

CHAPTER FIVE

Investigation, Day 2

[editor's note: actual photos of crime scenes have been removed. Due to the graphic nature of many of them, as well as the personal connection many of the ponies involved in turning these diaries into books had with various ponies depicted in said pictures, it has been decided that any and all photos would be removed. Descriptors of photos shall remain.]

I awoke this morning to the sound of trilling birds and the thin rays of sunlight filtering through the cracks in the roof, tickling my face. Idyllic, I think, this town. So colorful and bright. Such harmonious sounds to awaken to, and to see you through the day. It's nothing like the gray stone-walled cityscape of Canterlot. No, this town is simple and honest. There are no lying agencies or corporations to be had; no agent runners skittering about delivering the latest of the cover-ups. Just a nice town square, a shopping district, a few houses, and a lovely farm. These streets weren't paved with the lies of a government secretly controlled by the princess of the moon; they were carved through honest labor of hard-working earth ponies. I think that's why these murders hit me so hard. No pony expects something this terrible to happen in such an honest town. But then again, one rarely expects things this terrible to happen ever. I know that one would think me jaded at the very least, when it comes to murders. My own mother used to love saying that I was jaded. I hated that. In reality my own job makes me as sick as it would any other pony. I've just learned to deal with it; internalize it, compartmentalize it.

As my old mentor used to like to say, it's like your mind is made of two boxes: one for the now, and one for the later. There are things that you need to deal with right away, and things that can wait for later. You take those things that you need to deal with later, and you shove them in that box, close it tight. There will be time later to open it back up and cry and rage over them, but in my line of work, your mind has to constantly be in the now.

And yet here I am, raging to you, dear reader. Perhaps this little book is my way of dealing with things. I'm not entirely sure. I've never had to Profile myself before, you understand. But take my thoughts, then. Perhaps my thoughts can shed some light in to this grim situation. At the very least, they will help you understand me. I like to think I am one of the more sane members of the Agency, after all.

I laughed at that last sentence. I really did. Sane, methinks. Ha! Sane, I call myself, and here I am laughing at a little book that will never be able to laugh back. This diary is a true friend in that respect.

Yet I digress once more. A nasty habit of mine. You'll stop me when I do that though, right? Of course not, you're a diary being held by a reader. Ha. I laughed at that as well.

The night goes on now, and I have much to say about this day. So before I trail off into

some wildly unrelated topic and find myself writing until just before the rooster crows and the sun peeks over the distant hills, let me detail the continuation of this gruesome investigation.

We made our way to the crime scenes today. After politely declining what I'm sure would have been a wondrous breakfast from miss Applejack, Blaise and I made the trek towards the center of town. We would be visiting the five cordoned-off areas in Ponyville that had been the sites of the recent murders. It was a necessity; not just because photos rarely did justice to a crime scene, but also because analyzing what could be seen and possibly have been missed by the local police, we could solidify our Profile. We had the initial Profile, yes, but we had yet to complete it, and make sure it was nothing short of perfect. Today would be the day to do that. As we walked down the well-tamped dirt path leading towards town square, I took the time we had before we arrived to quiz him.

"Blaise." It had been silent for a while now, and it was me who broke it.

He looked up to me. "Hmmm?"

"What do you think we'll be doing today?" A test, then, I decided.

"We will review the crime scenes, amend the Profile where needed, and present it to the local law enforcement." He gave the word-for-word textbook answer. At the very least, he was studying.

"Good," I replied, nodding. "We'll start with the first murder, at the bakery. We'll go chronologically, and then end at the police department."

We walked a few more moments in silence, which was broken then by my partner.

"You're....excited about this, aren't you?" Blaise was looking up at me with a raised eyebrow.

"What?" I snapped my gaze to him.

"Your pace picked up a little bit when you were describing that to me. You're walking really fast now."

I looked down at my hooves as we trudged forward, and noticed that he was indeed right. He was wrong in his assumptions, however. I was intent on finishing this day quickly, but not for the reasons he may have suspected. I was simply interested in getting this over with so I could get back to my writing, and be done with the first brunt of our work. Inwardly I laughed, though it was devoid of mirth. So he was profiling me after all, I noted. That confirmed my suspicions. I would have to be careful. Not that I wasn't already being careful.

“We must finish the Profile quickly,” I told him. “The faster we get this done, the sooner we can present our Profile, let the authorities find our killer for us, and begin the second phase of our mission.” A neutral reply, I figured.

