Follies of Fillies and Foals
by Auta Mane aka the Masked Toaster
*It's pronounced 'Out-ah mane' as in, 'with**out a mane**'*

'Silent. Got to stay quiet,' Dash silently told herself. in her leafy hiding place, deep in a shrub. *'If they catch me, it's all over!'*

She pushed a leafy limb out of her face and peered through the branches. Shimmering orbs of amethyst quickly scanned the horizon for any sign of movement. The lush green meadow grass swayed in the gentle breeze, as the occasional colourful blot of a wild flower on the landscape danced with the wind. Green-laden branches on the four trees in sight bounced in step to the quiet waltz the wind played.

She popped her head from the leafy cloak and looked around again, just to be sure. Leaves flew from her mane as she quickly glanced about. "Good. Looks like no pony's seen me."

No sooner had she whispered it, when a voice pierced the silence. "There she is! Don't let her get away again!"

"Oh pony!" Dash yelled in horror and shot out of the bush in a streak of...yellow? Dash was many colours, but yellow?

----- *Three years ago today* -----

A spark of light appeared, cresting over the hills. Trickles of light began to filter through an open window, casting their warmth upon a yellow pony sleeping snuggly-wuggly in her warm, toasty bed.

Fluttershy woke with a soft yawn, hooves reaching out over her head as she stretched. Forelimbs landed one the red tartan bedsheets she had been so bundled up in.

As she turned left to look out the window next to her bed. "Oh, what a lovely sun rise," she said softly with a smile. She crawled her way gently out of bed, the floorboards giving a quick creak as a hoof landed upon them.

"Eeep!" she squeaked and jumped back upon the bed with a slight tremble. She let out an short sigh as she realized it was just the boards biding her 'good morning'. "Oh my, you scared me. Good morning to you, too," she bid back.

She walked over to window, where she was greeted by a gathering of birds from various species. They chirped and sang in unison, singing their greeting. "Good morning, everyone. I hope you had a pleasant sleep." The chirps picked-up as they replied. "Oh, that's lovely," she returned. She gave a wave of her hoof as turned back inside and made her way downstairs.

As the stairs dipped below the floor, she was greeted again by the varying woodland

critters taking residence in her home, all but Angel, who was still bundled under his blanket in the corner. Fluttershy strode over to his bed, calling to him to wake-up. "Come on, now. It's a beautiful day out. You wouldn't want to spend it all in bed, would you?"

Angel didn't even stir. She was used to his defiance, but that didn't mean she was going to give up. "Come on, Angel. You really must get up." She nudged the sleeping lump, but still he wouldn't move.

"Angel?" She nudged him once more, but still no movement. However, a low groan seemed to emanate from beneath the blanket. "Aw, are you not feeling well?" She pet the mound tenderly, but jumped a step when a snarl came out of the little bunny bed. "A-are y-y-you all r-right...?"

The timid pony slowly reached a trembling hoof across the bed to pull back the cover. As she grasped the edge, she swallowed the heart ready to leap from her throat. She slowly started to pull the sheet away. Inch by inch, her knees trembled more and more. She bit her lip as she gathered-up the nerve to finally tug the whole blanket away, as her legs and wings readied to run away. She took a deep breath and yanked hard on the blanket, which came flying off at her.

The blanket lofted through the air only a few seconds, but to the frightened pony, it seemed like minutes. Once it finally fell from her sight, she was greeted not with her soft cuddly little white bunny. What stood in his bed was the farthest it could be *from* a bunny. No, what now stood, snarling and drooling was some sort of monster out of the darkest of nightmares as blackened, mud-covered lump of fur with long, twisted fangs, glowing red eyes and a nose so large, it covered half the creature's face. A large, sloping forehead hung over drooping eyes and long, chipped and dirty claws extended from an even larger palm. The body was short and stocky with patches of missing fur. Enormous, bare two-toed feet stood under the creature.

It was hard to tell if it was squatting, or lacked any form of knees, but Fluttershy wasn't going to wait to find out. She shot out of the room through an open window and was over the hills to Sweet Apple Acres so fast, her scream was still echoing throughout the cottage and the woods.

