Digit was at his work table, drawing a blueprint for an invention he’d thought of earlier, at the bagel shop. As he was eating his bagel, he had noticed how annoying it was to spread the cream cheese, and he wanted to make a machine that would both toast the bagel and layer it with the perfect amount of cream cheese or butter. Unfortunately, all his designs just looked like ovens with spinning blades in them. In his exasperation, he fiercely crumpled up his latest design and threw it at the trash bin. “Why can’t I think of anything!” he exclaimed in exasperation, throwing his hooves in the air.

His black and green mane fell into his face as he slumped over his desk. Pushing his mane out of his face, he looked down at his cutie mark: a blueprint and a light bulb. He had gotten it when he was only five, after he built the anti bully sphere, even if the invention had just turned him into the ball for a new game. His dream was to open a shop to sell inventions that would make ponies’ lives easier.

There was a knock on the door, and his dad opened it a crack. “Digit?” he whispered. “You awake, son?”

“Yeah, Dad, I’m awake,” he said as he fell out of his chair and walked over to unlatch the chain he had on his door. “What is it?”

“You got a letter from your cousin Curtain Call out in Las Pegasus,” he said as he hoofed the red envelope over. Digit took it, broke the wax seal on the side that showed a red drawn stage curtain, and unfurled it to read.

Dear Cousin Digit,

First, I want to say how sorry I am that your business went under. I know Manehatten is a difficult place to start a successful business. It may sound insincere, but I offer you my honest condolences.

On to the main reason I’m writing to you: my mom was talking to Uncle Light, and he mentioned you really needed some work. Please don’t think of this as a handout—I remember how much you hate being helped—but I have an opportunity that you should really consider. I'm opening a club in Las Pegasus called The Velvet Mane, and I need someone with the know how to keep the club from literally falling apart. I know you live for this type of work, but I also know you aren't fond of busy city life. I’ll pay good bits for your service, though, and I'm sure you could use a change in scenery and a new start. Please contact me with a response soon.

Your cousin,

Curtain Call

Digit read it and reread it, until finally he let out a frustrated snarl, balled up the parchment, and threw it at the bin. “Oh come on!” he shouted, falling back into the chair and slamming his face against his work. “How many people know about my failure, Dad?”

“What failure, Digit?” his father asked.

“The one where I spent a ton of your bits to open a store that tanked?” he said cynically, giving his dad a sarcastic look. “That failure ringing any bells?” His dad sighed, walked over, and picked up the letter.

“Son, you didn’t fail,” he said sympathetically. “You just weren’t ready for your own store yet. And I think Equestria is still not quite ready for some of the things you invent, either, Digit. I mean, I don’t think my ears could take the sound of that, umm… What did you call the thing that cuts up the grass and puts it in a bag?”

“The Insta Meal Maker,” Digit groaned, slamming his head back onto the desk.

“You have to stop being so hard on yourself, Digit,” his father said lovingly. “Your mother would hate to see you like this. She always loved your inventions, and even though she isn’t with us anymore, I know she still believes in what you do.” He patted Digit on the back. “And so do I, son.” He unfurled the parchment and laid it down next to Digits head. “I think a new job, a new home, and a new city would be great for you. It could help you get back your drive to invent.” Digit glanced over at the wrinkled paper and sighed. As his dad began walking out of the room, he turned his head towards Digit. “Remember, there is no failing. There is just learning, and I know you will make—”

CHOOOOOOOOOOOO CHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Snapped suddenly awake by the train’s horn, Digit glanced around and realized he had fallen asleep on the train. He looked ahead and saw a conductor standing at the front of the car.

“Attention passengers,” the conductor was saying. “We will be arriving in about thirty minutes. Thank you.”

“Mmmm,” Digit said to himself, stretching groggily. “I must have dozed off for a while there.”

“Yeah, you’ve been asleep for a while,” said a small voice to his side.

“AH!” he yelled with surprise as he saw a little unicorn colt sitting next to him.

“AH!” repeated the colt as he threw the massive sketch book he was looking at into the air and dove under the seat. Digit looked down at the colt. He had a white coat, and his short mane was a mix of brown and dark blue. His horn was short and had a slight spiral to it, almost like a corkscrew. The colt’s features had begun to mature, but his small, round muzzle gave away his youth, and his long tail drooped so that it grazed the ground behind him.

“Please don’t be mad at me!” the colt said, still hiding under the seat.

Digit gave the colt a puzzled look. “Why would I be mad at…” he began, then he saw that the colt had been looking through his sketchbook. He chuckled to himself. “Don’t worry, I’m not mad. What’s your name?” he asked.

