

Ancient Blunders

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Chapter 2

A Dyx Between Friends

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It was decided that the two mares would be wed in a week, and so Pinkie Pie rushed around town, gathering supplies and building hype for the wedding. Though most of her friends reacted to the news with, at best, confusion and, at worst, outright terror—Rarity fainted—both of the Cakes were glad they would no longer have to deal with Pinkie’s antics.

The celebration was going to be massive. Pinkie would spare no expense. Streamers were strung throughout the town, and balloons bobbed from every fence pike, rooftop, and light post available. Games and presents soon piled up by Sugarcube Corner, ready to be dispersed the night before the big day. The bakery was busy day and night spitting out pies, cakes, pastries, and muffins and dumping them in heaps onto tables ready to be thrown across town at a minute’s notice.

All of Pinkie’s preparation did not occur in a vacuum, however, and soon the entire town was sucked into the action. Sweet Apple Acres poured their crop into the town, while Rarity fretted over the hundreds of dress and suit orders that flooded her store. Dinky, still working in place of her mother, found herself too busy to worry about either her sister or Carrot Top as she tried to keep up with the unending streams of invitations Pinkie sent to all the ponies in town who had assumed that they were invited anyway. Meanwhile, all the local artisans, craftspersons, and vendors dodged, ducked, dipped, dived, and dodged through the bustling streets in order to perform all manner of party-related duties. It became so hectic that the mayor was forced to enlist Twilight to help maintain citywide order and more effectively organize the preparations. But even then they could barely hold everything together.

Only Rainbow Dash managed to keep on top of her duties. After waking up near noon, she would work briefly on the weather and then laze the rest of the day away on a cloud. She spent most of that time watching all the other ponies zip back and forth below, and wondered why they seemed so stressed.

During this time Pinkie only paused once in her work, and that was to ask Twilight a very important question. She was at all not happy with the answer.

“Yes, Pinkie, I am *sure* there is no such thing as an invisibility ring; true invisibility is impossible by definition. Besides, only unicorns can wear rings. Just have Rarity pick out a nice necklace

for you or something,” the unicorn said. Her pink friend sighed, muttering something about a ‘great party prank,’ but quickly recovered and bounced off again, leaving Twilight to work out where to store the two tons of toothpaste that had appeared on her doorstep the day after Colgate had signed the wrong line on an order form.

By Wednesday, the wider world had been sucked into the preparations. An entire crew from Canterlot was wheeled in to help Vinyl Scratch set up the sound system, and the town’s center was transformed into a glistening white dance arena, with the unicorn DJ’s table set at its head. Pegasi from Cloudsdale were called in to help the weather team bend the climate to Pinkie’s will, and an entire construction team was wheeled in from Trottingham to make sure all the decorations were perfect. An orchestra, whose only housing could be found at the school, was also brought over from Canterlot, and Cheerilee was swamped trying to guard them against the hordes of adoring fans that all fame inevitably brought. They practiced constantly, and so nopony got much schoolwork done during the day. Several of the younger fillies, however, did discover their music-related talents and earned their Cutie-Marks. The Cutie Mark Crusaders were not among them.

Finally, after the longest week in Ponyville’s history, the day of the marriage arrived.

The area in front of the library had been turned into an altar; a small stage had been placed a few feet in front of the door, and rows of chairs radiated out from it in a large semicircle. A crimson carpet had been unraveled on the ground, and it extended from the outermost row all the way up to a pair of steps that led to a white, wooden arch that framed the spot where the two ponies would be wed. Red, white, and pink flowers and heavy green vines were entwined between its slats, and directly beneath it was a small black podium.

At this podium, there sat a single pony. He was a unicorn, black as coal, and he had a single white cloth clamped around his neck. On his back he carried grey saddlebags, which were packed to the brim but did not bulge. His mane was dark purple, and it matched the glasses he wore over his turquoise eyes. Beside him hovered a small leather book with the title, *Bib Libel’s Guide to Marriage: A Complete Collection of all Known Customs and Ceremonies*, embedded on its front in bronze letters. His cutie mark was a large white heart.

He stood at the altar and gazed out across the sea of chairs in front of him. He looked farther back, to the tables upon which mountains of pastries and armies of red drink cups lay. A single titanic cake towered over them all, with a pair of pink and yellow figurines buried in the frosting on its top. He peered into the distance, where the shimmering tiles of the dance floor sat waiting, surrounded by speakers and encased by a ceiling of lights and disco balls.

He sat at his podium, took in the whole of the town, and put forth a single question.

“Where is everypony?”

For though all the preparations for the wedding were complete, not a soul had come to see it. The chairs sat empty and the food lay untouched. Not even the brides had shown up. Only he, the minister, was there.

He had been hired only a day earlier, when, as he was resting on the roadside, a blue pegasus with rainbow hair had trotted up the road. When she was close enough to notice him, she picked up her pace and shouted in greeting.

“Hey!” she called. “You wouldn’t happen to know Chris-something-or-other, would you?”

“Christener?” He raised an eyebrow at her as she came to a stop in front of him.

“Yeah! That guy. Do you know him?” she asked, “We need him for a wedding, and Pinkie said he’d be around here... though I still don’t *how* she’d know that...” She shook her head dismissively. “Anyway, do you know where he is?”

The unicorn’s expression softened at the mention of a wedding, and cleared his throat. “Well, I am Christener—though most ponies call me Christ[†]—and I would be happy to offer my services to you, Mrs...?”

“Name’s Dash. Rainbow Dash. And I’m the fastest pegasus in Equestria!” She puffed out her chest, grinning with pride. “But right now I’m just the messenger. Pinkie Pie and Fluttershy are the ones getting married.” She frowned, muttering, “Hrm, that still sounds weird out loud...”

“Well then, Mrs. Dash.” Christ[†] said, “just name a time and place, and I will be there to make matrimony happen! Uh, that is, assuming my schedule allows it. You see, I have just been hired for a couple in Trottingham, and their wedding is in little over a month.”

“Oh, no problem.” Rainbow Dash said, pulling out a fat letter from her saddlebags and tossing it onto the ground between them, “The wedding’s tomorrow, in Ponyville.”

“Tomorrow?” His eyes widened. “I am afraid that is impossibly little time to prepare a wedding in! I do not believe—”

“Don’t worry about that part, dude,” Rainbow said, shaking her head, “we got it covered. Pinkie just wants a minister to make it ‘perfectly perfect,’ and apparently you’re the best.” Suddenly, her demeanor changed, and she leaned forward to eye him suspiciously. “You *are* the best, right?”

“Oh, y-yes! I assure you, my services are second to none.” He swallowed, and Rainbow gave him another hard look before finally backing off.

“Alright, just checking,” she said, “A lot of freaky stuff has been happening recently, and I don’t want no phony-pony conin’ my friend. Anyway, can you make it by tomorrow? Or should I tell

them to hold off for a day or two?”

“I believe that will not be necessary,” he replied, “Just let me pack my things and—”

“Great!” Rainbow exclaimed. “All the info’s in the letter, and the bits, too.” She turned to fly off, but stopped mid-crouch. “Oh, and if that’s not enough, just tell Pinkie Pie when you get there. See ya’!” With that she soared up into the sky, leaving a streak of rainbow in her wake. She was over the treetops and past the horizon before Christ[†] could react.

“Wait!” he cried, turning back to where the pegasus had been, “I thought you were going to fly me over... darn.” He sighed, and looked down at the package she had left. “Guess I will be walking again, then.”

He prodded the letter with a hoof. It was pink, wrapped in ribbon, and covered in smiley face stickers and crayon drawings of balloons. He levitated it in front of him and opened it. His eyebrows flew up as a waterfall of bits spilled out, scattering across the ground. He blinked, temporarily stunned, and then continued his investigation.

