

Thanks for not stoning me last chapter! Here's your reward! -Aryn

Chapter 11
([FiM Fiction](#))

"Tavi! Tavi! Didn't you hear that? *C'mon!*"

The cellist's heart rate had escalated. All their hard work, the rivalry with Lyrica and Vibrant, the complication of their relationship, all about to culminate in just a few short moments. Nevertheless, she managed to keep her voice fairly level. "Alright, I'm coming. How about up there, to the right?"

A small stage had appeared at the end of the ballroom, apparently set up by Fancy Pants's well-paid and evidently well-trained staff. On either side were sets of steps for ponies to ascend to receive awards. On it, at a microphone, stood the stallion himself, with Fleur beside him. Off to the side of the stage stood a few other ponies. Most were unknown to Octavia, but the artist that had so excited Vinyl -Tombstone- was among them. He stood calmly, surveying the crowd.

The DJ was already moving. "Sounds okay! Let's go!"

Octavia glanced around for Evie, but the green unicorn had slipped off on her own. As the pair trotted further into the ballroom, the stares of other ponies were almost palpable. No opinions were voiced, however, and the crowd did not reject them as they passed through it to a spot to the right of the stage, just as Fancy Pants began to speak.

"Thank you, fillies and gentlecolts. I must say, it has been a very pleasant evening. Are you having a good time?"

Their gracious host looked amused as his words elicited a huge cry of approval from the crowd. When he could be heard again, he continued.

"I'm delighted to hear it! Now, the moment you've all been waiting for. I know that all of you came here tonight hoping to be the pony in this envelope, and I apologize for the fact that not everypony could win. As you know, we play the songs of the runners-up during the dance to show our appreciation for them, and, by the amount of dancing I've witnessed tonight, they went over *quite* well. Am I correct?"

Another loud cheer. When this one had passed, Fancy grew more serious.

“But now, it’s time to announce those who were at the top. Please know that this was a very tough decision, and Miss de Lis and I had our hooves full. However, in the end, the winners were chosen. And here they are.”

Fancy Pants flourished the envelope in his magic, and opened the top flap. The crowd held its breath, waiting for-

The unicorn closed the envelope and winked. “Dear me, I nearly forgot to mention the prizes! Doesn’t everypony want to know?”

A largely negative response followed, along with cries of “Read it!” and “C’mon, Fancy!”

Their host smiled and shook his head. “May the crowd have its way. I’ll read the prizes as we announce winners. In third place this year- Oh, wait, something else I simply *must* mention.”

General groans from the audience.

“Now, now, this is somewhat interesting. We had many new entries this year, but there were two in particular that struck a pony as revolutionary. These both were well-written as well as entertaining, and both made it to the top three. In third place this year, for a remarkable mix of classical and electronic techniques-

This was it. Vinyl and Tavi consciously moved closer together, linking forehooves. The cellist glanced around and caught sight of their rivals halfway across the room, still alone, in their own space in front of the stage. They too were on edge, hanging on Fancy Pants’s every word.

“-Oh, wait, that’s right. The prize! The prize for third place this year is... A lifetime of free meals at one of my *favorite* popular downtown restaurants! *Le Equine Foin* has been in business for many years, and was, in fact, responsible for tonight’s catering! As a matter of fact, why don’t we have their chief representative here tonight, give the award? Chef Couteau Serat!”

From the side of the stage opposite Octavia and her companion, a very large unicorn stallion ascended the stairs and approached the mic. His cutie mark was a very large knife, and his moustache was immaculately styled, just like last time.

The DJ gulped. “T-Tavi? Is that... who I think it is?”

“GOOD EVNINK, PONIES!”

“I think it might be, Vinyl...”

“Oh... I was afraid of that...”

Chef Serat took the envelope from Fancy, and pulled out the first card. He squinted at it, then looked out at the crowd.

“Ze winners for third pleze and my perzonal guests at ze restaurant ahr... LYRA-CA DE CRES-CENDO AND VIBRANT BEETS!”

Vinyl immediately tapped her companion. “We beat them by *two* places! Yes!”

The crowd began to applaud, masking Vinyl and Tavi’s laughter. They watched with glee as their greatest rivals trotted up the stairs, forcing smiles to show to the cheering crowd. When they reached center stage, Fancy Pants shook hooves with them, then stood aside for the Chef to give the prize.

