

Chapter 5

Only by putting all of her weight onto it was Fluttershy able to snap the end off of the mop handle. It was just the right size she needed. She gripped it tightly in her mouth, breathing heavily through her nose. Her mind was reeling, her body was fighting her decision, but it was one she'd already chosen to make.

She carefully looked back in the mirror; her body was starting to shake. She carefully raised a hoof up, her body screaming out as it touched the tender spot. She bit down harder on the stick, her breathing was stirring into a panicked breath, the Health Drink had numbed some of the pain, but it couldn't numb this.

She had one shot to do this right and she had to watch to make sure she did it right, she couldn't close her eye. Her heart throbbed in her throat; she could hear every fast and deep breath she took, her hoof positioning itself just correctly. She readied herself as best she could, and then in a swift motion moved her hoof.

CRACK

Fluttershy screamed into the broom handle like she'd never screamed before, the pain was instant and intense, like red-hot knives piercing the back of her mind. Her body collapsed once more as fresh tears poured out of her eye. She panted heavily, laying there as she tried to recover from the pain.

She lay there, twitching as her wing throbbed constantly now, in more pain then it had been before. She forced herself to stand up, to look at it in the mirror; she had to make sure she had snapped it back into place correctly.

Through one eye she looked at the wing carefully. Despite it being covered in blood, hurting like she'd never felt pain before, she could see that the wing was in the correct shape it should be. She'd managed to snap it back correctly. She prayed that would be enough to keep it useable once it finished healing.

She laid down onto her back and held her injured wing straight as best she could. Only having one hoof to mend her wound was a pain, but she could work around it. She carefully placed the stick on the wing to keep it straight, hoping it would also help in making sure her wing healed. She carefully grabbed the bandages, and proceeded to wrap her wing with the stick.

It was excruciating, but once her wing was wrapped, she'd finished taking care of her wounds.

She panted heavily as she carefully picked herself up, looking back into the mirror to see

everything that she had done.

Her face was half covered now, wrapped in bandages so only her good eye was visible. Her hoof was bandaged and now raised in a sling that had been carefully tied around her neck, just below her lantern so that both could fit around her neck. Her body had been rewrapped for the third time as well to make sure the first wounds she had received were healing well. And finally her wing was wrapped in a makeshift cast that she had managed to get to lay flat against her body.

She sighed at the state her body was in. She had a hard time believing that this was real, yet there would no doubting the pain she felt.

“...If...If Rainbow Dash or Pinkie Pie are hurt...could...could they take care of their wounds?” Fluttershy frowned, looking at herself, “Rainbow Dash is reckless...but she’s also strong...she might be alright, she could fight back against the monsters here...but Pinkie Pie...” She shook her head, “No...Pinkie Pie’s done this before...a-as hard as that is to believe...she...she’ll be fine too.”

“Both of my friends are fine.” She smiled to herself in the mirror, trying to force herself to be reassured, but it wasn’t working well. She frowned again, before looking away from herself, “I...I hope they are...”

She turned and looked at her surroundings. She had wound up in a bathroom after the lift ride, though it seemed the effects of the drenched, rotting world had been left behind for the moment. The bathroom looked like it had fallen to disuse, but nowhere near the levels the hospital had. She had found a mop in the corner of the room, though it hadn’t looked like it’d been used in ages.

It was time for her to leave though; she had to go find her friends.

She carefully slipped the saddle bag back onto her back, and very carefully coordinating her three hooves, walked out of the bathroom.

She walked out into a cool breeze, wincing a little as the cold air bit against her freshly bandaged wounds. She looked out as best she could to see where she was, but it seemed that night had fallen, shrouding the world in a veil of darkness.

‘H-Has it really been half a day?’ Fluttershy asked herself in shock. She hadn’t felt that much time pass, but maybe because of her condition she was having difficulty with being a good judge of time.

She carefully turned her lantern on and it illuminated the path before her. There was a dirt road before her, open wide at first, before narrowing into a forest. She looked around,

noticing the building she had walked out of. She knew where she was.

It was the boat-house that sat on the edge of Crystal Lake just outside of Ponyville. That meant she was only a short walk away from Ponyville, she could be there in just a minute or two.

“Hold on Rainbow Dash...Pinkie Pie...I’m coming to find you.” Fluttershy said determined, before moving as quickly as she could down the path to Ponyville.

