

The earth spun through space. Basking in the light of the sun on one side, and of the moon on the other. The eternal dance playing out as it had for untold years. The sun roaring and bright, the moon cold and aloof, while the earth sat in between, bustling with life and growth.

Below on the expansive surface of the world, in a country, in a village, in a house by the forest a yellow pegasus walked out the door to check on her animals. She was not particularly brash, nor brave, or all that strong of will. And the day was not of particular importance. Still, on that unimportant day, the unassuming pony would uncover a long held secret.

She headed toward the trees, her pink mane bouncing behind her, twin baskets draped across her back, humming merrily as she walked through the forest entrance. The two tallest trees standing on either side, like sentries, she thought, watching over all that lived there.

It was a pleasant day, few clouds hung in the sky and it was not too hot or cold, spring had recently begun. It was her favorite time of year, the fresh shoots of grass peaking up through the newly damp earth after they had cleared the snow. The flowers beginning to poke out from the dense foliage, the air smelled of nature and life. She inhaled deeply.

A squirrel scampered down from a nearby tree and situated itself in front of her curiously. It was young, she had not met this one the previous year. It was one of the forests numerous new inhabitants. She reached into her basket and pulled out a nut, placing it gently on the ground.

“Hello little squirrel,” she said softly. “My name is Fluttershy, it’s very nice to meet you.”

It sniffed at her for a moment, turning it’s head to the side. Then it quickly grabbed the nut and dashed back up into the trees. Fluttershy chuckled to herself as she watched it jump nimbly from tree to tree. She loved animals more than almost anything else.

Fluttershy continued her work, laying specific foods in front of the burrows and nests of every animal. The rabbits got lettuce, the birds got seed and the squirrels got nuts among others. She went about her day until the work was done. The animals of the forest chirped and squeaked happily as they ate. She sat for a moment, just listening. Wind rustled the leaves and moles dug through the soil, all of it added to the music of the forest. She sighed contentedly, eyes closed.

After a moment, she reached into her basket a final time. “I’ve got one more mouth to feed,” she said smiling. “Mine.”

Fluttershy laid out a blanket, on which she placed a daisy sandwich, some spring water and a cookie. She ate methodically, two bites of the sandwich, a drink of water, and repeat. As she had her breakfast, something sparkled among the bushes. It caught her eye, she paused, trying to make out what it was. She couldn’t see it clearly in the shadow of the bushes, still it seemed to glow vaguely in the patches of sun the broke through the leaves. She finished her sandwich and her water. Getting up, she walked cautiously forwards, the object sparkled brighter as she approached.

Peering downwards, she saw it was a small glass ball. It looked as though it’d been there for a while. It was dirty, only a small bit of it’s surface shining under the grime. Inside, small slivers of green hung suspended in the clear glass. It was beautiful.

“Oh my...” Fluttershy said under her breath.

She went back to her baskets to grab a napkin, then carefully gripped the small object. She pulled, but nothing happened.

"You're stubborn, aren't you?" she muttered to herself, trying again.

Fluttershy pulled, she tugged and she heaved with all her might, but still it stayed stuck in the ground.

"I bet a strong pony like Rainbow Dash could get you out." She sighed. "Now, what am I going to do?" She sat back on her haunches, staring at the stubborn thing. Her efforts had knocked some more of the dirt away, but otherwise did nothing. It looked even prettier in the light, almost glowing in the sun.

Fluttershy had an idea. She got up and walked towards the tree line. Searching carefully, she selected a sturdy branch and returned with it clenched between her teeth. "This should work," she said hopefully.

The yellow pony pushed the stick into the soil, making sure to position it beneath the ball. Carefully, she placed both her forehooves on the high end up the branch and pushed downwards.

The ball budged slightly.

Encouraged, she pushed harder. Placing all of her rather small weight onto the branch.

Many things happened at once, most of which Fluttershy was unaware of. From her perspective, the ground began to shake, and the ball came free with a loud 'pop!'.

Outside of her perspective, a magic old and strong began to unravel, like a dress gripped by a single thread. The world slowed on its axis and something was sent hurtling out from the core like a rocket of light, up through the crust and into the forest behind her.

Fluttershy fell onto her haunches as the shaking stopped. She looked around confused. What had happened? Was that an earthquake? She worriedly got to her hooves and dashed around, checking to see if any burrows had collapsed, or trees had fallen. Seeing no damage, she sighed with relief. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the glass ball sitting in a pile of leaves. Completely free of soil. She could see even more clearly the slivers of green suspended inside, they looked like leaves. She wandered over, picking it up, she gently brought it back to her blanket, where she poked it with a hoof.

"Oh how lovely," she said happily. "I wonder who left you in there? Are you lost?" she asked it. "I hope you're not important to anypony, I bet they'd miss you."