The only other thing inside was a piece of crumpled paper that turned out to be an invitation, written in bright red ink, that urged him to come to “The Most Super-Spectacular Wedding Ever!” and conduct a marriage ceremony. He laughed to himself as he read it, and decided that, if nothing else, this job sounded like a unique enough experience. He then turned to the bits on the ground. They totaled to 200 more than his usual pay. He blinked, recounted, and then gasped in horror as it occurred to him that he had less than 24 hours to get to Ponyville or else risk betraying a pair of incredibly eccentric clients.

Panicking, he swung back to his campsite and began disassembling it. He went first to the tent, removed all the things inside—the sleeping bag, his book collection, a few trinkets—and then collapsed it with his magic. He rolled up the sleeping bag onto his withers, placed the folded tent into his left saddlebag, and then the rest of his things into their appropriate pouches in the one on his right. Next he packed the few pans and cups he owned and then made absolutely sure the previous night’s fire was out. He gave the small clearing a final one-over, nodded to himself, and then trotted off along the road, levitating out a map as he did so.

He cringed when he saw how far he had to travel. *Oh well*, he thought, *at the very least I might meet the Bearers of the Elements of Harmony.*

And though that thought gave him some encouragement, he still found his whole assignment odd. Typically, when called upon, he was expected to plan, set up, and oversee the entire wedding, not just recite the vows. Anypony could do that last bit. The actual legal side of the marriage was handled through a local government official, such as a mayor, and he was only there to help ease along the celebratory side of things. As such, he did not see why he was needed now, but the attitude expressed by Pinkie Pie’s letter was intriguing, and her payment

meant he was obligated to appear.

So he trotted on, hooves clapping against the ground as the day's shadows grew longer and longer until they blanketed the world and the sun sank below the horizon. A starry sky sailed above him, and weariness crept into his body. His eye drooped, his feet dragged, and his head bowed, but it was not until the moon was sinking behind Canterlot Mountain that he arrived in Ponyville. He sighed with relief, and curled up next to the great tree he found near the town's center to get a few hours rest before the ceremony.

Only he now he had woken to find the town deserted. This perplexed him. Did Miss Dash give him the wrong date? Had something happened during the last day? Would the town really let all this effort go to waste?

His thoughts were interrupted, however, when a bright blue blur came screaming out of the sky and barreled into him before he could react. He cried out in shock, skidding across the ground, and came to a stop uncomfortably close to the one puddle of mud the weather team had missed. His book thumped to the ground next to him a moment later. Grunting, he hauled himself back up, and began brushing himself off with his magic as he looked around for his attacker. He blinked in surprise when he saw it was Rainbow Dash.

"Oh. Hello again," he said.

"Oh hey Christ[†]!" she replied. She had tumbled a few feet from him, and was also in the midst of picking herself up off of the ground. "Heh... sorry about that. You okay?"

"Uh... yes, I am. No harm done, it seems." He levitated his book back to his side, and readjusted his glasses. "But—" He yawned. "What about the wedding? Where is everypony? I have not even seen the brides yet."

"Oh yeah, that." She rubbed the back of her head with a foreleg. "It turns out they worked so hard to get things set up that they ended up too tired to come today. I checked out the town myself; everypony's still asleep. Even the ones with alarms."

"I... see..." he said, frowning in confusion, "Well then, what do we do now?"

"I dunno." She shrugged. "I was just heading home for a nap when I crashed into you and decided to say hey. You need anything to get ready for the wedding? Because, knowing Pinkie Pie, it'll probably still happen today."

"Well... would you mind taking me to meet the brides?" he asked, "I would very much like to get to know who I will be wedding."

"Oh sure, no problem. Fluttershy's probably awake—all she's had to do is take care of Dyx. Just

follow me!” she exclaimed, zooming off in the direction of their cottage and waving a hoof at Christener to follow.

“Wait! Hold on!” he cried, lurching into a gallop, “I can’t run that fast...”

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Pinkie Pie yawned as she made her way down the steps from the bedroom that she, her son, and Fluttershy now shared.

Her mane was greasy, matted, and sprinkled with small white feathers from her pillow. She had stayed up late the night before, making a final few adjustments to the town’s decorations. She had worked so hard that her body had been riled up on adrenaline, and she had been unable to fall asleep until deep into the morning. Her feet dragged and her head sagged as she lumbered down the stairs, and she felt rust around her eyelids as she creaked them open.

Now in the kitchen, Pinkie proceeded to make breakfast, intent on making up for her lost sleep with nourishment. As she was still a bit new to the cottage and Fluttershy had done most of the cooking for the three of them, it took slightly longer than normal for her to throw something together. But after much rummaging through cabinets she sat happily at the table, a plate of syrup-drenched pancakes and eggs in front of her. She took a moment to enjoy the sweet scent of sugar before wolfing down her meal. She licked her lips and belched in satisfaction, smiling, and let her food settle for a moment before cleaning up.

Tossing her dishes into the sink, she trotted out to the cottage’s living room to find it deserted. Usually, after Fluttershy had made Dyx breakfast, the colt would help the pegasus with her chores until lunchtime, after which he’d be free to wander around the cottage and play on his own until dinner. Fluttershy would then spend the rest of the evening trying to tutor him; Dyx would be starting school in a week or two, and Twilight had been unavailable because of Pinkie’s wedding preparations.

Pinkie Pie’s routine, meanwhile, had consisted of sleeping, waking up early, and then heading out to town to get on with the wedding preparations, so she only saw Dyx and Fluttershy at dinner and, occasionally, during breakfast. But today she had missed them. She frowned. That was too bad, she had wanted to tell Fluttershy... something. She tapped the side of her head with a hoof, trying to clear the cobwebs from her mind.

“Hmm...” She trotted over to a window, hoping the mid-morning light would jog her memory. It felt really important, what she had wanted to tell Fluttershy.

She rubbed her chin with a hoof, and looked around the room. Her eyes fell on the green dress hanging in the corner of the room. It was Fluttershy’s gala dress, now re-purposed into a wedding gown. She had set it out last night, so that it would be ready for the wedding today. The

wedding. Today. Pinkie gasped.

“Of course! Everything’s done! *That’s* what I forgot!” She looked back at the window, and her eye’s widened. “Ohmygosh! I’m late!” she cried, scrambling to the door. She yanked it open, and galloped outside.

And then crashed headfirst into the black unicorn who had been trotting up the trail to their house.

Their skulls cracked against one another, and the two ponies fell back onto their haunches, each crying out in shock. Pinkie recovered in time to see Rainbow Dash flap to the ground next to her, cringing.

“Ooh... you two okay?” the pegasus asked.

“Yep,” replied Pinkie, unfazed, “My mane absorbed most of the impact.”

“Huh? I don’t think that’s—” But Rainbow Dash was cut off by a loud groan from behind her, and the two mares turned to see the black unicorn shaking his head to clear it.

“Urg, good morning,” he murmured, rubbing his head in pain. “Would you be Miss Pinkie Pie, then?”

“Yep that’s me!” she chirped. “Ooh, but how do you know my name? We haven’t met before! And you’re not from Ponyville, because I know everypony in Ponyville and I don’t know you! Though you do look familiar...” She scrunched up her face in thought.

“Well,” the stallion began, “I do put out adv—”

“Oh, I know!” she continued, face lighting up, “Did I have a dream about you? Or maybe you’re from Canterlot?”

“Well, I have done many—”

“Because I’ve been to Canterlot a few times and so I could recognize a some ponies from Canterlot even though I haven’t thrown them any parties, except that one time during Twilight’s birthday where there was that garden party next door.”

“Uh, if you could just slow down, please—”

“Speaking of which, I always wanted to throw a garden party—because I never have before and how could I be a proper party pony if I don’t throw every type of party possible? But I’ve never been able to because I asked Lily if I could borrow her garden for a party once and she just

screamed and fainted which I'm pretty sure means 'no' and I don't know anypony else who has a garden that's big enough for a party so—”

“Pinkie Pie!” Rainbow Dash shouted, sticking a hoof in the pink mare’s mouth, “I think he gets it.”

