

The afternoon sun was bright and aggressive, making the day especially hot for that time of year. The humid remnants of last night's thunderstorm still clung to the air, making the world shimmer in a soupy haze and marking a day better spent indoors. However, the thick canopy of trees stretching greedily toward the sun cast deep, cool shadows over the forest floor and kept the woods at least ten degrees cooler than the rest of the valley, though it did nothing for the humidity.

Fluttershy trotted quietly down the edge of an old forest path, overgrown beyond the point anyone but her could even find it in the underbrush. It was an avenue she took almost every day (or as much as she could manage), so that part of forest was as familiar to her as her own home. Her hoof cracked in half yet another fallen limb on the path beneath her, green leaves still clinging to the branch. She frowned and kicked it out of the way, quietly taking stock of yet another victim of last night's storm and worrying that there would be many more to come.

It was a furious maelstrom of thunder and lightening that lasted all through the night until the early hours of the morning. Fluttershy had let in a number of the local animals into her home to help them weather the storm, but there weren't as many familiar creatures there as she hoped for and feared the worst for the animals of the forest. Branches and limbs had been torn off their trunks by the wind while some older trees had been toppled entirely. Near the entrance to the forest, she had passed by a large oak, toppled completely over after being violently uprooted and embedding a muddy trench into the ground, and quietly worried for the countless animals who would have to find a new place to call home.

Fluttershy's vision blurred and she suddenly felt light-headed and dizzy. She immediately came to a halt to catch her breath, her legs shaking beneath her as she struggled to stand upright. The moment would pass, as it always did, but it was a struggle to keep herself standing while waiting for her dizzy spell to pass. Seconds later, after taking deep and deliberate breaths, Fluttershy's head stopped swimming and her vision sharpened back to normal.

"Oh dear..." she said to herself, shuffling on her sore hooves and blinking away the remnants of her episode. She turned and cast an eye back at herself worryingly. Fluttershy was vastly, heavily pregnant, her yellow sides bulging out to the sides while her belly hung low and heavily between her legs, making her wings seem almost comically small over the broad, round shape of her middle. She gently felt a nudge from inside herself as a tiny hoof pushed against the uterine wall, a gentle reminder from her foal that they were still doing alright. Fluttershy smiled quietly; as long as her twins were healthy, that was all that mattered.

Fluttershy huffed uncomfortably and tried to shift the canteen of water she carried with her closer to her mouth. She'd slung it over her back before setting off that morning, but the hours of walking and the awkward, wide-legged shuffle her pregnancy forced her to adopt had caused the canteen to bounce along her pregnant sides and now sat back closer to her cutie mark, just below her right wing. With a grunt, she tried to hop with her back legs and bounce the canteen back toward her head, but she only succeeded in making it shift further back toward her thighs. With an irritated frown, she next tried to reach her mouth toward the strap itself, but found it difficult to reach over her large belly. As she waddled in a circle, trying to bite and snap at the strap, she felt both the twins stirring in her womb, as if they were enjoying the ride. After a few minutes, she managed to grab the canvas belt with her teeth and pulled the canteen toward her thirsty mouth.

As Fluttershy drank her fill, she felt the bumps and movements of the twin foals in her belly and, naturally, began to worry. Undoubtedly, she was too far along to be exerting herself with an expedition through the forest, especially by herself. Though her official due date wasn't for another few weeks, the fact that she carried twins complicated the matter, and Fluttershy herself expected that her labor could come at any time. But the storm the night before was a dangerous and violent event and likely left many animals in need of help, and she couldn't simply stay home and just hope for their safety. She'd have liked to have flown to give her weak, sore legs some rest, but she was too far along by that point to do little more than hover for a few seconds. If Fluttershy was going to help, she had no

choice but to walk.

Once her thirst had been satisfied, the hugely pregnant pegasus let the canteen fall to her side, wincing as the corner bounced off her firm, yet sensitive belly. She peered around at the surrounding trees, her ears swiveling around to listen for running water. Many of the animals she looked after in the forest lived near subtle, natural landmarks. It was the reason Fluttershy needed to go out into the forest herself; it would have been far too difficult to explain to anyone else what to look for. To the untrained, unpracticed eye, the every mile of the forest looked exactly the same as the last. To Fluttershy, it was almost as easy as reading street signs.

