

The Reaper's Game

A MLP / TWEWY Crossover

By SIAanme

DAY 2: 2

"Nope sorry, we haven't seen any pony matching either of those descriptions."

"Oh. Sorry to bother you then. We'll be on our way."

That was the third pair they'd asked, and none of them had seen Applejack or Rainbow Dash. Still, it was too soon to give up hope. Fluttershy looked around the crowded square, searching for the spots of silence that indicated a mind unreadable. Since she couldn't help with the questioning, Rarity had her scanning full time to find more pairs. Mostly though, she was distracted by the thoughts of the living ponies.

It was so frustrating Fluttershy could just scream. Here she was, a pony content to go through life with as little attention paid to her as possible, and she finally had it. Complete anonymity. And it turned out it wasn't what she had hoped it would be. Yes, she wanted to hide from the world, but she always thought that would come with the option to speak up if she needed to. Here though, her voice was gone. Even if she wanted to be heard, she couldn't express herself.

"Well it was never going to be easy to find them," Rarity broke in on Fluttershy's thoughts. "Are you sure you don't want to do a quick fly-over to see if you can spot them?"

Well, at least she could still convey yes or no. Fluttershy shook her head. The idea of separating from Rarity, even for a short while, didn't sit well. What if she was attacked and Rarity didn't notice? She couldn't scream for help, and on her own, she was as good as de-erased. She instead pointed in the direction of the next pair.

"Well, if you insist dear. Who knows, maybe the fourth time's the charm." Rarity starting walking in the direction Fluttershy indicated. Only a few steps later, she tripped. Fluttershy hovered over and helped her up again. "Thank you Fluttershy. I swear the pavement stones here must be uneven. I've never tripped so much in my life."

The next pair of ponies consisted of a sea-blue unicorn and a pea-green pegasus. "Pardon me!" Rarity called out once they were close enough. "You there! The blue unicorn and green pegasus."

The pair looked around in confusion, finally spotting Rarity and Fluttershy. "More players!" It was the pegasus that spoke. "Oh thank goodness, I was beginning to worry we were the only pair in the game."

Fluttershy's heart sank. If Rarity and her were the first pair they'd seen, it was unlikely that they would know anything about Applejack and Rainbow Dash. She began scanning again. Rarity continued unfazed though.

"Yes yes, we're all in this game. How terrible right? Anyway, I just wanted to know if you'd seen some friends of mine."

The pair looked at each other. "You mean you're just looking for any friends, or certain friends in particular?" the unicorn asked.

"Yes, that's it exactly. Oh, where are my manners? I'm Rarity, and my friend over there is Fluttershy." Fluttershy waved a hoof shyly. "And we're looking for our friends, Rainbow Dash and Applejack. Maybe you've seen them? One's a blue pegasus with a rainbow coloured mane, and the other's an orange earth pony wearing a hat. Oh, and they probably both have no semblance of grooming or grace."

"Well... I don't think we've seen anypony like that. Oh, I'm Sea Breeze, and my partner is Oriens Ventus," said the unicorn.

"Oh..." disappointment tinged Rarity's voice. "Still, no matter, I'm sure we'll find them eventually. Sorry to have bothered you." Rarity began to turn away.

"Wait! Well, we haven't seen any pony that matched those descriptions perfectly," Oriens said. "But there was a blue earth pony with a rainbow mane at Bits n' Bobs yesterday when the mission finished. And she was with another earth pony with a hat, but she sounded rather upper class."

"I suppose it's as good a lead as any we've got. May we inquire if you've seen them today?"

Oriens shook his head. "Not today. Like I said, it was yesterday. But your friend's a pegasus, can't she just fly up and search from the sky?"

"See Fluttershy?" Rarity's tone was victorious. "I'm not the only one who thinks this would be easier if you searched from the sky."

Fluttershy tried to shrink into the ground, shaking her head. She knew it made sense, but there was just too much that could go wrong.

