~~~~~~Fallout Equestria: D.A.S.H. – Session 32~~~~~~

Hope for Better Times

Overmare: One of the diamond dogs swings towards the idiotic unicorn who tried to scam him, completely ignoring the toy the zombie placed before him.

Bullseye: Bullseye is seemingly making a more painful sort of fool of himself than usual, and he's even beginning to notice it himself.

"Hah... Guys, I don't know how that card got there." He grins nervously, rapidly discarding the ace of spades that had suspiciously launched itself out from behind his hoof. "It must have slipped during the last deal... Look, I'll give you this round. I'll even start with the big blind for fiv- three rounds, okay? Just to showcase my generous nature!" He laughs unconvincingly.

String: String takes back the bird. At least she tried.

Overmare: "Pony cheated as well?" the bigger diamond dog growls, keeping his place in the chair as he points towards you with a claw. "Get him!"

The other two diamond dogs are quick to follow his words, jumping at the poor unicorn.

Bullseye: "Oh, I thought that's why... Crap." Bullseye skips to the side and heads over to grab the filly ghoul.

Overmare: One of the diamond dogs manages to catch his tail, one of his claws digging deep into his flank.

String: String is already running, way ahead of Bullseye

Bullseye: "Horseapples!" Bullseye shouts, trying to kick off the overly buff, anthropomorphic dog.

Overmare: Bullseye actually manages to kick the diamond dog off, just before another one wraps his arms around Bullseye's neck, pressing him against his badly smelling coat.

Bullseye: "Okay guys, you can have five rounds! I'm not cheap- UGH!" Bullseye wriggles the best he can beneath the menacing hound.

Overmare: The bigger of the diamond dogs, the one still sitting down, growls. "You cheap pony! Trying to trick dogs with useless bottle caps." He slowly rises, slowly walking over as he cracks his fingers behind his head. "You better pay up, pony, or we're going to have a problem."

Bullseye: "Aaahaah..." Bullseye wiggles a loose hoof dismissively in the air. "That won't be a problem gentlemen. See, I come from the future, where caps are the currency and bits are as
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common as leaves. I have whole bags full, just to use as ballast for my hot air balloon!"

Overmare: "Looks like we got a smooth talker," the smaller of the diamond dogs giggles. "Although he could at least try to make up believable lies."

And if Bullseye were to ask himself, "isn't there any security in this cafeteria?", the answer would be yes, there is. Namely, the three diamond dogs that are now closing in on him.

Bullseye: "No I couldn't. I really couldn't. But I tried, eh?" Bullseye shrugs. Or would shrug, if he could move properly. "But hey, okay, I'm pretty tight with management here. I could hook you up with whatever you need. Just name it. I'll fix it. Pinkie promise."

Overmare: "...Pinkie promise?" the bigger diamond dog growls as he wraps his claws around Bullseye's muzzle, holding his jaw tightly shut. "How dare you even name that pony here?!"

Bullseye: "What. What? Ugh, look, Rainbow promise AJ promise. Luna be damned Celestia promise, then!" he exclaims in a panicky tone.

Overmare: The diamond dog looks practically furious as he takes a hold around Bullseye's hindlegs and, with a mighty show of strength, heaves him up on the table. "Exactly *what* did you say about our gracious leader?" he shouts.

At this point, the entire cafeteria has turned around to stare at the scene. Half of them look horrified, a few seem to enjoy the fight, and fewer still seem to be rushing off to get backup (just kidding, they realized they had exceeded their lunch break and are hurrying back to work).

Bullseye: "How do I even speak here without getting smothered?" He flails, trying his best to kick himself loose.

String: String shows up from nowhere, flailing her earlier acquired stick and throwing earlier acquired broccoli at the diamond dogs.

Overmare: "You don't!" the diamond dog growls, closing in on the unicorn and baring his teeth in a grin. "You simply pay up what you owe, before I throw you in the arrest!"

And String was totally ignored. Like a little filly.

Bullseye: "...Arrest? You won't beat me to a pulp and rape my corpse? Have I come to heaven?" Bullseye looks surprised.

Overmare: The diamond dog actually looks kind of... well, the thought makes him smile. Then, a moment later, he regretfully says, "No, I'm afraid that's against regulations."