“Oh, mhmph.” Pinkie said, refocusing on the stallion as Rainbow Dash pulled out, “So anyway, where were we? Oh right, your name. Ooh, wait, let me guess! Is it Shadow? Or Night Shade? Coal Heart? Bottle Breaker? Maybe—”

“No, no, none of those.” he interjected, “I am Christener—though most ponies call me Christ[†]—and I am the minister you hired for the wedding today. Remember? The wedding? It took me all night to get here on time.” He smiled nervously, glancing between the crazy mare and her companion.

“Ohh yeah!” Pinkie replied, eyes widening. “Great! You’re just in time!” She bounced up, and began galloping down the road. “Now let’s go before people start eating all the food.”

“Whoa, hold on.” Rainbow said, swooping in front of the earth pony, “Nopony’s there. They’re all asleep. All the setup wore them out.”

Pinkie stopped in her tracks. “What?” she screamed, “They all slept in *on my wedding day!*?” Her body quivered with anger, and her right eye twitched.

“Pinkie, *you* slept in on your wedding day,” Rainbow Dash replied, rolling her eyes.

“Oh yeah?” she snapped, jabbing a hoof into her friend’s chest, “Well *you*... you, uh...”

But before Pinkie could think of a proper retort, there was a great clamor from the forest’s edge. Startled, the three ponies turned to see a brown colt burst out of the treeline, eyes wide with fear. A swarm of bees buzzed out after him. He sped by the trio without a word, breathing hard, and then hurled himself into a patch of bushes on the trail’s opposite side. The bees pursued him, ignoring the three other ponies and disappearing into the foliage.

Pinkie Pie blinked in surprise, while Rainbow Dash and Christ[†] stared blankly at the spot the colt had disappeared into. A moment passed, and then the bees returned, this time chased out by a yellow pegasus. She spread her wings, glaring at the bees, and they retreated from her as fast as their wings would let them. The colt was huddled underneath her, smiling triumphantly.

“Thanks daddy!” he gushed. “They were about—”

“Don’t you ‘thanks daddy’ me,” Fluttershy, said, frowning at the foal beneath her. His smile disappeared, and he pressed his ears back against his head as she continued scolding him. “I told you not to disturb the animals’ homes—*especially* those that can hurt you—and yet you still

went and made the bees angry. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry," he said, lowering his head.

"Good." She smiled, beginning to move across the trail. "Now let's go find those bees' hive so you can apologize to them for invading their home."

"Uh, I don't think we can do that," the colt said, following after Fluttershy and glancing at the three ponies that she had yet to notice.

"No excuses, Dyx. We both know you provoked them, and you're going to apologize for that."

"No, I mean—"

He was cut off by a roar from the forest, and Fluttershy halted as a large brown bear stomped out from the underbrush. The remains of the bees' nest were clutched in his right paw, and a glob of honey hung from his muzzle. He lumbered over to Dyx, sat down in front of him, and held up his free forepaw to the colt. The foal looked at Fluttershy, then quickly bumped his hoof against the bear's paw, grinning. The yellow pegasus watched the exchange, dumbfounded.

"Henry said he'd give me some honey if I distracted the bees for him," Dyx explained.

"What!?" Fluttershy exploded, turning on the bear, "*You* had my son get chased around by bees!"

He growled in response, baring his teeth.

"Don't you talk back to *me* mister!" Fluttershy scolded, flapping into the air and staring down at bear. "You know perfectly well that bee stings hardly hurt you, yet you still put my son in unnecessary danger! I am *very* disappointed in you." She jabbed his nose with a hoof and he shied back, whimpering in fear. "Now I don't want to see you hanging out with Dyx ever again, understand?"

He nodded hurriedly before dashing back into the woods, his tail between his legs. Fluttershy turned back to Dyx.

"And I don't want *you* getting into any more trouble either," she said, "Do you realize how hurt you could have gotten?"

"Uh, w-well," Dyx began, tapping a hoof on the ground, "*originally*, I was going to just smoke the bees out, but I didn't want to set anything on fire... again... and I thought I could run fast enough, and..." he trailed off, smiling weakly.

Fluttershy sighed, settling back to the ground, and lowered her head to look her son in the eye. “Dyx, I’ve told you enough times to stop getting into trouble, and you know the forest is a dangerous place. Please, *please*, promise me you’ll stop doing things like this. The animals need to be taken care of, and I can’t watch you all the time.”

“Yeah!” Pinkie chimed in, being the only pony from the trio not stunned into silence, “You need to be super-duper careful around here, okay?”

“Okay,” he said, pawing the ground. “But there’s nothing else to do around here!”

“Sure there is, Dyxie, you just need to try new things.” Pinkie chirped, “Besides, soon you’ll be in school, and you’ll make a whole heap of friends, and then you can play with them!”

“Yes,” added Fluttershy, “and in the meantime you can play with Angel, or Gummy, or one of the other animals. But you have play *nicely*, okay?”

“Okay,” groaned Dyx.

“Alright, thank you, sweetie,” Fluttershy said, giving her son a nuzzle, “Now let’s get back the cottage and get you cleaned up for the wedding.” She turned back to the trail, swinging her head around to see Christ† for the first time. She shrieked, her eyes widening in fear, and then dived behind Dyx.

“Who’s that?” she squeaked, cowering behind her son.

The unicorn stared at her, his mouth opening and closing wordlessly as he looked from the space the bear had been to the now petrified mare who had shouted it down only moments before.

“Uh...” was all he could manage before Pinkie jumped in.

“He’s the pony who’s going to marry us!” she cried, darting to Fluttershy’s side to nudge her back onto her feet and over the Christ†. “He’s new here, so be extra nice!”

“Uh, I, uh, actually—*technically*—I am going to *wed* you two,” he said, having rediscovered his voice, “But, anyway, it is a pleasure to finally meet you.” He extended a hoof in greeting. “You are Miss Fluttershy, I assume?”

“Oh, um, yes,” she replied, sticking a quivering hoof out to meet his, “It’s nice to meet you too.” She gave his hoof a quick shake, and then took a few steps back to stand next to her son.

“Well, now that we’re all friends,” Pinkie Pie said, “Let’s get going!”

“Going where?” ask Rainbow.

“To my wedding, duh!” Pinkie said, rolling her eyes. “Where else would we go!?”

“Ugh, Pinkie,” Rainbow groaned, smacking her forehead with a hoof, “I just told you that the *entire town* is out cold. You’re going to have to reschedule it.”

“Oh, hmm...” Pinkie frowned in thought. This was a problem. If everypony was asleep, then they would miss the greatest Pinkie Pie Party™ ever of all time so far. And that would be terrible.

“Well then I’ll just have to wake them all up!” she declared. The pink mare leaped down the trail, only to be jerked back onto her rump by a yank from her tail.

“Hold on,” Rainbow Dash said, spitting out the hairy pink mess, “You can’t just burst into peoples homes and wake them up. Why don’t—?”

“Sure I can!” Pinkie chirped. “I’ll just climb in through their windows!”

“No! Just—! Gha...” Rainbow lowered her head in defeat, sighing. “Fluttershy, would you please talk some sense into your *wife* for me?” She turned to the yellow pegasus, who was pawing the ground nervously while standing next to Dyx, who was busy watching Christ†, who was himself focusing all his attention on adjusting the cloth around his neck and trying not to gawk at the scene he had stumbled into.

“Oh, um, yes,” Fluttershy said, sliding over to her two friends. “Um, Pinkie, maybe, instead of bother all those ponies—not that you would mean to, it’s just that, getting, um, pounced on tends to be rather bothersome. Anyway, what if, instead, we moved the wedding back a few hours and, uh, left a note for everypony so they’d know? That would work. If you’re not too busy with anything else, that is.”