"Guess she's afraid of heights," Sea Breeze snickered. "A pegasus afraid of heights, who knew?"

Surprisingly, it was Oriens who came to Fluttershy's defence first. "It's more common than you'd think Sea Breeze. Those of us who were born or raised away from Cloudsdale are more likely to be, since we've spent more time on the ground, but it's not unheard of for weak flyers to be... reluctant to leave the ground." He turned to Fluttershy. "I'd wager you're one of the latter, would I be right miss? Well, no problem. If it's that big a deal for you to find your friends, I can search for you."

Rarity's eyes went wide. "Really? You'd do that for us? But we've only just met! Why? You're not doing this just to impress us are you?"

Oriens smiled. "Do I really need a reason to help someone?"

"So in other words, yes, he is doing this just to impress you." That statement earned Sea Breeze a glare, which she met with a teasing smile.

"Sometimes I don't know why I put up with you," Oriens muttered under his breath.

"It's all part of my charm. You know you love it."

Rarity coughed. "Is this really important flirting, or were you going to search for our friends?" she asked, trying not to sound too pushy.

"Right, of course. I'll give the square a quick circuit and see if I can spot them. I'll be back before you know it." And he was off, spiraling lazily into the air.

Fluttershy watched him, worried something was going to happen. When she could see him no longer, she went back to scanning the crowd. Rarity went back to conversing with Sea Breeze.

"So, I take it you two knew each other before the game then?" Rarity was asking.

"Oh yes. We've been going out for the last year or so. We're engaged actually." Sea Breeze indicated the ribbon in her mane. "He gave that to me the night he proposed. It was the most wonderful night of my life."

"I see. If it's not too personal, how did you two meet?"

"That's not personal at all. Let's see, it started when-"

A cry ripped through the air. Sea Breeze's eyes widened and her ears stood up in shock. "Ori!" she cried out, and rushed off. Fluttershy and Rarity followed in equal haste. The cry had come from almost the other side of the square, and by the time they had got there it was too late. Oriens' body lay on the ground, his breathing ragged.

"Ori? Ori, it's me, Breeze. Please wake up..." Breeze crouched beside her fiancé, nudging him gently with her horn. It was clear she was holding back tears.

Oriens' eyes fluttered open. "Breeze... Did the fall... hurt?"

"Fall? What are you talking, about, you're the one who fell."

"I mean... your fall.... from heaven to earth...."

Despite the situation, a laugh escaped Breeze's lips, mingled with a sob of relief. "You're not hurt then? You're going to be okay?"

"I wouldn't say that..." Wincing, Oriens lifted his wing, revealing a gash underneath. Blood oozed from the wound, staining his coat red. Breeze looked on aghast.

"Oh my Ori, what happened? Who is responsible for this?"

"Aww, and I was sure I'd finished him off too." Fluttershy jumped at the new voice, and zoomed round behind Rarity. Sea Breeze took a defensive stance over Oriens' body, turning to find the speaker,

while Rarity turned as gracefully as she could. Considering Fluttershy was clinging to her, this wasn't very graceful at all.

The speaker was a peach coloured pony, with red highlights running through her otherwise white mane. Just behind her was another pony, this one a dark blue pegasus with a black mane. Both of them were floating a few metres above the ground, despite the peach pony having no wings. "Sorry, but could you all move out of my way? If I don't erase your colt friend, then I lose my bet, and I won't get a free bowl of daisy soup! Is that what you want?"

"You made that bet. I didn't. I don't have to keep it," the blue stallion said in a monotone. He touched down a few metres away, folding his wings away. "Finish the job. Erase all of them."

"Aww, but I just want to have some fun! Can't you lighten up, High Tide?" The other pony landed. "But you know, if I erase them all, that'll bring my streak to 12, and then you'll owe me a dandelion salad as well."

"Didn't make that bet. I won't pay up."