Let him take from that answer what he would. If he thought me simply excited that was fine; as long as he didn’t sense my apprehension about certain parts of my mission. I suddenly had a realization; if I could allow him to Profile me incorrectly, I could feed misinformation to the Princess about my intentions and motivations. It would be a delicate chess game, to be sure. Hiding my emotions while displaying fake ones would work in my favor, but would inevitably be very difficult. But I wasn’t about to let my years of schooling be bested by a baby dragon who was learning from me. The age-old trope of student-to-master wasn’t going to happen here if I could help it. I let my head swing back to front, so he couldn’t sense my inner ramblings from my face as I mulled this over. A chess game it was, then, I decided. Inwardly I smirked.

Your move...

When we arrived at the bakery, I could tell that the place was still heavily cordoned off. The yellow police tape still extended out from the entrance, and there was a police officer on duty, standing by the only door leading in. I flashed my badge to him and he nodded to us in acknowledgement.

“Nothing’s been touched in here, sirs. The owners were gone for a trip when the murder happened, and found the body when they came back. Since then, they’ve been staying somewhere else and the shop has been indefinitely closed.” He had a grim look on his face.

“I might need to question them later,” I told him.

He gave me a withering look, though it was only slight. “They’ve already been questioned, and anything they’ve said has been put on file for you.”

“I know,” I replied, walking past him. “But I’ll have to interview them all the same.”

I didn’t bother explaining why to him. He wouldn’t much have appreciated it anyway. I know they might pride themselves in their job, but this is their town, after all. And it’s a small town. Hard for somepony of the law enforcement to question people they know and see everyday about something like this. It’s even harder for them to imagine that the criminal is amongst them. It clouds their judgement. And besides, I might add, they don’t have my eyes. They don’t understand how to Profile.

I resolved to finish that later, however. Today was going to be about the main Profile. And for that I needed to focus on the crime scenes.

The interior of “Sugarcube Corner,” as the store was called, was a very generic bakery.

Sparsely decorated, and with a small counter and moderately sized waiting area, where parties could be held. I strolled past these quickly. I was interested in the area behind the counter, into where the kitchen was. It was very much like what I had seen in the pictures. The kitchen was quite spacious, with enough room for two ponies to work comfortably without getting in each other's way. The scene hadn't been touched, though the body was gone. That was understandable, of course. I made a mental note to visit the local coroner to discuss the bodies. Who knew... perhaps they could shed some light beyond the things they had written in their reports.

"Not much to go on here...." Blaise looked around. He stepped over to a spot on the shiny linoleum. "Got a pile of barf here, though. More than was in the picture."

I looked down, searching for the spot where the body had lain in the photos. I discovered that I had been standing in it. Eeugh..... There was that thick trail of spittle and vomit that had trickled from Pinkie Pie's mouth. I took a step back and looked over at where Blaise was standing. It was closer to the counter where the cash register lay.

"Another one?" I tapped a hoof to my chin. "She must have thrown up once while struggling, if she struggled at all. Then again, as she was dying."

"This must have lasted a long time," Blaise added. "This pile here shows that she was able to get some of the candy out of her throat while the killer was shoving it in."

"Enough strength to eject that...." I looked around. Sure enough, in an opposing corner, were bits of broken candy. "She must have had a stomach of steel and a lot of resolve."

"But...."

"Hmmm?" I looked over at Blaise.

"There's no other signs of a struggle. I mean, there's some candy here on the floor, and some over there, but nothing else is knocked around, or on the floor. Look over here...." he pointed at a nearby cutting board and knife rack, and then indicated above him an array of hanging pots and pans. "All the things that a pony would pick up to use as a weapon haven't even been touched."

I looked at the two entrances to the place; one at the very front of the store, above which was a bell that would ring whenever anypony entered. Then, walking over to the side of the kitchen, I tested the side entrance they probably used to load ingredients in bulk straight to storage. It was locked.

"Both entrances are secure. One is locked, and the other would ring if somepony came in. That leaves us with only one possibility here. They had to have entered from the front, which

means they were somepony she knew. And secondly, they had to have been extremely strong. There is absolutely no evidence of a struggle. Even if she were surprised, the way she was killed would indicate an extremely slow death, evidenced once more by this second pile of vomit. And that would mean....?" I trailed off, looking expectantly at Blaise.

"... that statistically, he is probably a stallion. We already thought about that though, because sadists usually are." Yet another textbook answer. He was learning well.

"Well, Blaise," I continued, "do you think there's anything else we can glean from this crime scene?"

He looked around once more. "I don't think so..... We should probably talk to the owners, but other than that, I don't see anything else we can get from this place."