“Hmm...” Pinkie Pie sat back on her haunches, tapping her chin and nodding her head thoughtfully. That was a good idea. Though it would mean a bit of extra work to keep things ready, it would also guarantee that everypony would be there. A smile appeared on her face, and she bounced forward to hug Fluttershy. “Ooh, what a totally great idea! But when do we set it back to. In an hour? Does that work?” She looked at the four ponies in front of her.

“Only one hour?” Rainbow Dash complained, “I dunno, I’d like to get at least five more.”

“Five hours?” Pinkie looked at Rainbow Dash, and tilted her head to the side.

“Yeah! Uh, y’know, because I have to do weather reports... and stuff...” The pegasus shifted her eyes suspiciously.

“Oh, and I still have some chores to finish up,” Fluttershy added.

“I am good to go, but I would not mind a few more hours of sleep,” Christ[†] said, suppressing a yawn, “Though, really, it would be ideal to have a few more *days* to get to know you two more; it helps me personalize the vows.”

Dyx merely shrugged, and went back to munching on the leaves of a nearby plant. Fluttershy noticed this and darted over to his side, smacking the red-colored leaves out of his reach and making him spit out what he had already bitten off.

“Dyx!” she yelled. “I keep telling you, those are *poisonous*. Stop trying to eat them!”

“But I feel fine!” he whined, “And I’m hungry.”

Fluttershy sighed. “You’re always hungry...” She picked up her son by the scruff of his neck, and tossed him onto her back. “Come on, let’s get you some medicine. Again.” She began trotting back to the cottage, turning her head back to say goodbye to her friends.

“And send Rarity over when you’re ready, if she’s free,” she said.

“Okie-dokie! See you all in five hours then!” Pinkie cried, bursting into a gallop and flying down the road. She had a lot of houses to hit, and she still had to pick up her dress from Rarity, and she’d have to get Twilight to use her magic to keep all the food from spoiling, and—

Pinkie frowned, realizing just how much she’d have to do to keep everything perfectly-perfect, and quickened her pace towards Ponyville.

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Princess Luna strode through the courtyard, her hooves clacking on the white cobblestones that lead to the entrance of the Canterlot Royal Hospital. Two guards flanked her, their dark armor gleaming in the noon light, and together they marched through the sliding doors of the hospital’s main entrance.

The waiting room was clean, smelt of dust, and had a thick sandy brown carpet that seemed to suck all the sound out of the room. A pink mare dressed in white sat at the reception desk, fiddling absentmindedly with a paper. A row of chairs lined the wall closest to the doorway, where a single stallion sat, his features obscured behind a two-week old newspaper.

The Princess moved up to the receptionist, and her two guards followed her, each taking a defensive position around where she stopped. Luna tapped a hoof against the bell on the desk, and it gave a dull clang.

The mare glanced up, sniffing in air. “Yes?” she exhaled.

“We have come to check upon the six soldiers of Our Royal Guard that arrived here earlier this week,” she declared, gazing down at her subject, “Are they well and in good hooves?”

The mare bent down below her desk, coming up with a fat clipboard of papers. She lifted the first few pages, scrolling through the list of names. “Do you have a name, Your Nightness?” she asked.

The Princess blinked rapidly. Did she really just ask for her name? That couldn't be right.

“What doth thou mean?” she asked, tilting her head in confusion.

“A name,” the mare said, look up from the papers, “Do you have a name for me, ma'am?”

“A name? *A name?*” the Princess snapped, jerking back from the desk, **“We are Luna! Princess and Ruler of Equestria. The Harbinger of the Night. What do thou mean, ‘A name’?”**

Outside the sky darkened, and the doors to hospital slammed open. A wind rushed in, scattering papers around the room. The pony sitting at the door cried out in anger as his newspaper was ripped from his grip. It tumbled through the air, smacking one of Luna's guards in the face, but he did not react as it squirmed and contorted around his muzzle.

“Doth thou not know of thy Overlord?” Luna continued, standing tall. The rooms shadows stretched over the floor, pulled in toward her body. She spread her wings, and the wind howled around her. **“Hath thou already forgotten the Nightmare of Our folly? How dare thee ask a name of thy own Emancipator!?”**

Lightning flashed outside, and thunder rocked the building. Luna's eyes blazed with white light, and storm clouds swirled above the hospital. She leaned against the edge of the receptionist's desk, and peered down at the now quivering mare.

“Well?” she hissed.

“N-no. Y-your N-nightness—uh—Princess Luna.” The mare shrunk under the alicorn's stare. “I-I mean, what is the name of the *patient*. N-not *your* name.”

Luna's wings fell to her side, and the wind dropped to nothing. The clouds evaporated, and pieces of paper settled around the room. Luna stared at the receptionist with horrified eyes. The stallion near the door sat dazed, his mouth agape and hair splattered over his head. The royal guard made no move to remove the newspaper that was now molded over his face, and his companion continued to stare impassively at the waiting room's exit.

A yellow sticky-note detached itself from the ceiling, and fluttered down onto Luna's nose. The princess blinked once, and then shook it off, pulling herself away from the mare's face. She cleared her throat, glanced briefly around her peripheral, and then stared straight at the back wall as she spoke.

"Moondancer. We recall a Moondancer." she said, pausing. "How fares her company?"

"Uh, j-just a moment, Your Nightness," the receptionist stammered, flipping through the papers on her clipboard. She scanned through them, her eyes darting up and down. A moment passed, and she grinned weakly up at the alicorn, eye shrinking in fear. "Uh, I'm s-sorry Your Majesty, b-but—" she gulped, "—there's no record of any Moondancer getting checked in here in the last week. O-or any group of ponies bigger than four."

"What?" Luna's wings unfolded in panic, her eyes widening, "What do you mean?"

"I-I mean there's no record, Your Royal Highness." The mare cowered in her seat, "N-nopony ever checked in. Oh please forgive me!" she cried, throwing her forelegs up to shield herself.

Luna closed her eyes, taking a deep breath to calm herself. No need to panic. It was probably just a simple mistake. The guards were still in Ponyville. Or the basic paperwork had slipped through the cracks. It was bureaucracy, things like that happened all the time. She would just have to send somepony else to check on them for her. She frowned. Really, she should have done that in the first place, but the task had seemed too important to delegate to an inferior. *Damn all these royal duties*, she thought.

It had been a busy week for her. Although Discord had not been revived, the incident had caused quite a panic in Canterlot and in Equestria at large. Celestia was forced to appear across the land to reassure the citizenry that everything was okay, while Luna had been stuck at the capital to juggle a panicking aristocracy with military leaders who insisted they be deployed throughout the land as a precaution. Luna had fought an uphill battle to convince her generals that putting troops in the streets would only incite *more* panic, and she was eternally grateful that a few key aristocrats *did* have their wits about them and were able to do most of the work for her in assuring the ruling class that Discord had indeed left the land.

"The princesses know what they are doing," one had said, "and besides, neither of them can feel his presence any more."

"Um, Your Nightness?" the receptionist asked, beginning to relax her forelegs. At the sound of her voice Luna's head flew up, and the mare flinched back to her defensive position.

"Is there an administrator We could speak to?" the Princess asked.

“O-oh, yes,” the receptionist moved forward, leaning over the edge of the counter to point out her directions with a shaking hoof. “The doctor’s office is through the main doors, and down the hallway. Last door on your right. Y-you can’t miss it Your Majesty.”

“Thank you,” Luna replied, nodding her head and trotting to the door she had been directed to. Her guards followed.

As the doors swung shut behind her she halted in mid-stride, letting out a soft gasp as she remembered something. She turned back, and stuck her head out the door. “Oh, and one other item,” she called out to the receptionist, “Please call me just ‘Luna’.”

“O-oh...” the receptionist replied, “S-sure. Luna.”

“Thank you,” the princess said, smiling. She then pulled her head out from the doorway and continued down the hall to the doctor's office. His report was disheartening.

“I’m terribly sorry Your Highness-” he began.