Fluttershy realised that these must be Reapers. And not the kind that watched from the sidelines either, the kind that actively hunted players.

Sea Breeze glared at the duo. "You... you're the ones who hurt Ori?"

The peach pony giggled. "Oh no, that was the Noise. But I suppose we're the ones who made the Nosie attack him so... Tide, does that mean we're the one's who hurt him?"

The pegasus shrugged. "Sure. Why not."

Breeze's horn ignited. "You monsters. How can you be so calm about this? You'll pay for what you did to Ori!"

"Ooh, this one has some fight in her! That's what I like to see!" The female Reaper laughed a fillyish laugh. "Come on then, let's play! Maybe you'll be a better playmate than your colt friend. He was soo boring, barely any endurance. I mean really, what sort of loser goes down after only one itty bitty sneak attack?"

Sea Breeze's nostrils flared. "You are so going down!" She ready herself to charge, but as she tried to leap forward she found herself held back. She glanced down to find Oriens holding her hind leg.

"Breeze, don't do this... you won't survive... and I won't without you either..."

A look of concern passed over Breeze's face. "But if we don't fight she's going to erase us."

"Do you really think we'll allow that to happen?" Rarity spoke up. She stepped between the Reaper and the pair. "Oriens got hurt trying to help us. So this is our fault."

"What? No, it's not your fault!"

Rarity waved a hoof to silence her. "Of course it's our fault. So we shall defeat this mannerless lout for you. Right Fluttershy?"

Fluttershy was already doing all she could to not run away. The only thing that had kept her near Rarity was the knowledge that it was safer than the alternatives. She looked back at Sea Breeze and Oriens, and steeled her resolve. Tentatively, she took her place beside Rarity, opposing the Reapers. The peach Reaper cricked her neck.

"Oh it's been too long since I got to have any real fun!" She grinned a disturbing smile. "Let's see how long you can entertain me." Without any more warning, she charged. Fluttershy closed her eyes, bracing for impact. A second passed. Two seconds. Five seconds and still no impact. Fluttershy peaked out to see the blue Reaper between them and his Partner.

"Tide, what are you doing? Didn't you want me to erase them all?" There was a note of underlying rage in the Reaper's voice, barely detectable.

"We're not allowed to do this. No direct fighting with the Players. Those are the rules."

"But Tide, I just want to play with them a little! Can't we break the rules just this once?"

"Candy Cane." High Tide's voice hadn't changed at all, but his partner seemed to flinch at his words.

"Fine, I'll play by the rules. But you'll owe me a veggie dog as well after this."

"I didn't agree to this bet."

Ignoring him, Candy Cane gave a high-pitched whistle, forcing all present to try and block their ears as best as possible. Within a few seconds, the air around her was thick with Noise symbols. Only these weren't the same as the ones Fluttershy and Rarity dealt with the previous day. These one were all circular, but with four small holes on the sides, giving the eerie impression of eyes. With a stomp of her hoof, Candy Cane sent to symbols flying towards Fluttershy and Rarity, surrounding them. Like the frog Noise symbols before them, they began to expand into three dimensions. They bulged at the middle, changing from a circle to a sphere, while the gaps stayed apparent. They seemed somehow familiar to Fluttershy, although she couldn't quite put her hoof on it. Until a set of wings unfolded from the back of the Noise.

"Mrrrt, brrp."

"Ugh, a parasprite?" Rarity let out a groan of disgust. "How ghastly! They were bad enough last time we dealt with them."

Fluttershy shared her companion's distaste for the creatures, especially since the Noise versions of them had lost their only redeeming quality, their cuteness. The swarm circled the pair, and the Underground began to fade around them, being replaced by the Noise plane battleground. It was now Fluttershy looked up. If she was able to, she would have screamed. Scores of parasprites blotted the sky, their multicoloured bodies giving the impression that Celestia couldn't decide what colour the sky should be and decided on all of them.