Bullseye: "How wonderful!" Bullseye shines. "I love the past!" He pats the diamond dog's shoulder and tries to roll off the table.

Overmare: The diamond dog keeps him steady where he lies, before smiling. "But you gave me an idea that's completely within regulations." With one quick, fluid motion, he draws up a ring and place it on Bullseye's horn. With another motion, he also presses Bullseye's jaw shut and quickly ties it like that. "We learned this trick after last pony whined."

String: Somewhere in the close proximity a stick is still being flailed at the diamond dogs.

Bullseye: "I'm not whining! I'm doing the opposite of whining!" Bullseye doesn't say, because he has his jaws tied together.

Overmare: String is picked up by the neck by one of the other dogs, the stick completely useless (magical powers, where are you?!). "What are we going to do with mini pony, boss?"

“The same as the horned pony: throw in the arrest!” the leader replies.

String: String is flailing violently.

Overmare: It's not very effective. As a matter of fact, it's not effective at all.

String: String doesn't care and flails anyways.

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Little Stripe: Stripe frowns. "No, I don't think that. Hope is never wrong. It is how you choose to realize that hope that can be wrong," she says, frowning again at her uncharastically wise words. "I'm starting to think your cryptic speeches are rubbing off on me, Mtume..." she adds with a slight smile.

Overmare: "He has that effect on ponies," Pure Soul says with a smile, as he motion for Little Stripe and Echo to continue walking. "But no, what I mean is that, seeing how the world you come from has ended, what we do here didn't work."

Echo: "The world hasn't really ended. It's more like this one was reshaped," Echo says in a half whisper.

Little Stripe: "That's one way to put it, if by 'reshaped' you mean turned-inside-out-with-mutated-organs-fucked-up..."

Overmare: "If Stable-Tec decided to put the Stables to use, then the world ended. And not by pretty means at that."

Little Stripe: "Exactly."

Echo: "'Ended' is still a bit too harsh."

Overmare: "Tell me, how many died? Is it like now, where ponies, while in war, still live in harmony with each other? Does everyone have food on their tables? From what I've heard, that's not the case."

Little Stripe: "Echo, have you been living under a rock-... No, you've been living on a cloud..." She sighs and rolls her eyes. "During our days in the wasteland, I didn't see one speck of green, or even the sun! Just one glance out the windows here says that things are actually alive out there."

Echo: "But doesn't the fact that we still survive despite all that count? Our world is still alive! It may be sick and dying but it's alive!"

Overmare: "No, your world is trying to get back to life from the dead!" Pure Soul snarls as he whirls around, jabbing a hoof in Echo's chest. "Those Stables are designed to not open before the world is healthy enough to BEGIN having life again! If Stable 05 has opened, it means that the world MIGHT have enough to keep living at least partially again! After how long? Fifty years? A hundred?!"

Echo: "Two hundred," Echo mumbles.

Overmare: "Two..." Soul drops his hoof down. "Two hundred?" He whirls around. "It died, was stomped, spat and kicked on!"

Little Stripe: "Or blasted to hell and back again."

Overmare: "It died!" He stomps down the hallway. "There's no other way to say it. This project right here failed to stop its death."

Little Stripe: "That's what I've been telling you..."

Overmare: Pure Soul turns around with a grim smile. "But even if that might be the case... it can still have some use." He glances towards Mtume. "If not for us... then for the future."

Little Stripe: Stripe frowns in confusion. "What do you mean?"

Overmare: "He means that if we can't stop this war, perhaps we can help the future restore," Mtume says softly, shaking his head. "But that can't be done. We can't change the future after our own wishes. We all play our own parts in the time spectrum."

Little Stripe: "And..?"

Overmare: "But that's just the point," Soul says with a smile. "They don't know about the future that lies ahead of them. Since that future isn't known by anyone in this room, we can change it! What we decide here will echo through the time spectrum, and that will be the reality. It won't change, it'll stay like it was before! Like it always had been after they left their own time!"

Little Stripe: Stripe looks quite confused.

Echo: Echo mimics Stripe.

Overmare: Mtume sighs. "You're tempting the stars, Soul. That will be your downfall." He looks over the room below. "But, if we could get Celestia to agree..."

