

# *A Heinous Hat Trick*

Duski rose from his relentless rest, his confused, still dreamy daze dissipating like the sleepy dust in his eyes as he smiled softly and rubbed them, stretching with a sweet, high-pitched yawn, his tail striking up to the skies as his whole body clenched and relaxed, the pup throwing off his bedsheets, slipping his furry toesies into his equally furry slippers and checking his phone, simultaneously filled with self-love and self-loathing as his lay-in had lead to a 10AM start to the day, swishing his dressing gown on with a flourish as he trotted downstairs, practically gagging for the delectable proper british brew.

Duski bapped the remote, flicked the kettle switch and very gently handled his favourite mug, adorned with a humorous but inappropriate for work fox related pun, flipping the teabag in as the millionth rerun of a semi-adult cartoon played, the dog, walking back to his front door to check the mail as he noticed a purple envelope perched though his letterbox as if deliberately, stuck just below his eye-level, inviting him to open it...

The kettle rumbling, rattling and roaring as it called for its master's return, Duski snatched the envelope and retreated to his heated appliance, firing its full clip into the cup directly on the bag like fish in a barrel. Bringing the steamy cup to the table, his well groomed claw sliced down the purple paper, a striking purple voucher sliding out for a free hat fitting.

His tail giving a swish and his ears perking to the idea as he absent-mindedly stirred his tea, slipping out the glossy, elegant letter and reading it in his head.

***“Dear Duski,***

*Congratulations! You have been selected for a free hat fitting by us at The Towers Hat Company, a wholesome, family run business looking to bring back some british class to the masses, is celebrating our grand opening!*

*We are looking for models for our new catalogue, simply bring your voucher to our shop located on Brunel lane and request your free fitting, we are confident you will be happy with our signature collection, so much so you simply wont be able to resist showing it off, but if you are unhappy with your fitting, a complementary, luxury pocket watch worth £2,500 will be provided for your time.*

*We thank you for reading this letter, and thank you in advance for your custom, we can't wait to welcome you and find the right hat for your head.*

***Sincerely, Allison Towers”***

Duski was already intrigued at the idea of a hat fitting, he was a sucker for headwear, but the prospect of a free pocket watch left him incredibly excited! By just trying on a dumb hat, he would net himself £2,500! or if he decided to keep it, one eye-catching, dazzling pocket watch.

He could see it now, his white collar shirt cuffed with a striking collar, an almost shimmering matt black waistcoat hugging his figure and melding with his pressed black slacks, his sleek, clopping shoes demanding attention, holding a jacket over his shoulder with his irresistible, sparkling new watch dangling and swaying from his person, he would be the guy everyone wants to be, as bitches would flock to him.

Leaving his brew to stew, Duski hastily dashed upstairs, getting dressed to visit the new business down town...

...Duski looked at his phone again, his hindering maps letting him know he was walking into a wall as he sighed, clutching his envelope tight as he scanned the road around him as his face lit up in victory, The Towers Hat Company, he found it!

A warm, welcoming, ol'timey store, it's sign proudly glimmering and presenting the stylish logo, a silhouette of a top hat and monocle, the hat's stripe and a spiral in the glass a poignant purple, yet to face the elements, with a range of caps and hats adorning the window, all seemingly sporting the ostensibly signature purple the Towers name came with.

A delightful chime welcomed the dog into the store as his jacket wavered behind him, the cold left outside as the orangey glow of the warming wooden room complemented the prominent purple laid around, so quiet and peaceful with a quiet, classical tune gently humming in the background. Spontaneously, a hat perfectly levelled with the shopkeeping counter sprouted a well groomed racoon from under it, as they popped up from behind with a delighted smile.

"Ahhh hello~! Welcome to the Towers Hat Company, I'm Allison Towers~!" The racoon announced with a dramatic and perfectly performed bow, his own hat keeping almost gravity defying hold on his head, his enthusiasm and cutting charisma painting a smile on the deergi's face.

"I trust you found the place okay?" The adorable panda-esque man questioned, tilting his head with a wide grin as he almost telepathically beckoned Duski over.

"Hi there~! Yes thank you! This is a really wonderful place you have here" Duski complemented, observing and absorbing the range of hats and accessories available, not spotting any prices though...

"Why thank you~! We are glad we could surpass your expectations! Thank you again for your custom, what can I do for you, Sir?" Allison proposed, genuinely touched by the kind words.

"Oh~! I had this letter this morning for a free hat fitting?" Duski replied, waving his letter before placing and pushing it to the owner over the table.

"Ahh excellent! Thank you so much for your interest, right this way please~!" The joyful racoon scampered around the counter and past the dog after swinging his measuring tape around his neck like a scarf, leading him towards the fitting rooms as Duski got a better look at the hats on offer, on a second glance, much of the range limited to top hats with Tower brand stripes, and weirder still there definitely wasn't any prices, but he pushed it to the back of his mind, the eager racoon patting a rich puffy, purple seat lined with a golden yellow trim.

"Please come! I think you will look simply dashing in one of our suits, Mr Duskington!" The racoon cheered, branding his wide, inviting smile once again like a happy salesman of costumed clothing.