“Luna, please.”

“Sorry. Luna.” he corrected, reading over a paper from his files, “But apparently there has been a huge oversight on my part.” He swallowed, “I take full responsibility.”

Luna frowned. “Take responsibility? Please, don’t sound so morbid. I am sure whatever happened was a simple mistake. I just wish to know how my guards are doing. Their conditions were rather serious.”

“Er, of course, Your Night—er, Luna. Here is what I’m talking about.” He turned the paper around on the desk, and slid it over to the princess. “We sent a crew out a week ago, just as you instructed, to transfer the guards from Ponyville’s hospital, but there’s no record of the patients ever making it back.” He chewed on his lip as Luna read over the document.

“I-I’m not sure what went wrong—all the ponies I sent out to make the transfer are still here, but it’s as if they trotted halfway down there, forgot what they were doing, and then came back to their normal duties without reporting in.” He swallowed again. “Really, I should have noticed that—like I said, it was a gross oversight on my part—but I assumed that, because I hadn’t gotten a bad report that week, nothing had gone wrong with any of our cases, including yours, Majes—er, Luna. I am very sorry. I’ll do everything I can to correct it.”

Luna nodded, and placed the paper back on the stallion’s desk. “That is indeed very odd. Night Breaker?” she called, turning to the guard on her right.

“Yes?” he replied. “What do you wish of me?”

"I need you to interview each of the ponies who were supposed to transfer my guards back to Canterlot. Find out what they remember about that day and report it to me." She turned back to addressing the doctor, "I trust you can arrange those interviews?"

"Yes, Luna. I can do that immediately if you wish."

"Very good," she replied, "Please do so."

"Right away!" he cried. He saluted awkwardly, and then sped out the door. Luna turned to the guard on her left.

"Breadcrumb," she said, "I need you to fly to Ponyville and make sure Moondancer and her company are well. Go now."

"Mphs mwm," replied the guard with the newspaper still stuck over his head.

"And take that thing off of your face," Luna added, "You look ridiculous."

"Yes, ma'am." He saluted, and then trotted out the door, leaving just Luna and Night Breaker in the room.

"Very well," the princess said, "I am afraid that I must leave now; I am already late for a meeting. Get me that report as soon as possible, and good luck."

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am." He saluted.

Luna nodded her thanks, and then raised her horn to the ceiling. It glowed with a light that expanded around the princess and then flashed outward, whisking her away to her royal duties.

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The kettle screeched, and Fluttershy began pouring out boiling water into two cups.

"So..." said the unicorn at her kitchen table, "how long have you known Miss Pinkie Pie?"

"Oh, ever since I moved to Ponyville," she responded, still working at the counter, "She threw me a party on my first day here, you know. That was really nice, even though I spent most of it hiding under the punch table." She smiled at the memory. "But anyway, we weren't very close friends until after we met Twilight Sparkle; she brought the six of us together, really." The pegasus turned her head back towards her guest. "Chamomile or green tea?" she asked.

"Chamomile, please," Christ† replied, "You six? The Elements of Harmony?"

“Oh, um, yes. I guess you could think of us like that.” Fluttershy placed a pair teabags into the steaming waters, and then carried the cups one at a time over to the table. She placed one in front of Christ† and the other at her seat. She sat down. “But to me they’re my very best friends.”

“Ah. I see.” He levitated the cup to his mouth, and sipped politely, humming in satisfaction. “This is excellent, Miss Fluttershy.”

“Oh, thank you,” she said.

She took a sip from her own cup, and glanced around the table. She wanted to be polite, but having a perfect stranger over for tea was making her nervous. She still wasn’t quite sure how Pinkie had found him, and though he seemed nice enough, his presence had made her realize just what she was getting herself into. She was marrying one of her friends so they could raise a colt that Pinkie had just found in the forest. Element of Kindness or not, this was a huge leap for her, and she had begun to feel a bit overwhelmed in the past few days. Dyx was a handful, and though she knew that Pinkie would be more available after the wedding, she would still have her job with the Cakes, and Fluttershy wasn’t sure that she could keep on top of all her chores and still be a good father for the colt. At least school would be starting soon and then she wouldn’t have to worry about him getting into trouble all the time.

“So, um,” Fluttershy said, trying to keep the conversation going, “How long have you been wedding ponies?”

“Oh, ever since I got my cutie mark.” he replied.

“Oh. Well that sounds... nice.”

“Oh I love it. I get to meet new ponies all the time and be around them when they’re at their happiest.”

“How... wonderful.”

“Yes, well, at least that happens most of the time. Relationships do go sour occasionally, but when that happens I try my best to ease the pain. Not everything works out for everypony all the time, unfortunately. But so long as their relationship is based on love, ponies will find happiness.”

“Oh. That’s...” Fluttershy trailed off, and there was another lull in their conversation. Christ† cleared his throat, and took a sip from his teacup.

Fluttershy felt bad. She wanted to be happy and excited about her wedding, but even thinking about the future she was tying herself into and all the responsibility she was piling onto herself

only incited nervousness. She was too tired to feel the dread she knew she should be feeling. Dyx's antics had exhausted her. His idea of fun, she had discovered, seemed to be to create as much chaos as possible whenever she turned her back on him. One day he had chased the cat into the forest, and it had taken two hours to calm her down enough to let Fluttershy bring her back. Another time he wrecked a beaver's dam, and Fluttershy had spent the rest of the day overseeing Dyx as he helped rebuild it. And twice this week he had accidentally set fire to the chicken coup. Somehow.

"So," Christ[†] said, breaking Fluttershy's musing, "what made you and Miss Pinkie Pie decide to finally get married? I understand the wedding preparations were rather rushed..."

"Oh, well, um," Fluttershy looked up from her tea, "Pinkie, um, proposed to me just last week, actually, but she's very enthusiastic about her parties. It's her special talent. I'm surprised she didn't want to get married very next day, actually."

"I see." He took another sip from his teacup, "So, if you do not mind me asking, what makes you think she is 'the one,' as they say?"

"Oh, um, well..." Fluttershy had heard that question, or a variation of it, many times in the past week, and it was always awkward to explain that she and Pinkie weren't actually marrying for love. "Really, Dyx is—"

"Daaaaaad!" The colt's whine cut her off, and the two ponies looked over to see him walking through the kitchen door, a desperate expression on his face. "Can I *please* go outside?"

Fluttershy sighed. "No, honey. You're grounded until after your mother and I are married. You really hurt those bees."

"But Angel's being mean to me!" The foal complained.

"What is he doing this time, Dyx?"

That was another thing. Angel had started pestering the colt, but Fluttershy couldn't figure out why. She had watched the bunny dance around and point out various patterns many times, but she hadn't been able to decipher any of them. Eventually, he had given up on trying to communicate to her about whatever it was about Dyx that bothered him and instead had taken to picking on the colt whenever Fluttershy wasn't around. Nothing violent, of course, but always annoying enough so that it was a problem.

"He's sitting outside the window and... and, uh—" the colt frowned, looking for the right word, "—and taunting me!"

"How?"

“He... he just is!”

Fluttershy sighed, excused herself from the table, and trotted into the livingroom to investigate. Sure enough, Angel was outside the window. He had set up a miniature lawn chair and was lounging in it with a tanning mirror in his hands and a glass of iced tea at his side. He also wore a pair of sunglasses that were almost as big as he was.

Fluttershy frowned at the sight, and Dyx scampered over to the window to stick his tongue out at the rabbit. Angel looked down at the colt, took an exaggerated sip from his iced tea, and wiggled his eyebrows as if to ask ‘*Are you jealous?*’ He then returned to his sunbathing.

Fluttershy sighed. “Just ignore him, sweetie. He’s only trying to get a reaction out of you.”

“But I—!”

There was a knock at the door, and Fluttershy moved to answer it. It was Rarity.