Soul snorts. "Celestia won't agree, you know that as well as I. If we're doing this, we'll have to go behind her back with it." He glances at Stripe. "Think about your future foals, Mtume. Is a dead world the kind of world you want them to grow up in?"

Mtume sighs again, before shaking his head. "And what if Celestia finds out? She'll close us down immediately, and imprisonment will be the least of our troubles." He looks at Stripe, smiling slightly. "But if it can help their future... maybe it would be worth it."

Echo: "Really?" Echo is kinda lost at this point and is trying to act as if she understood.

Little Stripe: Stripe looks a bit uncomfortable at apparently being valued so highly. "Right, so... How?"

Overmare: Soul's smile disappears. "That... will be a problem. Maybe..." he shines up. "DNA! Like we would do with Celestia! If we change the vial used in the encoding with another, we could have it only react to the DNA of either of you!"

Little Stripe: "Really?" Stripe echoes Echo. "Is that even possible?"

Overmare: "It's more than possible," Mtume says softly, looking down at her with a smile. "Or, well, maybe not outside of these walls. But in here... it's possible." He nods to himself. "It could work."

Echo: Echo just looks more confused.

Little Stripe: "And... What would you do? Put your superweapon in stasis for us to find it in two hundred years, assuming we actually go back there? 'Cause I really don't wanna go back. Really."

Echo: "I'm with you on that one, Stripe! Mostly, anyways..."

Overmare: "I could push it within your reach, but..." Soul sighs. "We'll have to shut it down, or hibernate it, before it can be used by you. And you would have to come back here to activate it, yes."

Little Stripe: Stripe looks crestfallen. "We have to go back? Why?"

Overmare: "I can't leave the satellites active for two hundred years. No, once your DNA has

been connected and the satellites have been launched, I'll shut down this place and all its contact with the satellites. You'll have to activate it again in your own time. If anyone gets in here before that, and the power is active... then they could be able to hack into the computers and cause a disaster."

Echo: "But why do we have to go back?"

Little Stripe: "Yes, but... Why do we have to go back at all? What is it gonna do that is so bloody important that we have to risk our life and sanity by going back to that wasteland?"

Overmare: Pure Soul leans closer to them. "Time itself doesn't like people traveling along it. I heard that you saw smoke in the corner when you were at the hospital. They've already found your trail. It might take a week or two, but in the end... they'll find you. And that's a meeting you'll not survive." He shakes his head and stands up tall again. "Time travel is – obviously– possible, but a pony traveling in time can't stay for long. That's the price of it."

Little Stripe: "They? Who?" Stripe asks insistently, looking nervous. "And how do you know so much about this?"

Echo: Echo looks at Stripe. "Was there smoke in the hospital room?"

Overmare: "You're not the only ones who've visited timelines that aren't your own. The past intrigues a lot of people, and once you find the means to fulfill travel... it can be done." He smiles sadly.

Little Stripe: "Wait... what? You mean you've met others from the future? Who?"

Overmare: Soul chuckles and shakes his head. "No. I've traveled myself. Both me and Mtume have." He sighs. "To a time of peace and order, when zebra and pony travelled and lived in harmony."

Little Stripe: Stripe looks doubtingly at him, before shrugging. They had travelled in time after all, so why not others? "And what about this... smoke?"

Overmare: He shakes his head. "You don't want to know. Just know this: If you see it, run."

Little Stripe: "That sounds... ominous..." Stripe says, looking worried.

Overmare: "Or, well... rather, get back to your own time by any means. Not even Celestia can fight those beings."

Echo: "Sound like much of the wasteland." Echo says to Stripe.

Little Stripe: "But what ARE they?"

Overmare: "They're hounds, trackers of the angles of time. If you travel in time, you're their

prey, and they will find you. If they herd you back to your own time, they *might* ignore you, but... it's not certain."

Little Stripe: "Er... don't you mean angels? Also... crap."

Overmare: "No, angles. In time and space, the angles determine where you go and where you come from. Nothing else. It's... a difficult thing to wrap your mind around, really."

Little Stripe: Stripe nods slowly, not really understanding anything except 'evil bad smoke is evil and bad and should be avoided'. "Right..."

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Overmare: Our unicorn and ghoul filly… heroes… have now ended up in the facility arrest cell.