It didn't take long before the Noise made the first move. A group of about ten parasprites broke off from the main swarm, flying on a collision course with Fluttershy. The pegasus activated her shadow barrier a moment before impact, protecting her from the assault. The parasprites made no effort to correct their course, slamming into the barrier, and each disintegrating with a white flash as it made contact.

Fluttershy looked down at the pin powering the barrier. It was glowing brightly, a sign that it would last for a while. Her own defence seen to, Fluttershy looked around to see how Rarity was doing. The unicorn was having a harder time, having to constantly fend off attacks. As Fluttershy watched, a group broke off from the main swarm and rushed Rarity. They didn't get far before an ice pillar pierced through them, erasing all of them, even those that were only brushed by the column. Another group was attacking from the other side, and it too met with the same fate. The next swarm was buried under a sudden rockfall. Despite how well she was doing, Fluttershy could tell Rarity was struggling just to keep them at a horn's length.

Fluttershy turned her attention back to her side of the battle. The swarm had been quiet since she had activated the barrier. The barrier that had just run out. Sensing their opportunity, the swarm surged towards Fluttershy, extending a tendril of parasprites. Fluttershy was disoriented by the sudden loss of her barrier, and was struck by the parasprites. Before she could recover from this attack, another swarm had reached her, and this too struck her. And then another. The assault was relentless, slowly but surely draining Fluttershy of her power. She saw why the parasprites could attack so haphazardly. They couldn't survive a hit, but if they could get in a hit their superior numbers would quickly overwhelm their victim. As was happening to her.

Looking up, Fluttershy could see another element to their strategy. With every blow a parasprite connected, another one spawned in the above swarm, allowing the attacks to come even faster. It was a vicious cycle, and one that she was now trapped in. It was hopeless, she was just too weak. She had let down Rarity, she had let down Pinkie, she had let down Applejack and Rainbow Dash, she had let down....

Shing. A flash interrupted her thoughts. The barrier pin had recharged. What was she doing? She couldn't let every pony down! Her friends needed her! Drawing on the little energy she had left, she focused on her shadow barrier again, successfully forming it and prevent any further attack. The swarm continued attacking under its own momentum, crashing into the barrier like waves breaking against a rock. Casting a glance behind her, Fluttershy could tell Rarity was having trouble. She had managed to keep them at bay this long, but if they managed to break through... well, Rarity didn't have a barrier to protect her. It would be over in a matter of seconds. They had to end the fight before that could happen.

Fluttershy gingerly stretched her wings, and with a few flaps ascended into the heart of the swarm, her barrier still active. It erased the Parasprites on contact, clearing a path for Fluttershy's flight. She continued to fly through the swarm, erasing swathes of parasprites at once. She checked her pin. It had dulled, now barely emitting any light. It was a sign that it would soon disperse, leaving her one again at the mercy of the swarm until it returned. But Fluttershy forced herself not to panic. She still had her other pin, the one with a turtle on it. If she could just figure out how to work the thing...

She descended again, touching down just as the barrier deactivated. The swarm wasn't far behind, though there was far fewer of them now. Fluttershy tried to remember what Pinkie had told her about the pin.

Oh, what did it do? Was it something to do with water? Balls of water maybe? It was as good a lead as any. She thought back to how she first activated her shadow barrier. She was being attacked by those frogs, and she wished there was something between them and her.... Was that it? Was it imagining things? Oh, if she was a unicorn she just knew she'd have no problem.

The swarm was closer now, and closing in fast. Fluttershy closed her eyes, and imaged a large ball of water between her and the swarm. She opened her eyes again to find no sphere before her, only ravenous parasprites. She tried again, wishing twice as hard as last time. No luck, and the Noise were almost upon her. Belatedly she realised that maybe she was imaging the size of the orb too big. She tried for what she was sure would be her last time, this time visualising the sphere as only two hoof spans across.

