

Once upon a time, in the magical land of Equestria...

...there was a war. A war that would scorch and poison the world with balefire, a war that would slaughter ponies in their millions, a war that would annihilate every last city and leave only skeletal remains. All, that is, save one.

Las Neighgas.

It alone would be spared the horrors of the megaspells that destroyed its siblings, its neon lights and pristine orchards becoming a haven of the Old World amongst the chaos of the post-apocalyptic land. However, those lucky enough to be held in its protection were not the only ones to survive the great war. When spellfire consumed Equestria, those who survived elsewhere did so in great underground Stables. When they opened, their inhabitants set out amongst the ruins of the Old World, forming settlements and tribes.

The denizens of one such Stable, far to the south-west of Las Neighgas, Stable Fifteen, founded the town of Luna's Blessing atop their sanctuary. From there they consolidated the area around them into the New Lunar Republic, a nation that worshipped the lost Princess of the Night and sought to restore Equestria to how it had been under her rule, whole and unspoiled again.

As the NLR expanded, scouts came back with news of an impossible treasure: a city untouched by the ravages of the balefire holocaust, kept alive by a lake behind a vast wall built across the Colterado River and mysteriously unsullied by the cloud cover that obscured the rest of the world. But when it mobilised its forces to reclaim this city, the Republic found another faction waiting for it, bearing the standard of the other royal alicorn; Celestia's Legion. A proud warrior society built upon the ideals of the ancient world before the emergence of Nightmare Moon and sworn to restore order to the remnants of ponykind by any means necessary, the Legion held a fortified position on and beyond the Hooper Dam, defending their assets in the East, with a view to conquering the preserved city themselves.

With neither side willing to make the sacrifices required to claim Neighgas as their own, a bitter stalemate has existed for fifteen long years across the Colterado. In between the two, the New Neighgas Strip has remained open for business to the soldiers of the Sun and Moon alike, jealously guarded by its enigmatic ruler, Full House, and his army of robots and rehabilitated tribals.

This delicate balance of power is due to be shifted, however. It comes with a young pegasus courier from Stable Eighty-Four, carrying with her in her saddlebags what at first glance would seem like only a small, worthless trinket. A pegasus for who, it would seem, luck has finally run out...

Prologue: A Humble Request

Damn. How did this happen? How could anypony have known where I would be?

He had come marching into our town like he owned the place. He – perhaps I should explain. Our town isn't like most other towns; Zephyr is special for two reasons. Firstly, it is built upon a Stable; Stable Eighty-Four. The Stable I was born and raised in, before we decided that living outside in a ramshackle group of buildings was better than the pre-war shelter that had nurtured us for nearly 200 years. Secondly, Zephyr, as with the Stable beneath it, is predominately populated with pegasi. Sure, there are a few earth ponies and unicorns who have moved in since, but out of all of the settlements of the Equestrian Wasteland, we are the only one where the majority of the populace (who are actually friendly, mind you) have wings.

And there are only two reasons why anypony comes to Zephyr; to trade, or to hire a courier. And this pony didn't look like he was in the mood to barter.

Just a simple blow to the head, and that was that. I was helpless, my hindlegs bound beneath me, wings firmly strapped behind my back, forelegs bound in front of me, forming a pathetic pose, as if was begging for mercy from my captors. There were five of them; four tribals, each with identical cutie marks of a skull wearing a bizarre kind of helmet. Three leered at me, each an earth pony with a fearsome array of melee weapons strapped to them. The fourth, a dark red unicorn with a black mane, was busy with a shovel, digging a pit – my grave.

Pegasus couriers. We were highly prized; after all, who wouldn't want their package ushered safely above the horrors of the Wasteland at breakneck speed? Pegasi were exceedingly rare down here. Traders carried tales to us of the Grand Pegasus Enclave above us, and the dark tales of those known as 'Dashites', who shunned the clouds above. We knew our value, and charged accordingly. After my grandfather passed away when I was still a foal, my mother and father had taken rein of the Rainboom Express; the fastest, most reliable courier service in the whole of the Wasteland, and, I might add, a family business. The youngest of four siblings, I had earned my cutie mark on my very first mission - a winged lightning bolt on my flank, all in white.