“It’s Sugar Rush,” he started timidly, “but everyone just calls me Rush.” Some tension had left his voice, but he still remained rooted under the chair. “You sure you’re not mad? ‘Cause I didn’t ask or anything before looking at your book.”

“I’m not mad,” Digit reassured. “You can come out of there. How about you show me if you liked any of the pictures in there?”

His eyes growing wide, Sugar Rush Shot from underneath the seat and back into the seat next to Digit with the book already in hoof. Speeding through it, he quickly got to a page and pointed at the invention. “This one looked really cool!” he declared excitedly, shoving the book into Digit’s muzzle. “What is it?”

“Slow down and let me take a look,” Digit laughed, taking the book. Rush had chosen a page with a design that looked like a saddle bag, but instead of bags, it had two cylinders on the sides. All over the page were different designs of the device and a few sketches of ponies wearing it and flying threw the air. There were several other variations, too, ranging from one with a single cylinder resting on a pony’s head to another with four small cylinders attached to a pony’s hooves. “Ah, thats my Air Dash Saddle,” he said, a grin creeping across his face. “It’s supposed to give ponies who can’t fly, like us, the ability to do so,” he was gesturing exuberantly as he continued, “by harnessing the energy of a small, artificial tornado created by a pair of fans in the cylinder. I got that idea from watching weather pegasi stirring up a storm. Then the wearer would be able to adjust the speeds of the fans to speed up, slow down, and land.” He was positively beaming as he finished his explanation.

Sugar Rush sat speechless, staring at Digit, who then flushed with embarrassment for getting so excited. “That...” Rush began slowly. “That is so cool!” he exclaimed as he lept from seat to seat, pretending to fly.

“Well I’m glad you think so,” Digit sighed. “Not many ponies thought there would be any use for it.”

Sugar Rush suddenly landed on Digit’s head and looked down at him. “Why wouldn’t anypony think it would be useful? I think leveling the playing field with pegasi would make things better, all high and mighty with their clouds. Well look out, here comes Rush with a tornado!” At that, he jumped from Digit’s head to the seat and began spinning around until he fell to the floor, dizzy.

Digit couldn’t help but laugh and the energetic little foal. “You’re a funny little guy, you know that?” he said as he offered a hoof to Rush.

“So do you have one with you right now?” Rush asked excitedly.

“Oh, um... no,” Digit admitted a bit sheepishly. “I… I never managed to build a working model that didn’t explode the moment I turned it on.” His smile faded as he closed his sketch book.

Noticing the change in Digit’s mood, Rush jumped back onto his head. “Thats OK, Digit,” he said encouragingly, “but when you do finally make one that works, I want to be the first to use it. Deal?” He lowered a hoof before Digit’s face.

“Deal,” he said as they knocked their hooves together.

“Sugar Rush!” a loud voice interrupted, startling Rush off of Digit’s head.

“Oh crap, it’s my mom,” he said as he peaked into the aisle.

A mare walked up in a huff and eyed Rush down. “How many times have I told you not to wander off and brother ponies?” she demanded as she pulled him out from under the seat.

“Do you mean how many times this train ride or in general?” he asked as she set him down.

“I’m sorry, sir,” Rush’s mother apologized. “My little colt here doesn’t know when he is bothering ponies. I hope he didn’t disturb you at all.”

Digit waved it off. “No bother at all. He is a funny one. Actually cheered me up a bit. See I’m moving to Las Pegasus and I’ve been kind of on edge.”

“Oh!” she said. “Where are you moving from?”

“Manehatten. A job was offered out here and I was in a situation where no wasn’t the best answer.”

“Oh, well we live in Las Pegasus! We were visiting Sugar Rush’s Grandmother out in Fillydelphia. If you ever need any help getting around, I work at the tour center, so you’re more than welcome to come down.”

“Mom, stop!” Rush groaned, drawing the words out and pulling on his mother’s tail. “You’re doing that thing where you try to sell tours again.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry!” she said, growing red. “I tend to do that. I really didn’t mean to try to peddle a tour to you.”

“It’s fine,” Digit assured. “I might take you up on the offer. I’m not going to know a thing about this city. In return, I can get you guys into one of the upcoming shows in The Velvet Mane. We are supposed to open soon on the strip,” he said, and he reached into his saddle bag. “Here is my card”

His cousin had sent him a bunch of the cards and told him to hand them out whenever he could, so that everypony should know about the club. The card was made out of velvet with the name of the club stitched into the front. She took it with a thank you and said goodbye, sweeping Rush up onto her back.