It worked, and the parasprites flew head on into the orb, dissolving into nothingness as they made contact. Stranger, the sphere moved with contact, floating in the direction it was hit. Fluttershy formed another orb, this time right in the middle of the parasprite swarm. A gaping hole appeared in the swarm, the ball having bounced off each parasprite it killed into another grouping. A few more strategically placed orbs and the swarm was almost finished.

A scream interrupted Fluttershy's assault. Looking over, she found she could no longer see Rarity, the unicorn being mobbed by parasprites. And the things were multiplying again, beginning to repopulate the sky almost as quickly as Fluttershy had cleared it. *Rarity!* Fluttershy opened her mouth to scream, but her voice stubbornly stayed missing. An anger built up inside her, the same kind that she had felt the day she had stared down the dragon. The feeling gave her a second wind, and she activated her barrier and flew into the midst of the swarm once again. She was erasing the parasprites as fast as she could, racing the clock. She flew faster than she had flown in her life, desperate to save her friend. She circled the swarm, circling tighter with each pass, trimming the Noise down to a only a score or so. With one final sweep, they too were gone. She looked over at Rarity's side of the field in time to see the last of the matching parasprites dissolve. They had survived. They had won.

As soon as the battleground had been replaced with the Underground once again, Fluttershy rushed to her friend's side to make sure she was okay. Rarity was shakily regaining her footing, but otherwise okay.

"They certainly were a hoofful weren't they? Thank Celestia you managed to finish them before they got me." Fluttershy blushed at the praise.

"They survived? They really survived?" Candy Cane's voice was incredulous. "Well, at least they're not going to be boring, Alright then my little ponies, for our next game-"

"Your streak's broken," High Tide interrupted. "Back to zero. I win the bet."

"What? But you said you didn't make the bet!" A note of rage crept into Candy Cane's voice.

"No. But you did. You owe me a sandwich."

Candy Cane's eye twitched as she regarded Fluttershy and Rarity. "You hear that? You've lost me my bet! I was going to draw this out, but now I think I'll just erase you right now!" She started calling up

Noise symbols again. Fluttershy braced herself for another onslaught. Before they were set upon however, High Tide stepped between the pair and Candy Cane again.

"You lost. Sandwich. Now."

"But they... they're.... you.... ARRGGHHH!" Candy stormed off into the sky, muttering curses as she went. Tide spread his wings, preparing to follow her. He turned to Fluttershy and Rarity.

"You fight well. Hope you survive. Later." He took off after his partner. With a few wingbeats, he was beyond the pair's sight. They headed back over to where Oriens was still lying.

"Are you two okay? They didn't try anything while we were fighting those Noise did they?" Rarity radiated concern.

"Not at all. I think they were too busy watching you." With some help from his fiancé, Oriens struggled to his feet. "I guess I'm in your debt now."

"Whyever do you say that? If it weren't for us, you wouldn't have been attacked in the first place. Besides, we would have helped even if you hadn't tried to help." Fluttershy nodded an emphatic yes.

"Be that as it may, you didn't force me to help. And you saved not only my life, but Breeze's as well. I think you'll find we're squarely in your debt."

"Just agree, he won't rest until he finds some way to owe you," interjected Sea Breeze.

"Well he's just going to have to go away disappointed. No pony owes Rarity anything."

There was a silence as the two debtors stared each other down. Finally Oriens cracked, smiling. "Well I guess if you really want things to be even between us, fine. Neither of us owes the other."

"Good. I'm glad you finally saw sense," said Rarity with just a hint of smugness.

"So it's agreed? We're even then?" Oriens smile widened. "Then I suppose if I were to, say, tell you that I managed to spot a rainbow mane roughly north of here before I was attacked, then you'd owe me, right?"

Rarity spluttered in panic. "Now wait a minute..." Fluttershy didn't quite hear the rest of what she had to say, as she leapt at Oriens with her hooves open wide, abruptly ending the hug when she realised she was hurting him. She shuffled away, trying to hide the blush colouring her cheeks.

