

Disclaimer: I do not own “My Little Pony: Friendship is magic”. This is a fan generated fiction. “My Little Pony” is owned by Hasbro Toys and was adapted for television by Lauren Faust who deserves all due credit for its creation and the characters it brought us.

The fanfic *Cupcakes* was created by “SergeantSprinkles, World’s greatest party Clown” and is visible at <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/02/story-cupcakes.html> and elsewhere online. It is recommended that you are familiar with this fanfic and the entire mythos of alternate endings it spawned before reading this.

The basics of the forensic technics described in this fanfic, as well as certain facts concerning Equine physiology and behaviour (such as the use of “twitches” to alleviate stress) are grounded in reality.

My Little Pony: Forensics is Magic.

Part one: the scene.

“What have we got here?” Asked Wedge, arriving on the scene.

“Well” said Biggs. “I’m honestly not sure. I tell you Wedge, this isn’t your usual domestic: this is something *special* .”

“Special?” said Wedge, scanning the crowd of confused and frightened ponies gathering outside Sugercube corner. “Yeah I can see that.” He said, spotting another Guard vomiting in the flowerbed outside, and noticing the nurses who were supposed to be treating witnesses for shock staring into space and shivering themselves. “Who called it in?”

“The mayor, would you believe.” Said Biggs. “She was tagging along with the food hygiene inspectors for a routine visit when, well, they must have timed it just right, or wrong, and caught the suspect just as she went upstairs to the kitchen to get a sharper knife or something. Caught with the trapdoor to the basement wide open.”

“The mayor just stumbled into this?” asked Wedge, trying to make his way through the crowd. Bile rose in his throat as he saw they were hanging back: it was a sad thing about pony nature that only cops ever learned, but people didn’t move *away* from the scene of a crime; ponies were nosy, and if there was something to see, especially a murder scene, they tended to move *towards* it. If they were keeping back, it must be something *really* horrific.

“Yep. Ran right out of there screaming her head off, right into Big Mac, and got him to come and secure the suspect: She didn’t try to run.”

“She didn’t run?”

“Too busy laughing.” Said Biggs, his voice shaking very slightly. He hesitated, then continued. “Once the mayor calmed down she was furious. She knew both the suspect and the victim, and wanted an explanation. Went right up to the suspect and screamed into her face ‘how could you, how could you’, or so witnesses tell us and... well... the suspect wasn’t muzzled and the mayor was awfully close...” Biggs held up a photo. Wedge looked for some time.

“The doctors say she’ll probably keep some of the vision in that eye,” Biggs continued “But as for the facial damage...”

Wedge ducked under the police tape, and looked around. There was a huddle by the nurse’s station they had set up to administer twitches to traumatised ponies, and a pair of guards, Aquilinus amongst them, were trying to take statements. He trotted over to one of the nurses, and asked her to find him the medical examiner. Then he went back to viewing the building: Sugarcube corner; a perfectly ordinary shop, in a perfectly ordinary street, on another beautiful spring day in Equestria. What was worse was that he and Biggs weren’t even supposed to be there: Palace guards sometimes handled cases deemed too tough for local law enforcement, but within the guard Horatio was the- *had been* the number one pony with regards to forensics until he tripped and impaled himself on his own sunglasses: he’d be neither walking or making witty one-liners, let alone working a case, until they removed the struts from his frontal lobe. So instead of accompanying Celestia on her tour of Equestria assessing farm productivity, they had landed the case. Lucky them. After some time, Wedge felt moved to speak.

“Isn’t this where we usually buy donuts and snacks whenever we go through here with the Princess?”

“Oh Sweet Celestia Wedge *don’t*. I’m struggling to keep my lunch down as it is. The thought that we might have been buying Cupcakes in this place while below us... No! Just no!”

“Sorry Partner, just saying. Actually, Didn’t Celestia stay here once? I seem to remember standing on guard here when a pony kept trying to make me laugh. Wow, to think we might actual have brought the princess here...” Wedge stopped. They were bringing the body out on a gurney.

“What do we know about her?” he asked, quietly.

“Quite a lot: ran the cutie mark though Aphis, when we found the cutie mark, that is. Minor local celebrity: did some work for Celestia in the past, worked the local weather detail, bit of an amateur athlete, wowed them all at the young flyer of the year... sweet girl by all accounts. Lot of potential, which just makes it all sadder really.”

“She knew the suspect?” asked Wedge. Biggs nodded.

“Best of friends. Some even say there was some sexual tension between the two, but as far as we can tell that’s just baseless rumour. Still, we’ll have to consider it with regards to motive.”

“Not our problem. Celestia gave us a job to do. Let’s get in there, and catalogue the physical evidence. Any family?”

“Not locally, as far as we can tell. Guessing by her age she probably has parents somewhere who’ll have to be told, but they need tracking down so we’ll not have to do it.”

“Well that’s a small mercy then and- Oh *Hay!*” Exclaimed Wedge. The orderly wheeling the gurney had trodden on the edge of the sheet covering the body, and the corner of the sheet had pulled off, revealing the victims face and a shock of multi-coloured mane. The orderly tried to re-cover it but in her haste ended up over-compensating and exposing an expanse of blue flank to the world.

“Well, so much for keeping the identic of the victim out of the press, or giving the pour soul some dignity.” Said Wedge, before yelling to the orderly. “Derpy! If you can’t drive that thing let someone else do it! And stop eating the evidence: put those muffins back were you found them!”

Biggs covered his eyes with his hoof and sighed “I guess this is what we get for merging the postal service with the coroner’s office to cut the deficit.”

Wedge, meanwhile, was glaring at the sheet. "Where is that M.E.? Why in the name of *sweetgrass* is that body covered with a sheet and not in a body-bag?"

"Because I get one bag at a time and that's not the body, or at least, not the important parts of it." Yelled a voice from inside the shop. "You boys had better get down here, and I'd advise you to hold your breath: That home taxidermy project you just saw going past isn't the worst of it."

Part two: the basement.

"I think." Said Biggs. "That I'm going to throw up."

"Not in my crime scene you're not, partner." Said Wedge, examining the restraints.

"Celestia! Wedge, how can you even look at that thing with her just lying there?"

"It's that or look at the body, partner. Or the décor." He said. "This is a complex set up: straps, clamps, buckles, vices, manacles, adjustable support struts, a gearing system to flip the vic' over. Some of this kit must have been custom made. How did no-pony notice these suspicious purchases?"

"Well the suspect was a mare, and looked innocence herself, that's helps 'em slip under the radar Wedge."

"True. So Doc, what's the time of death?"

Doc Whooves adjusted his bow-tie and looked to the two guards "Hard to tell. Of the three measures I'd normally use, two just aren't applicable to this case. Rigor mortis, the stiffening of the limbs and joints as the calcium ion balance is lost in the muscles after death, causing them to contract, rather relies on having a body with limbs that *haven't* been systematically smashed and had electrodes embedded in them. Parlour Mortis and Livor Mortis, usually taken together to give a measure of 'lividity' or the settling of the blood at the lowest point in the body and leaving the skin there darker and the rest of the skin pale really rather relies on the body actually *having* skin. I'd give you the liver temp, except for the fact the liver is in that bucket over *there* quite some way from the body. The best I can do is the body-temperature of the larger segments of the carcass and, well... You boys may not have determining time of death as your cutie-mark calling, but you have been to enough crime-scenes before. And you can see how this one is" Wedge and Biggs nodded. Wedge spoke.