String: String slaps Bullseye across the head with the sneaky stick. Because String is bored and going to jail without passing their friends sucks. And it's Bullseye's fault. Hence the slap.

Bullseye: Bullseye was rendered unconscious.

String: String stands epically on top on her defeated friend-foe, and starts walking around on him.

Bullseye: Bullseye would mind being trotted on if it wasn't for the fact that sitting in a cell was so damn boring, and that at least gave him some sort of entertainment, though an uncomfortable one. But it's okay. Stripe will save him. Surely she'll pop in here within seconds wielding a sword and her mighty courage. And a cape.

String: String gets distracted by and tries to repair her broken toy bird. She fails miserably, shrugs and stuffs it back in her pocket.

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Overmare: "Like I said, a difficult concept to comprehend..." He smiles slightly as he walks down the stairs on the other end of the bridge like thing they're walking on. "But, for now... once you've completely recovered, you should probably look for ways to go home. That's always the tricky part, especially if you came here unwillingly."

Echo: "I don't get it, so I'll just follow you if things get weird, okay Stripe?"

Little Stripe: "I don't want to go back..." she mumbles quietly, quite child-like.

Echo: Echo looks at the smaller mare and then leans in to give her a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

Little Stripe: Stripe closes her eyes and nods in thanks.

Echo: "Don't worry, we'll make it."

Little Stripe: "I sure hope so..." she quietly replies.

Overmare: "I'm certain that things will go well." He gestures with a hoof to himself. "It did for us! And we didn't even know about them before..." He turns silent and looks down at the floor for a second, before shaking his head. "Before we encountered them the first time."

Little Stripe: "It's not them I'm worried about... But what DID happen when you met them, then?"

Overmare: "We lost a dear friend of ours," Mtume softly says, looking down at them. "We didn't expect the claws from the smoke, and... she wasn't quick enough. We fled, and just made it to the portal back to our time stream before they reached us." He shudders.

Little Stripe: "Oh... I'm sorry."

Echo: "Yeah... How long were you in the past?"

Overmare: "A week."

Echo: "Then... Perhaps we should return as soon as possible." Echo visibly shivers.

Little Stripe: "We haven't even been here one full day. Hopefully, we're safe for now."

Echo: "Yeah... but..." Echo starts another staring contest with the floor.

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String: String mumbles something incomprehensible but obviously offensive in Bullseye's general direction.

Bullseye: "No you!" Busllseye responds wittily, ensuring a vocal victory.

String: String violently falls over from the sudden comeback. It was so unexpected that her mind almost imploded.

Overmare: Actually, it did. Lower your intelligence with two.

String: "Oh crap." String mumbles and glares angrily at the narrator.

Overmare: There there, the narrator says softly, petting her. Don't worry, you'll get them back sooner or later.

String: String squees with happiness.

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Little Stripe: "But what?" she demands.

Echo: "I don't want that to happen..." Echo mumbles from behind her mane.

Little Stripe: Stripe frowns at Echo. "Well... yeah, obviously we don't want that. But... a week is a pretty big timeframe, you know. I don't think we're in a hurry..."

Echo: Echo looks back at Stripe, looking slightly frightened. "I guess..."

Little Stripe: Stripe glances at Pure Soul. "...Right? If it took a whole week for them to get after you guys, we should be pretty safe for at least a few days, right?"

Overmare: "Well..." he hesitates, before sighing. "I'm not sure."

Little Stripe: "That's not very reassuring."

Overmare: "I'd rather tell you the truth than lie and be wrong."

Echo: Echo looks even more frightened. "Is there any way we can find out that it's time to get back?" Echo asks Pure Soul.

Little Stripe: "Or rather, isn't there any way we can stay?" she pleadingly adds.

Overmare: "I'm afraid not. They'll hunt you down until you're either where you belong or dead."

Little Stripe: "And you're one hundred percent certain on that?"

Overmare: "Are you willing to take the risk?"

Little Stripe: "I... don't know? Going through the days knowing that you any time might be ambushed by things that want to kill you sound pretty much like where we came from. And, to be honest... I really prefer this place. It's... alive."

Overmare: He smiles. "Maybe you can change how things are where you came from?" he asks softly. "Maybe you can create a new place that's alive?"

Little Stripe: Stripe snorts at Soul. "Sure, just give me a magic box capable of restoring life to a dead world."

