whoof looked a bit taken aback by Lucky's sudden assertiveness, but Lucky didn't back down. "Do you understand?"

"Alright Lucky! Don't go bursting a blood vessel," was all that he said.

"Good," responded Lucky, "because it's important to not force ponies to do things before they're ready."

"I know Lucky. I get it. I understand."

"Me too."

Dr. Whoof raised an eyebrow at him, "What?"

"What? Nothing. Just... you. *Grrrr*."

"Are you sure it was just your leg that got injured?" asked Dr. Whoof. When Lucky didn't respond he rolled his eyes and stood up. "Well, I'm going to go get some rest. I'll see you tomorrow."

"OK. Seeya," said Lucky. As he left the room, Dr. Whoof almost crashed into the nurse; the same one that had taken care of Lucky the first day he had arrived. He managed to sidestep her just in time though. As she entered the room she looked around carefully before giving Lucky a big smile.

"Did you get it?" Lucky asked.

"Oh it was so difficult, but there were plenty of girls willing to help the cause once they realized who was asking, *Mr. Popular*." From behind her back she pulled out a small satin box and handed it to Lucky. He opened it, inspecting its contents for a few moments before shutting it again.

"It's perfect," said Lucky, smiling back at her. "Thank you."

"Oh, don't thank me," said the nurse, blushing. "It was donated by a dear rich mare who has dozens of them. She said this one was among her best, and that she wishes you a happy life. Such a nice lady!"

"Well then thank her for me too," said Lucky, tucking the small box behind his pillow.

"Will do!" the nurse replied. "You're free to go by the way. The Doctor says you're going to be just fine as long as you keep pressure off that leg."

"Alright. I think that I'll just rest a little first."

"Well whatever you feel like doing sweetie!" she said, patting him on the head and turning to leave.

"Um, one last thing!" Lucky called after her.

"Yes?"

"What was your name?"

"You can call me nurse Greenspring dear."

"Ok. Well my name's Lucky, and... do you think this is a good idea?"

"Lucky, honey, you'd have to be crazy to think it wasn't."

Lucky laughed. "If you say so Nurse Greenspring." She smiled at him one more time before exiting the room. Once Lucky was alone he pulled out the small box again and opened it. It really was perfect, just like *her*. There was more to this than just perfection though. He let his head fall back on his pillow as thoughts about life rolled around inside his brain.

Once the moon began to rise he wearily got up from his familiar hospital bed and began the long journey back to his lonely room.

Chapter 6:

Round Trip

The next day was filled with festivities. Lucky and his friends, once again dressed in their finest clothes, had arrived at the scheduled time. They didn't find a bunch of stuffy, well dressed ponies sitting quietly and waiting for a lecture to start as they had expected, but instead found the stadium completely packed with cheering ponies as acrobats and other tumblers put on an impressive show on stage.

After the acrobats were done there was an intermission where the finest foods that any of them had ever seen were brought out for the spectators to enjoy. When they returned to their seats and the curtains opened again a full orchestra had been set up. The orchestra played several mesmerizing pieces that left many ponies in the audience in tears, then politely stood and left the stage to be replaced by yet another amazing group of performers.

There were magicians, and plays, and fireworks. As each presentation left another even more impressive one took its place. This cycle repeated for the entire day, and although it was intensive, nopony wanted to leave. As the sun finally began to set, the curtains closed once more. After a short pause they re-opened, and a single pony holding a microphone, whom Lucky and his friends recognized well, stood before them.

"Hello, all my good friends," boomed Nokota Terska's voice across the crowd. "I hope you have enjoyed this special celebration, for this very special occasion."

A thunderous roar of applause shook the entire stadium so hard that it seemed like it should have collapsed. This went on for several minutes. When it finally died down Mr. Terska began to speak again, in a somewhat more somber tone.

"Thank you all. I thank you all so very much. Your kindness and support warms this old heart of mine. As you are all aware, I come before you to make a life changing announcement," Murmurs of excitement began to spread through the crowd. "Life changing for you, perhaps, but even more so for myself. For you see, after all the years I have labored to improve our great world, and in all the good it had brought me, it is finally time for me to say... goodbye."

"What?!" shouted Dr. Whoof as he leapt from his chair, his eyes almost popping out of his head. He was barely audible over the collective gasps of the enormous crowd as he turned toward Coconut and grabbed him by the collar, shaking him like a ragdoll

and screaming, "This has to be a joke! Is this what you've been keeping secret this whole time?!"

"Ye-e-e-s!" Coconut managed to say.

"How could you not tell me?" Dr. Whoof continued to yell, finally letting Coconut go. "Do you understand what this means? I can't even begin to comprehend... I don't even know... *I think I'm going to be sick!*"

"I didn't tell you because I kind of guessed you would react this way! Plus it seemed like something that you should have heard from Mr. Terska himself. Would you even have believed me if I was the one who told you?"

"I hardly believe it now! What's going to happen to his empire with him gone?"

"Um... about that. You may want to sit down."