Oriens grinned through the pain. "So, looks like your friend agrees, the debt is on the other hoof now."

"It certainly is not! We saved not only your life, but your fiancé's life as well, so I think you'll find we're even again. Let it never be said that Rarity owes any pony anything."

"Oh? I thought it was that no pony owes Rarity anything?"

"It goes both ways!"

"Well tell you what. I'm such a nice guy, I'll call it even. But you'll owe me for it."

"How is that any different?"

Fluttershy and Sea Breeze began pushing their respective partners away from each other. Breeze gave Fluttershy a smile. "Sorry about this, and thank you again for saving us. See you some other day maybe?"

Fluttershy nodded, still pushing Rarity away. It didn't take long for Oriens and Breeze to vanish into the crowd. Rarity finally calmed down, and the full impact of what Oriens said sank in.

"Wait, he said he saw a rainbow mane north? Fluttershy, do you know what this means? Rainbow Dash must be that way! Quickly, we must hurry!" She spun around in a hurry, and walked straight into some pony.

"Oww.... watch where you're...." Rarity trailed off as she saw the stallion she had collided with. "...going."

"My apologies ma'am. I wasn't watching where I was going. I am called Gathering Storm, and you are?"

He was handsome, that was for sure. He was slightly taller and more muscular than your standard stallion, which was unusual in a unicorn. He was aptly named as well, as his dark grey coat suggested storm clouds, with a streak of yellow running through his slightly spiked mane, like lightning. He wasn't Fluttershy's type, but she could understand why Rarity was currently lost for words.

"Ra.. Rarity. A pleasure to meet you Mr Storm." Rarity's eyelashes fluttered enough that an onlooker might mistake her for trying to fly. "I must say, it's always a pleasure to meet a gentlecolt like yourself... especially a *handsome* one like you."

"Oh Lady Rarity, you flatter me. I could say the same for you. It's just a shame about your mane though, it's the only thing that really stops you from being a true beauty."

"Well I... Pardon me?" Rarity's brain caught up with her ears. "Are you trying to say just because my mane is messy, that you don't think I'm beautiful? I'll have you know beauty is more than skin deep!"

"Is that what you really believe, or is that just what you'd like to be true? Anyway, I couldn't help but over-see you're helping of that other pair before."

"Oh that? That was nothing, after all, being generous is..."

"Incredibly stupid." Rarity was brought up short again. "Oh my dear Rarity, don't tell me you didn't know? Not everyone who wins the game can come back to life. Usually it's only one pair, or even sometimes only one player. You in fact just made it less likely that you'll come back to life. Especially since your performance thus far has been rather lacking. That last battle? Your partner is the only reason you won. If she wasn't around, you would have been erased."

"But... wha.... how did you...?" Rarity struggled to form coherent words. "You could see our battle? But how?"

Storm smiled, a smile that made Fluttershy uneasy. "Oh, did I not mention? I'm a reaper. We can watch battles anytime we please."

A Reaper? Fluttershy sprang between Gathering Storm and her friend, an impressive feat considering the narrow gap between them. Storm merely chuckled. "Oh and here you are, the star of the battle. A little song bird who's lost her voice. Is that really what you value most in your life? Well, if something so unimportant is highest on your list of value, than where must things like your friendships lie, hmm? Something to keep in mind."

There was a brief whistling noise. Gathering Storm turned his head to the side as an apple flew past it. "And with that, I must take my leave. Good day to you ladies, and I hope you remember what I said." A bolt of lightning struck Storm, and he was gone. Rarity was still shaken by the encounter.

"Hmmp! The nerve! Who's he to tell us what we should and shouldn't do, right Fluttershy?" Fluttershy nodded her assent. "But that apple... where did it come from?"

A familiar, coltish voice called out from the crowd. "Well it's about time we found you!"