“Bye, Digit!” Rush yelled as his mom carried him off. “Remember, I’m the first one to fly!” Digit waved and smiled.

A attendant appeared at the front of the car and announced, “We will be arriving soon, so please make sure all your belongings are with you. Place all trash into one of the bins, and have your arrival passes ready. We will be docking within the next five minutes. For those who are new to the city, if you look out the right windows, you will be able to see the Rump Tower and many other popular buildings. Also Just Hoofing It Train Lines would like to thank you for choosing us as your transport professionals.” He smiled and walked back into the mid cart.

Digit looked out the window and saw the city. Even in the middle of the day, it looked like a second sun. The light shot into the sky and the city gleaned from it. Even though he wasn’t much of a city pony, he had to admit it looked like a gem in the middle of the desert, and it was astonishing. The train rode onward towards the City of Lights, the City of Bad Choices and Unknown Fortunes. The city he would call home. The city that would hopefully give him a new start. He lay his head back and looked at his sketch book, his name embroidered on the black cover in gold silk. He took out the letter from his mom and read it again: “Digit, never stop inventing marvels. Love, Mom.” Digit smiled and slid the book back into his bag. “I won’t, Mom, and this new city will be where I make you truly proud.”

As Boom Box drifted around the terminal, hanging upside down from a bench made of clouds, he played air instruments with his hooves along to the music blasting through his headphones. Below him, Chaos Theory was at a small table doing a card trick for a small group of fillies and colts. A little purple filly pulled a card, which Chaos presented and put back into the deck without looking at it. He laid out the deck in four lines and shuffled them back together, then he gave the filly who had pulled the card a small piece of parchment and a quill and told her to write down the card she had drawn and fold up the paper. After she did he set the parchment on fire.

“O, Spirit of the Cards,” he began with exaggerated panache, “show me what card this filly drew!” He made a small show and pressed on the filly’s forehead, after which he took the ash and spread it across the top of his hoof, where it spelled the letters A and H. “Did you draw the ace of hearts, little one?” he asked, pulling the ace of hearts off the top of the deck.

“Yes, that’s it!” said the filly, eyes wide with amazement. The small crowd of foals cheered and stomped their hooves, and a few older ponies who had gathered behind gave a light round of applause, too.

“Thank you!” said Chaos, bowing dramatically, “Thank you! You're too kind.” When he had finished bowing and the applause had faded, he continued, “If you would like to see my full show, with more illusions and wonders to astonish and delight ponies of all ages—a show filled with death-defying marvels and feats that scoff at the dictates of reality—then please come to the grand opening of The Velvet Mane, opening soon on the strip. You will want to get your tickets soon because you never know—” Chaos then grabbed the table cloth and wrapped it around himself. The cloth almost instantly fell to the floor empty and Chaos was nowhere to be seen, but he suddenly called out from behind the crowd “—when they will disappear!” Everypony cheered and stomped in applause. “Thank you again!” he said as he walked through the crowd and gave out the velvet cards. When he reached his table again, he bowed once more and began setting up for the next train’s arrival as the crowd dispersed.

“What are you doing?” Boom Box asked from his cloud, his headphones now around his neck, his blue and black mane as always a skewed and covering his face.

Annoyed at the question, Chaos snapped back without looking up, “What does it look like I'm doing, Boom?”

“I don't know,” Boom said in a mock serious tone. “You're a magician. You could be doing anything.”

“I'm trying to drum up business for opening night,” Chaos replied with an agitated sigh. “Something that I’d think you would want to do as well.”

Boom sat up on his cloud and pressed a thoughtful hoof to his chin as he said, “I thought we were just down here to pick up the boss’ cousin.” Chaos just shrugged off the comment and kept setting up his table. “Wait a minute…” Boom continued, a look of realization spreading across his face, “the boss didn't even ask you to come.” Jumping down to the floor, Boom got right into Chaos's face. “Why are you really here?” he demanded with an almost accusing tone.

“I, uh,” Chaos began nervously stuttering, “You know, I just wanted to meet the new guy, and like I said, I wanted to bring in business to the club.” He pushed Boom away. “Thats all.”

After he thought for a moment, a sly grin crept across Boom Box’s face as he said, “You wouldn't happen to be trying to gain spotlight time without Ruby, would you?”

“What?” Chaos shot back a little too quickly. “Of course not!” But sweat was beginning to form on his brow.

“I would hope not,” Boom went on, his grin not breaking, “because you know what she gets like when ponies try to upstage her.”

A shiver ran through Chaos as he thought of the last time he had done a show without her. Turning to Boom Box, he pleaded, “You must never tell her I was doing this, got it? If she asks, I was just down here passing out cards and brochures.”