She was having trouble coordinating three hooves correctly, especially with trying to trot into town. She was wobbly on her legs, most likely a side-effect of not having rested enough, but she kept going forward. Her determination to see her friends was the strongest factor driving her mind right now.

Twigs in the forest snapped, strange noises crept through the leaves, she swore she could hear soft wails in the distant trees. But she forced her mind off of the sounds. She had to move past them, move into Ponyville.

The path began to open up before her, the dirt path quickly being replaced by the stone streets of Ponyville, the trees spreading apart as she saw the first signs of the homes in Ponyville. She smiled to herself as she returned, happy to be back in a place that seemed more normal than where she had been for the last half a day.

Her music box began to hiss, stopping her in her tracks.

‘Oh no...they’re here too...’ Fluttershy gulped as she looked into the night, trying to see what was causing her music box to hiss.

Sliding into view around the ground before her came a creature. It was in the basic shape of a pony; however this creature seemed to be no older than a filly reaching marehood. It’s body was completely hairless, the skin of the creature looking as if it had been deeply bruised all over, many parts of the skin dead or dying with other parts seemed fresh and healthy in comparison. It’s ears were folded down, melded with it’s face in such a way that it’s eyes were covered. It’s long legs pushed its body against the ground, its front hooves seemed to be strapped down on its back, as if tied down with its own skin, melding it with its body.

As the creature crawled around, it let out a strange, screeching cry, not unlike that of rusted metal grinding, unpleasant to the ears, but yet a sad wailing cry...

Fluttershy gulped as the creature seemed to push itself all over the place, unable to move in a straight line. Her instinct was to feel sympathy for the creature, her gut told her it was a creature to be pitied, that it needed her help...

Then an image of the dark creature appeared in her mind.

She carefully stepped around, slowly getting away from the creature, before running deeper into town. She slipped away from the creature, her music box finally going back to silence. She panted softly, looking over her shoulder to the direction she had left the creature.

It didn't seem to be able to follow her, which didn't surprise her considering it didn't seem capable of moving in a straight line. She let out a soft sigh, grateful that she could avoid the creature, she really only had enough bandages left to wrap one more wound at best and she didn't know when she would need it.

She carefully began to look around, trying to focus on the buildings around her. She blinked her eyes to gain more focus, if she knew where she was in Ponyville, she could navigate her way around.

She carefully moved her head around to look, careful not to harm her injuries, as a blur moved across her vision.

"Huh?" She said, quickly turning her head back to the blur. In the distance, as if glowing white like an angel, was the image of a young filly.

Fluttershy stared at the filly, not sure what to say or if to speak up. She wasn't even sure if it was real or not, but it was a filly just standing in the middle of nowhere.

The little filly let out a giggle before turning around and running away from Fluttershy.

"H-Hey! Wait! It's dangerous out here!" Fluttershy cried out, her instincts acting to quickly chase after the filly. "Come back! You shouldn't be alone!"

If the filly could hear Fluttershy, she didn't seem to be listening. She just continued to run, turning down a street. Fluttershy followed as quickly as she could, but she was slow and stumbling now, she cursed at herself for having let herself get so injured when she needed to help an innocent foal right now.

Her music box hissed as from the darkness crawled out another one of the monsters that pushed itself along the ground. Fluttershy ran past it, making sure to avoid even touching the creature. Her whole body was telling her she had to catch up to this filly.

The filly turned down another street and Fluttershy followed as best she could, nearly toppling over as she slowed herself down with her three hooves. She quickly paced down the street, when two of the monsters burst forth from the darkness causing her music box to wail.

These two seemed to be heading straight for her, with no time for her to move out of the

way. She gulped before quickly jumping. The two creatures wriggled their way past her as she landed behind them.

She thanked Celestia for having avoided them, before returning her sight to the filly. The filly made one last turn, not down a street, but into a house. Fluttershy felt grateful that the filly had gone inside, but she still had to make sure the little filly would be alright.

Fluttershy quickly drew closer to the house, looking it over before gasping.

The house was in terrible condition, it didn't look like it had been used in years. The windows were boarded, the walls were black, holes littered its frame, the gentle breeze caused it to groan very slightly.

Fluttershy gulped, getting a bad feeling from the house. However, the filly had gone inside of the house, she couldn't leave the poor thing alone.

