

"So what's the plan?" asked Rainbow Dash, the girl running alongside her friends.

Who were all collectively making their way back to the cellar entrance they had used only a few minutes earlier. Their pace was briefly slowed when a dull boom prompted a wave of dust and plaster to rain down around the eight women. The sound of gunfire was constant by then, though thankfully it was also joined by the snap crack of magic or a battle cry yelled by one of Platinum's servants.

"This is where I leave you," Platinum announced, causing the girls to skid to a stop.

"What? Why? Don't you want to woop those losers with us?" Rainbow Dash demanded.

Platinum growled. "If you haven't noticed, my house is currently being bombarded by mortars. It is taking my servants all they have just to keep the wards up and if I do not get to the teleportarium soon I won't have a home to defend."

"We'll handle the offence," Sunset quickly interjected. "In fact Rainbow Dash and Applejack will deal with your artillery problem while the rest of us push back against the main group."

"But they have guns," Fluttershy exclaimed.

"Sort your people out Sunset. You owe me," Platinum spat before turning and disappearing down a side hall.

"I should be able to reinforce our bodies with an enchantment now that I have my magic back," Sunset replied, sparing the departing undead a short glance.

"Why bother? I'm probably faster than a speeding bullet," Rainbow Dash declared, doing a quick lap around the group to prove her point.

"The rest of us ain't," Applejack pointed out, catching the speedster by the shoulder and pulling her into a stop.

"I don't really like violence," Pinkie Pie added. "They're mean but I don't think I could hurt them."

"I'm not asking you to kill them, just disarm and capture," Sunset stated.

"We can do this, girls. Just stick together and help each other out. It will be like any other bad guy," Twilight exclaimed.

"Well not exactly darling, though I appreciate the pep talk," Rarity added.

Sunset grunted, her hands flashing briefly before a layer of red energy settled over their bodies. "That should do it, but don't go out there and let yourself get hit on purpose. It will still hurt."

"After we're done with the mortars we hit 'em from behind. Right?" Applejack declared, slamming a fist into her open hand.

"Exactly," Sunset declared. "Rainbow will handle recon to make sure you two stay hidden until you find them, once you do though, knock 'em flat."

"Right!" Rainbow Dash declared.

"And what about us darling?" Rarity inquired. "I know you said we would be helping out in the center but I am not used to being in a shootout."

"Use your shields to cover who you can, and protect the wounded. Fluttershy I want you to work with Rarity in order to recover those who might already be injured," Sunset spun towards Twilight. "We will handle the main bulk of the fighting, with Pinkie Pie offering what support she can where it's needed most."

"Got it!" Pinkie Pie cheerfully declared.

"Good. Now let's get out there and do some good!" Sunset exclaimed.

A resounding cheer went up through the group and a second later all seven were charging out the cellar door. Where they immediately split into two groups, with Rainbow Dash and Applejack going off to the left while the others went around the front of the home. Their spirits remained high despite the increasingly sound of fighting, and it remained that way until they cleared the bushes and saw what was happening.

Bloodied, and bloodless bodies littered the ground as Platinum's many servants squared off against armored soldiers. Caught unaware, the lich's help fought with whatever they had handy, including axes, shovels or just their bare fists. Unlike the black, faceless grunts who had military fire power, and lethal precision.

Dozens of corpses littered the ground, all of whom were garbed in the usual attire of Platinum's assistants. On the other side, only a single injury had been sustained by the soldiers who had nearly fully breached the mansion's courtyard by this point. Though their initial resistance had been poor, Sunset could see that three partially armored undead had just exited the home and were carrying rifles.

It was obvious that more reinforcements were coming, but at this rate they might not even have the time to arm themselves. At least the large opaque barrier which hung over their heads remained strong, the magical wall holding back the near constant barrage of mortars. Which detonated uselessly, their payload doing little against the powerful ward placed over the ancient house.

For a moment the five girls said nothing, a sudden fear overcoming them the second they were faced with such violence. It didn't last long though, as Sunset Shimmer stomped a foot, and pointed towards the driveway where a squad of soldiers were approaching.

"Rarity block their entrance for as long as you can. Everyone else, you know what to do, get on it!" Sunset shouted.