No longer grinning, Boom went to put his headphones back on. “Yeah, yeah,” he said unsympathetically.

Chaos pulled the headphones back off, looking him dead in the eyes, as he said, “I mean it, Boom. Not a word. If she finds out about this, I'll be forced to tell her it was you that smashed her last bottle of Sparkling Apple.”

A look of terror came over Boom's face and his ears folded down. “How did you know it was me?” he whimpered.

“Because you just told me!” Chaos said triumphantly.

“Told you what?” Boom said with genuine curiosity. Chaos looked confused.

“That you broke Ruby’s last bottle of Sparkling Apple.”

“I never told you that,” he said seriously. “I'm trying to figure out how you knew.”

Chaos slapped his hoof to his face. “Look just don’t say anything, and everypony will be fine. Got it? Ruby has been freaking out enough about the opening as is, and I don't need her thinking I'm trying to upstage her.”

“Yeah, yeah. I got it,” Boom said, no longer having any interest in the conversation. He walked over to a bench and slumped down into it, allowing his wings to unfurl. “Why did we have to come down here so early?” he groaned. “It feels like we’ve been here for hours.”

“We’ve only been down here for two hours, Boom,” Chaos said, returning to his table. “And you slept through most of it. Like I said before, we had to come down early because I wanted to advertise and bring in some business for the club.”

“Don't we have brochures to do that?” Boom said, pointing a hoof at the racks of brochures in the info area.

“Boom, look how many different brochures are over there,” Chaos said. “What are the odds that a pony fresh off the train is going to pick ours?”

Boom Box thought for a moment and said, “At least one right?”

“Thats right,” Chaos said as he shuffled his cards. “One. Out of hundreds. Besides, I think you would agree that it looks better when we come down and give a little taste of the club. Get ponies’ curiosities high. They will become more interested, and The Velvet Mane will be the first thing that comes to mind when they wonder what they should do this evening.”

“Ok, I get it,” Boom said, grinning slyly. “You wanted to show off.”

“I guess that’s always a perk,” Chaos admitted as he finished cleaning up his table. “Anyway, did the boss tell you anything about his cousin?”

Boom Box shrugged. “Nothing, really, other than he is going to be our new maintenance pony, he comes from Manehatten, and he is a grey unicorn with a black and green mane and a blueprint and light bulb cutie mark.”

Chaos’ ears shot up as he spun to face Boom. “Did you say a Unicorn is going to be our new Maintenance Pony?” he asked impatiently. Confused, Boom lifted his headphones off his head

“Yeah, why?”

Suddenly, Chaos dashed over and grabbed Boom's face between his hooves. “Why wasn't I told we were getting a unicorn as our maintenance pony?!” he demanded.

“Is not a big deal,” Boom box managed to sputter.

“Not a big deal?” Chaos said, dropping Boom to the ground. “Not a big deal?! Of course its a big deal!” He walked a few paces then turned and began melodramatically, “I can see it now! The club opens, the crowds gather. Ponies impatiently waiting to be let through that glorious red rope. They flood in, the casino abuzz with ponies winning, losing, and making all around merriment. The showroom packed. The lights dim. Everything grows quiet. And BAM!” he cried, stomping a hoof, “I appear and perform my mystifying act. The ponies are awestruck. They can't tear their eyes away from this amazing earth pony with the powers of the cosmos!” He gestured broadly with every word, while Boom Box stared on blankly.

“But then,” he continued, disaster! After the show, ponies stick around to meet me and get my autograph, but they stay just long enough to see the unicorn on stage simply ‘checking the equipment,’ and suddenly, ponies no longer believe. They start to say, ‘That Chaos Theory is nothing but a sham! He clearly uses that unicorn to enchant his props!’” He brought a hoof to his forehead as he continued, “Soon after, it will all fall apart. First, I will be labeled a phoney. Then, my beloved Ruby will leave me. Curtain will find a replacement, and I'll be force to act out on the street for small bits simply to get a slice of bread.” He concluded his speech by dramatically slumping across his table. Boom box started slow clapping for a dramatic effect.

“Wow, Chaos,” he replied with mock sincerity. “If that really did happen, you could always get a job as an over-the-top actor. But you really shouldn't worry,” he continued, walking over to Chaos’ table. “I don’t even think he uses magic more than an average unicorn. Pretty sure Curtain said he was an inventor or something.” He picked up a ring set Chaos had knocked down in his performance and set it back on the table.

Looking up at Boom, Chaos said in a low voice, “And what if he is a powerful magic user?”