The dog nodded before his ears twitched at the sound of footsteps, spotting the back end of the building though the doorways behind the counter as he saw 3 hatted figures, stacking seemingly endless boxes.

"Oh! Is that your family?" the canine questioned.

“Wha? OH! Yes! Such helpful siblings!” The racoon answered, still patting the pillow.

“But... there's like only one racoon” Duski paw slowly pointed in confusion.

“Family of thieves~!” The racoon tapped at his natural black mask, patting harder, faster louder.

“Wait what!? that raises even more que-”

“The time for hats is now, sir!” the racoon stamped his clawed paw as he gave a final, muffled slam of the purple pillow, the dog dashing to it, very british in his stance of not wanting to cause a fuss.

The corgi parked his loafy, jean covered behind on the stool, looking back at his handsome mug in the mirror, the racoon taking no time to get to work as his fingers clasped his chin with a thought provoking hum, unravelling his lengthy, length measuring tape as he prodded and donked the deergi's antlers.

“Hmmm, guess these are permanent~” The racoon grumbled, trying to plap a regular sized hat on Duski's head as his head sticks valiantly thwarted his attempts, the hat plonking off and hitting the floor as the racoon was countered and disarmed.

“Umm... yeeeah~” The dog nervously smiled, slightly embarrassed he decided to go to a hat shop completely forgetting about his antlers, he hit his head on low ceilings enough, and despite them literally sticking out his squishy, dumb, doughy brain, their existence would often slip his mind... maybe that was exactly why they did...

“No matter! My goal is to provide the world with hats, and by golly I will give them hats!” the animated racoon declared, Duski could have sworn he heard a clap of thunder in the distance, and it wasn't even raining.

Ally got to work, wrapping up the deergi's forehead and marking his tape with coloured sharpies, taking careful consideration to Duski's antler length as the hat would need to account for such prominent, provocative pointy bits.

“Uh huh... okay! Just stay there sir, let me find the quintessential hat for that head of yours~!” the racoon promised, happily slipping into the back leaving the curious canine to explore.

The dog scoured the many knick-knacks available alongside the admittedly well crafted top hats, a collection of wallets, watches, gems and jewellery that sparkled with shine and pleased the eye with their quality, but still no prices... Duski picked up a sharp, smart, black wallet, feeling the designer leather perfectly stitched together, the dog flipping it over as he inspected it, thinking to himself it would make for a generous gift... and it did, the dog opening the wallet to find a licence for what eerily looked like his post dog, what the heck was it doing here?

The wallet was emptied except for the licence, either the postmaster travelled very light or the snatcher was careless, Duski's lie in meant he didn't spot the poster of his letter, but if it was his usual dog, would that mean he visited here before it was opened? Or even weirder, brought here... it could also be just be the fact he dropped it around here, nevertheless something seemed wrong.

Things also seemed unusually quiet at the back of the store, especially for so much activity...

The canine shuffled back a few steps silently to peak through the still opened doors as he watched the hatted staff move boxes and boxes of hats, scrawled with sizes of all kinds, way too many for a simple indie store, it was apparent these hats were under some kind of mass production.

A white Umbreon, hatted of course, matched his way to the stack of boxes where a tiger was taking his turn to collect one, but as the clumsy hatted tiger swung around, he knocked off the Umbreon's hat, the Umbreon freezing in position, completely unmoving, as if they couldn't believe what just happened.

The canine's brow raised as no one seemed phased by the frozen worker, trapped mid march as their hat just rolled back and forth on the ground beside them.

That was when Ally appeared, hat in hand, this one with a rather bland black stripe, happily strolling past the Umbreon before stopping, still smiling... as a purple tendril slid out from the back of their hat! Slithering down their back growing longer and longer as it coiled around the missed placed headwear, lifting it up and fitting it back snugly on the stuck bundle of fluff, firmly twisting it back and forth slightly and giving it a gently tap, before retracting under the raccoon's brim, the Umbreon back to work as if nothing happened, un-paused as the raccoon too went back to their day.

Duski, filled with shock and terror, watched with bewilderment, rubbing his eyes and looking around the store to check he was still in the real world, looking back at the doorway, where an ominous, alien glow pulsed with power from corner where raccoon had slipped off too, hatted works continuing to march and move unaware of the mysterious glow smothering them, before it stopped, a moment of silence, before Ally's foot steps started once more...

With a set of foot steps scurrying closer, Duski panicked, teleporting back to the stool trying to maintain a straight poker-face, unease setting in with one too many strange things about this new store, calculations running in his brain as the raccoon neared with a dazzling brand new hat, a shimmering, shiny purple stripe coiled around its brim, was that the same hat from before?

"Here we are, sir~! I'm sorry for the delay, I'll be sure to get to work on more for your antlered friends and family, hmhm~!" The raccoon giggled, absolutely certain his customer would be most pleased with his visit as he almost skipped with a hat and cane in hand.