Just like that the fear was gone, shattered by Sunset's commanding tone, and direct manner of speaking. Rarity immediately did as she was ordered, erecting a series of six foot high barriers across the entire entrance. With their method of entry denied, the soldiers paused briefly before spreading out and trying to find an alternate way past.

Unfortunately for the first man who tried to squeeze through a hedge, the plants fought back, and tore the poor soul limb from limb. Seeing now that there was no other way through, the soldiers began to form up and unload their firearms into the magical obstacle. This caused Rarity to wince, and nearly apologize for failing only to realize that the barrage barely put a dent in her shields.

She didn't have long to contemplate this, as the effect was still draining, and she focused herself utterly on the task at hand. As did the other girls, who were already enroute to relieve the beleaguered undead who were fighting the few soldiers who had nearly made it to the house.

Pinkie Pie was the first to respond, appearing before a surprised soldier who had been bearing down on a wounded zombie gardener. The black armored male barely had the chance to utter a surprised yelp before the party girl threw a handful of confetti into his face. Where it exploded into a thick pink paste which clung to the agent's helmet and completely blinded him.

"I didn't know I could do that," Pinkie Pie muttered.

The girl didn't have long to consider her new powers however, as the man was swiftly aided by his fellow squad mates. Who shot at the strange female who had appeared out of nowhere and blinded one of their allies. Firing in short, rapid bursts, Pinkie Pie was forced to retreat, throwing handfuls of glitter behind her and blinding the squad with a sudden burst of fireworks.

Sunset was startled for a moment, idly noting to herself that Pinkie Pie was even faster than usual. She was also stronger too, given the fact that she was running with the gardener under one arm without being slowed by his weight. The former unicorn wasn't surprised for long however, and she quickly raised her hand, conjuring a series of glowing ethereal chains.

Emerging from the ground beneath the soldier's feet, the agents found their limbs swiftly bound tight against their bodies. One almost managed to get a shot off at the fleeing form of Pinkie Pie, but Twilight's magical aura yanked the gun from his hands. On a whim, the nerdy human attempted to crush the device, an effort she was surprisingly successful in.

The pair didn't marvel at their new powers for long, as Pinkie Pie was already running to help several skeletons holding out in a garden shed. The undead help was fighting with shovels and other gardening implements, while barely holding off their foes. It was clear that bullets did little to the boney creatures, but a determined looking soldier with a shotgun was about to change that.

A blast of pellets destroyed the midsection of one of the undead, knocking it to the ground where it quickly became inert. Racking another shell, the soldier was prepared to put another of the monsters down, only to have what looked like a stun grenade go off directly in his face. Now blind, and panicking, the soldier stumbled back, inadvertently dropping his weapon in the process.

Pinkie Pie followed this up by throwing another handful of glitter, that upon hitting its target, turned into what looked like gum. The thick pink substance bound the thrashing soldier to the ground, putting him firmly out of the fight. His allies however, were not affected, and two of them spun towards the newest target, immediately firing on the girl.

For a moment Pinkie Pie wondered if her desire to help the boney undead had been a bad idea, but rather than be killed by the small arms fire she was only bruised. Knocked to the ground by the force, the party girl fell behind a small garden wall, where she quickly checked for damage. After finding that she was only lightly scuffed, Pinkie Pie raised a thumb towards her friends, who all breathed a sigh of relief.

Cursing her friend's foolish decision, Sunset decided to end that particular fight quickly by casting a spell. In an instant the ground beneath the soldiers morphed from green grass to slick black goo that smelled faintly of grease. All but one man fell almost instantly, with the final soldier being knocked onto his butt by a shovel he received to the chest.

Once on the ground, Twilight removed their weapons with her telekinesis while the skeletons either tied them up or battered them into unconsciousness. Either way the fight was over relatively quickly, with the attackers managing only a few brief spurts of return fire before being dealt with. With the majority of the courtyard clear of foes, Fluttershy hastily sprinted over to Pinkie Pie, a fearful look on her face.

"Are you sure you're okay?" asked the kind young woman.

Pinkie Pie nodded eagerly. "Just a few bumps and bruises. You should help mister bojangles over there."

Fluttershy blinked, and glanced over to the pile of bones sitting a few feet away. "I don't know if I can."

"And I don't know how I turned my explosive confetti into bubble gum, but I figured it out," Pinkie Pie replied with a shrug before hopping up and sprinting away.