She very carefully walked up to the door and pushed it open, her lantern illuminating the insides.

The door opened up to a decrepit living room, the furniture had long ago been eaten by insects, the table lay in pieces on the ground, most of the doors were sealed off with wooden planks the floor was covered in a thick layer of dust.

Fluttershy slowly walked into the house, her every footstep made the house creak and groan, as if struggling to hold up her weight.

She looked around the living room, every doorway on the floor she was on was completely sealed, there would be no way for her to get through any of them. On top of that, she couldn't see a single sign that the filly had entered the house.

She turned her attention to the stairs, the only path that hadn't been barred off by wooden planks. If the filly had gone anywhere, she must've gone upstairs.

Fluttershy slowly made her way to the staircase, looking up its length. She very carefully began to climb it, testing each step to make sure it'd hold her, as she then worked on climbing the stairs with just three hooves. She found herself doing surprisingly well.

Despite the creaking, the moaning and the constant threat of collapse, she made it to the top of the stairs.

She looked around, to her left was a door that was blocked off by more wooden panels, to her right was...

Fluttershy blinked in confusion. The imagery before her seemed to clash with the rest of the house.

The section of the floor right before a door had turned into a red, rusted metal, the door made of the same material. The wall seemed to be stretch out in a circle around the door, making the walls rotting and falling apart while just behind the holes in the wall was a chain-link fence, as if they were holding the walls together.

The area gave her the sense that it was supposed to be like a cage...

Fluttershy gulped before walking up slowly to the door. She didn't know what was behind the door, but something told her she had to look inside, that she had to find out what was in this room. She carefully put her hoof up to the door, took a deep breath for courage, and pushed open the door.

The first sound that came to her ears was panting. Loud, exasperated panting. Her eye focused on the image before her, her sight recognizing two different hues of pink in the shape of a pony. It had to be...

"P-Pinkie Pie?" Fluttershy called out to her friend. The panting stopped as the pink form seemed to freeze right in front of her. It slowly turned; as Pinkie's wide blue eyes came into view, looking to stare at Fluttershy.

Fluttershy let out an audible gasp as she instinctively took a step back. Pinkie Pie was covered in blood. Her mane was straight and her cheeks were wet with tears she'd been crying. Fluttershy's eyes immediately tried to spot or identify a wound...but she didn't see one. The blood on Pinkie hadn't come from her, it had come from...

Fluttershy's eyes moved down to the ground. Laying on the ground, in a pool of her own blood...was Pinkie Pie. Though this Pinkie was different...the hair was curly like Pinkie's normally is, but it was wearing a multi-colored leather dress with varying wings on the back...

"Flu...Flu...F-Flutter...shy?" The standing Pinkie seemed to gasp, as if finding difficulty breathing.

"Pinkie Pie...what...what happened?" Fluttershy asked in shocked disbelief. She could barely make out the scene before her. Why were there two Pinkie Pies...and why was one dead?

"F-Fluttershy..." Pinkie hiccupped as fresh tears began to spill down her cheeks, "Is...Is that...r-really you?"

"...O-Of course it is...Pinkie Pie...why...why are you..." Fluttershy couldn't finish her

sentence. The words were refusing to come out, she couldn't think of how to speak what she needed to say properly.

"Fluttershy...why...why are YOU..." Pinkie choked on her words, as she desperately rubbed her face of her tears, "Why are you...why are you so hurt!?" Pinkie twisted her head, as if saying those words struck pain into her.

"W-What?" Fluttershy asked confused, before looking down at her hoof in the sling. She was hurt...but at the moment she didn't care about that, she cared about what was happening with her friend...

"I'm fine Pinkie Pie, but please, tell me-"

"You're NOT fine!" Pinkie interrupted her with a yell. Fluttershy took another step back in shock; she'd NEVER heard Pinkie yell like that before, "Fluttershy..." Pinkie visibly shook as more tears came from the pink pony, as her blue eyes looked at her once more, "Your face is swollen and covered in bandages, your hoof is in a sling, your body is wrapped up and...a-and your WING IS IN A CAST!" Pinkie then snapped her head away from looking at Fluttershy as she sobbed hard.

Fluttershy was speechless. It was true; she was in very bad condition at the moment.

But...