“Look, I’m pretty sure he isn't, and you're going to be fine. And I'm never wrong,” Boom said with a friendly pat on Chaos' back.

“Boom,” Chaos retorted in a matter-of-fact tone, “you are always wrong.”

“When have I ever been wrong?” Boom asked with exaggerated offense.

“Just this morning, on the way here, when you swore that you had a blueberry muffin but it was actually poppy seed. I mean, how do you even get those mixed up?”

“Pfft, details,” Boom said dismissively. “I mean about the big stuff. Look, you're going to be fine. This pony will probably even help build something that can make your act even better.”

“You know what,” Chaos said, standing back up, “you’re right, this time. I’ll just have to do things that not even unicorns can pull off, and then there will never be any question. I truly am a master of the cosmos.” He said with renewed vigor.

“Attention, attention,” came a voice over the terminal’s intercom. “The two PM from Manehatten will be arriving in ten minutes at dock four. Again the two PM from Manehatten will be arriving in ten minutes at dock four. Thank you.”

“Anyway, Master Cosmos,” Boom said, “the two PM arrival is the one we’re waiting for. We should probably head to the dock so we don't miss him.”

“You're right,” Chaos agreed. “Help me pack up my stuff and we can head over and wait there.” He folded his supplies up in a cloth.

“What was that?” Boom Box replied, his headphones back on.

“Nevermind,” Chaos sighed as he finished packing, and the two headed over to dock four.

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The train pulled into the station with a loud hiss, and a final bellow from the engine signaled that it was at a full stop. Attendants appeared on either side of the car to help ponies disembark and put a final punch in arrival passes. Digit decided to wait until the other ponies were out of the aisles before getting up. While he waited, he looked out the window at the station’s arrival platform. It was as extravagant as he pictured the rest of the city to be. Grand statues of earth ponies, pegasi, and unicorns held up huge, white columns. Ponies were gathered around the columns, greeting each other with brohoofs, hugs, and kisses. Digit couldn’t help but smile as he saw Sugar Rush shoot up to a young looking mare, whom he assumed to be a sister. She hugged him and his mom and they began walking into the station.

“Sir?” a light voice snapped him out of his staring. “Sir, we need to ask you to disembark now so we can clean up.” Digit looked around and noticed he was the only one left on the train.

“Sorry,” he said, embarrassed, and he got up and left the train. As he walked across the marble floor, he saw just how extravagant the station really was. It was adorned all around with marble, gold, and various gems. The waiting area resembled a casino, and posters of past and future performances covered the wall, each with a stylized frame representing the performers.

As he walked through the line of antique posters, he noted a few vintage posters of the Wonderbolts and old magicians like Hoovedini, but as he trotted through the hall the posters turned more recent, with upcoming shows from the current Wonderbolts, Cirque du Saddle, and the Blue Mane Group. In addition to all the posters, there were brochures all over advertising clubs, lounges, and casinos.

“Feast your eyes upon the amazing Master of Illusions!” boomed a voice out that broke Digit from his sightseeing. Looking around, he noticed a blue-coated earth pony putting on a little show for the new arrivals, many of whom were too wrapped up in happy greetings to pay the stallion any notice. All of a sudden, the magician noticed Digit staring and hurried over to him. “You, my good pony,” he said, wrapping his front leg around Digit’s neck. “Care to see a masterful illusion that will surely astonish and amaze you?”

“Um, no. I’m good,” Digit replied, shaking the stallion off his neck. “I’m supposed to meet up with somepony, so I don’t have time.” As he started to walk away, though, a sudden tug on his tail held him back. Becoming annoyed, he said, “Is everypony going to be this pushy here?” He tore his tail out of the stallion’s mouth. “Look, I said I don’t have time!”

As he turned around, the stallion was pressing a hoof to his own head and saying, “I sense your name is… DIGIT! And you have come to work at the Red Velvet as the new maintenance pony!”

Confused and giving the stallion a quizzical look, Digit replied, “Yeah, but I was told to look for a brown Pegasus named Boom Box, not a overacting earth pony.” A sudden burst of laughter came from above. Digit looked up to see a brown Pegasus laughing.

“Oh, wow,” the pegasus said. “He knows you for less than a minute, Chaos, and you over act the greeting. Classic!” He dropped down to the floor and pulled his headphones down around his neck. Chaos stood back and sulked, looking insulted. “Hi there,” the pegasus continued, taking and shaking Digit’s hoof. “I’m Boom Box, and the drama pony is Chaos Theory. He works at the club, too, as our second biggest act and number one magician.”