Confused, and curious, Fluttershy walked over to the fallen undead and extended her hands. "Please let this work," she muttered to herself, digits now glowing faintly.

A second later and the pile of formerly inanimate bones began to shift and move, rising up from the ground. Fluttershy let out a startled eep before tumbling backwards, staring up at the skeleton in confusion. The creature seemed surprised to be alive, and looked down at Fluttershy for a second before flashing her a double thumbs up.

Fluttershy watched as the creature picked up its shovel and sprinted off to help its allies, leaving the girl alone.

"Hey this guy is bleeding real bad! You gotta help him Fluttershy!" Pinkie Pie shouted.

Fluttershy turned to find that the party girl had already started to triage the injured creatures in Platinum's employ. Gathered within the shed, several creatures were sprawled out on the ground, including a bunch of undead but also a handful of living beings. Among them was a young male who was clutching his bloody arm and groaning in pain as he writhed on the floor.

Seeing that her services were needed, Fluttershy hastily made her way over to the small structure. Ducking and weaving her way through the sporadic gunfire, Fluttershy scrambled into the small wooden building.

"Do what you can. I'll keep bringing them to you," Pinkie Pie hastily exclaimed.

"Err right I'll-" Fluttershy began, but Pinkie Pie was already gone. "Start with him."

Looking down, Fluttershy raised her hands. "Here goes nothing," she muttered.

Sunset saw all this, but barely took note of it as she was busy dealing with the rest of the remaining soldiers inside the courtyard. Without reinforcements the black armored humans were swiftly being pushed back, but they weren't going down without a fight. They didn't even fire a shot at either Sunset or Twilight, though that may have been because of the growing horde charging at them.

The undead servants lead the pack, while their still living counterparts threw bricks, or fired what few real guns they had. It only took a few well placed applications of the heat metal spell before most of the soldiers were disarmed. Twilight aided in this endeavour by simply ripping the weapons from their hands and either destroying them or simply tossing them away.

Facing such an onslaught the remaining soldiers were quickly battered into submission, and were either gunned down or knocked out. Either way it wasn't long before the courtyard was secure and Sunset could turn her attention back to the entrance. Where she was met by the sight of several squads huddling on either side of the road leading away from the house.

"Brace yourselves!" Rarity shouted.

"Wha-" Sunset muttered before a deafening bang cut off her response.

A great plume of dust and debris flew high into the air, briefly obscuring a crater that had appeared where Rarity's shield had once been. The young woman herself grunted in pain, falling to the steps of the house and clutching her head with both hands.

That had been a bomb, Sunset quickly deduced, one that had been blocked almost entirely by Rarity. A feat Sunset would have normally assumed would be impossible given how weak her shields usually were. Like seemingly all of them, the fashionista had received a power boost, though there was no time to think about that at the moment.

As a flurry of grenades had been thrown into the courtyard, with a dozen armored soldiers ready to charge behind them. Unlike the scattered and poorly organised mass of troops from earlier, this group was ready. Before their explosives even went off they were already firing into the courtyard, suppressing their foes.

"Damn," Sunset cursed.

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Applejack skidded to the stop at the edge of a row of bushes, ducking behind a dead tree which Rainbow Dash was already hiding behind.

"What's the situation?" Applejack asked.

Rainbow Dash gestured at the group of soldiers gathered near a long pond surrounded by long dead flowers. "They set up a machine gun in the middle, and they got a couple of those mortar thingies behind it," Rainbow Dash pointed out.

Applejack peeked out from behind their cover to find that was indeed true. Three mortars fired one after another, creating a constant barrage launched at some unseen target behind them. Sitting in front of them was a gun emplacement which had been hastily erected between two rose bushes.

The gun itself was long, belt fed, and was manned by a pair of black armored humans who had yet to notice the girls. A dozen other soldiers stood nearby, surveying their surroundings or helping to move ammunition for the mortars.

"I don't think Sunset's spell is going to be able to protect us from that big gun," Applejack pointed out.

"Pfft no biggie. We'll just go around," Rainbow Dash exclaimed.

"You mean you'll go around. That Platinum lady made it sound like time was of the essence here," Applejack replied.

"Then I better get going," Rainbow Dash declared before disappearing in a blur of color.