“You can still see where the sweat has soaked into the restraints from when that poor thing was in them. Body still warm, blood in the gutter not yet fully clotted, even the stink of urine’s still fresh. They waked right into this one as it was happening.”

“Makes you wonder how she got that hide stuffed and mounted so fast.” Said Biggs, trying not to look at the obvious marks of flaying on the corpse. “She must have had the wire frame and stuffing ready to go before she flayed the victim...”

“Or this is a different dead Mare than the owner of the hide we just wheeled out.” Said The Doctor. “I mean, look around you.”

Biggs tried not to, Wedge didn’t need to: you didn’t just go out and do something like this to one of your best friends on a whim, you’d had to have gotten a taste for it first. You needed practice. He’d have known there were more victims even if parts of them weren’t mounted to the walls.

“Just to confirm...” asked Wedge.

“Yes, the victim is a female Pegasus, you can see the stumps of the wings. But until we go through dental records, we can’t tell if the body here matches the mounted hide outside. We’ll just have to wait. Besides, I need to wait until the coroner signs the paper work: you know how it is now a days, time was the coroner *was* the M.E., but now a days it’s a political appointment; she kicks the body and if it doesn’t kick back, she’ll sign it over to me. I’ll clear out when I get the call, then the scene is all yours’ boys.” Said the Doctor.

“Fair enough.” Said Wedge. “We’ll leave you to moving that body then, Biggs, lets walk the scene.”

“Do we have to? I mean, just look, what the *heck* is that?”

“The glitter jars?”

“I was thinking more of the intestine balloon-animals.”

“I was thinking the decorative glitter-jars” said Wedge, staring into them. “These seem to be full of bodily fluids the perp has harvested from the victims, there’s a chance we can match them to

victims, help identify them. I mean, look at that one.” He said, gesturing to a jar sitting between one holding a preserved tongue, and one playing host to a pair of blue-green eyes.

“Wedge, it’s a jar full of pee. I don’t know what’s worse, you staring at it or that fact you seem to find it more interesting that the next, jar, which is staring *back*. It’s pee, Wedge.”

“And it’s clear.” He said, tapping it with his hoof. “No cloudiness, no suspension of white crystals, no precipitate at the bottom. And when you tilt the jar, it flows like water”

“So?”

“So? You *have* seen your own urine, right? Equine urine has calcium carbonate crystals in. It’s cloudy, and syrupy. This wasn’t from anything equine.”

“Glad to see somepony knows their medical facts.” said the Doctor. “You’ll put me out of a job at this rate Wedge. But there’s some non-pony skulls here, look at that one.”

Wedge and Biggs looked.

“An eagle?” asked Biggs. “Are you telling me this little mare killed an *eagle*, painted its skull and stored it’s pee in a decorative jar?”

“Eagles don’t urinate Biggs, birds don’t. And it’s too large a skull, and too mammalian in shape. Gryphon, probably. “

“Uggg, well, bag it and tag it anyways. You take that side of the room, I’ll take this side. Whoever finishes first gets to leave this hole and start on the shop upstairs. Deal?” Asked Biggs, hefting his crime-scene camera and it’s tripod.

“Deal Biggs. Out of interest, the owners of the shop?” asked Wedge.

“In shock: they took it *badly*; one seems to have had a mild stroke, and the other’s heavily sedated. They thought of the suspect as their adopted daughter, and then they found out exactly what they had adopted. Exactly who they had let look after their kids...” Wedge nodded. You thought you knew ponies, but they kept on surprising you.

They moved around the room, photographing, recording, Bagging. It took a long time: they had both dealt with murder scenes with so little evidence you'd need an exhaustive search lasting hours to find anything, but they'd never dealt with a scene where you could barely move without tripping over body parts, weapons or trace evidence. Eventually, once the coroner had signed off and the Doc had moved the body out, Wedge found himself by the restraints again. He found a set of drawers on a small cart within easy reach of the restraints. Just a set of drawers; hoof carved, wooden, nicely painted, cute little three draw set. He stared at it for some time, and then opened the first draw.

"Dear Celestia Above, will you look at this." He Said. "Ketamine, Morphine, a dozen other painkillers and tranquilisers, Atropine, Oxygen, saline drips, antibiotics, Adrenaline, just look at the amount of Adrenaline Biggs! She had help! No way a teenage earth-pony with no medical training and no work-related reason to be inside a hospital could get her hooves on all this stuff!"

"I found a lot of empty Adrenaline vials and used needles in the skull she was using for a waste-paper basket, under these lotto-tickets." Said Biggs, photographing a hoof print on the floor. "What would she want it for? The tranquilisers and painkillers I could understand, to keep the victims under control..."

"And the Oxygen, saline, antibiotics and adrenaline to keep them alive and conscious despite the blood loss. I mean, you know that metallic taste you get in the back of your mouth when you're scared or exhilarated, like when you've just caught a prep?"

"Yeah?" said Biggs, ripping down and packaging the "Life is a party" banner. He noticed the words were embodied in a dozen different colours of tail-hair, and shuddered. The Mayor had been babbling about the horrible, horrible needlework when she was taken to Canterlot for treatment. Biggs had wondered at the time what she meant.

"You listening Biggs?"

"What? Oh, yeah. Metallic taste?"

"That's adrenaline. You sweat it out too, and this place reeks of it. Some of that will be just because the victims would have been deathly scared, but there's no way a pony is pumping out that much adrenalin in her sweat unless somepony else is pumping it back into her again as fast as her body can process it. This perp kept them awake, Biggs, Live and scared and in pain and she kept them awake. We're dealing with one sick puppy."

“You only just realised?” asked Biggs, jokingly, as he came over open and opened the second draw. He let out a quiet whistle. “Now *that*.” He said as the light reflected of the nest of viscously polished and honed metal “Is nasty.”

“Yup.” Said Wedge. “Well, we knew we were going to find this. Pass me those tubes, I’ll package the knives and cleavers, you get some bags for the saws. “

“Kay.” Said Biggs as he started to package the implements, wincing as he came across the odd one that was still blood-stained. “ Ugg, so may hacksaws. Why are they called hacksaws? They don’t even hack.”

“It’s from the old High German *haken*, or hook, describing the shape of the saws teeth.”

Biggs paused, and stared.

“You’re such a geek Wedge.” He said, tying a label onto the saw on his third attempt. Unicorns had all the luck when it came to knots. He then bagged it and put in on the pile. Aquilinus came in periodically and took the evidence bags out to the evidence cart Wedge had brought down from Canterlot.

“Hey, I’ve got a good memory, it’s not exactly a disadvantage in our line of work partner.”

“Hah! Okay partner, you want to see what’s behind door number three?”

They both stared at the draw, wondering what could be worse than the drugs and the knives. Aquilinus took one look, grabbed a pile of evidence, and scarpered.

“You first.” Said Biggs. Nothing in this basement had been good, so it made sense that he’d rather not open it. Wedge didn’t particularly want to either, but they had a job to do. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and pulled open the draw.

He heard Biggs exclaim, and his stomach barrel-rolled. But then Biggs went. "Oh. That's a lot less dramatic than I thought it would be." Wedge open his eyes, and looked down.