As she rolled it, the ball moved with an odd grace along the uneven surface of the blanket. The leaves inside almost seemed to spin and dance in the sun.

"I can't wait to show you to Angel and the others."

Suddenly, a loud boom rang out from behind her. She jumped with a yelp, quickly running to the nearest tree and hiding behind it, leaving the ball on the blanket. Fluttershy's heart hammered in her chest as she peeked out to see what'd happened.

The earth was loose and shaken in a heap around where the sound had come from. Beside it stood an earth pony. Fluttershy let out another yelp and pressed herself back against the trunk of the tree, breathing heavily.

The earth pony, a mare by the looks of it, looked around bleary eyed and opened her mouth to say something. All she managed was a few squeaks before she gave up. Fluttershy looked out again, wondering if perhaps she'd been hurt. Looking at her the second time, Fluttershy couldn't help being stunned at how beautiful she was.

It was a strange sort of beauty. She was taller and more slender than the average earth

pony, standing a good head higher than Fluttershy. She was dirty, but that didn't seem to change much. Her coat was a deep brown color, offset by a light green mane and tail, which were tangled and matted, almost dragging along the ground. Her eyes were a deep green as well, and they looked curiously out from under her dirty mess of a mane. She spied Fluttershy's blanket sitting by the tree. Trying to walk over, her legs collapsed sending her tumbling onto the ground.

Fluttershy was at her side before she knew what was happening.

"Oh my!" she said worriedly. "Are you okay?" She looked the strange mare up and down, trying to see any injuries.

"Ahhh, ahhh," rasped the mare.

"You can't speak? Do you need water?"

The mare nodded.

Fluttershy quickly walked over to her saddlebag, grabbing an extra bottle of water and a few handkerchiefs she'd used to wrap the food. She bundled them together and placed them under the mare's head, gently placing the bottle up to her lips. She drank lightly for a long time, emptying the bottle before she took a breath.

"Better?"

The mare nodded again.

"Can you speak now?" Fluttershy asked, concerned.

"I...I.." she tried. The mare looked confused for a moment, her eyes looking down at her snout oddly. She worked her jaw back and forth a few times. "I...can..." she said, sounding almost surprised. "I can...speak..."

"Good!" Fluttershy said happily. Suddenly, she remembered herself and backed up a few paces. "I'm...um...very happy you seem alright," she said softly.

"Alright" said the mare, trying the word out on her tongue. "I am...alright."

Fluttershy nodded in agreement. "What's, well....excuse my asking if it's rude, we've only just met but...what's your name?"

"Name," said the mare, smiling at the word. "Name is alright."

"Your name is....Name?" asked Fluttershy. "Not that it's a bad name if it is!" she added quickly. "It's just...well....oh dear..."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said the mare happily, trying to get to her hooves. "Speaking is..." She looked up at the sky for a moment, trying to figure out a word. Her eyes shot wide for a moment, as though she were surprised to see it was there.

"Fun?" Fluttershy offered.

"Fun!" the mare echoed, forgetting about the sky. "Language, it's...familiar....fun!"

Fluttershy squeaked, and backed away from the mare's exuberance. She seemed to get stranger the more she spoke. "Do....you have a home?" she asked quietly.

"Home?" asked the mare. She looked around the forest, still shakily trying to stand. She appeared disoriented until she looked at the soil below her. The mare stomped a hoof resolutely. "Home!" She grinned at Fluttershy as though she had just solved a complicated puzzle. Her stomping threw her off balance, she teetered almost falling again before Fluttershy ran over to support her. The smaller pony strained under the weight.

"I am small..." said the mare in wonderment. "There's so little to move...." she looked

down at her rather slender frame.

This was the longest sentence Fluttershy had heard her put together on her own. Perhaps she would get some answers out of her after all. "You live in the forest?"

The mare shook her head. Looking at the ground, she stomped her hoof into the dirt again, leaning heavily against Fluttershy. "Home!"

Fluttershy yelped at this declaration. Her strange visitor's excitement unsettled her slightly, she always fretted about meeting new ponies. Fluttershy felt far out of her depth. She decided to try another route. "Um...do you have any family?"

The mare tried to stand on her own again. "Do I...have family?" she asked, tilting her head. She looked again to the sky. "Yes!" she said. "Family!"

Fluttershy waited for her to continue, but she remained standing there, neck craned up in the air. The yellow mare sighed, quite unsure what to do. This wasn't her area of expertise, she dealt with animals, not ponies, but she was concerned about the mare, whose name may or may not have *been* Name. Still, she could apparently stand on her own now and seemed fairly alright. She'd been out too long, if she didn't get home soon, Angel would be worried.

"Okay...um....Name. I really need to get home, do you need some help finding your way out of the forest?...um...I can help if you want me too...but if you don't that's fine too, if you can make it back alone."