"They can still turn the gun around ya silly git," Applejack muttered bitterly. "Fine. I'll take care of it. Like usual."

The farm girl pushed her hat back onto her head, and looked around, trying to figure out how she was going to accomplish her stated goal. That was until her gaze fixed on the tree she had been using for cover up until a few seconds earlier. Topping off at about ten feet tall, and four feet wide, the decayed plant had long since lost all of its branches.

She did feel weirdly strong all of a sudden, and Applejack had already discovered that she was faster than normal. With that in mind, she cracked her knuckles, stretched her back, and reached out to grab the trunk in both hands. Using a large hole and the stump of its sole remaining branch, Applejack heaved with all her might.

For a moment nothing happened, then the farm girl felt a strange spark inside of her, one that once ignited, gave her a terrifying burst of power. Decayed roots broke, or tore free from the earth, followed closely by the tree itself which emerged from beneath her. The sudden shift nearly threatened to make Applejack overcompensate and fall over, though she quickly shifted her footing.

Hefting the makeshift projectile at her target, Applejack judged that they were a good thirty or so feet away. The team of gunners also hadn't noticed her yet, likely because Applejack could hear fighting coming from within. Rainbow Dash had already engaged the enemy, Applejack figured, which meant that she would need help soon, lest they fail their mission.

"Here goes nothing," Applejack muttered.

She then took a short hop forward and used every bit of strength she had to throw the tree like it was an oversized javelin. A startled cry went up a half second later, and the three men scrambled out of the way right before getting hit by the projectile. Having aimed primarily for the gun itself rather than the men, Applejack was proud to see that she hit her target.

The machine gun vanished amidst the explosion of dead wood, and only the man directly behind it had been injured. Knocked to the ground, he sported no visible wounds, and Applejack hoped that he wasn't terribly hurt. Either way she wasn't about to sit around and find out, the girl already sprinting across the field, charging directly at her foes.

Who didn't notice her approach until the thump of her work boots could be heard over the sound

of gunfire from further in. As one, the pair turned to Applejack and quickly fired at the girl, though their bullets did little to slow the charging girl. Her trust in Sunset's spell turned out to be well placed, and Applejack noted that the gunfire largely bounced off of her to no effect.

Leaving behind only small welts, and the occasional bruise, Applejack was able to clear the distance without being seriously harmed. Upon nearing the enemy, the closest soldier raised his rifle like a club while his ally drew a knife and attacked her. Eager to end the fight quickly, Applejack merely accepted the blow to the head, and punched the first man square in the stomach.

His attack felt like a light slap to the farm girl, while her blow felt like getting hit by a bus, and the man was sent flying backwards. After skidding briefly across the ground, the soldier groaned once before falling to the ground, arms and legs splayed wide. His buddy took one look at what had just happened, and promptly dropped his knife, and raised his arms over his head.

Applejack chuckled. "Smart move, now just hold still a second."

"Whatever you say lady," replied the soldier. "Just don't punch my torso off my legs and I'll do whatever you say."

A look at the mortar area revealed that Rainbow Dash had done her job well, and numerous unconscious or injured men lay on the ground. The athlete herself was fighting the last three that were still standing, though fighting was putting it nicely, as she was mainly annoying them. The trio punched, kicked, or stabbed at the athlete yet always missed by a large margin, while Rainbow Dash danced around them.

"Missed me. Nice try. Oh so close," she teased, always staying several steps ahead of their foes.

"Would you wrap this up already? The others might need a hand," Applejack shouted.

"Spoilsport," Rainbow Dash muttered.

Before the three soldiers had a chance to utter a sound, they were subdued in a flurry of blows. Several dozen punches to the chest knocked one to the earth a second before his closest ally was brought low by eight rapid strikes to the kidney. The final foe had his knees kicked out, and his arms tied behind his back by a pair of twist ties before he even hit the ground.

"There. How many did you get?" Rainbow Dash asked.

Applejack snorted. "This ain't a game."

"But if it were. I'd be winning right?" Rainbow Dash retorted.

"Maybe, but that machine gun thingy counts for twelve," Applejack stated.

"Who are you people?" asked the man Applejack had captured a few seconds earlier.

"Just a pair of high school students out on break," Rainbow Dash replied.