Overmare: "What if I can?" he motions towards the satellites being assembled in the hall. "What if I have the means within my hooves?"

Echo: "Well, Horseshoe seemed pretty alive to me... Compared to the rest." Echo shivers.

Little Stripe: She looks at Echo. "Well... yes," she reluctantly admits. "But the ponies weren't... good. They were either cruel and greedy, or miserable and lonely..."

Echo: Echo looks dubiously at Soul, and then turns to Stripe. "Well from what they told us at home that town seemed like heaven on Equestria. No overly poisoned air, no cannibals trying to mutilate and eat them."

Little Stripe: Stripe hesitates, looking disbelievingly at Soul. "What... what do you mean?" She turns briefly back to Echo, "So that place is the BEST that the Wasteland has to offer? Fantastic..."

Echo: "Well, compared to the other places that the scouts brought back word about, it seems like the best of the ponies in the wasteland had gathered there," Echo, says looking a bit sad.

Little Stripe: "So what you're saying is that anything outside Horseshoe is actually WORSE?!"

Echo: "A lot worse, actually. Do you remember the slaver camp? Even that is apparently mild."

Little Stripe: Stripe's eye twitches. "Do I... remember? Do I REMEMBER being CAPTURED and SOLD as a SLAVE?! YES I FUCKING REMEMBER! And what part of that do you think makes me want to go back?!"

Overmare: Pure Soul looks very, VERY uncomfortable.

Echo: "W-well..." Echo looks at the ground and mumbles something incomprehensible.

Little Stripe: Stripe moves closer to Echo, lowering hear head to be level with Echo's head. "'Well' what?" she asks sternly.

Echo: "I don't want you guys to die..." Echo has her eyes closed and head drooping low.

Little Stripe: Stripe looks taken aback and blinks, not quite sure how to respond to that. "I..." She seems literally speechless.

Echo: "I'll go back to the room now." Echo mumbles and starts walking back the way they came.

Little Stripe: "E-Echo! Wait!" Stripe reaches out after the large pegasus, looking distressed.

Overmare: "Don't worry... she won't get out without a card," Pure Soul says softly. "But... go talk with her. I'll wait."

Echo: Echo stops and looks back, tears in her eyes.

Little Stripe: Stripe slowly walks over to Echo. "Echo, I... We won't... we're not gonna die, Echo.

We've come this far, haven't we?" She assumes a weak smile. "We've survived a radiation- and ghoul-infested Stable, we've fought our own selves in that cellar. We even came face-to-face with the spirit of Chaos itself without even a scratch!" She interrupts herself. "Well, at least nothing that couldn't be fixed!" she adds sheepishly.

Echo: "B-but what if you're wrong? I don't want to lose my first friends..." Echo says, looking straight at Stripe.

Little Stripe: Stripe gives a sad, shaky smile. "Well... We just... don't know that. But we can hope. And we *will* make the best of it. If nothing else, we'll make it, for us. And Echo... you won't lose us. Because we won't lose you. You're family, you know," she finishes, smiling a little brighter.

Echo: "R-really?" Echo replies, her eyes glowing with a small hope.

Little Stripe: "Of course!" she quickly replies, and frowns slightly. "Why wouldn't you? You've been with us from the very beginning of this whole nightmare, and never once been away from our side!"

String: "Except that one time with the slavers." String murmurs to herself. If she had a mirror she would most likely look surprised at herself too, for saying that just now.

Echo: Echo begins to smile and cry at the same time. Also snot is running from her muzzle. She looks pathetic, especially for her size.

Little Stripe: Stripe's smile wavers a bit, closing in on amusedly grossed-out.

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String: String is not entirely sure if this is amusing, sad or both. She also hurls a bowl she found in the cell at the narrator, just as repercussion for his upcoming comment about stuff being gay.

Overmare: GAAAA- ouch, WHAT WAS THAT?! WHO DARES?!

Bullseye: Bullseye looks at the weird filly. "Are you talking to yourself again, hun'? Don't go crazy now, you hear! You know I'll have to go crazier then you if you do, and that wouldn't be pretty!"

String: String looks her most innocently. Both at the narrator and Bullseye. "I might, but not crazy, no crazy at all. Not even remotely."

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