First, a quiet snort was heard, followed quickly by a full, hearty laugh. A blue and rainbow pony fell out from behind the curtains adorning the window, rolling on her back in laughter, forelimbs crossed over her stomach as hind legs kicked in the air.

Dash finally managed to calm enough to stand up and strode over to the creature, who pulled-off it’s head, revealing Angel Bunny, a devious though proud smile across his face. “Oh that was *sooo* awesome!” she said as the two hoof-paw bumped. “Did you see her face? And how fast she ran? *Priceless!*” She let out another boisterous laugh.

Suddenly, a cry was heard that stopped the pony’s laughter cold and sent a chill down her spine. “RAINBOW ***DAAAAAAAASH!***” howled Rarity, who back at Carousel Boutique, had just found her shop torn apart and raided with a note left in the middle of the middle of the room, adorned with the little racer’s signature rainbow lightning bolt that

matched the cutie mark on Dash's flank. Dash had tried to write a note so complimentary and full of praise for Rarity, hoping that it might calm her down when she saw the aftermath. But Rarity didn't even give the note so much as a quick glance after seeing who it was from.

"Uh oh..." Dash said quietly as her tail and ears drooped. Her head sunk as low as it could without burying it in the floor. "I, uh... gotta go... do this thing that I need to do... Bye!" And with that, the little pegasus pony shot out the window just as Fluttershy had done, but she popped her head back in for a moment. "You were awesome, by the way!" she told Angel and was gone again.

Applejack, meanwhile, spent her day trying to coax Fluttershy out from under her bed, where she remained the next three days, trembling so violently that she shook the whole Apple house.

----- *One year ago today*-----

Fluttershy once again awoke to a gleaming sun rise. She bid her morning tidings to the birds on her window sill as she made her bed and went down stairs. She greeted all her woodland friends who returned with chirps and squeaks.

She trotted over to the window, stretching her neck out as she took a deep sniff of the flowers growing outside. "Oh, just lovely," she said softly. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. She looked, but no one could be seen. Her quiet voice called out 'Hello?' but there was no answer. She strode over to the door and asked again, "Hello? Who is it?" Again, no response came. She was about to leave it be, as no sound had been heard, but another three knocks came rapping at the door. Perhaps whoever was at the door simple couldn't hear her.

Pulling the door open, she bid 'Hello' again, only to be greeted by a thick fog that enveloped her, blotting out even the hoof in front of her face. "Is someone there?" she called out to the fog, but not even an echo returned.

Suddenly, a pair of glowing lights appeared. They seemed to be staring at her as another pair appeared, then another, and another. Soon, she was surrounded by the lights, all in varying sizes. The fog shifted a little and it became apparent they were eyes, blinking and staring back at her. Suddenly, all manner of unearthly noises were heard and the eyes seemed to be closing in. She tried to stare them down, but they continued to encroach closer, unaffected by the intimidating glare. She tried again, fluffing her wings out and trying to sound strong and confident, though her meek and cracking voice did nothing to help.

Suddenly, the largest pair of eyes yet appeared, dwarfing all the other pairs. A guttural growl shook the pony down to her hooves, or so it would have were she not already trembling. She leapt back and was returned to her living room, but she didn't stop there. In three steps, she was back upstairs in her room, hiding behind a wall of home-made plush animals.

Outside, the fog started to lift as a pair of blue wings cut through the haze and fanned away the cloud Dash had lain over Fluttershy's door. The eyes revealed themselves to be nothing more than candles on sticks while the two larger were a pair of lanterns hanging from a branch.

The blue pony laughed loudly once again, but Fluttershy wouldn't hear over her chattering teeth and knocking knees. Dash blew-out the candles and lanterns, then took-off laughing to herself. Fluttershy, however, wasn't seen again for a week.

----- *Earlier today* -----

"Target sighted." Dash had been following the two ponies all day, and now that they let their guard down, it was time to strike. She slipped from cloud to cloud, slowly descending till she was hidden in the treetops. Twilight was falling asleep, but Fluttershy was sitting as awake as she'd been all day as she stared-off into the sunset that scattered amongst the trees.