"The boss is never gonna believe this," he muttered.

"Nah I'm pretty sure he already knows about us," Applejack replied before turning back to Rainbow Dash. "Would you mind tying the rest of these idiots up? I'm gonna bend those tube things just in case they get loose."

"Yeah sure. I'm pretty sure I saw a bunch more of those twist tie thingies over there," Rainbow Dash replied.

"I'm pretty sure they're called twist cuffs," Applejack replied, glancing at the soldier. "Right?"

The man nodded.

"Heh. I knew it," Applejack exclaimed.

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Sunset Shimmer ducked behind a low garden wall, the magic she had been channeling flickering and dying when she focused elsewhere. A second later and a dull boom shook the ground, sending dirt high into the air. With the grenade out of the way, Sunset conjured a quick scrying sheet high above the house and looked down at their situation.

The flood of soldiers had slowed, as had their advance, but Sunset had done little as well. Sure they had held onto the courtyard but only just barely, as both herself and Twilight had remained pinned down for some time at that point. The serving staff had done what they could, but their foes were simply too well organized, and always had at least one squad searching for Sunset.

Their bullets hurt, but were unable to pierce Sunset's enchantments, though they were still enough to distract from spell casting. More unfortunate still were the high calibre weapons that were being trained on their position. Sunset didn't want to test herself against a gun that could punch through steel with ease, leaving them in a poor spot.

Pinkie Pie and Fluttershy were still pinned down near the shattered remnants of the garden shed, doing what they could. The rest of the staff were utilizing the short stone wall for cover while Twilight cowered only a few feet from Sunset. The sight of fearful tears streaking down the young girl's face sent a bolt of righteous indignation through the former pony.

"What do we do?" Twilight asked, her hands clasped over her head. "Every time I try to help they throw grenades or shoot me, and they'll get that big gun set up in no time!"

"Were pinned down, and unable to do much without getting hit," Sunset Shimmer muttered, her features hardening. "Which means we gotta accept a little punishment."

"Sunset no!" Twilight called, but it was too late.

Hands glowing brightly, Sunset stood up, one arm already pulled back and ready to hurl a fireball at their foes. She was met with an immediate rain of bullets that pelted the front half of her torso, and threatened to break her concentration. Gritting through the pain, Sunset threw the first ball of fire towards the cluster of soldiers which were advancing on the shed.

The explosion knocked the small squad to the ground, or into the air like one unfortunate soul. After falling back to earth, the prone soldier was swiftly dragged behind cover by a zombified human woman. Sunset didn't watch him go, and focused her attention completely on the single heavy weapons emplacement the soldiers had managed to erect.

Placed at the edge of a bombed out crater, the long barreled machine gun was leveled their way, yet was not firing yet. A frantic soldier loaded it while his ally pointed it directly at Sunset, waiting for his friend to finish his job. Not wanting to find out how strong her enchantment truly was, Sunset altered her spell so it would explode just above the crater.

She then pulled back an arm and readied herself to hurl the projectile at its target, only to have her aim thrown off. As bullets began to stream out of the end of the weapon, pounding into the young girl's torso and traveling up her right side. Releasing her attack, Sunset felt something rip through her limb, sending a white hot bolt of pain through her.

Collapsing on the ground in a heap, Sunset cried out in pain, clutching the large hole that had been made in her bicep. The former pony was only vaguely aware of her surroundings after this point, picking out the familiar cries of her friends. She could also hear a sudden battle cry ring out through the air, followed by the surge of undead feet.

Reinforcements must have arrived, Sunset reasoned, though she didn't much care about that at the moment. All she saw was Twilight's sobbing face and blood covered hands as the other girl tried to staunch the bleeding. Sunset wanted to assure her it would be alright, but couldn't do anything but release a soft, agonized whimper.

Thankfully Fluttershy quickly made an appearance, the girl having been surprised for only a second before quickly moving to help. With her own hands glowing a faint pink, the veterinarian somehow managed to grow new muscle in Sunset's arm. It was still incredibly painful, though Sunset managed to keep her composure until at long last her arm was whole once more.

Blinking blearily, the girl tensed and flexed the newly created tissue, before realizing that someone was talking to her. Actually it was more accurate to say that someone was shouting at her, while a second person was trying to stifle her sobs.