The very large unicorn smiled and held out the award, then paused a moment. He narrowed his eyes.

“Have I zeen you two somewhere before? At ze restaurant, mebe?”

Lyrica shrank back, and even Vibrant swallowed nervously. “Oh, I don’t think so. Never been there before! Of course...”

The pianist jumped in from behind him. “Of course, we’ll have to come down now that we’ve won this *lovely*” -she gritted her teeth- “award.” She turned to the crowd, and forced another smile. “Thank you so much for the honor. And Fancy, dear- this party is a delight!” She tittered, and quickly trotted offstage. Vibrant, glancing at the still-confused Chef Serat, hurried to follow her. The crowd murmured.

Fancy Pants had smiled genially when the blue mare had addressed him, but his expression changed to one of minor disgust once the pair had left the stage. This was quickly replaced again with his ‘host’ smile again, and he looked out over the crowd.

“Well, then! One prize down, two to go! Now, we’ll announce these next two at the same time. I must say, they were *very* close when it came to the judging, but we simply *had* to make a decision. Now, the prizes are: For first place, the winner will receive- as every year- a recording contract with my own studio, Fancy Records. This is the opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to be the next star artist-”

Fancy paused and winked at the crowd. “-And a chance to work more with my own *charming* self.” General laughter followed.

“But getting back to business. Second place this year will be awarded a monetary prize of five hundred bits, and a complete makeover of their recording studio or their instrument- to give them the means to come back and win *first* next year.”

“So, to the winners. Fleur, may I have the last two names, please?”

The elegant pink-maned unicorn passed him the last two envelopes. The eyes of every pony in the room focused on them as he raised them high in the air, and began to pull open the flaps.

Vinyl quickly turned her head to look at Octavia. The motion caught the cellist’s eye, and she glanced at the white mare. “Vinyl....?”

The DJ, for once, had no words. In the middle of the crowd, she leaned forward, and kissed the cellist, just as Fancy pulled the slips from the envelopes and read out the names.

“And the winners are... In second place, Misses Octavia and Vinyl Scratch, for their stunning infusion of classical and modern styles! And In first, a fairly young entry that completely blew us away with a remix of The Living Tombstone’s “Like a Spinning Record”, Evie Stellar!”

The crowd erupted in cheers. The DJ and the cellist stared at each other, wide-eyed with surprise. They glanced at the stage, then back at each other. In sync, they said, “*Evie?*”

The green unicorn was already ascending the stairs, her face a mix of excitement and shock. As Vinyl and Tavi made their way to the stairs, still considerably flabbergasted, Evie reached center stage, and the microphone.

“Oh my oh my oh Celestia wow... Um... Thank you, everypony! Um.. Wow... this is... Thank you, Mr. Pants! I mean, Fancy. I mean, Fancy Pants!” She glanced around the stage frantically. Seeing Vinyl coming towards her, her eyes lit up, and she turned back to the crowd.

“Oh! And I need- have to- um, to thank my friend and guide who made this possible- who lent me the record that I made the remix of! Miss Vinyl Scratch!”

Vinyl stopped short, her mouth open even wider than when Evie was announced as first. Her eyes sparked with irony-filled amusement. “I... You... you used *that* record?”

Evie nodded ecstatically. The shock was wearing off, and the excitement was setting in. “Uh huh! I just thought it would sound good if I added a few things here, and changed a few things there, and-”

“-And it did.”

From behind them, the light gray pony with the blue mane trotted forward to stand between Vinyl and Evie. Both went immediately silent, and stared.

Tombstone continued, looking at Evie. “Fancy called me specifically to listen to your remix, and I was quite impressed. You’ve got a future ahead, if you’ll take it, and I look forward to seeing you at Fancy Records as you start your contract.”

Evie went back to looking dazed. The earth pony turned to Vinyl.

“-And as for you, I’ve heard many good things about you around Manehattan. Your song is quite well-done, and you-” He glanced at Octavia next to her- “you *both* should be proud. I’ve been looking for a new style to experiment with, and yours seems to be perfect for innovation. Might I request your assistance in a few of my upcoming songs?”

Vinyl blushed deeply and looked almost as stunned as Evie did. Octavia, less dazzled, stepped forward to shake the artist’s outstretched hoof, smiling.

“That sounds delightful. Thank you very-”

“This is the biggest load of bullshit I’ve EVER heard.”