“Good afternoon, darling. I hope you’re ready for your big day!” The white mare smiled, but she looked tired. There were faint bags under her eyes, and her mane was just the tiniest bit messy to show that she had slacked on her usual beautification.

“Oh, yes,” Fluttershy replied. “I just need to put on the gown—which is perfect, by the way. Pinkie’s taking care of everything else.”

“Oh, good. I’m absolutely *thrilled* you like the dress. I was a bit worried that simply changing up your gala dress wouldn’t be enough, but it worked out beautifully. Anyway, I’ll help you into it and then we can get going and—ooh! Is this the minister?” She turned to Christener, who had walked out to see who had entered. Dyx was still frowning at Angel.

“Yes I am,” he replied. “Miss Pinkie Pie hired me.” He he shook hooves with Rarity.

“A pleasure to meet you,” she said.

“The pleasure is all mine,” he replied. He turned to Fluttershy, “And I do not mean to be rude, but I will be heading to the wedding now. I believe Miss Pinkie Pie will want me to be there before you. For the ceremony and all.”

“Oh, yes.” Fluttershy replied. “Of course.”

“Alright, I’ll see you then,” he said, starting up the path, “And thank you for the tea.”

“You’re welcome,” said Fluttershy.

“We’ll see you in a few!” Rarity called. She waved him goodbye before entering the cottage and shutting the door. “Now, let’s make you *fabulous!*”

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Breadcrumb descended from the sky, aiming for Ponyville General Hospital. He had flown high above the clouds, but his armor and fur had been more than enough to keep him warm. He liked watching the world from up there. It felt so far away; quiet. He enjoyed that feeling of isolation. Now, though, the wind rushed past him, and as he neared the hospital he swooped upward to slow himself before folding his wings in and dropping to the ground. He trotted into the reception area and asked to see the head doctor.

“I need some information from him. I’m on a mission from Princess Luna.”

“Oh, of course,” the receptionist replied “I’ll get him right away.” She left and quickly returned with the doctor, and Breadcrumb wasted no time in getting the information he needed.

The doctor explained to him that, according to the head nurse, the staff from Canterlot Royal Hospital had come and taken Moondancer’s company back to the capital while she and her crew were out. When Breadcrumb pointed out how odd that sounded, the doctor shrugged and pulled out a clipboard from his desk.

“Well, they *did* fill out the appropriate paperwork.” He showed the clipboard to Breadcrumb. “I don’t know why they came back empty hooved.”

Breadcrumb glanced over the medical forms, and then looked the doctor, confused. “Uh, doc? Why is the ink pink?”

“Pink?” The doctor turned the clipboard around, and frowned at it. Sure enough, thought it was filled out all that had been written on was colored bright pink. “How odd, I didn’t notice it until you pointed it out. I wonder...” He sniffed at the paper, and then licked it. Breadcrumb raised an eyebrow, squeamish.

“Uh, doc? Are you feelin’ okay?”

“Interesting,” the doctor said. “It tastes like chocolate.”

Breadcrumb’s eyes widened. “Chocolate?” Even if Luna hadn’t told him to be on the lookout for any sign of Discord, the first thing he would have thought of at the mention of chocolate was the draconequus. When Discord had first escaped he had been flying, alone, above the Everfree Forest, and it had rained chocolate milk so hard that his wings had been too heavy to fly with. He’d crashed into the forest below, and it had taken him two days to find his way out on foot. He

still had nightmares about that place.

“Yes, it’s definitely chocolate. Why would anypony do their paperwork in pink colored chocolate?”

“That’s a very good question.” Breadcrumb scanned the room cautiously. The doctor was acting much too calm for somepony who’d just found out half his patients had gone missing. He looked at the receptionist he’d first talked to when he’d walked in. “What do you think about this, ma’am?”

She shrugged in response, staring back at him with glazed over eyes. She looked like she’d suddenly stopped caring about her job. Breadcrumb frowned, and looked back at the doctor. He was slurping words off the paper. The royal guard gasped and snatched the clipboard away with a wing, tucking it away under his armor.

“Doc, what the hay are you doing?”

“Oh, sorry. I was hungry.”

“Hungry? I’m trying to find out why six of my friends went missing and all you can think about is how hungry you are? What is wrong with you!?” He stormed out of the hospital, disgusted by their apathy, and threw himself into the sky. He couldn’t believe it. The first piece of evidence he stumbles upon might point to Discord being involved and that dumb doctor goes and ruins it because he can’t control his appetite. He should have bucked him for acting so stupid. That would show him, that little—

Breadcrumb halted in mid air, his rage suddenly passing from him. He landed on a nearby cloud and reviewed what he had just thought. Why had he gotten so angry? And why had he stormed out of there like that? That had been very unprofessional of him. And also completely unlike him. He scratched at his head, and looked at the clipboard. All the writing was still there, unaltered despite having been slobbered on. He frowned. Something fishy was definitely going on down there, and whatever was perpetuating it had affected him. He needed to get this to Luna ASAP. Her Nightness would know how to handle Discord’s influence.

He kicked off the cloud and veered toward Canterlot. On his way from the capital he had avoided flying over the Everfree Forest but now time was of the essence, and now below him were the dark and wild trees. Midway through his flight, however, he noticed a dark-colored pegasus curled up on a cloud and decided to investigate. As he approached he saw that the pegasus was wearing the armor of a royal guard, and when he landed he recognized her as one of those who had gone missing: Moondancer.

She was in a terrible condition. Her coat was dirty, her mane was tangled and grimy, and her armor was smeared with patches of green, evidence that she had spent days living in the

underbrush, though he could not think of why she would look this bad. The Everfree River had enough calm spots for a pony to bathe in, and she could have flown out in the first place. He stuck a hoof out to nudge her, but stopped as he remembered something Night Breaker had told him.

The other guardstallion had been with Luna on the night of Discord's almost-re-release, and he had told Breadcrumb about how one of the hospitalized guards had been "possessed by chaos." Breadcrumb still wasn't sure exactly what that meant, but if Discord's influence had spread to that hospital then there was no telling what it could have done to those who were caught in that blast of chaotic magic. He again stuck out a hoof, but readied himself to flee should Moondancer turn on him.

His caution was futile, for in the next moment he was tackled off the cloud by somepony from above and behind him. Branches snapped and leaves rained around him and his attacker as they plunged through the treetops. He didn't have time to slow himself, and his breath was knocked out of him as he smashed into the ground. He heard the clipboard crunch underneath him as his head smacked against the earth, but then all other sensations were replaced by a throbbing pain in his head and the world became blurry and dim.

He struggled to stay conscious, but found himself waking up. His side was sore, and it hurt to breathe, but his vision had returned. He was in a clearing, and Moondancer was sitting in the distance, watching something to his left. Something was wrong with her eyes, he thought. He turned his head to see what she was looking at.

It was a pink mare. She towered over the guardstallion, smiling maliciously. He tried to move, but found his limbs bound by rope. The mare bent down to stare at him, and her eyes were wrong. There were no real pupils, only distorted spirals in the middle of bright red irides. They changed color to blue as he gasped in fear, and her expression turned from intimidating to victorious.

"Gotcha," she said. A dirty rainbow of magical power rushed from her eyes to his, and Breadcrumb was blinded by color as his mind swam with chaos.

=====

Once again, Christener stood at the altar, ready for a wedding, and this time the town was ready with him. The audience was filled with the townsfolk, and their coats created a collage of colors. The relatives of the bride and groom sat in the front row along with the friends and family of the bridesmaids. To both his sides were the bridesmaids; the four other bearers of the Elements of Harmony. Pinkie Pie stood in front and to the right of the podium, grinning at everything. All they were waiting for was Fluttershy to enter.

When Christener had first arrived in town, he been impressed with the decorations, but as the

day had gone on he began to think that they were a bit excessive, even for a wedding. *Had it really been necessary to dress up the whole town?* But as he'd talked to Pinkie Pie more things started to make sense. Her life was dedicated to partying, it was only fitting that one of the most important days of it would be the biggest she could muster.