"What were you thinking?" Fluttershy yelled in Sunset's face. "You could have died!"

"We, I-" Sunset stuttered.

"Don't you dare do something so dangerous every again young lady!" Fluttershy scolded.

Sunset nodded mutely. "I won't."

"You scared the dickens out of me," Pinkie Pie muttered.

"There was so much blood I thought for sure you were..." Twilight trailed off, shaking her head. "It doesn't matter now."

"Oh but it does," interrupted a familiar voice. "Your team, though effective, was found wanting."

The small group looked up to find Platinum was standing over them, her clothes marred with blue splatters of something that smelled vaguely of mercury. Though sporting no injuries, the undead seemed to have aged ten years somehow, as deep lines were visible beneath her eyes. Her foot tapped rhythmically on the ground as she gazed intently at the small group, a strange mix of a scowl and a smile on her face.

"We did everything we could," Pinkie Pie pleaded.

"Then why didn't you throw smoke to cover your friend while she was casting that fireball?" Platinum retorted.

Pinkie Pie blinked, her shoulders falling slack. "I didn't think of that."

"And you Sunset, did you fail to think of that either?" Platinum demanded.

"I considered it," Sunset admitted.

"And why didn't you enact such a plan?" Platinum continued.

"Hey, leave her alone. She just got shot!" Twilight demanded, tears still staining her cheeks.

Platinum hesitated a moment before her same dissatisfied expression returned to her face. "That is exactly why I am asking. You wasted your time trying to figure out how to incapacitate them without seriously injuring your foes and this is the result," Platinum stated.

"That seems a bit mean," Fluttershy pointed out.

"Sunset is an investment I have sunk a considerable amount of time and effort into and I will not see it wasted," Platinum finished, spinning towards Fluttershy. "You will accompany your leader inside where you will be taught how best to utilize your healing abilities. The rest of you will remain here and aid in securing what remaining enemies darken my doorway. Understood?"

Her friends seemed ready to argue, but Sunset cut them off by standing suddenly and grabbing Fluttershy by the arm. "Come on. Let's get moving," Sunset offered.

"If you're sure," Fluttershy murmured.

Sunset paused, and glanced back towards the driveway, where several black armored soldiers were being run down by a horde of undead. Most of the invaders had been dealt with, and from one side Sunset could see the rest of her friends returning at the head of a convoy. Just over a dozen of the attackers had their hands bound as they were marched towards the entrance to the mansion.

All in all it looked like things were rapidly resolving themselves, a thought punctuated by the sound of retreating helicopters. Looking up, Sunset noticed that flat black choppers were leaving without the men they arrived with. Three of the things were quickly moving to escape, though one was swatted out of the air by an enormous earthen hand.

Dirt, rock and trees made up the limb which slapped the offending vehicle out of the sky as if it were little more than a gnat. A second arm attempted to grasp another helicopter, but the flying machine avoided the attack and managed to escape. Several more half hearted attempts were made by the strange giant arms, though they quickly retreated after accomplishing nothing.

"What was that?" Pinkie Pie muttered.

"That was the house. Wasn't it?" Sunset asked.

Platinum nodded proudly. "Now that she is not protecting us from their bombs she can strike back at our foes. Come, we have much to do."

Without waiting for a response, the undead turned and walked back inside, leaving her guests little to do but scramble after her. Still remaining arm in arm, Fluttershy and Sunset trotted hastily after the ancient undead lich, scrambling up the stairs. Where they were met with an odd sight that they had not expected to see.

The exterior of the home was now pristine, as if being shot and bombed had healed rather than harmed it. Paint that had been flaking before, now looked brand new, and even the door sparkled as if it had been recently polished. When the door opened, Sunset and Fluttershy saw

this trend continued inside, which was now spotless. Not only that it was also comfortable, warm, and no longer resembled a haunted house abandoned for centuries.

“What happened to the house?” Fluttershy muttered.

Platinum stopped, and with an irritated sigh, turned to face the pair. “You may have done a sloppy job of it, but you have defended my home and my servants. You are welcome within the halls of Platinum manor forevermore.”

The undead didn't waste another word on the pair and walked away, leaving Fluttershy and Sunset to stare at one another in confusion. The pair exchanged a shrug before following after their host, choosing not to point out the smile they had seen on her pale face.