"N-no problem at all! Say! I really appreciate the fitting, if you could send me the measurements or keep me on file, I'll be sure to come back some time! But uh... I'm an idiot and forgot to bring my wallet with me! Haha~ Damn~!" The dog struggled mentally, patting an empty pocket and shrugging with terrible acting skills, sweating and shaking as he went to get up.

"Awwwww~! I'm real sorry, sir, it's such a shame as we made this had just for you~" The raccoon whined, his arms flopping to his side still holding the hat, defeated and deflated as he continued to move closer.

"Well, a deal's a deal, and if you weren't pleased, I give you my watch..." Ally uttered, sliding out a beautiful watch from his waistcoat pocket, his logo emblazoned on the front with pinpoint precision, swaying back and forth in front of the dog.

"What do you think? Been in my family for generations, just gave it a little more of a personal touch, hmhm" The raccoon smirked as he continued to wave it in front of the canine, like a paw full of treats trying to waft over a hypnotic scent

"G-gosh that is really...really pretty... b-but I should get going~ C-can I take a look?" The dog mumbled, trying to not be rude but also the sway of the watch was being rather... distracting~

"Hm? Oh no, I never said you could take it with you! Just giving you a real good look, just sorta, burrowing a glance if you like, until you don't need it any more~" the manager explained, his tone taking on a more villainous approach, as he tapped the top of his watch with the cane, the watch

clicking open as its tick became louder, much more invasive, and the canine saw the beautiful trademark spiral of the Towers Hat Company, which almost seemed to move and swirl with each sway, catching the dog's attention quite well as each sway was perfectly timed...

Tick, tock~

Tick, tock~

Tick, tock~

It's true what they say, that time seems to go so much slower as you stare at it, Duski feeling like he had been watching like the moment lasted forever as ironically he lost his grasp on time, the numbers blurring in with the purple and white of the spiral, as the canine seemed to freeze on his poofy pillow, mesmerised as he sat back comfortably, the racoon continuing to swing his treasure as he gently tapped the deergi's antlers with his cane, getting no response and smiling a wide grin.

"Glad you changed your mind, Duskington, now, lets get you hatted shall we? Trust me, its not so bad with a good fit like this~" Ally spoke, struggling holding in an evil laugh, moving back round the dazed Duski as the dog watched his ditzzy self in the mirror, hat slotting neatly over his antlers, slowly lowering, with a sinister purple glow emanating from inside.

If Duski could snap out of it, the multiple screeching, wailing, alarming red flags would be leading him to the door like a runway, but...

The room was utterly silent other than the fabric rubbing against Duski's fur as the hat slotted nice and snug on his head, the canine suddenly popping up with perfect posture and alertness without a sound as if awakening from a bad dream, his face empty, his fear and daze deleted as well as seemingly everything else, with no resistance whatsoever.

His eyes beginning to glow ever so softly with a purple-ish hue, his orange iris now a smart, fashionable purple, the canine started to reanimate after a few seconds, turning it's head as it admired it's new look in the mirror, feeling his new firm, solid yet fluffy hat on his head nervously with his paw, as if it wasn't his own, as he gave a warm smile in admiration of his new attire.

"There we go~! You look so much better, it really does suit you, doesn't it?" the racoon asked, evil grin replaced with his previously joyful tone.

"It looks...perfect~! It suits me so well..." Duski said softly, his vocal chords and body feeling so loose and relaxed, so fresh and new, just like his hat.

"Splendid~! I am very sure I'll be seeing such a delighted customer again, and I am sure this is the beginning of a wonderful relationship, I am sure you'll be bringing value to my store with every visit~! Clothes, jewellery, antiques..." The racoon slotted his prized watch back in his pocket.

"... And most importantly, customers, hmhm~! We do have a lot of hats to shift, and everyone would look so good in their own, don't you think?" The racoon tilted his hat in celebration to his fellow hatted friend, his cane wrapping around the canine as he was led out the store.

"Thank you so much, Ally! Yes, everyone should have hats like this! I'll be sure to visit and bring my jewellery with me..." Duski nodded his hat back, strutting out the store with newfound pride in his steps, off to show his winged and furred friends alike his new headwear.

About to wave off his latest loyal customer, Ally noticed the vouchers pressing against his pocket, yelling out a command to the pup urgently.

“Oh, Duski, stop right there!” The raccoon ordered, with the canine stopping on a dime as if unable to resist the order.

The hatted gentleman scampered over, wrapping his arm around the dog with reassurance, pulling out more vouchers and slipping them in Duski’s with a friendly, firm, repeated pat.

“Be a deer and deliver these gifts to your friends & family, will you? I am sure they would love to look as stylish as you are now” Ally proposed, patting Duski’s hat as if sticking the idea in his head.

Duski’s eyes glimmered as he had the brilliant idea! He had to show everyone his hat and tell them about this store, the incredible service and how good his hat felt, giving them the very generous gift of a free fitting. Duski smile widened as he resumed his strut, the raccoon politely pushing them in the right direction.

Ally chuckled to himself, lifting Duski’s wallet to his face and giving a devilish grin at his latest treasure, heading back to his store, closing the door as it dinged, another satisfied customer...

**WRITTEN BY...**

**DUSKI**

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