I had been tasked to deliver a modified rifle to the next town over, with strict instructions not to use it. It was a safe route, intended only as a training run for me. In fact, apart from the rifle, I was unarmed; after all, who would expect loving parents to send a blank flank into a dangerous area, or with a weapon she might injure herself with?

The final one of my captors was evidently the ringleader; a light grey unicorn with a pale yellow mane. He wore a chequered black and white suit, tailored to show off his cutie mark, a brightly coloured logo of a place called 'The Trots'. I had no idea what it meant, and I had a sinking feeling I never would. He stood with his back to me, looking out at the vista ahead of us; a desert plain leading away from the ridge, towards the brightly lit haven of New Neighgas in the distance. I appreciated the bitter irony of being buried in a graveyard in sight of my final destination. The neon lights in the distance winked at me, mocking me for coming so close to success.

Of course, nopony would ever have imagined that a badly wounded griffin mercenary would just happen to wander into the area at the same time. A mercenary who had just seen his entire company wiped out, and needed something to take his anger out on. Me. I had been dragged to the ground by him, his talons raised to swipe my throat out, when something came over me. I bucked him away as hard as I could, and somehow was agile enough to avoid his attacks while pummelling him with my forehooves. Eventually, he had backed down, and I flew as fast as possible to my destination. As soon as I handed that package over, my cutie mark appeared. I had found my calling as a courier; I was fast, I delivered no matter the odds, and, Luna damn it, I knew how to defend myself with my own hooves.

I delivered no matter the odds. I remembered that oath to myself; tears ran down my cheeks as I realised I had failed. Failed myself, failed my family, and failed my mission. The penalty for that would be to die, lost and alone, in sight of my destination. I wondered how my mother would react

when I never came home, when I broke that promise to her that I had made.

"I can do this! I'm not a foal anymore!"

"Spectrum..." My mother's weary voice was tinged with both irritation and concern. "I know you fought off that griffin, and you've made a lot of deliveries faster than any of the other couriers. But those were short trips in territory you're familiar with. New Neighgas is over two hundred kilocanters away! It'll require you to stop overnight and camp in unknown parts of the Wasteland. You've never done that before."

"But how will I ever learn how to be the best courier in the entire Express if you never send me on missions like this? You let Prism go to San Flankcisco last year, and he's only two years older than me! This is just because I'm your precious little Spectrum, isn't it?" I retorted. "The runt of the litter."

"No it isn't. San Flankcisco is in the New Lunar Republic – it's safe and stable. New Neighgas is a tinderbox! There's three armies all waiting to fight to the death over the place! I don't want to send you into such danger. And besides, this delivery seems awfully...odd. I don't like the implications of this deal, but we can't afford to pass it up."

I realised this argument was quickly descending into me throwing a tantrum in front of my mother and was not helping my point at all. I had always dreamed of making a delivery of life-or-death importance to one of the major settlements of post-apocalyptic Equestria; Tenpony Tower in the Manehattan Ruins, the Fillydelphia Crater, Canterl... actually no. Canterlot was bad news. Very bad news. New Canterlot, then. That would suffice. But New Neighgas? The City That Survived? An oasis of bright lights and glistening casinos in the grim Wasteland? I couldn't possibly miss this opportunity!

"I mean, who just wanders up and orders such an expensive delivery for, well, junk?" she continued.

"Think we're ready." The tribal stepped out of the grave, throwing the shovel to one side. The suited unicorn turned to face me, flicking away the cigarette in his mouth. How wonderful – the executioner getting one final smoke before the execution. I looked at him, blinking away my frustrated tears, ignoring the burning pain in my left foreleg where he had surgically removed my PipBuck. He stared at me for a second.

"You gonna get on with it, or what?" one of the earth ponies growled.

"Y'know, unlike some less civilized folks, I like to look a pony in the eye before I usher them out of this world," the unicorn drawled back. His eyes flickered back to me, a hint of sadness in his cobalt blue eyes. "Sorry it had to be this way, kid," he said, addressing me.

"Please – I have family. Please let me go. I promise to never come here again," I pleaded. It sounded pathetic even as the words left my mouth. I knew this was the end.

"It's just business."

A strange request at that. The unicorn had come marching in, his duster matching the rich chestnut brown of his coat, a short ochre mane hidden beneath an old cowpony hat.