But seeing her pink, party loving, fun having friend sob and cry while covered in blood didn't feel right to her. She wanted to help Pinkie Pie more than she wanted to help herself.

"...Pinkie Pie..." Fluttershy mumbled softly, as if trying to find the right words to comfort her friend.

"This...This is all my fault..." Pinkie visibly shook as she cried, "I shouldn't have let this happen. I should've protected you; I should've been there..." Pinkie hiccupped and gasped for breath, "I should've known better than to let Twilight do this..."

"Pinkie...you...you couldn't have possibly known things would happen this way..." Fluttershy offered her words to Pinkie.

Pinkie seemed to stop shaking for a moment, before she began to shake again, though this time it was different. Pinkie...Pinkie was laughing. Fluttershy grimaced a little, this wasn't a fun loving laugh, this was...this was the laugh of a mare whose mind was breaking.

"Oh...Oh that's to laugh." Pinkie tried to smile, but her mouth wobbled as she rubbed her face, "I've been through this before...I've done this once before and I...I know how horrible this

place really is.” Pinkie shook her head, “But despite that...despite knowing everything I do, I let us get brought here anyway!” Pinkie let out a single laugh, before the smile she was trying to have vanished from her face as she hung her head.

“...Rainbow dash was right...” Pinkie mumbled quietly, “...If I...If I had really cared...I wouldn’t have said nothing...I would’ve told you everything that happens when you come here...I wouldn’t have tried to hide the truth for the sake of protecting you all from what I experienced...no...I didn’t speak up because I was selfish, because I only cared about myself...and so I let this hell fall upon you Fluttershy...”

Fluttershy’s mouth fell open as she tried to speak. She didn’t honestly believe any of Pinkie’s words. But she couldn’t say anything that would make her friend not believe them. Her mouth closed as she frowned, she felt so helpless...

Pinkie’s head slowly turned to look at the corpse of herself that still lay on the ground. Something about that body seemed to spark something inside of Pinkie Pie.

“But...But that doesn’t mean I’m going to just let my friends die!” She stood up, almost as if she was yelling at the dead Pinkie, “I REFUSE to be the reason they die! So long as I have strength in my body I will NOT let any of my friends fall victim to this world any longer! So long as I have a single breath of air in my body, I will fight this world with everything I have so that they can live!”

Pinkie was angry. She was panting heavily as she yelled at the corpse. In this one moment she had never seen Pinkie go through so many emotions, emotions that gave Pinkie’s words truth behind everything she said. The words were all personal, words that she had to speak from her heart.

Pinkie slowly turned away from the corpse, looking at Fluttershy with a glare. Fluttershy flinched. Pinkie’s stare softened when she saw the fear she was putting into her friend. Pinkie rubbed her face one more time as she tried to put on a soft but sad smile.

“Come on Fluttershy...let’s...let’s get out of here.” Pinkie said slowly walking towards Fluttershy.

Fluttershy could only just softly nod, as she turned around and opened the door back up, walking out back into the abandon house’s hallway, slowly followed by Pinkie Pie.

“So...what brings you here?” Pinkie asked quietly, not looking directly at Fluttershy, but at the hallway before them.

“W-Well...” Fluttershy tried not to stumble over her own words, “I found my way back to Ponyville after getting separated...a-and then I saw a filly run into this house...I-I was looking for

that filly when I found you..." Fluttershy explained quickly.

"So you saw a filly run in here?" Pinkie asked making sure she understood. Fluttershy nodded her head, "...Did you find her yet?" Fluttershy shook her head, "...Then we should try and find her. If there's one thing I've come to realize...things don't just happen without a reason here." Pinkie said as she began to walk further down the hallway of the second floor.

Fluttershy slowly followed after Pinkie Pie. There was silence between the two mares. Fluttershy wanted to speak up, she wanted to say something, but the words only got caught in her throat. She felt like Pinkie Pie was portraying herself as a monster...

But she knew Pinkie Pie wasn't a monster...she was a caring friend, who more than anything, loved her friends...

Pinkie checked a door, only to find it locked. She seemed to scrunch her face at the door, before letting it go and continuing on, leading the way.

Fluttershy watched Pinkie Pie as she moved. She seemed to scrutinize small details, looking at her surroundings with intensity. She looked like she didn't want to miss a single detail of anything in the house. She seemed determined, focused, like nothing was going to stop her from the mission she had set herself out to accomplish.