"Baking made easy?" He said. "It's a cook book? Well, that kinda figures, this is a person who kept her keas, party invitations and loose change a skull, makes sense not everything down here would be murder-related. Besides, she works in a bakery..." said Wedge, noticing that he had left hoof prints in the dusting of flour on surface of the book: that would have made an interesting forensic technique if all hoof prints weren't exactly alike, he idly thought.

"Oh." Said Biggs, quietly.

"What?"

"She... she works in a bakery... she was caught heading for the kitchen..." they both looked up, at the ceiling. The kitchen was above them. With the basement trapdoor open, they could hear the creak and jingle of the pans on hooks swinging in the breeze.

Biggs and Wedge shared a look. Wedge tilted his head on one side. Slowly, very slowly, Biggs nodded.

They went up the stairs into the kitchen. The stairs creaked slightly underhoof.

It was immaculately clean, and cosy, and cute. Doilies, motivational posters, cute embodied aprons. And several store cupboards.

Wedge paused. One, and only one, had a padlock on it.

He looked to Biggs who swallowed nervously and put his hoof on the handle of the cupboard and lit a lantern. A bluebottle buzzed somewhere in the room. Wedge turned, aligned his body carefully and then bucked the lock off.

Wedge couldn't see into the cupboard as Biggs thrust the lantern in, but he could see his partners face as the light and the emotions flickered across it. Then Biggs put one hoof to his mouth, his cheeks swelled out, and he dropped the lantern with a sharp *crack* and galloped as fast as he could to the nearest window, which he stuck his head out and, in full view of the traumatised crowd, begun to vomit profusely.

Wedge glanced into the cupboard, keeping his face carefully blank, and closed it before any of the crowd looking in thought the windows could see. He then moved over to his partner.

“Biggs! Come on Buddy, we knew it was going to be bad, but for pitities’ sakes, we’re palace guard, sent down because this was too tough for the local cops, we’ve got to set an example! Besides, ponies aren’t even supposed to be *able* to throw up! It’s almost anatomically imposable!” He hauled Biggs up. His armour was streaked with snot and vomit, but it’s not that which horrified Wedge. His partner, half his life spent on the force, was crying.

“It’s a cookbook! It’s a cookbook!”

“I know, calm it!”

“No you don’t k know Wedge, you don’t get it yet, do you? We used to shop here, Wedge! *We used to shop here!*”

Wedge froze for a moment, and then bolted. He tried to aim for the shop opposite get to their bathroom, but he didn’t make it: twelve seconds later he was on his knees in the centre of the town square, pukeing into a flowerbed. It lasted a long time, most of it exiting via his nostrils as was normal for equines, and even when he was finished, he wished he could keep on throwing up: He didn’t feel clean yet. He wondered if he ever would again.

Part three: Questions

“You okay?” Asked Aquilinus as Wedge trotted slightly messily into the town-hall, where they were corralling witnesses.

“No. You?”

“Is... is it true about the?”

“The cupcakes? Yeah. The donuts and muffins too. Don’t even *ask* about the Marshmallow squares. We sent all the food down to the lab, once we saw what was in the store cupboards. Looks like it’s all... contaminated.”

“Celestia! We’ve just been told not to pass on any information to the public about the case in case they panic or try and lynch the suspect, and I thought that seemed a strange order until I heard this rumour from the Doc...”

“It’s no rumour. Where’s Biggs?”

“Getting himself cleaned up, you want-”

“No time. Where’s the suspect?”

“I... Wedge I’m under orders...”

“This Hall is also the Mayor’s office and local Courthouse. It’s the only building in Town with a Cell: don’t take me for a fool, Ack, I need to see her.”

“Cel! You know the rules, No-one talks to the suspect until she’s either shipped to the palace or Her Majesty’s appointed questioner arrives!”

“But you already have her restrained, muzzled, unless we’ve lost the kit again, and with a shrink. I saw the head-doctor go in, Ack, I know how this goes. Someone that crazy and we’ll never get any information out of her: she’ll just get shipped off to the palace and be found too crazy to be tried, vanish into the system, and we’ll never get a word out of her.”

“Does it matter? She’s already confessed, boasted would be closer, and you’ve bagged enough physical evidence to banish her to the moon for a thousand years, and we both know it’s not like she’ll tell us where the bodies are to give the victims a decent burial, we *know* what happened to the bodies! What info could we need out of her?”

“Drugs.”

“Drugs? What? You working Narcotics now? Who cares!”

“Medical drugs. She kept the victims dosed up: somepony had to provide her with those medicines, and I want them, Ack. I want them *bad*.”

Aquilinus looked around, nervously. “Okay, I’ll see what I can do. The Doc is going to give her a brief check before we ship her off, not the shrink, Doc Whoves, usual thing to make sure no-one’s roughed her up, though by Celestia’s mane she deserves it. I’ll see if I can get you in then, that way

the Doctor can steer you on the right line of questioning with these drug questions, but I can't promise you anything. Security is understandably tight on this one, and I heard a rumour her Highness will be coming down in *person* to make a speech to the shocked town and I *really* don't want to be caught red-hoofed letting unauthorised ponies through the security screening." Wedge nodded.

"Thanks. I'm going to question the witnesses, try and talk to the suspect and the vic's friends, see if any of them have a medical connection. This mare had help, Ack, this mare had help!"

"I know." Sighed Aquilinus as Wedge walked away. "I know."

After asking around, and meeting up with Biggs, Wedge soon found his first witness.

"You realise all the Suspects friends are also the Vic's friends?" asked Biggs, fighting down a queasy burp. "They all feel betrayed and shocked. You ask them anything this soon after that sort of revelation and they'll flake on you."

"She won't flake, Biggs, I promise you. Besides, you know witnesses: if you don't get their stories down right away, they forget, or start to add detail that was never there. Ahh...Excuse me, miss Rarity? I'm sorry, but can I speak to you? I'm Gaurdspony Wedge and this is my partner Gaurdspony Biggs, I realise you've already given a statement, but do you mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"What Oh. Well, er... Yes! Yes, of course you can ask me, officer. Er..."

Wedge watched. A unicorn, about the same age as the suspect and the vic, clearly very agitated.

"Is this a good time?" He asked.

"Ah, well, you see officer, I was just minding my own business when I heard about this most *dreadful* news and I came right here and... and.. " her lower lip started quivering. "And my friend Applejack was already here, so I asked her what was going on and she said...she said...Oh Pinkie! I can't believe it! Why! Why!" sobbed the unicorn as she healed herself at Biggs and put her head on his shoulder, catching him by surprise, as she immediately started howling and flooding the front of his armour with tears.

"Why Pinkie? Why? *Why!?* And why did it have to be Dashie? I mean, of all the worse things that could have happened *THIS IS THE WORST POSSIBLE EVER!!! Why!?* *Why!?*"

Biggs looked over to Wedge “Not gonna flake, eh?” Wedge sighed and waited until the witness appeared to have cried herself out. She then sniffed a few times, and then noticing Wedge looking at her peeled herself away from Biggs’s armour. She only then appeared to notice the tears, snot, and trace amounts of vomit.

“Errr, do you by any chance have a hankie I could borrow?” She said, staring down at herself with a dead dull horror. Biggs instinctively reached for one, and then remembered, as he did about twice a day, that there were no pockets in his armour and shrugged. Wedge sighed.

“I’ll fetch one for you ma’am.”

“No, no its quite all right, I’ll just, give me a second...”