"Neither do I." I started heading for the door. "Come on....we have a lot more to see today, and time runs short."

Time was indeed running short. The killer had killed somepony once every two days.... which meant that if they held to their pattern, there would be another killing tonight. If you really think about it, there is every possibility that the killer is out there right now, murdering somepony as I write this. The thought brings a chill to my spine. And there is nothing I can do! Even with the Profile now, there is no surefire way to know who exactly they are. We have very little evidence to go on, and the police are spread far too thin already. I could go patrolling, but I would probably not find anything, or be too late anyway. And I need my rest too.....tomorrow we still have much to do. There surely is not enough time in a day for me to get work done. And yet as I write that, here I am rambling once more. Onwards then, dear reader.

What we found at the Carousel Boutique, the store where the bodies of both Rarity and Spike were found, was in one word, grisly. The pictures I had seen hardly did it justice. And the smell, too..... an awful smell of dried and drying blood. That was understandable, of course; the place was literally covered in it. I recalled to myself, as we entered the shop, the coroner had marked the death of the baby dragon down as largely unknown, though it clearly looked as though the poor creature had exploded. I was not one to disprove this, as I looked around at the mess. In the center of the room was a large splattering of blood, and there were trails radiating outwards from the center. At the end of each trail, lay a small plastic card with a number, which as I remembered from the evidence records corresponded to a piece of the body that had been found and taken to the coroner.

Exploded was right; this was truly disgusting.

I stepped over to the area that had been pictured in the photos of Rarity. She had been lain on the floor in front of one of the tables that were strewn about the place. There was a considerable amount of blood here as well, though it had been pooled, not splattered. Her death

had most certainly been slow and painful.

“I don’t get it...” Blaise said.

“What?” I looked down at him. He was standing on his tip-claws, trying to look up at the table in front of us.

“The sewing machine is perfectly clean. Shouldn’t there be blood here?”

“Why would there be blood here?” I saw what he was getting at, but I didn’t point out his mistake.

“The white unicorn here was found with a bunch of clothes sewn into her skin, and a word stitched into her foreleg. Why isn’t there any blood on this sewing machine? It’s the closest one to where she was lying...”

“Ah, but,” I retorted, “A sewing machine doesn’t have the power to go through skin and muscle consistently. You can’t stitch things like that. This was done by hoof.”

“Oh....” he looked rather sick now. I didn’t blame him. “So the killer really is quite strong...”

I nodded, turning my attention to the large blood splattering that decorated the middle. We wouldn’t learn much more from Rarity’s death. Not until we were able to speak with the coroner. What I was more interested in was this dragon’s death. It was an anomaly. It was, like the others, a very brutal murder. But it lacked a written message, and the nature of it was strange, to say the least. Explosion, I mused..... this was evidence of possible magical activity. And there was no evidence to suggest a second killer as of yet..... It was possible that this killer was either a unicorn, or just very very strong.

“Hey, what’s this?” Once again Blaise snapped me from my thoughts.

“What?” Had he noticed something I didn’t?

“There’s a bit of blood that goes out over here....” he stepped around the large “explosion.” Pointing downwards, he traced a trail of blood that led away from the initial splatter. But unlike the other tendrils, it was thicker in width and longer than the others.

“Strange.....” I walked over, and then followed its trail with my eyes. It led over to a shelf on the far end of the room, much farther than anything else had been flung. I looked over and, squinting, I could make out a small card with a number on it. “Blaise,” I said, “Look at your notes. Scene two, card six, what was it?”

Blaise took out a small notebook. "Uh.....a leg. Dragon. Blown off just above the knee joint. That's what it says."

I looked down at the splatter once more. It was so out of place, this trail. The "explosion" had a clear radius, but this one exceeded it. It was out of place, as though.....

"Wait..." I said it aloud.

"What?"

I traced the circle with my hoof just above it. "This is a circle here, with trails radiating from it in equal distances. The erm....pieces of the dragon's body were flung far, but this trail here," I said, pointing out the anomalous tendril, "reaches farther than the others. It appears to be from a second attack."

"So....he exploded twice?"

"A crude way of putting it....though no less accurate." It would have to do as an explanation, I decided. There was no real way to tell exactly how this dragon had died, but it had been brutal and quick. Much different than the other murders, which had been brutal but slow. There was a clear amount of aggression here, but little to no evidence of torture, and the lack of a message indicated less hatred. The brutality was born either from desperation or sheer anger. I would factor this in later, when I presented the Profile to the local authorities.