"What?" Dr. Whoof said, still in shock, but he nodded nonetheless and fell into his seat, staring at his hooves in distress, like he was trying to physically piece together his thoughts on what he had just learned. Mr. Terska patiently waited for the crowd to calm down, which took almost five minutes. When it was finally quiet enough for him to be heard again there were tears in his eyes.

"Yes yes, quite a shock, I'm sure, but do not be sad or sorry, for I have a qualified associate who shall be continuing my work. She may not be as well known to some of you as I am, but I assure you, she has made me very proud, and I have no doubt that she will live up to the family name. May I introduce you all to my dear daughter, Joule Terska!" Dr. Whoof fainted.

As Joule walked onto the stage, the noise died down until all that could be heard were the clops of her hooves on the hard wood floor. She hugged her father as he gave her the microphone. Looking very professional, she turned toward the crowd and smiled.

"Hello," she meekly said.

As soon as they heard her voice, the crowd began cheering again.

"Thank you," she continued. "Please, you're too kind." Although the cheering continued for quite some time, it died down much quicker than it had for her father. "I thank you all for your warm welcome. The responsibility I take upon me now is one which I do not take lightly, but I promise you, and you, daddy, that I will devote myself from this moment to the end of my life to the advancement of science, and the betterment of ponykind." Her words held such conviction that the crowd couldn't help but start cheering again. Despite this she continued to speak. "It is an honor, and a blessing! If you do not know me now, I assure you that you will! I have my dear father to guide me, and all of you to support me! Now if you will all excuse me, I need to get to work!"

The curtain closed a final time, and the crowd erupted in another tsunami of adoration for this brave young mare. Coconut looked over at Lucky. He was sitting in his chair, staring straight forward with his mouth hanging open slightly. After a minute he looked back at Coconut, practically begging for an explanation. All Coconut could do was shrug weakly and say, "I'm sorry."

He felt helpless as he watched Lucky fall back in his seat and breathe a heavy sigh, absentmindedly reaching up and feeling his jacket pocket. Before the applause had even begun to die down, a dashing young Pegasus with a black coat and mane flew over to Lucky and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, Lucky?" he asked.

"What?" Lucky responded.

"Miss Terska wishes to speak with you backstage."

Lucky looked surprised, but got up quickly nonetheless. He looked back at Coconut, who was now attempting to wake up Dr. Whoof.

"Coconut!" he yelled over the noise of the crowd.

"Yeah?"

"Come with me! Joule wants to talk to me, but... I don't know what to do! Everything I had planned has changed!"

Coconut left Dr. Whoof slumped over in his seat for the moment and walked over to Lucky. He put a hoof on his shoulder for comfort, but knew it wasn't enough. Stepping forward, he embraced his long-time friend in a hug. "Honestly Lucky, I think this is something that you need to do on your own. Go and talk with her. I'm sure the right words will come to you. They always do, right? When you're done Dr. Whoof and I will meet you back at your room. We're there for you buddy! No matter what happens." When he stepped back Lucky didn't look any happier. Perhaps a little more confident though.

"A-alright," Lucky stammered. He felt more nervous than he had in a long time, but he needed to pony up. Putting on his bravest face, he turned toward the dark Pegasus. "Take me to her."

"Please, right this way," said the Pegasus as he quickly began walking toward the stage far below them. Lucky followed. As he did, Coconut shouted a few last words of encouragement.

"Good luck!"

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The Pegasus led Lucky behind the large red curtain and through the same metal door the he and his friends had entered through the previous day. When they were inside, the Pegasus knocked on the door of the office. It opened and Joule stepped out. She thanked the Pegasus, and he bowed before walking back out to the stage and taking off into the night sky.

"Come in Lucky," she said.

Lucky stepped into the office, his hoof holding the small box in his pocket tightly. When he was inside he saw that Mr. Terska was there as well. "Hello Mr. Terska."

"Hello Lucky."

"And congratulations Joule!" Lucky said as cheerily as he could, turning toward her. She smiled and nodded politely. She started to speak, but Lucky quickly interrupted. "Before you say anything, there's something that I need to do. I... I have something for you." Lucky pulled the small satin box from his pocket, and handed it to Joule.

"What's this?" she asked unexpectedly, opening the lid. When she saw what was inside her eyes widened and she stepped back in surprise. A ring made of spiraling white gold was displayed in front of her. On the top of it rested two pristine jewels that were polished to perfection. One was the same deep, almost imperceptible blue as her hair, and the other the same flawless white as her fur. Upon seeing it Mr. Terska quickly leapt from his chair.

"Young sir! Are you so bold?"

"Yes," replied Lucky boldly. "Well... I was. This may seem sudden Mr. Terska, but don't worry. I got this before I knew what I do now, about your daughter taking over your... everything. She's a wonderful unicorn, and I was going to ask her to marry me. Ask her to come and live with me in Ponyville forever, and raise a family with me, but now... well... things have changed, and I understand. Consider it a gift to remember me by."