Still, as a wedding planner, he couldn't help but question some of her odd design choices.

"Mrs. Pie, if you do not mind me asking," he said, pointing to the audience, "why did you use folding chairs for seats? Aren't those for Minotaurs?"

"Uh, you know, I'm not sure," she replied. She looked at the audience. Some of the ponies were sitting across two chairs as if they were a bench, while others had opted to fold theirs up and stand or sit in the grass.

"I can explain that," Twilight Sparkle interjected, "Things got so crazy while we were setting up that I had to delegate some task to other ponies, and I put Lyra in charge of seating arrangements. My bad."

"Oh," said Christener. That didn't explain anything. He turned back to Pinkie, "And why do you have an entire orchestra? I mean—"

"Well for the [background music](#), duh!"

"Background... music? Wha—" But just then the orchestra started playing, and he turned to see Fluttershy walking down the aisle. Three little fillies pranced ahead of her, tossing pink petals onto the red carpet. They all wore simple white dresses and had soft yellow flowers in their hair. The bride herself looked gorgeous. She had blue and white flowers throughout her mane, and a long light green dress that trailed behind her. She had butterfly earrings and a matching necklace with an engraving of a pink balloon on each wing.

She walked up the aisle, smiling nervously at the ponies around her. Dyx was beside her, wearing a simple black suit with a red tie. He lagged behind his father to eat a few of the flowers the fillies had tossed out, but he was not enough to draw attention away from her natural grace and beauty. The crowd oohed in appreciation, and they stomped politely as she moved up the aisle.

Fluttershy trotted up the stairs and stood facing her soon-to-be-bride, and Dyx took a seat in the front row. The music faded to background noise as Christener began to recite the vows. Pinkie Pie quivered with excitement as he spoke, and practically squealed her yeses. Fluttershy was much calmer, and though she bit her lip at a few lines she replied with confidence and conviction.

As he spoke, Christ^t thought over his day. All in all, he considered the ceremony a success. He

had his doubts when he had arrived, but he could tell now that these were good ponies, and he wished them the best in their marriage.

“...and now, finally, you may kiss the bride!” Christener declared, beaming.

Pinkie froze, and Fluttershy immediately shrunk back from her spouse, blushing. At this, the crowd stopped their quiet admiration and instead let out a chorus of *huh?*'s which caused the band conductor to slip up, which led to the music dying out in a screeching racket. Christener blinked in surprise, glancing between the couple while his book hovered in front of him. He looked down at it, re-read what was written, looked back at the brides, and then turned to the now equally-confused bridesmaids. They shrugged.

“We have to k-kiss?” the yellow pegasus squeaked. Pinkie Pie snapped out of her freeze and turned on the minister pony.

“Are you crazy!?” she cried, “I haven't even brushed my teeth today!”

“Uh, but I—! But you—! But she—!” Christ[†] pointed at his book and at the mares, trying to demonstrate the reason for his confusion. He blabbered on for a moment or two more and then gave up, turning back to the brides' friends. “They are getting married, right? This *is* a wedding, right? I'm not crazy, right?”

“Of course it's a wedding!” Pinkie shouted, throwing her hooves into the air “It's the greatest, most super-duper, perfectly-perfect wedding ever in history! But you want to ruin it all by having me make out with my best friend! In front of the whole town! And our son! Who *does* that?”

“But you're getting—!” Christ[†] stammered, waving a hoof from one bride to the other, “Don't you two—? Haven't you—?”

“Hold on, everypony,” Twilight Sparkle said, sliding between Pinkie and the minister to break the conflict, “I think there's been a *tiny* misunderstanding here.” She chuckled nervously, and then plucked Christ[†]'s book from his magical grip. “Let's just have a little look in this book here and see what the problem is...”

Her eyes scanned the page, and she frowned in concentration. “Hmm, nope, nothing wrong here. ‘*Dearlly beloved, blah, blah, blah, you may now kiss the bride.*’ These *are* the usual marriage vows, Pinkie. This *is* what happens at weddings. Normally, anyway.” She handed the book back the Christener.

“You want us to kiss?” Fluttershy whispered from the ground. Her face was now beet red.

“This is ridiculous!” Pinkie said, jabbing her hoof at the minister. “If I wanted to kiss Fluttershy I wouldn't need any dumb book to tell me to do so. You seriously need to rethink your—!”

“Okay!” Christener cried, snapping the book closed. “I’ve got a better idea. How ‘bout I just say: ‘*You may now hug the bride,*’ hmm?” He smiled desperately. “Does that work for you Miss Pie?”

Pinkie’s rage evaporated. “Oh yeah, that’ll be great! I knew there was a reason you’re the best, Christ[†].” She scooped up Fluttershy into a hug, and the crowd cheered, deciding to just go along with it.

That was it, Christener thought to himself, after tonight he was never coming back here, and he would only speak at weddings he had planned. Even if they were the Bearers of the Elements of Harmony, these ponies were all crazy.

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Later, after things had settled down and the cake had been eaten, Twilight stepped up to the podium and took hold of the microphone. “Excuse me everypony,” she said, “I’ve prepared a speech for this occasion, and I think now is a good time to share it with you all.” She levitated a stack of papers in front of her, and a few groans were emerged from the audience. Twilight cleared her throat.

“Marriage,” she began, “Marriage brings us together today—”

“—to par-tay!” Pinkie finished, jumping in front of the microphone and shoving her friend out of the way. Papers flew everywhere. The crowd cheered. “Now c’mon everypony, let’s *dance!*” Pinkie jumped off the stage and galloped toward to dance floor. The crowd stampeded after her.

Twilight sighed and rolled back onto her hooves. She trotted after the crowd, disappointed but hopeful that she might be able to work the speech later into the night. She didn’t.

=====

Dyx was a very happy colt. He wasn’t quite sure what this whole ‘wedding’ thing was about, and he didn’t understand the fuss about ‘kissing’ that had happened earlier, but at least he had finally gotten some real food. He’d been able to eat a whole layer of cake, two plates of muffins, a bowl of fruit salad, and a bag of cookies before Fluttershy had stopped him and told him he’d had enough. He’d tried to explain that he hadn’t, though, but she wouldn’t listen. His dad never believed him when he told her he was still hungry.

“I’m sorry honey,” she’d say, “But there’s no way you’re not full. I’m afraid that if you eat anymore you’ll get a tummy ache. Or that your belly might explode.”

But he wasn’t full. He was never full. He didn’t understand how anypony could ever be full; how they could eat so little and still be satisfied. The hunger in his belly had been there from his first

memory, and it had gnawed at him ever since. He had forced himself to get used to the emptiness after he learned that meals were limited, but the recent binge had finally suppressed his hunger, and he could think in peace. Now, he moved through the dance floor, reveling in the sight and sound of it all.

Around him the whole town danced, the forms of ponies he did not know were illuminated by the stage lights. They swayed and jerked to the music, tapped to the beat and shook to the rhythms. Their shadows flickered and jumped across the ground, multiplying and vanishing under a shifting flurry of strobes and rainbow lights. He slid through the crowd, occasionally dodging a stray kick from the dancers, and revelled in the chaos. His senses were overloaded with the color and sound, and it was intoxicating. He hadn't cared much about the wedding ceremony—that black pony talked too much—but he liked this. This he could watch forever.

“Hey, kid!” someone shouted.

“Huh? Me?” Dyx turned to see who it had been. He was surprised that he could hear anypony over the music, but the voice cut through clearly.

“Yeah, you! C'm'over here, dude.” He saw that it was the DJ, and she was waving him over with a hoof, her head bobbing to the beat. He trotted over to her turntable.

“So, what's your name, kid?” she asked him.

“Dyx.”