She said with increasing panic as she desperately tried to get the mess of herself with a hoof, then futilely tried to get the mess of the hoof with the other hoof, then squinted her eyes and concentrated. Her horn flared and a box of tissues shot across the room to her, nearly stunning Biggs in the process. After a while fussing with her appearance in a half-stunned manner, she appeared to remember where she was and snapped back into conversation.

“I’m sorry officer you must think me awfully rude.”

“Not at all ma’am.” Said Wedge, thinking that she looked asleep on her hooves and emotionally half dead, which was only to be expected if you had just found out that one of your best friends had murdered and mutilated one of the others. “I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions about your relationship with the victim, if that’s quite all right.”

“Of.. of course officer.”

“When did you last see the victim?”

“Oh, Umm... not long ago. A few days at most. I... you know, I can’t quite recall when. You see Dashie is always... oh... was always so independent, and yet so *lazy!* If you didn’t see her you didn’t know if it was because she was busy, or off doing something adventurous, trying to impress the Wonderbolts, her idols you know, or if she just found a good place to nap. I.. I can’t honestly say. Not long ago. They day before yesterday, maybe, of the day before that. I can’t recall where she said she was going.”

“Did she often tell people her plans, say in advance where she was going?”

“Oh yes, but, well, she changed her plans so often, and so seldom followed them herself, she’d often tell one of us she was off to practice her low-level flying, tell another she was going to do some cloud sculpting, and then later we’d find her helping Fluttershy count birds, or racing random strangers: she was never very punctual, or regular in her schedule.”

Wedge sighed: That was one trait right here that a serial killer would notice and latch right on to.

“And her relationship with the suspect, were they close?”

Rarity looked at her hooves. “Yes.” She whispered. “We all were.”

“We?”

“Me, Rainbow Dash, Pinkie Pie, Twilight Sparkle, Applejack, and Fluttershy. We.. we did everything together. We shared everything together, or so I thought.”

Wedge felt half-tempted to tell her just how much they had all shared if they’d been eating the suspect’s cooking, but he hadn’t the heart to do that to anypony. They’d have to be told sooner or later, but he’d let Celestia work out the right time and way to do that. Then something clicked.

“Twilight Sparkle? Celestia’s Student?” *Shining Armour’s sister?* He thought.

“Yes... she was very close to... to both of them.”

Wedge digested this new information, and absolutely nothing else, he hoped. No wonder Celestia was coming down personally to sort this out. Then he remembered something Biggs had told him earlier, about the victim having worked for Celestia in the past, and it clicked again.

“You six, you were the six that defeated Nightmare Moon, weren’t you. Fought Discord? You wielded the elements of harmony, didn’t you?”

“Oh, Yes. Is that relevant?” she asked, sounding put out. Wedge hesitated. He had no idea, however he was pretty sure that when the Princess heard that one of the users of the elements of harmony had gone snooker loopy and cannibalised one of the others, she’d not be best pleased. He then did

what all police officers do when they have no idea how to continue with a line of questioning and fear that they may have ended up horse-apple creek: he redirected, and pretended he'd always meant to.

"So the victim, would you say she would have trusted the suspect completely?"

"Oh why yes! Dashie, you see... she was our element of Loyally. She'd never betray a friend, so she trusts all hers completely!"

"Element of Loyally." Muttered Biggs. "Life sure does know how to stick it in and then break it off, doesn't it? So just out of interest, what harmonious element did the suspect embody?"

Wedge glared and Biggs, but to his surprise, Rarity answered without any sign of hesitation.

"Laughter."

Wedge and Biggs looked at each other. Figured.

"And the Suspect... would you say she was, well, herself lately?"

"Yes. Yes that's what makes it even worse. I mean we creative types are always a little highly strung, I'm something of a dressmaker, she's a master baker, there are always a few things we creative souls are troubled by... but, she's been so *happy* of late. You see, when Pinkie is happy, she's happy, and when she's... put out..."

"Put out?"

"We'll she's never given *any* indication of this sort of thing before, but let's just say if her hair deflates, you'd not want to be in the same room has her." Rarity realised the two officers were looking at her with their heads cocked on onside and their mouths open. "She gets depressed if she thinks people don't like her." She translated.

"A history of depression? I see. Was she taking anything for it?"

"Not that I know of."

“Was she seeing a doctor, or did she have any friends who were medically trained or worked with controlled drugs?” said Wedge, steering the questioning towards what she wanted to hear.

“No, not that I know of, and she pretty much stayed within the same circle of friends as the rest of us.”

Wedge snorted in frustration. Where *had* she got all that medical kit? Then he remembered the restraint harness.

“Would you say the suspect was good with her hooves? Any hobbies, woodworking, anything like that?”

“Pinkie? Havens no, a terrific baker, but I sold her a dress for the Galloping Gala, and she could barely get into it. Got into a muddle with the straps, and she’d foolishly tried to make some adjustments herself that I had to undo for her, poor thing couldn’t sew for toffee. Aside for some skill with kitchen utensils, no.”

Wedge, who had seen the suspects skills with kitchen utensils first hoof, decided not to comment. He moved on methodically: “Were any others of you circle of friends, well, what I’d call ‘hoofy’? Good with machines, metal working, wood working. Any hobbies or skilled crafts?”

“Other than dress-making? No. Well... the only one of our group who’s at all, well, a *labourer* is Applejack. She runs sweet Apple Acers, the local orchard. But she doesn’t do much of what I’d call *skilled* labour. She just, you know. Kicks trees. Sometimes works with carts and cart-harnesses, you know, axles, wheels, bridles, horse-collars, oh and of course her tree-surgery bits, pruning knives, wood-working tools, saws, the like. Nothing *odd*.”

Wedge and Biggs thought this over. Wedge caught Biggs’s eye, and was sure that they were both thinking about the complex restraint-harness in the basement and the collection of saws.

“And where is Applejack? You say she was here when you arrived?”

“Oh yes... her and her brother, well they were walking past when the mayor found that awful awful cellar, so Big Mac, her bother, made sure Pinkie didn’t get away, and Applejack, she... she went and looked in the cellar, and well, after that she wouldn’t stop crying, so after that the nurse gave her a couple of twitches, and when that didn’t work Doctor Whooves gave her a sedative and put her to bed in my shop across the street because it was closest and I said it was okay. Ohhh, and I was supposed to watch her little sister but she’s wandered off somewhere!” said Rarity, stamping a hoof petulantly and beginning to tear up again.

“Humph. And do you think she could account for her whereabouts for the last, say couple of days?”

Rarity smiled though her tears.

“Me and Applejack are the only two of our group who keep what you’d think of as regular hours, I’m always in my shop with customers, and Applejack spends almost every hour of daylight Celestia sends working her orchard, with her family to help, and the rest helping other ponies: I doubt either of us has more than a few hours in the last six months that can’t be accounted for my at least a few witnesses.”

“I see, well we’ll soon check that out. “ Said Wedge. He felt cheated, someone had to be supplying her these drugs.

“Are you sure nopony you know has any medical training, or reason to keep controlled drugs?”

“No, I’m sure. None. Except... well do Veterinary drugs count?” Asked Rarity half embarrassed, as if afraid of being told not to waste their time. Wedge felt his stomach lurch, like he’d just been dropped twenty feet into cold water. He glanced at Biggs out of the corner of his eye, and saw he was whistling between he teach as he inhaled. Bingo.

“Yes, that would count.” Said Wedge with exaggerated calmness. “Is one of your circle of friends a Veterinarian?”