"Alone...." the mare repeated, looking back down at Fluttershy, her smile was gone. "Alone...."

"Um...I'm sorry, is something wrong?"

The mare sniffed. "I don't want to be..." she said softly, tears at the corners of her eyes.

"Oh! Um...I sorry! Did I do something wrong? I didn't mean to!" Fluttershy floundered at the sudden change of tone.

"I don't want to be....alone." The mare sniffed again, looking at Fluttershy, her green eyes burning into hers. "Please?"

The yellow pegasus didn't know what to say. She didn't even fully comprehend what had just happened. This was too much, all she'd wanted to do was feed the animals. She wasn't cut out for this. This was a job for a more outgoing pony, like her friend Twilight or Applejack, not her. But she knew one thing, she couldn't leave a pony in need. The mare looked as though she were on the verge of tears. Fluttershy couldn't just leave her in the woods,.

"It's okay, don't cry." She put a reassuring hoof on the mare's back, at least as far as she could reach. "Come with me, I have a house just this way. We can sort this whole thing out...if you want."

The mare nodded.

"Now, before we go, I don't think I can call you Name...." said Fluttershy softly. "If it's alright, I need something to call you."

The mare looked around for a moment until her eyes fell on a daisy. "Flower!" she announced, drying her eyes. "Call me flower."

Fluttershy smiled. "Flower, that's a lovely name."

She looked curiously at the yellow mare. "You?"

"Oh!" Fluttershy turned red for a minute. "I never told you my name. That's rude isn't it? I'm sorry. My name is Fluttershy."

“Fluttershy!” Flower echoed, another smile breaking out over her face. She grabbed the startled pegasus in a hug. “Lovely name.”

Fluttershy turned several shades redder in the larger pony’s grip. “Um....please let go of me...not that I don’t appreciate it. It’s just....we should go. Angel will be worried.”

Flower released the flustered mare. “Angel?” she asked quizzically.

“Oh, that’s my friend. He’s a bunny, he gets terribly worried if I’m out too late.”

“We don’t want to worry Angel,” Flower said, looking rather pleased with herself. “we have to get home.”

Fluttershy stared for a moment. “You must be feeling better,” she remarked quietly. “You’re speech is much clearer now.”

Flower blinked. “I am....unskilled. I have not spoken in a...” She thought for a moment. “long time.”

Fluttershy looked worried. “Have you been out here alone that long?”

“Alone....” Flower said that word again, seeming to sag under it’s weight.

“Oh! Don’t worry! I-I’m not going to leave you alone,” Fluttershy added quickly. “Here, lets get home, you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want too.” She sat the mare down. “Um...if you’ll just wait a moment. I have to get my things.”

Fluttershy collected the handkerchiefs she’d made into a makeshift pillow, folding each one before gently placing them back into her basket. Once she had finished, she turned to fold up the blanket, only to find Flower standing next to it warily eyeing the cookie she’d left sitting there.

“Um...I’m sorry, did you want that?” asked Fluttershy. “You can have it, I’m not hungry.”

Flower sniffed at it. “What is it?” she asked warily.

“It’s...well...it’s a cookie. You’ve never had one?”

Flower shook her head. “What is a cookie?” she asked.

Fluttershy had promised not to pry, but her curiosity was steadily growing. “Well...It’s a small baked piece of dough, with things inside to make it sweet,” she explained. “This is oatmeal...I think it’s good, bu-”

The cookie vanished, Flower chewed greedily as she ate, crumbs spilling down her face as her teeth worked oddly together.

“Do you....Like it?” Fluttershy hazarded.

Flower smiled, bits of cookie stuck in her teeth. “Have you tried this!?” she asked. “It’s....” She paused. “Lovely!”

“Well...I made it this morning...” Fluttershy admitted, blushing.

“Made this?” Flower cocked her head to the side. “There’s more?”

“Yes, I made a tray of them. You can have some more....I always make far too many, but Angel likes them so yo-”

“We have to get home!” Flower jerked up suddenly. “We don’t want to worry Angel!”

“Well yes but-” Fluttershy found herself being shoved towards the forest path. “Oh, but my blanket...Flower please wait...My house is that way!!...”

Flower had apparently found her legs. She quickly shoved in the direction Fluttershy pointed. The yellow pony protested meekly as she was pushed forwards. Though she eventually gave up and offered the occasional bit of direction to Flower’s exuberant pushing.

Behind them, in the forest, the fresh green leaves of spring began to turn a sickly brown. Something dark slithered out from the hole in the earth. It quickly shifted and squirmed getting its bearings. Beneath it the grass turned dull and grey. The forest became deathly quiet, no birds sang, and no squirrels chattered. The thing quickly slithered out of sight, into the darkness of the trees, leaving decay in its wake.