"Mr. Lucky," he said, putting on a stern expression and standing as tall as he could, which was quite intimidating, "when we last parted ways, I was informed by my daughter that you were a brute."

"I'm *very* sorry to hear that," he replied.

"And you *would* be, had she not explained how much of a gentelpony you have been to her since you met on this cruise. It seems that you have grown up quite a bit since those many years ago, and you are right in thinking she has a great responsibility now, but I shall not allow anyone to decide her future other than her, no matter what the cost. Not even myself. All I want is for her to be happy." Mr. Terska turned back toward his daughter. "Joule, you have my blessing, whatever you choose." With that he turned to Lucky and bowed, then exited the office without another word.

"Lucky... I don't know what to say," Joule said quietly. She tilting the small box, causing light to glint off the gems.

Lucky could see the conflict that was building inside Joule. As he watched, a strange sense of peacefulness came over him. "You don't need to decide between me and your father," he said confidently. "I may want you, but right now he needs you. If there's one thing more important than friends, it's family. Even I know that."

Joule took a step toward Lucky, her eyes brimming with tears. "Do you remember what you said to me, the day we met at my favorite table?"

"...I love you."

Joule jumped forward, nuzzling her head into Lucky's neck. "I love you too..."

Lucky nuzzled her back, wrapping an arm around her as she began to cry. He was just happy to be there for her; to be able to take care of her now, when she needed him most. "It's OK Joule," he whispered softly in her ear.

"It was so perfect Lucky! You were perfect, but you're right. I can't just leave my father. He needs my help. I need to go home with him. Oh, why did this have to happen now? We could have done so much together. Why can't everything just be perfect?"

"There's more to life than perfection," said Lucky. "Sometimes things happen at the wrong time. Sometimes we have responsibilities that get in the way. Sometimes it's just plain bad luck."

Joule took a step back. She was still crying, but now a smile clung to her lips, making her tears seem to sparkle in the light instead of darkening her countenance. "Isn't there anything to be done?"

"We can wait," said Lucky, laughing softly. "If there's anything I've learned, it's that even the worst wounds heal. Just endure, and eventually you'll be OK. Everything will work out, better than you can possibly imagine."

"Do you promise?"

"I promise."

Joule looked at the ring one last time, then closed the little box and handed back to Lucky. "You keep it," she said. Lucky looked at her in shock, but she insisted. Still smiling kindly through her tear filled eyes, she pressed it into his hoof. "I want you keep it, because someday you're going to find a beautiful, funny, wonderful mare who can accept it, and when you do, you'll give her this ring, and she'll be the happiest pony alive."

Lucky hesitated for a moment, but accepted the small box back from Joule. He slipped it into his pocket, then once again embraced her in an affectionate hug.

"You promise?" he asked.

"I promise," she answered.

As the events of the evening came to a close, and the stadium emptied, two ponies stood backstage, sharing one finale, perfect kiss.

The show was over.

**THE END**



# Epilogue

"I don't get it," said Coconut, carefully wheeling his suitcase down the steep ramp leading off The Equinox. He looked out before him at the crowd that had gathered to welcome home friends and family from the week long cruise. "Lucky gets dumped by the mare of his dreams, and ever since it's like he's never been happier. Is it some sort of post love trauma thing? Should we be worried?"

"I think it's yourself you should be worried about," replied Dr. Whoof. "Trying to understand what goes on in Lucky's head? That's a sign of mental sickness right there."

"I just don't get it is all. Do you?"

"It'll be a cold dark day in Equestria before anypony ever gets anywhere close to getting Lucky."

"Hey guys!" bubbled Lucky as he ran up to them, his bag balanced perfectly on his nose. "Were you talking about me?"

"Not so much about you, as about what's wrong with you," said Dr. Whoof.

"What's wrong with me?" asked Lucky, a stupidly happy grin covering his face as he focused intently on his bag.

"Don't you feel bad?" asked the utterly boggled Coconut. "Not that I want you to feel bad, I just don't understand. What happened that day when you talked with Joule?"

"Oh it's nothing to worry about," said Lucky, attempting to flip his bag in the air and catch it again. To his friend's amazement, he succeeded. "You win some you lose some, but someday I'll find a beautiful, funny, wonderful mare, and we'll live happily ever after."

"Really?" asked Coconut.

"Yup!" replied Lucky. "It's going to be so fun!"

"How can you be so sure?" asked Dr. Whoof.

"Because Joule told me!"

“Jewel told you that?”

“Yup!” Lucky jubilantly rambled. “And since she’s my *super* good friend, and she’s *super* smart, I know I can trust her, and that makes me feel better. The way I see it, friends are like boats. Sometimes they may toss you around a little, but in the end they’re what keep you afloat in the big sea of life, no matter how rough it gets.”

“How very philosophical,” Dr. Whoof replied, rolling his eyes.

“Thanks Dr. Whoof! Also it’s pronounced *Jou-*”

Dr. Whoof smiled as he heard Lucky hit the water far below, followed by the panicked screams of civilians. He was home, and this really had been the best cruise ever.