“Well, not really, but Fluttershy works with animals an lot, she loves all animals, even the *vile* ones, and she has seemingly *NO* fear of dangerous creatures, and since she works with snakes sometimes she’s required to keep anti-venom kits at her place. It’s some sort of workplace-safety-law.”

“Anti-venom?”

“Yes, and other bits and bobs... now let me see. Antibiotics, in case a bite gets infected, painkillers, tranquilisers for dangerous animals, anti-allergy meds, and ohh, what’s it called? Those two anti-poison injections? The one you use to stop convulsions if it’s a convulsing poison, and the one you use to wake yourself up if it’s a sleeping poison.”

Wedge started blankly at Rarity, stunned. "Atropine and adrenaline."

"Oh, that you. Yes, those. Atropine and adrenaline. Lots of them."

"And, err. How would you describe Fluttershy?"

"Oh well, you know our Fluttershy!"

"I'm afraid I don't, ma'am. What's she like?"

"Oh, err. Shy, introverted. Quiet, keeps to herself mostly... err..." Wedge and Biggs stared sharing meaningful looks at that, and Rarity spotted them.

"No! it's not like *that* she wouldn't hurt a fly! I mean, she so peace-loving that when she couldn't get all of the cute little animals to love her and the night of the Gala, she ended up completely distraught!"

"You know what, I think I do know her: I was on guard duty at the gala that night; didn't she burst through the door, stampede a bunch of animals across the room and stand in the doorway, clothes torn, yelling 'you're going to LOVE ME!' at the top of her breath?" Asked Wedge, then he paused. Now that Wedge thought about it, he could swear he had seen the suspect in this case there, goosing a random purple pony on the dance floor. Hindsight was a wonderful thing, sometimes.

"Ah, well, you weren't exactly seeing her at her best."

"Wasn't she the one who started acting really weird and gross in the middle of a public fashion show?" Asked Biggs.

"You go to fashion shows?"

"My mare-friend made me Wedge, don't spread it around."

“There was an explanation for that!” said Rarity. “I’d freaked her out before the fashion show by putting too much pressure on her, and as for the gala, the only reason she looked like that was because she fell into one of her own animal traps and-”

“Wait, she sets *animal traps!*?”

“Well, yes, she always been good at it but... ohhh look, she’s just not like that, okay? She wouldn’t hurt a fl- well, there was that bear whose neck she twisted round, but it was strictly therapeutic and besides *He started it!* She’s actually very gentle when you get to know her!”

“All right, but we’ll have to question all the victims friends, so you may as well tell us where she lives. But don’t worry, we don’t jump to conclusions about these sorts of things.” Said Wedge politely, while behind Rarity’s back Biggs silently mouthed *she did it she did it she did it*. Rarity looked a little upset, but she nodded anyway.

“Okay. Public bridleway seven, number four-oh-nine. Right up that way, stop when you get to all the ridiculously cute woodland critters. Can’t miss it. Oh, and could you please keep an eye out for Applejacks little sitter? Earth pony, yellow, no cutie mark, about yay high? Applejack will be so upset if she’s wandered off!”

“We’ll do our best, ma’am. We will probably be around latter to interview Applejack, so let us know when she comes around and feels up to it.” Said Wedge and they turned and walked off. He didn’t get far before he stopped again. Ack was gesturing him towards a door.

Looked like he was about to meet their suspect face to face.

Part four: lottery.

Wedge edged though the crowd to the door, then looked around. No pony seemed to be paying him much attention. He watched their character witness, Rarity, leave the building. She went to her shop across the way, pulled the blinds, and changed the sign on her door from “Come in, we’re open.” To “Sorry everypony, we’re closed.” He didn’t blame her. If he was in her hooves he’d not want to see anypony right now. He sighed, then tossed his head to Biggs to get him to follow. Biggs looked intrigued, and slipped though the side door after him. Virtually no pony noticed them leave the crowded hall.

“What’s up, partner?”

“Nothing. We’re certainly not about to make an unauthorised visit to the suspect and try to question her without official authorisation.”

“Oh right. Glad we’re not doing something like that then.” Said Biggs, grinning.

Aquilinus lead them down a short, dust-smelling, wood-panned corridor into the courthouse section of the building. By the look of things no-one had had reason to use this area for a long time. Hardly surprising, Wedge though: crime in Ponyville was almost non-existent. Or so they had thought.

Further proof of the towns unfamiliarity with crime came when they got to the cell door.

“Ack, What the heck is he doing here?” said Biggs, gesturing to a civilian earth-pony standing in the corridor with his back legs up against the cell door. Aquilinus had the good grace to look embraced.

“No pony here has used the cell in years, and the local cops had lost the keas, so I’m hiring Big Mac to hold the door closed.”

“You’re Bucking *kidding* me?” said Biggs.

“’fraid not: the mayor may know where the keas are, but she’s in no fair state to tell.”

“Oh for the love of...” muttered Biggs. Wedge interrupted.

“Big Macintosh, right? You secured the prisoner initially while they were waiting for back up to arrive?”

“Eeyup.”

Wedge and Biggs stood around for a second, waiting for him to elaborate. When they realised he wasn’t going to, Wedge asked him another question.

“Did the suspect give you any grief?”

“Nope. Ah wondered why, when she’d bit the mayor and all, but she said she couldn’t hurt *me*.”

“Did she say why?”

“Lottery.” He said, cryptically, and then shrugged.

“Ah didn’t ask her no more. I’d seen that there basement. Ah reckoned Ah didn’t want to know any more. Ah mean, imagine keeping somepony in a basement like that.” He said. Wedge sighed.

“Okay, well we’ve got your statement, and we’ll probably call you back about this some point later, all right? Huh, where’s that darn medic? He’s late.”

“More precisely, you’re early.” Said Whooves materialising out of the shadows in the corridor. “Remember, timing is my cutie mark calling, time of death, time of day... I *always* know the time.”

“Yeah, well so would I if I wore a pocket-watch.” Said Biggs sarcastically.

“What watch?” said Whooves, confused. Then he noticed it. “Oh, this old fob-watch? Its broken, it always has been. I just keep it for sentimental value. Funny, until you mention it I had completely forgotten this thing even existed.” He said, taking it out and then putting it back on its chain from his bowtie without even opening it. He never had, as far as he knew.

“Well, whatever.” Said Biggs. “It looks silly hanging from your bowtie.”

“No it doesn’t: Bowties and fob watches are cool, and unlike wrist watches and long ties, they don’t end up getting stuck inside whoever you’re autopsying. Anyway let’s get this over and done with, and remember, I’m just a simple small town doctor who happens to be the local M.E., so if you get caught I have no idea that this interrogation is illegal. Oh, and although it’s a terrible thing to say after what she did, but as soon as I step into that cell, I’m her doctor and she’s my patient. I don’t want to crowd her, so just you Wedge, and you try anything I think is making her physical or mental health worse, and I’ll kick you out on your... plot... Got it?”

“Got it.” Said Wedge. “ On an unrelated note, how long until we can expect an autopsy report?” The doctor shrugged.

“A while, and longer still until I can get the dental comparison made. I can give you boys a sneak-preview of the result though: death by multiple injuries, and bear in mind that the last time I used that diagnosis was when I had a Pegasus fail to pull out of a two-thousand foot dive. Whether it was shock or exsanguination that did for her in the end, that poor soul had multiple...well... everything.”