The voice came from the edge of the crowd, coming closer. All on stage turned to find

its source, only to see Lyrica de Crescendo climbing the stairs once more.

Fancy Pants stepped forward first. "*Excuse me*, Miss de Crescendo?"

Lyrica didn't hesitate. "*Shut it*. You and your tramp of a marefriend over there can kiss my flank. How could you give the prize to *them*?" She indicated Vinyl, Octavia, and Evie. "I have more musical talent in my hoof than them!"

The host drew back in indignation. "*Miss de Crescendo*, I HIGHLY suggest that-"

The blue mare wasn't finished, and decidedly ignored Fancy. She turned to Tombstone. "And *you!* I thought at first I'd get to see Scratch over there lose her dreams, and not get to meet you! After you picked the wretched little filly first, I thought that *at least* I'd have some measure of satisfaction! But *no!!* You had to go and partner with them, too! Well, you know what?"

She turned to the crowd, which had remained in a state of silent shock the entire time. "*Would you all like to know what?*"

Silence.

This didn't phase the pianist, who was well past the point of no return. "*They're fillyfoolers! Dirty little fillyfoolers! And I have PROOF! VIBRANT! Drop them!*"

A noise came from above. Octavia, who had been wondering suspiciously the whole time just *where* Lyrica's colt friend was, got her answer as she glanced up and caught sight of the stallion on the upper balcony, emptying a sack onto the crowd below. Fluttering out of the bag were what looked like thousands of pieces of paper.

As the first sheets hit the floor, Vinyl snatched one out of the air with her magic and jumped. "Tavi! Look!"

It was a picture of the pair sharing a kiss outside of the cellist's apartment. The image was quite clear, and Octavia clenched her teeth in anger at the thought of being spied on.

However, she was beaten to Lyrica by another. Fancy Pants, having caught a picture himself and witnessed its contents, didn't bother with formalities. Tearing up the picture and levitating the mic to himself, he advanced on the pianist, speaking into it so that the

entire crowd could hear.

“MISS DE CRESCENDO!”

Lyrica stopped for a moment, overwhelmed by the volume. When everypony could hear again, Fancy continued.

“You *clearly* have no respect for the decency of *anypony*. Your manners are deplorable, and you are a *horrid* loser. You and your- oh, look, there he is now.”

Coming towards the stage was Vibrant, presumably done dumping pictures. He had rushed down the stairs, and now was striding through the crowd, which parted before him as if he were infected with some virulent plague. He reached the stairs up to the stage as Fancy continued talking.

“-You and your *coltfriend* should kindly remove yourselves from this festiv-”

Fancy stopped short and considered Vibrant with a new interest. Cocking his head to the side, his face suddenly lit up in recognition, and he grinned and called to the stallion.

“Oh, -Vibrant, was it?- Don’t I recall seeing you at the club the other night? It seems to me that you were with a yellow pegasus that evening, but perhaps my memory isn’t quite what it used to be.”

Lyrica turned to her approaching coltfriend, a mixture of fear and fire in her eyes. “What is he saying? I thought you were visiting your mother!”

The white stallion shook his head. “I don’t know what he’s talking about. I would, um, *never* do that!”

From across the stage, Vinyl chipped in in an imitation of Vibrant’s voice. “*Two at once!*”

“Why do they keep saying that? That’s the second time tonight!”

“Well... That is... I never...”

Fancy Pants jumped back in. “Oh! That’s correct! She was a bartender someplace, wasn’t she? Yellow coat, red mane. Fit perfectly with you.”

Lyrice's eyes were beginning to show death for the stallion next to her, who could do nothing but shake his head in an unconvincing manner and stammer for his defense. Fancy Pants, after considering him with distaste for a moment, resumed his earlier tirade.

"At any rate, it is one thing to be unhappy about losing to a rival. It is *something else entirely* to invade their privacy and call them 'dirty'. I, for one, am quite willing to bet that their relationship is much more solid than your own."

Lyrice glanced out at the crowd, looking desperately for backup. However, all the ponies who had heard of the relationship earlier in the evening were already losing interest in the pictures, and many were tossing them on the ground. The pianist was shocked.

"But.. but... they...."

Fancy advanced one more time, bringing him almost nose-to-nose with the blue unicorn, for a final blow.