She quietly floated down from the tree, staying aloft just above the ground. She knew her pranks on Fluttershy had been somewhat mean the last few years, so she was going with something a little simpler. Silently, she air-walked her way over behind Fluttershy. As she took a deep breath, the wind began to stir, rustling the tree branches and causing the light to dance across the fields.

"BOO!" Dash cried out. Fluttershy fell-over like a goat. Dash began laughing, though not as whole heartedly as she had the previous years. She started to settle down as she wiped a tear from her eye. "Haha, ha. You alright, Fluttershy?" There was no response. The blue pegasus nudged the yellow one. "Fluttershy?" The pony fell over with glassy eyes and no sign of breathing.

"Oh-oh no. OhnoohonohnoohnoohnoohNO!" Dash started to panic, ducking left and right as she muttered over and over, unable to think, unable to remember the UPR (Unconscious Pony Rescue) class in flight school. "I...I have to get out of here! No! I can't just leave her here, somepony might find out! They may have seen me!" And so she scooped the pony up in her arms, and took-off into the sky in a blur of rainbow and yellow.

----- *Yesterday* -----

"And that's why I came to you for help, Twilight," Fluttershy said as the two sat in Twilight's library.

Twilight raised an eye brow before asking her confusion. "I thought you said Rainbow Dash pranked you every year. What about two years ago?"

"Oh, she... did."
"Well, what happened?"
"I'd... rather not talk about it..."
"That bad?"
"Worse."

Twilight winced at what her imagination played in her mind before responding. "So, what do you want me to do?"

"Make her stop." Fluttershy said half-hidden behind her mane. "Please?"

“That pony doesn’t exactly listen to reason...”

“Well,” she looked to the ground as she scuffed the floor with a hoof. “Couldn’t you use a spell to make her stop?”

“I don’t feel comfortable casting spells on others without them knowing.” Twilight brushed the back of her head with a hoof as she shared Fluttershy’s view of the floor. “I’d feel worse about using mind magic.”

Fluttershy looked away for a moment then back towards her friend. “Well, what about a decoy? A duplicate?”

“That might work, but I can’t make illusions.” Twilight’s face lit-up as she had an idea. “But if we had something that looks like you, I could use a come-to-life spelll.”

“Well... I might have something...” The timidness in the little pegasus pushing her to hide her face as if in shame. “Do you promise not to tell anyone?”

“Cross my heart, hope to...” Twilight began to recite the Pinkie Pie oath.

Fluttershy winced and reached a hoof out to stop the unicorn. “No! I mean, that’s alright... I believe you. Anyway, I’ll go get it.”

With a flap of her wings, the yellow pony gently floated across the ground and out the door. Moments later, she returned, landing on the unicorn’s balcony... carrying Fluttershy.

“Wow! That looks just like you! Did you make it?” Fluttershy nodded. “It’s incredible!”

“Thank you. I... dabble.” She looked away as her cheeks started to blush. “Actually, I made one of everypony.”

“Really? Can I see them sometime?”

Fluttershy’s face flushed pale in an instant. “Uhh...they need a...little work.”

Twilight noticed some fine stitching around the left eye, differing heights on all the legs and some in several spots legs and the second Fluttershy’s side. “S-sure. Some other time, maybe? Just leave Fluttershy with me and I’ll lead her around Ponyville tomorrow.”

“Oh, thank you, Twilight.” After slipping off her back, Fluttershy bid her friend good night and headed home.

----- *Earlier today* -----

It was already past noon and there was no sign of Rainbow Dash anywhere. Twilight was starting to become exhausted. She had already paraded FlutterTwo through town for three hours, stopping in to see the others. Rarity had the boutique closed up for the day and was

hiding behind the poniquines, ready to hurl something if Dash happened to set hoof in there today.

She stopped by Sugar Cube Corner to see Pinkie, but the pony wasn't in. It seemed she was out pranking everypony, too, although Twilight knew she had more restraint than Dash when it came to pranks. That only left AJ, who was hard at work back home. Twilight took FlutterTwo through the orchard, passing under the trees Dash so loved to sleep in while loudly calling Fluttershy's name.