“Dyx, huh? Neat name. I'm Vinyl Scratch. Nice ta meet ya', kid.” As she talked the bobbing of her head kept in perfect time with the music. Dyx couldn't help but be hypnotized by it. “So, kid, I saw you just wanderin' around out there on the floor. Why weren't ya dancing? Don't like techno?”

“Uh, no,” Dyx replied, not sure what a 'techno' was, “I like watching better.”

“Watching, eh?” Vinyl smiled wryly to herself. “They would ya' say you got a good pair of eyes?”

“Uh, yeah, I guess.”

“Great!” She stopped her bobbing and bent down to his level, removing her glasses as she did so. “Then can you tell me what color *my* eyes are? I keep getting mixed reports.”

“Um,” Dyx looked at her eyes, unsure of what to call the color he saw. As he stared he became unnerved by their appearance. They were off somehow; they seemed distant and unfocused.

“Uh, red but also purple... I think. But, uh, can't you just look in a mirror or something?”

“Ha! I wish,” she said, sliding her glasses back into place, “I could stare into a mirror all day and not even know it. I’m totally blind.” She turned back to her turntable, and her head resumed its bobbing.

“Blind?” Dyx asked, “What’s that?”

“It means I can’t see. My eyes don’t work.”

“Oh.” He couldn’t imagine what that would be like. “Why?”

“Eh, I’m not really sure. But don’t worry. I was born like this, so I don’t know what I’m missing, and I’m happy. Ignorance is bliss, y’know?”

He didn’t. If he were to have some part of him taken away, he would want it back no matter what. He didn’t know what he’d do if he suddenly couldn’t see or hear or smell or... remember.

“How do you, y’know, walk around and stuff if you can’t see where you’re going?”

“Oh that’s easy. Sonar, like how bats navigate.” Vinyl swiveled her ears around for emphasis. “Why do you think I became a DJ in the first place? Sound is my special talent. I can see everything on the dance floor better than anypony else. I just do it with my ears and a bit of magic instead of my eyes. Still can’t see colors, though.” She frowned. “I swear, if I could get a definite answer on my eye color that would make my life. Half my fans tell me it’s red, the other half tell me it’s purple, and my friends tell me it’s maroone. How do you ponies even kept track of all these shades in the first place?”

“Well, if I forget something I usually ask daddy about it,” Dyx replied, “And we had a whole lesson about colors once. ‘Trees are green, mommy is pink, the sky is blue—’ ”

“Yeah, see, that’s something I’ll never understand. There’s no sky for me, all the sound just gets lost up there. The sun, the moon, day, night, it’s all pretty much the same emptiness to me, but when the music starts, the world is mine.” She chuckled. “Heh, sorry kid. Now I’m just rambling at’cha. You can go back to watchin’ the dance floor if you want. I got a nice track coming up that I think you’ll like. Actually, wait.” She perked up, swirling one of her ears around. “I think your mother’s calling you.”

“Dyyyyyx!” Pinkie cried, hopping up to the colt just as the DJ spoke, “There you are! I’ve been looking all over for you. Now c’mon, we finally have some time together and it’s time to dance; let’s go get our groove on!” She scooped up Dyx onto her back and leapt back onto the dance floor.

“Nice meetin’ ya’ kid!” Vinyl called after them, “If you’re ever in Canterlot, hit me up!”

But he did not hear her. He was too busy trying to keep up with his mother's dancing. He tried to copy all her moves, but she was moving too fast for him. She twirled, and he could only shuffle his feet. She jumped and bucked, and he could only trip and kick. She popped, locked, and dropped it and he just fell onto his side. He huffed in frustration and gave up, deciding to go back to just watching. Pinkie noticed him wandering away, and went over to tap him on the shoulder.

"What's the matter, Dyxie?" she asked. "You can't be partied out already!"

"Dancing's too hard," he said, "I don't like it."

"Too hard? Hmmm." Pinkie scrunched up her nose in thought. "Ooh, I know what'll do the trick!" She jumped over to the turntable and whispered something in Vinyl's ear. The DJ smiled, nodding, and Pinkie hopped back as she changed records. Dyx tilted his head at her, confused, but she just winked at him as the song started playing.

"*You reach your right hoof in,*" Pinkie grabbed Dyx's hoof and started singing along, leading him in the dance. "*you reach your right hoof out, you reach your right hoof in and you shake it all about!*"

As they danced Dyx began to smile. *This* he could do. It was much easier. And it was fun. He and Pinkie danced together, and he was happy to be with her. He hadn't spent much time with her since the day she'd found him, and he hadn't realized how much he'd missed her until now. She had given him food, and she had made him laugh when he was scared, and though Fluttershy had taken care of him, Pinkie was the one who had rescued him.

"Mommy," he said when the song ended, "Are you ever going away again?"

"Huh? Going away?" Pinkie raised an eyebrow at him.

"Uh, yeah. After you moved in with daddy, you weren't there hardly ever." Dyx shuffled his hoof against the ground, worried that what he was saying sounded stupid. Pinkie's face softened.

"Oh, Dyxie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to leave you. I just had so much to do to make this wedding absolutely, super-duper, perfectly-perfect!" She threw up her hooves on the last words, as if showing off the world to her son. Dyx looked up at her wide eyed, and Pinkie bent down to hug him. "And it was, so I won't have to leave you and Fluttershy alone ever again." She broke the hug.

"Except for when I'm working, that is, and I guess that we couldn't be together when you're in school, but school doesn't last all day either and I'm pretty sure I could schedule my work so that we both do those at the same time, which would mean we'd have *all* of the rest of the day to play together! If you want."

“Really? Every day?”

“Yup! And we’d have even more time on weekends!” Pinkie smiled, and knelt down to look her son in the eye. “And if you ever need anything, I’ll be there for you, Dyx. I promise.”

“Promise?”

“Yep. Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye.” She mimed the actions as she spoke them. “That’s a Pinkie Promise, and nopony breaks a Pinkie Promise while Pinkie Pie’s around. Especially not me. Because *I’m* Pinkie Pie!” She giggled, and Dyx laughed. “Now, where’s Fluttershy? I haven’t been able to dance with my own husband yet!”

“I’m, um, over here,” the yellow pegasus said. She was stepping through the crowd of dancing ponies, trying to squeeze through the mass of bodies while flinching from stray limbs that were thrown her way. As soon as Pinkie saw her she rushed over and brought Fluttershy to where Dyx was standing. The pink pony then pulled the colt in toward them, and they hugged for the first time as a family.

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The party lasted long into the night, but Christener took his leave of the town as soon as the sun had set. He was exhausted from his long days of traveling, but he knew he could make much better time if he left tonight. He trotted out the way he’d come, and was almost half a mile from Ponyville when he heard a rustle in the bushes beside him.

He eyed the bush and took a few steps away from the sound, but kept going. He knew the best way to deal with creatures from the Everfree Forest was to avoid them. However, the rustle repeated itself, and it was closer this time. He glanced back to see nothing, and quickened his pace. The rustle followed him.

“Who’s there?” he shouted, turning to the treeline. He cast a spell and his horn ignited with a magical light, revealing the area. He took a cautious step forward and looked into the forest. He saw only leaves and their shadows.

“What the—?” Something hit him from behind. He flew forward into the trees, his horn sputtering out. He landed on the ground, and something was on him, pinning him down. He struggled against it and tried to shout, but a hoof pinned his horn against the ground and he could only gasp as his head snapped back. Two shimmering eyes appeared in the darkness above him, and a voice spoke.

“Welcome to the herd.”

All he saw was sickly color.

AND SO DYX KNEW OF FAMILY

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I welcome all criticisms and comments.
Please leave all feedback on this story's EqD page, thank you.

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I do not own the intellectual properties that the authors of the fan-fiction that this fan-fiction is
loosely based off of do not own. So there.
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[†]Pronounced "Kr-ih-st," as in *Christopher*.

¹His damn dysfunctional time machine is the reason why it took so long to release this chapter. Don't ask for the details.