“No way to speed up identification of the body?” Wedge asked the doc. He shook his head.

“There’s a Unicorn I’ve read about in forensic journals whose magical talent is telling how closely two ponies are related by just touching them, makes her living solving paternity suits. If we could get a sample from the stuffed hide we found into one of her hooves and a tissue sample from the body into the other, she could tell us how many alleles they had in common in about thirty seconds, but A, she’s in Fillydelphia and as a unicorn can’t fly, and B, the only Pegasus we had who was insured to carry medical samples was Rainbow Dash, the victim. We’d be sending out our back-up courier to deliver the samples: Derpy. You know the reason she’s limited to local deliveries only?” Wedge nodded. “No sense of direction. Went to look for southern Birds in the north.”

“Right. Sorry boys we’ll have to do this the old-fashioned way: no results for you until I get back to my autopsy room. Speaking of which, *tempus fugit*, I haven’t got forever...” he nodded towards the Cell door.

Wedge nodded back, and took a deep breath.

“Biggs, there no point you waiting around here to get caught and punished, go check out that Fluttershy’s house, report back to me as soon as you can. Okay Mac, open her up.”

The cell door creaked open, and Wedge and the Doctor stepped inside.

Wedge had been preparing himself for many things. A sullen refusal to talk. Death-treats. Twisted mind games. Even out-and-out physical assault. What he had not prepared himself for, however, was Pinkamena Diane Pie.

“Hi! Omygosh I’m so glad to meet you! Oh wow, your armour is so *purrrty* oh hi Doc, good to see you looking so well, but, duh, of course you would silly! Omygosh, is this like a party, a surprise Cell party! Oh I love it!”

Wedge looked on shocked. Now he had seen her close up, he remembered her actually meeting Celestia at Sugercube corner before. She had swiped a cupcake right out of Celestia’s hoof. He realised that he had let this pony through security to sit down and feed Celestia her deranged cooking. Wedge stood completely aghast staring at the suspect as she continued chattering in this mode for some time, even managing to bounce happily up and down in her straightjacket. The doctor was apparently used to it, and started running basic medical checks on her without any sign of worry or upset. He made non-committal replies to her incessant chatter, and this only seemed to encourage her.

“...and so I was like ‘oatmeal, are you crazy?’ and then she was like-”

“Pinkamena Diane Pie?” Asked Wedge, cutting in.

“Call me Pinkie!”

“Miss Pie, do you know why I’m here?”

“Is this about that punch I made for Gumby’s birthday party? Because if it is I can totally explain!”

“No, it’s not about that.”

“Ohhh! You wanted to ask about Sugercube Corner’s new hot coco range? Because if you are, I’m just the pony you need to see! We’ll have so much fun!”

“It’s not about that. In fact I think I’m going to be withdrawing my custom from Sugercube Corner.”

“Oh, then is it about the ponies I’ve been drugging and taking down to my basement to play with and then putting into cupcakes? And you’re here to try and question me illegally in this cell because you know if you don’t do it now you’ll never get another chance. It’s about that, isn’t it? I guessed right! Do I get a prize?”

Wedge stared, then leaned sideways and whispered to Doc out of the corner of his mouth. “Is she kidding me? What sort of mind-game is this?”

“I’ve been Pinkie’s family physician since she was a tiny foal. Trust me: this is normal. If she starts playing mid-games or goes abnormal, you’ll know.”

“What are you whispering about? It’s not nice to talk about other ponies behind their backs, you know!”

Wedge glanced at her, then started talking to the Doctor normally.

“Is there anything you can do to, well, even her out a little? I’m not sure I can conduct an interview like this.” The Doc shook his head.

“Sorry, she’s mid sugar-rush now, as always, and although there is *plenty* I could do to calm her, none of it is medically necessary. Unless there is a clear medical reason to do so, I can’t do anything.”

“Well, do you mind if I give her a twitch then?”

“Knock yourself out, it’s an approved prisoner-control method. But only three in one hour, and ear first.”

Wedge reached over, grabbed the suspects right ear, and pulled. It was a bizarre fact of equine physiology, but if you tugged suddenly downwards on an equines ear, or pinched their upper lip and “twitched” it suddenly, it triggered a natural release of endorphins into their system, calming them. It was approved as medically safe, and was the Equestrian government’s favoured method for treating minor shock and for subduing unruly prisoners. Ear was less effective than lip, and more painful, but it left the option of moving onto the lip later on, effectively upping the dosage if the first twitch failed.

“Ow. Hehe, stop that, that feels funny.”

“Miss Pie, I’m going to ask you some questions, and I’d be obliged if you could answer simply and honestly. Do you understand?”

She nodded, enthusiastically. “Okey Dokey Lokey. Lies hurt, secrets and lies, they hurt really bad. Don’t worry, I’ll answer.”

Wedge looked at her blankly for a moment.

“Why did you do it?”

“Because I had to, silly! Dashie wasn’t going to just cook herself! And even if she did Dashie’s cooking? Yucksville!”

“Why miss Dash? Why Dashie, had she done something to upset you?”

“Oh no, well... she did upset me during, she died on me *really* quickly, which I though was rude. When you’re with a friend and that friend is enjoying your company, I feel it’s rude to leave early. But then, I guess I was a little too harsh with her, I was just so *happy* to be working with one of my very best friends for the first time, you know? Sharing so much with her ohohou, it was just magical! Can you blame be if I went a little overboard and pushed my luck? Now the one I did *after* Dashie, she lasted. She lasted a *really* long time. It’s never the ones you expect, is it?” she looked at her straitjacket, and the smiled at Wedge. “But then again, I think you know that.”

“You’ve... you’ve killed since Rainbow Dash?”

“Well *duh*, do you remember that big charity bake sale the other day? I make Dashie last as long as a could, but I ran out of supplies and with ingredients that fine, it’s really a crime to either skimp or to try and water them down or stretch them out, so I had to take another.”

“So, the body we found in the basement isn’t Rainbow Dash?”

“Well of course not you silly old Stallion! No, after Dashie I had to try again, and you just wouldn’t *believe* how lucky I got! Two in a row!”

“Who’s the victim the body in the basement belongs to then?” The suspect giggled.

“Oh Silly Guardpony! I can’t tell you that, you have to work that out on your own. Although it’s very, very rude to keep secrets, it’s even ruder to break promises to your friends, you ought to keep promises *forever*, so I’m sorry, but I just can’t tell you. Pinkie Pie Swear. Besides, if I did, where would be the fun in that!?”

Wedge snorted, frustrated. He looked at the buckles on her straitjacket

“Where did you get that restraint setup made? That’s some fairly specialised equipment: you couldn’t have made it all on your own.”

She giggled. “A friend helped.”

“But you can’t tell me who?”

“Exactly! It’s like a guessing game, isn’t it, this is fun!”

“And the medicines...”

“A friend.”

“Fluttershy?” He asked. She giggled.