“I’m sorry,” Digit said to Chaos, realizing his mistake at insulting a new co-worker. “I just thought you were a pushy street magician.”

Without lifting his head, Chaos woefully replied, “Well if you couldn’t tell the difference, then it’s only a matter of time before nopony can.”

“Oh no,” Boom said, slapping his hoof to his face. “Here we go again.”

Chaos lifted his front legs dramatically, but before he could speak, Digit said with a slight bow of his head, “I’m sure you are amazing and I just wasn’t really paying attention. Now that I look at you, it’s clear you are no mere street performer but a master of your craft.” Chaos and Boom both stared blankly at Digit for a moment and then, almost immediately, Chaos was on his feet, frantically shaking Digit’s hoof.

“Oh, you are so right!” he exclaimed. “And if a unicorn such as yourself can see that just by looking at me, then some day all of Equestria will see it plain as day! You are a pony of valor, Digit, and I thank you.” He turned to Boom Box, whose mouth still hung agape at how quickly Digit cheered Chaos up. “Boom, I will be staying here to get some more publicity. Please show our new friend to the club so he can get settled in.”

“Right,” said Boom Box, taking a moment to register the sudden shift. “Of course, let’s go, Digit.” He grabbed Digit’s extra saddle bag and threw it on his back. As they walked away, they could hear Chaos putting on a show with renewed vigor. Already, a rather large crowd had gathered to see his performance. “How did you know what to say to him?” Boom asked as they walked along.

Digit replied with a smirk, “I come from Manehatten, the pinnacle of melodrama and over acting. If I couldn’t handle cheering up someone like that in Manehatten, then I would have never had any friends.”

“Still,” Boom said, a hint of respect in his tone, “the only pony I’ve seen snap Chaos out of his ‘Woe is me’ monologues that fast is Ruby.” As they walked out of the arrival platform, they entered the wide atrium that was the train station’s lobby. Ponies trotted to and fro, some arriving and saying goodbye, others still greeting friends. The same type of statues from the arrival platform sat in the middle of the room, holding aloft a giant clock.

Looking around and taking in the extravagance of the station, Digit felt very small, and started feeling a bit anxious about leaving home for this job. Boom Box looked back and noticed Digit’s head lowered.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, falling a few steps back to keep speed with Digit.

“I’m just not a fan of so much… excess,” he said, still looking around.

“You come from Manehatten,” Boom said quizzically. “Isn’t that place nothing but excess?”

“Yeah,” Digit agreed, “but it was more excess in art and in food that was bad for you, not so much on wealth. Plus, I never went to the ritzy parts of the city.” Boom thought for a moment then jumped in front of Digit.

“Just stick with me then,” he said proudly, a big grin on his face. “If there’s anypony who is mellow enough to help you, it’s me.”

“Thanks,” Digit said as he stepped around Boom. “I’ll keep that in mind.” As they approached the station’s grand entryway, the noise began to pick up and the light from outside dug its way in. A wave of dry heat enveloped Digit as he walked outside, and the sunlight was so bright that he had to put a hoof in front of his face.

"Wow, it's a bit bright," he said, looking down to avoid the light.

"Well yeah, we are in the desert," Boom said in a matter of fact tone. "Oh, look over there!” He pointed to a visitors stand. “We can buy you some shades."

They trotted over to the little stand where an old gray stallion sat with a dealer visor and large aviator sun glasses on. He looked up as they approached and said, “You look like you ain’t from here.”

Digit smirked. “What gave it away?”

“Well, not many dark coated ponies around here,” he said through a gummy grin. “Also the luggage. What can I do for you?”

“I just need a pair of sunglasses,” Digit said as he began shuffling through the different pairs that were displayed on the rack. After a few moments, he pulled down a pair of black Aviators and laid them down on the counter.

“That it?” the old pony asked as he picked them up to check to see if he had priced them.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Digit responded as he pulled a satchel of bits from his bag.

“Eighty Bits.”

“Are you serious?!” Digit said, taken aback. “That’s way too much for a cheap pair of sunglasses!”

“Cheap?!” the clerk shouted. “You think my product is cheap?!” He began an elaborate speech about how eighty bits was a steal for his product, but Digit just rolled his eyes and walked away toward Boom, who was sitting on the curve and bobbing his head.

Digit pulled Booms headphones down and said, “Come on, Boom, this is a scam. We’ll find something somewhere else.”

“How about a wager?” the clerk called to them, afraid to lose the sale altogether. Digit and Boom both turned their heads.

“What kind of wager?” Digit asked.