"Welcome to the Rainboom Express, Zephyr branch," my father said. "How may we be of service?"

"Six items, extra small, to be delivered ASAP to the New Neighgas Strip" the unicorn had replied bluntly.

"Well, of course we can do that, but...but..." My father was never one to be decisive in a situation like this.

"That would cost eleven thousand, seven hundred bottle caps," my eldest brother, Chromaticity, informed the stranger. "You sure it's that urgent?"

"Yes. It most certainly is. I will be paying in Lunar Dollars, however," the unicorn intoned. "I want each package delivered separately, as well. One item per courier. As I am aware, that will raise the fee to sixteen thousand, five hundred bottle caps," he continued, pre-empting my brother's uncanny mathematical skills.

"Well, then, if you're sure...I'll go and get six of our best, then," my father assured the stranger.

"Business?! Killing an innocent courier for a worthless... toy is 'just business'?" I screamed at the suited unicorn, suddenly angry, both at him and at the whole world for brushing me aside as if I was nothing.

"You want us to teach her some manners, Two Pair? Heh, heh." The tribals looked at me, eying me up. I realised what they implied to this unicorn. Oh, please Celestia, no. Not like that.

"This is a graveyard, not a brothel. If you've got the itch that bad, go and scamper back to your valley and take one of those junkies that you call your tribe. I don't play with my victims," the unicorn... Two Pair... spoke back to the tribal coldly, glaring at him.

Standing there having a smoke while they dig my grave isn't 'playing with me'? I thought. I had only known this stallion for a few minutes, and I already hated him more than any other pony I had ever encountered.

"Time to cash out." This was it, then. No more Spectrum. No more heroic deliveries. No more time.

My pleading had finally worked. I was Courier Six, I had a one-time pass to the New Neighgas Strip loaded into my PipBuck, and was raring to go. At the unicorn stranger's insistence, each of us had been assigned a number to check out with at journey's end, and shown our items. They were of no particular value; a pack of cards from 'Eighty's Bar and Gambling Hall', a model of the Spire (Neighgas' tallest building), a silver crescent moon pin badge from the NLR, a matchbook from 'Prance Tourism Board' ("Prance – the other Las Neighgas" a small slogan on it insisted), a small contraption stamped with 'Property of Hooper Dam Hydroelectric Company', and finally, my item – a silvery casino bit. I had only seen it briefly before it been locked into a safebox and placed in my saddlebags.

"Report to the Spire when you arrive in New Neighgas to deliver your package. I have paid half in advance – the other half of the payment will be given when all six couriers have delivered their packages. Ensure they all get there in one piece. They may not seem like much, but they are very valuable to the recipient, and he will be most upset if any misfortune should befall them. Good luck."

And with that, the stranger walked out of town as abruptly as he had arrived.

"Spectrum. Please be careful out there. New Neighgas can take in a filly like you and chew you up faster than you can blink. Once you've delivered the package, you get out of there and come back straight away, you hear?" My mother, as always, was fretting over nothing.

"I promise, Mom." Right after I've had a good look around a couple of the casinos, I mentally added. This was going to be awesome.

And now that was a promise I would never fulfil. The Rainboom Express would lose out on over 8,000 bottle caps thanks to me losing my package in the desert, and infinitely worse, my parents would never see their daughter, their precious little Spectrum, again. Or forgive themselves for letting me do this.

I looked up at the unicorn, framed by the full moon that shone down through the eldritch disc of clear sky that hovered permanently over New Neighgas.

"What's it worth, huh? My life? You'd kill me for that piece of junk?" I spat at him. He looked surprised, and levitated the silver bit out of his jacket.

"This little baby?" He asked in mock disbelief. "Piece of junk? This is worth more than you can ever possibly imagine," he grinned.

Putting it away, he withdrew a small semi-automatic pistol from his other inside pocket and pointed it at my head. I stared down the pitch black maw of its barrel.

"Sorry, kid... I know from where you're standing, it looks like a thirteen black cat streak of bad luck. But, the truth is..." He paused for a moment. "The dice have been loaded from the start."

"No... *PLEASE!*"

A shot rang out.

The whole world went black.

New Neighgas had claimed another life.

Fallout: Equestria: New Neighgas

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Based on the original story and setting 'Fallout: Equestria' by Kkat

[Chapter 1 >>](#)