After a while, Twilight was wiped-out. She set the doll sitting under a tree and sat herself under another. Just as she was starting to fall asleep, a loud pop went-off behind her startling her from sleep. "I'm up! I'm up!" she sprang-up, right into the falling steamers and confetti raining down on her and scaring the wits out of her. "Ahhh! Spiders! Get them off! Getthemoffgetthemoff!" She jumped backwards, flailing her legs as she fell back against the tree she had been resting under.

As she slid down the trunk, Applejack came over. "What the hay is goin' on over here?" Asked a slightly winded earth pony.

"I was just pranking Twilight. She was real hard to find all the way out here," replied a happy Pinkie, still holding a party popper.

"Is that all?" AJ asked with a sigh as she caught her breath.

"Eehhhuuh... what happened?" a slurring Twilight asked in a daze.

"Looks like you jus' got Pinkied, sugar cube."

"Wha-where's Fluttershy?"

"Oh, she left with Dashie," replied a gleeful Pinkie.

"Left? How could she leave?"

"She's got wings, ya silly filly. They both flew-off."

"Girls, that wasn't Fluttershy."

"It sure looked like her. I saw them both flyin' over mah orchard."

"It looks like her because it's a doll she made of herself. She left it with me to fool Rainbow Dash so she wouldn't scare her today. But no one's supposed to know which is why we need to get it back. Which way did they go?"

"I saw them headin' towards the forest, but as fast as Dash is, she's probably already there by now."

"Well, it's all we've got to go on. We'd better hurry before it gets dark."

“Okie-dokie, smokey!” chimed Pinkie.

“Smokie?” a bewildered Twilight asked.

“Uh, Twi? You’ve, uh...got a little fire in y’ur mane.” The charge in the party popper had ignited a piece of confetti, which in turn landed in Twilight’s mane.

“AHH! PUT IT OUT! PUT IT OUT!” Twilight screamed as she ran around in circles.

A burst of water hit her in the face, bringing the pony to a halt, dousing the fire and soaking the pony through. Pinkie stood, holding a seltzer bottle with a wide smile as Twilight squirted a stream of water. “Thanks,” she replied disdainfully.

“No problem! I always keep one with me!”

Twilight shook herself off. “Lets get moving, girls!” And the three set-off for the Everfree Forest.

“Hold it right there, Rainbow!” The girls appeared over the hill.

“Oh no!” Rainbow cried, grabbing Flutterdoll and leaping into the air.

“Not this t’ah’m,” said Applejack as she pulled-out her lasso and started twirling it over-head before flinging it. With a tug, it snared around Rainbow’s hind leg and started pulling her along.

Dash stopped pulling. “Alright. You caught me. I scared Fluttershy to death!” she yelled with remorse as she tried not to cry. With a sniffle, she added, “But you’ll never take me in!” And with that, she threw Flutterdoll at the girls, knocking them down with a grunt, and the lasso out of Applejack’s grip.

“What’s going on?”

“Who-what?” Dash asked, looking around as Fluttershy floated down in front of Rainbow.

“My doll!” cried Flutters in her quiet voice.

“GAH! Ghost!” screamed Dash, reeling backwards in fear, till she crashed into a tree and blacked-out.

She woke after a few minutes, wincing as the bump on her head reminded her it was there. “Ow. What happened?”

“Well,” began Twilight, leaning over the pony who lay now on Fluttershy’s couch. “You scared a doll of Fluttershy to death, then tried to flee into the Everfree forest.” Dash sat-up, rubbing the bump on her head. In the middle of the room stood Fluttershy and Fluttertwo. “See? This one’s just stuffing.” She knocked on the real Fluttershy’s head, who cringed. “Oops. Sorry.”

Dash burst into laughter, ignoring the pain in her head.

“What’s so funny? Even you couldn't tell them apart.” asked Twilight.

Dash snickered as she tried to talk. “Not that. Your mane!” She roared in laughter again.

Twilight’s mane, in one part, had been turned into curled mess of charred hair. She didn’t enjoy it, nor Dash’s amusement. She took one of Pinkie’s poppers and held it next to Rainbow’s mane.

“Wh-what’re you doing?” Dash asked through her chuckling.

Twilight squeezed the popper with a loud bang. Confetti flew past Dash’s mane, but the flash set a small kindle in her hair which quickly grew.

Dash sprang-up and started running in circles, screaming “Put it out! Put it out!”