“Well, this is Las Pegasus, the city of chance,” the clerk responded, a sly grin creeping across his face. “Let’s play a game of chance. A quick dice roll. You call it. If you win, I’ll give you the glasses for ten bits.” By now, Digit and Boom had walked back to the stand.

“And if you win?” Digit asked without breaking eye contact.

The clerk’s grin widened. “You pay the eighty bits, and I get that fancy pouch you got on your back.” Digit looked back at his saddlebag. His dad had given it to him before he left. Made of rare stretched dragon scale, it was quite an expensive going away present.

“Digit, don’t do this, man,” Boom warned. “Don’t risk that. We can just go somewhere else.”

Digit thought for a moment. “No, I think I got this. If I’m going to live in this city,” he said, looking back at the clerk, “I should learn to play the city’s games.”

“That’s the spirit!” the clerk encouraged through a snicker. “Here are the rules: I roll the die, and you call even or odd. If it lands on what you call, you win. If it doesn’t, you lose.” He bounced a die on his hoof as he explained. “It’s pretty much like flipping a six-sided coin. You understand?”

“Yeah I got it,” Digit said, leaning nonchalantly on the counter. “Let’s just play.”

“Wait a minute,” Boom said, pulling Digit a few paces from the counter. He continued under his breath, “Look man that die is probably fixed to land on the opposite of whatever you call. I’ve lived here long enough to know a cheat when I see one.”

“Yeah, I know they’re fixed,” Digit said, smirking, “but I have a way to counter it.”

“Really?” Boom looked confused. “How?”

“You will see,” Digit said, still smirking as he turned and walked back to the stand. “You ready to play?” The clerk stretched his wings out as he tossed the die. Digit called even, a low whistle stirred the air, and the die finally came to a stop. It was a two.

“What—” the clerk stammered. “How?!”

“What do you mean?” shot back in feigned ignorance. “I’d say you ran a 50/50 chance at winning, just like I did.” He sneered as he threw the ten bits on the counter, put on the Aviators, and turned to walk out.

“You cheated!” the clerk shouted through clenched gums. “That’s the only way!” Digit stopped and turned back.

“And the only way you would know that is if you cheated yourself,” he said matter-of-factly. “Would you care to admit it and cut your losses, or should we have a pony in blue settle this?” Digit stared deadpan, unblinking, as if challenging the clerk to make a move.

Finally, face red with anger and embarrassment, the clerk broke the stare and grumbled, “Just leave my stand.”

“Wow, Digit!” Boom exclaimed as they trotted down the busy sidewalk. “You must have amazing luck or something if he really was cheating.”

“Luck had nothing to do with it, Boom. I cheated just like he did.”

Boom stopped in shock. “Wait, so you cheated, too? How?” He trotted to catch up with Digit. “I mean, how was he even cheating in the first place?”

“Remember how he stretched his wings when he tossed the die? He created an air current, and I just used a little magic to subtly alter it.” He glanced over at Boom. “I’m actually surprised you didn’t notice, being a Pegasus and all.”

Boom looked down at the sidewalk. “I’ve never been that great at the weather stuff. It’s not like I can’t do it, I’m just not that good at it.”

“It’s not a big deal,” said Digit, waving a dismissive hoof. “I’m not all that great at magic. I’ve got very little of it.”

“Well what about just now?” Boom looked at him.

“It doesn’t take much magic to alter a light air current,” Digit explained. “I can’t do things like lift heavy objects or teleport or any of that. My magic begins and ends at small things.”

After walking for a couple minutes, they passed a diner. Boom heard Digit’s stomach growl. “Well that isn’t good,” Boom said. “Let’s get some lunch.” He gestured his head toward the diner.

“I don’t know,” Digit protested. “Shouldn’t we head to the club?” Without so much as acknowledging Digit’s protest, Boom walked up the steps to the simple glass doors. Reaching the top, he stopped and turned to motion for Digit to follow.

“This place is real good,” he said. “My treat. I’m sure you didn’t get much on the train, so I’d start listening to that gut of yours.” When he thought about it, Digit realized he hadn’t eaten since before getting on the train.

“Ok, let’s grab a bite to eat,” he agreed. “But we should make it quick. If my cousin hasn’t changed, I’m sure he still hates things running late.”

“Yeah, the boss ain’t big on lateness, but he did tell me to show you around and get you acquainted with the area.”

As they walked into the diner, they were greeted by a young mare who seemed delighted to see them. She had a black mane with yellow-gold streaks running through it, a light grey coat, and dark, maple brown eyes. As they approached, she rushed up and hugged Boom.

“Hey Boom, good to see you!” she said cheerfully then released him from her embrace. “The usual spot at the counter?”