Fluttershy's ear perked up as her heart suddenly dropped. She could hear it...

She could hear the siren blaring in the distance.

"P-Pinkie Pie...do you hear that?" Fluttershy asked, terrified of the sound.

"Hear what?" Pinkie asked, instantly putting her focus on Fluttershy.

"...You don't hear it?" Fluttershy asked surprised, "T-Then maybe it's my imagi-"

"Fluttershy, don't ever assume anything here is your imagination!" Pinkie said, emphasizing the word ever, "Tell me what you're hearing!"

"I...I hear...a s-siren..." Fluttershy mumbled quietly.

Pinkie's pupils shrunk, as if in instinct.

"Fluttershy...stay very close to me. Don't leave my side, alright?" Pinkie said very seriously. Fluttershy nodded her head softly, as Pinkie turned back around before continuing down the hallway.

At the end of the hallway they came to another door. Pinkie put a hoof up to it and the door swung open.

Inside the room was a surprise. The shape of it was well taken care of; there was a new beige carpet with white walls all around the room, the room being lit fairly well. On one side of the room was a giant mirror that seemed to encompass the whole wall.

Pinkie entered the room first, scrutinizing it carefully. She didn't see anything out of the ordinary in the room, there was a small bed in the corner and desk with drawers. On one of the walls next to the window was another door, looking similar to a closet.

Pinkie walked over to the desk and examined it, seeming to be looking for something, opening each of the drawers for a clue or answer.

Fluttershy slowly walked into the room as she turned off her lantern. She had been expecting scenery similar to the kind she had seen at the hospital, everything drenched with water, rotting and falling apart...but the room was remarkably serene. Something about it gave her a sense of calm...

"Nothing..." Pinkie Pie muttered staring at the desk confused. She then turned her attention to the closet door and walked over to it. She opened the door and saw a small, walk-in closet that was lined with some clothes and boxes. She stepped inside to investigate for clues.

Fluttershy sat down, looking at herself in the mirror. She really did look a mess. She'd managed to avoid getting most of her hair in the bandages, so it was helping to hide the bandaged side of her face, but she still couldn't believe just how much damage she had taken from her encounter at the hospital.

"...You'll be okay..." Fluttershy said to herself, raising a hoof up to touch the mirror.

The mirror began to become translucent, as Fluttershy let out a shocked gasp. On the other side of the mirror, in a room similar to the one she was in, sat Rainbow Dash, staring at the mirror.

"Rainbow Dash!" Fluttershy cried out, pressing her hoof harder against the mirror.

"Rainbow Dash!?" Pinkie cried out from inside the closet. She instantly moved to exit the closet, when the door slammed shut on her face. She stared in shock at the door, as she tried to force it open, but it was locked tight.

"NO! NO YOU LET ME OUT RIGHT NOW!" Pinkie yelled as she banged on the door. She banged so hard she could feel pain begin to soar through her hooves.

Fluttershy couldn't believe that Rainbow Dash was on the other side of the mirror. She tried to bang her hoof against the mirror, but Rainbow Dash didn't seem to hear her. Rainbow Dash was just staring blankly back at her from the other room opposite the mirror.

"Rainbow Dash! Rainbow Dash! RAINBOW DASH!" Fluttershy cried out desperately trying to get her marefriend's attention. She banged against the mirror as hard as she could, her hooves beginning to bruise with each strike. But Rainbow Dash just sat there, looking confused at the mirror before her.

Suddenly, the lights dimmed. Fluttershy gasped as the light grew dimmer, her hoof quickly moving to her lantern to turn it on. The bright light blinded her as it reflected off the mirror, as she was no longer able to see through it or Rainbow Dash with the light on. She quickly turned the light back off, looking back into Rainbow's room.

The door at the back of Rainbow's room opened, though Rainbow still didn't move. Darkness was creeping into the room from the open door, washing in as if it was mist.

Fluttershy's heart sank. From the doorway flared a pair of familiar red eyes.

Fluttershy banged on the mirror again and again, crying out as loud as she could, "RAINBOW DASH! BEHIND YOU!"

The dark creature opened its mouth, revealing its wretched white mouth as it slowly walked closer to the sitting Rainbow Dash. But Rainbow Dash didn't move. She only seemed to tilt her head in confusion looking at the mirror still.