"*AND*, you may be assured that your prize *will* be rescinded. I am considering not allowing you to enter *any* further contests, as well. I have *never* seen two ponies act so *infantile* and *petty* in my entire life. Now, take your worthless selves, and *please leave!*"

Lyrice, soundly defeated and disheartened, turned to leave, almost bumping into the red and yellow-maned pony behind her. Seizing on a chance to retain some dignity, she began to berate her ex-paramour.

"*Vibrant! Move your lousy, cheating, fat flank out of the way!*"

The white stallion was about to open his mouth for a rebuttal when the entire stage went silent, reacting to one thundering voice.

"FAT-FLANK?"

Chef Serat stepped forward from where he had been standing on stage. His face was an image of wrath, and his eyes blazed. Even his moustache seemed angry.

"YOU TWO! YOU VERE ZE VUNS!"

Lyrice trembled and took a step back. Fancy Pants subtly moved back as well, to allow the chef pony a better line of sight.

The pianist glanced at Vibrant behind her, and then back at the large, angry unicorn. She began to slide to the side, attempting to escape his field of vision. The chef continued to glare at her, and Lyrice quavered under the look.

“Um.... which ones? I don’t, uh, know what you’re talking about!”

“OHH, YES YOU DO!”

Vibrant tried to smile. It looked grotesque. “Uh, I don’t think that-”

The chef pointed at him with a hoof. “YOU VERE ZE VUN WHO SAID IT! FAT-FLANK!”

Lyrice decided to take the lesser of the two evils before her, and moved behind her (now temporary) colt friend. “Get him, Vibrant! Go!”

The white stallion had other plans, however. He swallowed loudly, and the fierce points his mane were spiked into seemed to wilt a little under the chef’s menacing gaze. He raised a hoof in front of him in a placating gesture.

“No, no, what I *said* was colossal, and that has a very different- ”

Vibrant froze, realizing what he’d just uttered. All eyes were on him as his mouth hung open, his face an image of the only thought going through his mind:

Oh, BUCK.

Serat narrowed his eyes and gave a small malicious grin. Vibrant trembled.

From across the stage, Vinyl had recovered her wits. “Oohhh, *busted!*”

Octavia poked her with a hoof. “Shhhh!”

However, the crowd had already picked it up. Echoes of “Oohhhhhh!” were reverberating around the room, and several members had already begun laughing at Lyrice and Vibrant’s semi-terrified expressions as the very large unicorn began advancing slowly towards them again.

Without moving his gaze from his quarry, the chef called offstage to an attendant.
“JACQUES! ZE BEEG VUN!”

Evie glanced back at Vinyl and Tavi, confused. “Did he say, ‘the big one’?”

The two older mares exchanged looks, each guessing the meaning of those words.
Octavia answered.

“I’m afraid so.”

Evie began to turn back, still talking. “Well, what does that mea- Oh *Celestia*, that’s big.”

From the shadows next to the stage, an extremely large saucepan had been thrown.
The large unicorn caught it in his magic, and raised it.

“CHEF SERAT GIVE YOU VUN CHANCE TO BE LEAVINK!”

Lyrica and Vibrant opened their mouths to protest.

“VUN!”

“But, I’ve got a perfect right-”

“Listen here, you overblown-”

“TWO!” The saucepan raised a little higher.

“Why don’t we all just-”

“THREE!”

The pan began to come down. The pianist saw it and panicked, shoving Vibrant in front of her to block it, and jumping off the stage. She landed clumsily among the crowd, then picked herself up and began to bolt for the doorway. Behind her, the stallion (who was seriously considering no longer being her colt friend) abandoned all remaining shreds of dignity and virility and followed her, jumping and nearly landing on a brown pegasus in the crowd. The pony leapt back with a look of disgust.

Serat bellowed and gave chase, yelling. "OHHH, NO! YOU IS NOT GETTINK AVAY LIKE ZE LAST TIME, IN ZE RESTAURANT!"

He too jumped from the stage. The pegasus that Vibrant had virtually landed on saw him coming and nearly fainted. A friend from the crowd dragged him out of the way just as the chef landed, sending a tremor through the ground. He still held the pan high in his magic, and began to chase the two out of the ballroom, still roaring. The crowd watched as all three ponies disappeared through the door to the hall.

Muffled shouts continued to punctuate the silence that reigned in the ballroom. Every eye was trained on the doorway, and all ears were straining to hear.

"-AND NO COMINK BACK AGAIN! OR I MAKE YOU INTO ZE SOUP!"