“Sure, counter works great,” he said as he motioned for Digit to hurry up. As Digit approached, the mare noticed him.

“Well hello, stranger!” she said. “You seem a bit out of place.”

“Digit, this is Winter Eclipse,” said Boom. “Winter, this is Digit.” He gestured between the two of them as he added, “He’s from your neck of the woods.”

“You’re from Manehattan?” said Winter Eclipse, her face lighting up. “Oh, that’s great! What brings you out so far? I came out for school and to try and start a singing career, but it hasn’t worked out all that well, but that’s ok, because I've made a lot of great friends like Boom here, and I’m making ends meet and I have fun when I can, and—”

“Winter!” Boom interrupted. “Slow down and breathe! You’re doing that thing again.”

“Oh, sorry!” Winter blushed. “I get carried away sometimes when I get excited. Follow me to the counter.” She led Boom and Digit to their seats.

“Its okay,” Digit said with a chuckle. “I moved out here for work is all. I’m going to be working with Boom over at The Velvet Mane.”

“That’s great, because any friend of Boom’s is a friend of mine,” Winter said. “Speaking of The Velvet Mane, Boom, I thought you were going to try to get me a job over there.” She shot an accusatory look at Boom.

“Yeah, sure, I didn’t forget to ask,” Boom said dismissively as he fought with his seat to keep it from spinning. “I just forgot to tell you.”

“Forgot to tell me what?” she asked as she slapped a menu down on the counter in front of him.

“That you got the job, like, two weeks ago.” He flinched, bracing himself for a punch or yell. Instead, Winter let out a shout of excitement, leaped over the counter, wrapped Boom in a hug, and planted a big kiss on his cheek.

“Thank you!” she cried. “What will I be doing?”

“You are going to start as a bartender,” he explained, rubbing his head with his hoof and turning red in the face, “and Curtain said in time he might be able to find you a singing gig, if he thinks you have what it takes.”

After another gleeful shriek, Winter said, “Ok, whatever you guys want is on the house today. My treat for bringing me a new friend and great news.”

“That’s great, thank you,” Digit said, looking down at the menu. “So what’s good?”

“Just grab us two hay burgers and a side of gravy fries,” Boom said to Winter, pushing Digit’s menu down. Winter wrote down the order and gave a wink, then she walked to the kitchen with a spring in her step.

“So that was different,” Digit said with a grin as he looked around the diner.

“Yeah, Winter is a trip,” Boom agreed. “She moved out here a few years ago. I met her at a club I was DJ-ing for, and we kind of just became friends. Excellent singer. Mostly rock stuff, but her smooth jazz is breathtaking. If anyone can make it here, it would be her. I mean, she is talented and smart and beautiful.” Boom looked over at Digit, who was giving him a sly look.

“You like her a lot, don’t you?”

His face turned bright red. “What?! No! *You* like her!”

Digit laughed and patted Boom’s shoulder. “It’s alright, man. I’m just giving you a hard time. She seems great.” The two sat in silence for a brief moment, then Digit said, “So can you tell me a bit about the club and the ponies I’ll be working with?”

“Yeah, sure,” said Boom. The club, as you know, is half casino and half lounge. We will have small weekday acts and big ones on the weekends. For the most part, the weekday stuff will be filled with whatever Chaos and Ruby do, plus some new acts as kind of an audition thing. As for the crew, well let’s see...” He tapped thoughtfully on the headphones around his neck. “There’s my sister. Her name is Ryme, but lately she’s been going by Dusk. I would just go with it, because she can be mean about it. She is a bit on the melodramatic side since she moved back out here from Fillydelphia, but she is still super nice. Then there’s Chaos. You briefly met him at the station. He’s our main magician. He does all his big stuff on the weekend for the casino. Super melodramatic, but he says that’s because the best magician is also the best actor. Then there’s Ruby. She’s the lounge’s biggest act, as a singer. She’s hard to explain, so you’ll just have to meet her. Then, you know, we’ve got the rest of the staff. But other than your crew, which I don’t know much about, you won’t meet many of them.”

“Ok,” Digit said, looking around. “So you think I'll fit in with these guys?”

“Pff,” Boom laughed, “after what I’ve seen you do just in the short time you’ve been here, I’m sure you will be fine.”

Just then, Winter walked back out with two plates and placed them lightly in front of Digit and Boom. As they ate, the three talked and shared various stories, and Digit thought that if everypony was this lighthearted, he may have made the right choice in coming out here. They finished eating, Boom told Winter when she would officially be starting, she hugged them both goodbye, and Digit and Boom headed for The Velvet Mane.