"NO! STOP! PLEASE! DON'T HURT RAINBOW DASH!" Fluttershy begged as tears began to stream down her face, her hoof starting to hurt from how hard she was banging on the window.

The dark creature stood right behind Rainbow Dash, its white mouth grinning at her as her heart stopped beating, Fluttershy looking right up into its face.

The dark creature opened its mouth in a bigger grin. Fluttershy's heart sunk further into her gut. The dark creature raised its mouth higher.

Then, it brought its mouth down hard on top of Rainbow Dash.

The mirror turned bright, forcing Fluttershy to shield her eyes from the sudden change. She adjusted her eyes as best she could, as she looked up at the mirror.

A soft, sad, [music box lullaby](#) began to play as images started to dance across the mirror.

"D-Don't worry...A-Ashley...I-I'll...f-fix you up..." the image was a crying, very young, filly Fluttershy. Her pony doll had been torn to pieces, the stuffing spread all around her. The filly was very carefully pushing the stuffing back inside of the torn up doll, before taking a threaded needle and starting to very slowly, very shakily, sew the torn pieces back together.

A splatter of blood struck the window, making the image turn red, before the image changed.

"Mother..." Filly Fluttershy called out softly to her mother who was lying in her bed. The older mare's head seemed to almost snap, as if looking in anger at the child. Fluttershy shook at the sight, never having seen her mother look so angry at her before. But the look of the older mare soon softened, as she looked at her child. She was tired.

"What is it my child?" She asked, though exhaustion was apparent in her voice.

"Dad...wanted me to see if you wanted anything to eat..." Fluttershy whimpered softly.

"Hah...food to eat." Her mother said with sarcastic bitterness, turning her head to look out the window of her room, "What's the point of eating. It burns my throat and makes me sick."

"B-But...you n-need to eat mother..." Fluttershy whimpered.

"Oh, I DO do I?" The older mare glared angrily at her daughter.

Another splatter of blood struck the window, causing the image to turn red once more, before the images changed once more.

A smack rang out loud, as Filly Fluttershy tumbled from her sitting position on the table. Tears sprang to the edges of her eyes as she looked up at what had just struck her; the nurse pony was glaring at her.

"Now tell me again...how did you break your wing?" She snapped at the little filly who was crying.

"I...I..." Fluttershy gulped as she tried to breath, "I...f-fell while...t-trying to fly..."

"That's right." The nurse said then walking over to Fluttershy and picking her up, sitting her back down, "You broke it trying to fly. You silly filly," The nurse said as if trying to be patronizing to her, "You need to be much more careful when you try flying. It can be very dangerous to fly." The nurse nodded her head slowly, "Now let's freshen that cast."

Fluttershy could only cry more, the cast on her wing seemed to be digging into her skin.

A third splatter of blood struck the window. The images turned dark, the mirror seeming to turn into a fire of darkness. The mirror burned up completely, disappearing without a trace.

Fluttershy sat in the dark, tears streaming from her eye. She was sitting in the pitch black room now, unable to see anything.

She carefully moved her hoof up to her lantern, before hesitantly turning it on.

The light lit up the room before her. Blood stained the carpet and the walls, but there was no sign of Rainbow Dash or the dark creature. The smell of blood and mildew struck her next, as she could hear the dripping of water all around her. The room was now rotting, drenched, she had returned to that world, the world separate from Ponyville.

She had returned to the Otherworld.

She very slowly stood up, lifting her hooves over the wall where the mirror used to exist. She carefully walked around the bloodstain that was all over the floor. She couldn't see a single remnant that told her Rainbow Dash had been here, only the blood stains that scoured the room.

She hiccuped before gulping, praying that Rainbow Dash hadn't just been killed before her eyes. But without a body there, she prayed that she could still be alive.

Fluttershy walked up to the door in Rainbow's room, and saw something written on blood on the door,

*Deep within there are secrets laid to rest
But we cannot hide forever from the sins of our past
What once was lost will now be found
Blood-stained hooves will rise once more*

Fluttershy couldn't help but realize, the words were meant for her. That the images she had just seen were only the beginning. Once she stepped through that door, she was going to learn...

Learn exactly what those images meant.

With a deep breath, and gulping down the heart beating in her throat, she opened the

doors and walked inside.