“Can’t tell. I’d have to kill myself if I told, and then who’d do the baking? You know, I’m not sure who was the best, yanno? I mean Dashie, she was the very first of my special special friends to come up, and what we had there was really something. The intimacy, you know? You’ll never, ever get that close to someone, not a friend, not a parent or a child, not a lover, no way! I got to know her in ways no-one else ever will. It was perfect! She fought so hard to start with, the only thing that spoiled it was she turned out to be a big stupid baby in the end. She just gave up, it was sad! But her surprise, the shock of finding her friends would betray her like that, it was priceless! The one after her, complete opposite. She was heartbroken, but barely suspiired. She’d gotten suspicious somehow. She didn’t fight at all, she just lay there and took it, for hours and hours. That was rude, she was spoiling it. So I had to cheat: I told her what my plan was, you see, I told her who was next, and that

got her up and fighting. How hard she fought when she realised that if she didn't escape, others would be next. And the looks she gave me, I nearly *died*. It was priceless! I was about to stuff her too, until stupid miss prissy prissy mayor-face turned up. I don't like her, she tasted funny!"

"Who was going to be next?"

"Is, is going to be next."

"Was, you're in a cell."

Pinkie looked at Wedge sideways, then smiled and winked.

"Is going to be next. A friend, remember?"

"Who!"

"Can't tell, you'll have to be smarter than that, Gaurdspony Wedge, you're asking all the wrong questions. I mean, what's your cutie mark, somepony asking a suspect really silly silly wrong questions? I bet it is, under that armour. If I was in your hooves, and I was asking silly silly questions like that when I'm supposed to be good at it, I think I'd have to go and have a little cry."

"Why Dash? Why one pony and not the other? How do you pick who goes next?"

"Ahh, the right questions. Oh goody! How did pick them?"

"Yes."

"How do I pick them?"

"Yes!"

"I don't!" Yelled the suspect triumphantly, throwing her hooves out wide in joy, and filling the cell with party streamers. Wedge reared up, wings spread, hooves raised and ready to buck, when he noticed that somehow her front legs were back in the straitjacket. He looked at the Doctor, who shrugged and stared picking streamers out of his mane. "We never did work out medically how she does that. Just ignore it: she can only do that when it's funny, just bear it in mind when you're moving her to the palace cells."

"Is it magic?"

“Apparently not. Just ignore it. Oh, and keep in mind, she always seems to know where ponies are and where they are heading to if she wants to find them. I must have walked past this cell a dozen times today, and each time she yelled ‘Hi Doc’ before I got into her line of sight, and I *know* I don’t make any noise on these carpets. I can only imagine how useful *that* talent must be to a killer. ”

Wedge looked back to the suspect.

“You don’t pick them. All right, then who picked Rainbow Dash?”

“No-one, her number just came up!”

“Her what?”

“Her number just came up.”

“Number?”

There was a knock at the cell door.

Wedge glanced to the doctor, then to the suspect, who had started chattering endlessly again, and then went outside.

Biggs was there, with the mail-pony, Derpy.

“I’m sorry edge, I know never to interrupt an interrogation, but Derpy here has something, and she seems to think it’s urgent.”

“All right, what is it Derps?”

Derpy hesitated, reluctant to interfere with the sanctity of the Mail, but she handed it over, and then fled.

Wedge and Biggs looked at it, it was a letter.

“Humm, letter to the suspect, pre-paid envelope with typed address and no stamp, so no saliva sample we could match to anything, probably anonymous pre-paid postal account, like the kind direct advertisers use. What do you think Wedge?”

Wedge pointed to the serial number on the pre-payment details of the envelope. “This is the *fortieth* letter to be sent from that account to the suspect. Regular pre-paid letters.” He opened it with a hoof, carefully. The suspect would be getting a lot of hate at the moment, and he half expected the letter to contain anthrax or a live parasprite of similar. Instead it contained...

“Lotto tickets? Biggs, wasn’t that waste-paper bin in the cellar full of these?”

“Yeah, that and used adrenalin needles.”

Wedge looked at the letter. It was three strips of Lotto tickets, the kind they used for raffles at fairs and fairs, folded laterally down the centre of each strip so you couldn’t see the numbers, and all stapled to a machine-printed label on generic low-grade paper. Wedge read the label.

WEEK FORTY. ONE TICKET FROM EACH STRIP THEN DISCARD. ALL USED TICKETS MUST BE DESTROYED.

Wedge felt a little sick. “Her number just came up.”

“Huh?”

“Oh, nothing. Did you check out this Fluttershy’s place?”

“Yeah. She’s the one all right. The place is deserted, and going by the lack of post pilling up only since this morning. Door not locked behind her, place in a mess, saddle bags she purchased not long ago missing, I know because there were dated receipts for them on the floor, personal effects gone and the anti-venom and drugs missing from the first aid kit. And a little clue that she won’t be coming back. You know we were told she liked animals?”

Wedge nodded. Biggs scowled.

“Somepony poisoned all the injured animals she was caring for before she left, and her pet rabbit too. And put out poisoned food for the local wildlife: that’s what made me try the door and find it unlocked. Classic narcissistic killer behaviour; if I can’t have them, no pony can.”

“Celestia! All right, get her description, or find a picture or something and put it out, not that we’ll have any luck finding a Pegasus with that much head start and knowledge of the local woods, but try anyway. Oh, and can you get me those used Lotto tickets? I’m going to talk to our suspect about this.”

A few moments later Wedge walked back in, the new letter in his mouth. He dropped it on the table in front of the suspect, and glanced at the Doc. The suspect was still going on about the ponies she had killed, and the Doc was watching her with a dull disgust.

“She’s raving. You’ll have to give her another twitch: not that I approve of unnecessary non-medical uses of them, or course.”

“Of course. Can I borrow your hinged-twitch?”

“Sure” said the doctor, passing over a large metal device, hinged in the middle. It looked like an oversized nut cracker. “If you want to put any part of your body near her mouth after what happened to the mayor, be my guest. I’ve got plenty of bandages in my kit here, you’ll be pleased to know.”

Wedge grunted, and applied the twitch to her lip, and pinched. Her ears instantly sagged and her posture relaxed as she blissed-out. When he released it again she was still talking about the killing, but at least seemed aware there were two other ponies in the room.

“And then the *look* she gave me, it was so intense, and she just looked and said to me, ‘you know you don’t have to do this Pinkie, you have a choice, we all always have a choice’ and then I said ‘well Duh, I know I don’t *have* to do it, it’s just I *want* too, this is what I live for. This way we’ll be friends for ever’ and then I told her ‘life is a party’ and I took her pretty little eyes out with a melon-baller, to stop her staring anymore. I tried an ice-cream scoop, for the pun, but it just wasn’t cutting it.” She looked at Wedge and fluttered her eyelashes at him. “She had lovely eyes, but then again, I suspect you’ve taken my jars away, so you’ve already seen them. Do you understand, now, why I did it?”

Wedge nodded, and pushed the letter across the table to her. “Because her number came up.”

She looked at the latter and then unfolded the tickets with her mouth and begun to read them, smiling.

“Ah, next month’s numbers. We’ll, given I won’t be able to do these ones myself, I may as well look at who the numbers are. I’ve got the names all matched up to the numbers in my head, safer not to write it down.” She looked at the numbers, and froze up, stunned. Wedge wondered what had happened, when suddenly there was a noise like a deflating balloon, and her hair dropped flat, and she started howling.

“*Bitch bitch bitch bitch BITCH BITCH!*” she screamed. “She cheated! I’ll Kill her, I’ll take her out to the woods and then I’ll *kill* her! She cheated, she cheated with my numbers! It’s not possible, the numbers are only ever supposed to be able to come up *once!* The numbers are only ever supposed to be able to come up *once!* I’ll kill her, I’ll rip her horn off and shove it up her cheating backside!” she screamed, rocking from side to side and pounding her head against the cell walls as she screamed in horror. “Dashie! Oh Dashie forgive me! She killed you! She **murdered** you! You’re number didn’t come up, it only means something if the number comes up, she just killed you!” she yelled, smashing her face against the table.