At this point, I decided that there was little left to see in the Boutique. Admittedly, I was getting rather tired of the sight and smell of all that blood as well. I decided to end our investigation of that particular scene, and we exited.

We dined at a local restaurant for lunch. It was a small venue, with a lovely outside dining area. It was an interesting experience, to be sure. Not just for the looks that I got from passerby, either. Of course, the looks are normal. With my shaved mane and other features that draw the eye, it is only natural that one in my situation would get stares. But what I found most interesting was the looks of others around me, and their interactions with those around them. I noted, as I sat eating away at a daisy sandwich, that everypony wore very neutral looks on their faces. A "poker-face," I believe one might call it. Most around me showed little emotion, smiling only occasionally, and talking at a moderate volume. I watched couples sitting at lunch to eat, and saw that they conversed in more subdued tones than normal. Despite the affectations of the decor of this particular restaurant (they were rather festive in their color choice and wall art), the overall mood of the whole place seemed, in a word, dim.

I had not seen this as much before on my missions. This was a small town, of course. And with small towns comes the strange phenomena of fast-travelling news. Neighbors gossip. Ponies gossip at the market. Ponies gather for lunch and exchange gossip. In a town where

everypony knows pretty much everypony else, news travels extremely fast.

Of course, that wasn't all. Those who had heard of the murders likely had heard rumors that the killer lived amongst them. It was highly likely, to say the least. It was fascinating to see this town now, let me tell you. Everypony was scared. Everypony was suspicious. Everypony was quiet. I had never seen anything like this in all my time as a Patcher. Having mostly worked large cities, and having stayed most of my early career in Canterlot, I was used to the uncaring sea of faces that came with large-scale cities. But here....no, this was different. This was true fear.

I realized then that I would have to be careful for two important reasons. Firstly, I had to be careful what I said and to whom. If word and rumors travelled as quickly as I suspected, then I would need to choose my words carefully. And secondly, I would have to caution the local police. Citizens were scared. And when a pony is scared, sometimes they do things they will regret. We had to keep this investigation under wraps, as it were. Not that I wasn't already doing that; this was a Patch job after all. But we would have to tread lightly.

Inwardly, I sighed. Treading lightly had become something of a constant for me lately. It was very tiring.

I shall not bore you with the intimate details of the other two crime scenes; they provided even less information than the first two, only serving to confirm our initial Profile. Rainbow Dash had been blitz attacked in a public restroom, and the local teacher had received a fate similar in pain to that of Pinkie Pie. Both were brutal, well controlled, and extremely slow.

On another note, I only vaguely remember what we did after the Boutique. Suffice to say that my mind was in a haze today, dear reader. After the scene at the Carousel Boutique, I had trouble concentrating. Not from the disgust at what I had seen in there, but the evidence of the second "explosion," as well as the initial "explosion" itself. It was a high probability we were dealing with a magical killer, but I couldn't rule anything else out. I went over possible scenarios in my head, all of which I would later present, but nothing seemed to truly hold water. Then there was the missing message.....

Gah, even now as I write this, I feel as I have gotten something very wrong. And while I am not one to always "follow my gut," as the saying goes, I cannot ignore that small voice in my head that is telling me to re-think things entirely. It is quite bothersome. And it has been quite distracting today as well. And that is a poor thing to have when on the job. As my old mentor might say, it's going to take a lot of flexing my brain to keep that second box closed. Things for later must be dealt with later. Focus on the now. Interesting..... even when I write that, I still read it in his voice.

I would take some time to talk about him, as he is somewhat important to this story, but I'm afraid that I do not have much time left before I must sleep tonight, and that is a rather long

bit of writing. I still have to finish writing about today. Perhaps I will have more time at a later date. For now, back to the story. That is.....assuming I can remember where I was.

Ah, yes. The Police

Our job here, in terms of catching the killer, is mostly advisory. The local police still handle most of the work, but where we come in is the Profile. By giving them the Profile, we can help them sort out their investigative work and set them on the right track. Of course, it falls to us to help them canvass the area, but after all, they know this town and the locals better. So by presenting them the Profile that we've built, from our looking over both the evidence and the crime scenes, we can better their chances of catching the killer in a timely fashion.

But I am worried about this particular case. The killer has been extremely fast. I fear we may see more deaths before this investigation is over. And even with our help, I'm not entirely sure how many may die until then.

It is with these thoughts that I once again trudged up to the Ponyville Police Department this evening, with Blaise in tow. I would have to present them with a solution, but not let their hopes be raised too high. I fear that getting their hopes up may result in those expectations being dashed to the ground.

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