The outer doors were shut with a bang. There was silence in the hall. No pony dared breath.

Chef Serat poked his head in through the door to the ballroom., his smile wide. "OOOKEE! ZEY AHR GONE!"

The audience erupted into cheers, much to his surprise. He looked befuddled at the praise, then shrugged and smiled some more. He had left his saucepan outside, presumably in the hall with one of his waiters.

Fancy Pants turned to the musicians remaining on stage. "I apologize for the rude disturbance. At least we're done with those two."

Returning to center stage and levitating the mic to him again, the host calmed the crowd. When they were quiet, he made a few closing remarks.

"Well, then. Did everypony enjoy this year's festival?"

The shout of agreement trailed off as Fancy shook his head. "No, no, you didn't. Simply because, it's not over yet!" We'll have more dancing, more music, and Angevin at the bar is still serving up drinks." The blond-maned pony waved cheerfully at the crowd. Vinyl gave a small hop of excitement at the prospect of more alcohol.

"Chef Serat is still serving gourmet treats outside, and the balconies upstairs are still quite the private location for any young couples." He winked clearly at Vinyl and Tavi.

Octavia froze, waiting. This was it; all the 'coming out' before had paled compared to this millisecond. This was different; this wasn't a few ponies. This was exhibition. Her eyes closed. Up on stage, before everypony, without the shameful antics of their rivals to distract the crowd from passing its judgement...

"Tavi! *Tavi!*"

The cellist opened her eyes at Vinyl's call, to a multitude of smiling and cheering ponies. She stood there, mouth slightly agape, as the applause tapered off and the crowd waited for Fancy's closing words.

Nothing. They said nothing. No hatred, no cruel laughter, no anger...

Their host continued. "So, please, enjoy yourselves! Fleur and I cannot eat all the leftovers! And, for the love of our dear Princess Celestia, *never stop making music!*"

The din at this from the aggregation of musician ponies in the crowd was deafening, and Fancy smiled contentedly. He was one of the few upper-class ponies whose expensive hobby it was to help other ponies- it always made him feel excellent, like nothing else could. Seeing Vinyl and Tavi glancing at each other and blushing, he gestured to Evie.

The green unicorn came to him, and the white stallion whispered something in her ear. Evie smiled and grinned, nodding emphatically. "Oh, yes, that's fine!"

Fancy thanked her and left to speak to the ponies in charge of the music.

Meanwhile, the second-place winners had just begun to leave the stage when they heard a quiet, yet refined voice behind them.

"Wait a moment, please!"

They turned to see Fleur, smiling kindly. "I wanted to thank you for being here tonight. Manehattan- all of Equestria- needs your example."

The pair smiled, still in slight shock. Vinyl looked a bit confused. The pink unicorn shooed them off with a hoof. "Now go! Go dance! Have fun!"

The musically-inclined mares climbed down from the stage and began to make their

way through the crowd. Halfway through, Fancy Pants's voice came back over the microphone.

"Breaking our usual tradition of playing the song of first place winner first, with permission from Miss Stelar, we're going to switch the order these first songs will be played in. Will everypony please clear the center of the dance floor? Except for the second-place winners, that is."

Vinyl and Octavia looked around in confusion as a wall of ponies receded from them, leaving them in a large clearing. Without warning, a familiar melody came over the speakers.

Their eyes locked. All the gazes of the other ponies were focused on the two mares in the middle as their song began to play, but those two had eyes only for each other.

The DJ extended her hoof formally. "Could I have the honor of this dance?"

Octavia smiled and took the hoof.

"Of course."

*** **

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*** Author's note:

Hey, fillies and gentlecolts. Take a look at the description. Does it say 'complete' yet?

That's cause it's not. ;)

We're close, though. (Can you say 'epilogue') Anyway, a few things to mention:

-I tried to make this ending pretty obvious. I mean, there had to be a happy ending, but of course our favorite heroines couldn't win- that would be too cliche. I think a lot of you guessed what was going to happen, and I'm okay with that!

-I made Tombstone's OC pretty classy and eloquent here. I don't know if that's how he talks, or how his OC should talk, but it seemed to fit, so I wrote his dialogue like that.

Sorry if you know different. D:

Was everyone pleased? LET ME KNOW! Leave a comment, send me a message, etc.
Love you guys! Hold on for one more week!***