“Right, that’s it Wedge, you’re out. You’ve gotten *quite* enough out of my patient, now get the heck out.” Said Doctor Whooves and he plunged a needle into the suspect’s neck as she sobbed into the table.

“But-”

“Out!” yelled the Doctor, as the sobs begin to quieten down as the tranquiliser took effect. As he was headed out the door, Wedge just heard her say “And your number never came up either, I’ll bet. Two in a row, I should have suspected! I’m sorry, my friend I’m sorry my poor little f-”

The door slammed, cutting off the end of the conversation. She was under by that point anyway, or as close as made no difference. He could guess what had been in that needle; The triple whammy, they called it on the street, Ketamine, Detomidine and Sodium Pentothal. It put you out quickly, safely, and for a considerable time, so asking to be let in latter to continue the interview was out. Wedge stared at the door for a moment, and then swore loudly and in great detail.

“Doc kicked you out?” Biggs asked.

“Yeah. Quick, let’s get out of here before were caught... in here.” Said Wedge, bundling Biggs into the mayor’s office. To their surprise a young Filly was there, clearly having been listening in. They stared at her, quite suppressed. She started back.

“Er?”

Biggs immediately started yelling “What in *Equestria* do you think you’re doing here missy?” Wedge held up a hoof to silence him. She was quite young, although perhaps it was only the absence of a cutie mark that gave that impression, scared looking, yellow. Something in Wedges memory clicked.

“Wasn’t Rarity looking for you earlier?”

“Er...” her voice, at first nervous, was now closer to terrified. Even Biggs noticed that she was shivering, and lowered his voice.

"It's okay, were palace guard: we're not going to hurt you: we're the good guys. So what's your name?" he said in his talking-to-foals voice.

"Errr..." She was shaking quiet badly now. Biggs tried a different approach.

"It's all right, you're not going to get into any trouble... how did you get in here? There's a guard on the door to this section off the building?"

"Errr..." Wedge noticed she kept shifting from hoof to hoof. That could be guilt, he thought, or it could be a sign. He pumped for the latter.

"Is, is there something you wanted to tell us?" he asked quietly, but seriously. "I've seen that shuffle before when ponies have something they want to get of their chests. "

"What do ya do, if you know something bad 'as happened, but you can't tell anypony, but even tho' you *can't ya gotta?*" she blurted suddenly. Biggs seemed a little taken aback, but Wedge paused and considered it as carefully as he would a question from an adult. She seemed to appreciate this, and calmed down slightly.

"Well, you can always tell the Guard." He said levelly. "It's our job."

"But Ah *Can't!* Not here!" she said, peaking down the corridor. Wedge turned and looked. Big Mac, the doctor and Aquilinus were clustered in the corridor talking. When the spotted him and the filly looking they staled. The filly pulled back like she'd been kicked in the face, and flattened herself against the wall, clearly frightened to be seen.

"Not here. Not now." She hissed. Perhaps begged was more accurate.

Wedge considered this. "This is about the case, isn't it? About Pinkie?" she nodded. It was possible she knew something important, and even if she didn't they needed as many witness statements and as much information they could get. Wedge briefly contemplated bringing her in, but there would be no point, she'd clam up and because they couldn't hold a filly this young for more than a few hours, all it would achieve would be to scare her off. He reviewed his options.

“Well, if you want we can arrange to meet somewhere where you feel more comfortable to take your statement, or if you can get an adult to bring you, you can go to Canterlot, to the palace, and use the password *apricot*: it’s a one use password, gets you in once, to the non-secure areas at least, and then you can ask for Guardspony Wedge.” The filly seemed to consider this.

“Ah... Ah gotta go. This was a mistake. Sure was nice meeting you two officers tho’. Now, you’ll excuse me ah..ah.” she bolted nervously out the door. They watched her run past the cluster of guards in the corridor, jinks past the bemused ponies, knocking over a stack of cardboard boxes of case notes that someone had stacked in the coridor, and out the door at the far end. Big Mac noticed her running past and gave a “Hey!” but she ignored him and went right out of the door, back into the crowded town hall. Mac shifted his weight as if he was about to take off after her for a second, then remembered where he was and what he was doing. He snorted and stamped a hoof in frustration.

“You know her?” Wedge asked. Big Mac snorted.

“You could say that. She’s kin.”

“Was she with you when you and Applejack were grabbed by the mayor, you know, when the killings were discovered?” asked Wedge. Big mac considered this.

“Nope, but she turned up really soon after. I know she musta looked in that basement, because I caught her coming out of it.” Wedge realised that in that case she might make a good witness, and made a note to try and contact her later as he and Biggs went back into the office. Back inside the mayor’s office he noticed that the filly seemed to have been in the process of leaving a note for them when they burst in on her. He picked it up.

Three words. SHE HAD HELP. No signature. Wedge looked at it for a moment, and then tucked it inside his armour: Biggs was already ranting about hysterical fillies wasting their time, so he guessed he’d not be too impressed with the note just at this moment.

“ -And what’s more who in *Equestria* keeps leaving those darn boxes lying around so they get in the way every time someone runs from the Guard? Can we just once have a chase without running into either them or a fruit-stand or something? It does my head in! Oh and Ack, we don’t want the whole of Equestria overhearing, close the door, will you? Were you born in a barn or something? Anyway, what’s up with the suspect Wedge, why’d you get kicked out?” asked Biggs.

“Oh, she freaked when she saw this week’s letter, so the Doc doped her. When she freaked out, she said that the same number should never come up twice.” Said Wedge, placing that letter on the mayor’s desk.

They both scanned the lotto-tickets attached to the letter, then re-scanned them, then went thought then carefully, one at a time.

“There are no duplicates. No number does come up more than once Wedge.”

Wedge stared.

“She, she said Dash was murdered.”

“Well, yeah. She said that because she did it.”

Wedge thought for a moment. “Did you get the old Lotto numbers we found there?”

“Sure, here.” Said Biggs, pouring them out onto the table. After a few moments of sorting, Wedge held one up: 1408. He held it next to a ticket in the middle of one of the strips attached to the new letter: 1408.

“The suspect, she knows these numbers by heart, so she’d see right away if a number came up that had already been played... and because she takes one ticket at random from each strip, and never looks at the rest...” he started sorting through the old tickets 501, 1408, 409, 251 409, 1408, 616, 1408... Biggs started to help.

The letter for that week had three strips on ten lotto tickets attached to it. There were thirty used tickets recovered from the basement. Twenty seven were still neatly folded like the ones on the letter, to hide the numbers. Three were not.

“Oh. My. Gosh.” Muttered Biggs.

They had soon arranged the thirty into three strips of ten, as they would have originally been. One strip of random numbers, of which 501 had been selected, one strip of just 409’s, one strip of just 1408’s.

Biggs and Wedge stopped, flabbergasted.

“Somepony, somepony knew. Maybe the same person who posts the numbers normally: maybe this Fluttershy, or maybe somepony else just found out about the lottery and posted a duplicate letter. But somepony knew. These weren’t random killings Biggs: somepony decided to kill Rainbow Dash and another pony, and rigged the lottery. Somepony is a murderer, and tricked Pinkie Pie into doing it for them.”

To Be Continued...

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