There. Just barely at the edge of her hearing, she caught the sound of trickling water, so faint it might have been mistaken for the wind. She sighed in relief and shuffled in place, happy to find she was going in the right direction. It was easier to find the creek from the air, of course, but she was satisfied her mental map of the forest worked from the ground just as well.

“Now then...” she said to herself, shifting her heavy weight between her hooves. She tossed her pink mane out of her face and squinted while taking a good look at her surroundings. “If that’s the creek...then there should be...” Fluttershy gasped and fluttered her wings happily at the sight of a large bundle of moss on the side of a towering oak tree. “*There!* So if that’s where the moss is, then..” She turned around and spotted an old, long-abandoned bird’s nest nestled in a tree, a red ribbon woven into the circle of branches.

“Perfect!” Fluttershy shouted (though her ‘shout’ was barely louder than any other pony’s slightly raised voice). She wobbled unsteadily on her tired legs, which seemed too skinny and twiglike to be supporting the girth of her heavily pregnant body. Nevertheless, she had a job to do, one that didn’t take maternity leave. She took a deep breath, shook out her stiff legs, then waddled shakily off the path and into the underbrush, feeling the bushes, twigs, and stay ferns tickle the underside of her belly as she moved.

The pegasus used her ears more effectively than her eyes, listening for the trickle of water growing louder and clearer the closer she came to the source. Eventually, a glimmer of light sparkled out from behind the green and brown of the forest and Fluttershy finally found herself standing on the edge of a small, but very old creek winding its way through the forest. She could hear the far-away roar of the river it came from, but turned away from it and followed the creek downstream.

“H-Here...here it...” Fluttershy panted, her legs shaking underneath her. She no longer had the strength to keep her body steady, so her belly rocked and heaved from side-to-side with each step. From the kicks lashing out inside her, the twins weren’t enjoying the bumpy ride. Fluttershy smacked her dry lips and knelt down to drink from the creek itself, but her knees were too exhausted to hold her steady. She fell to the dirt with a loud *thud*, her legs crossed underneath her belly and the twins inside it kicking impatiently. Fluttershy sighed wearily, then bent her head down to the stream and finished drinking to her fill before trying to stand again.

After a couple failed attempts (during which she was happy no one else was around to see), Fluttershy finally pushed herself upright again, her legs wobbling beneath her like a newborn foal’s. Thankfully, she wasn’t far from her destination and managed to work up the strength to shuffle her pregnant body back into the underbrush, holding her wings far out to her sides for balance.

Not far from the creek was the thick truck of an old tree, long-toppled over, covered with ivy, moss, and earthy-colored mushrooms growing on the side. It was also mostly hollow and served as an ideal den to whichever animal happened to claim it, first. As she approached, Fluttershy noticed freshly dug soil strewn across the ground and a new hole burrowed beneath the roots. Once she was close enough, but not too close, the mare huffed uncomfortably as she sat back on her haunches, the weight of her belly shifting down against her hips. Thankfully, the pressure was finally taken off her hooves and she felt like she could finally take a breath. While sitting in the quiet forest, Fluttershy quietly marveled at how far her belly swelled out in front of her. Did twins really make that much of a difference in size or was she just naturally fertile? More than likely it was a combination of the two,

with some of the blame laid upon the father, as well. The pregnant mare smiled as she stroked a hoof over her belly. At least she didn't need to worry about her twins being strong enough. From the power in their kicks, they had strength enough to spare.

"Hello?" Fluttershy called out, leaning forward slightly to peer into the darkness beneath the tree trunk. "Excuse me? Is someone in there?" She always made a point of making noise and being obviously seen when dealing with animals, as they often found it more threatening for her to sit in silence, like a predator would do. Of course, there was no answer in response, so Fluttershy shifted forward slightly, her tail dragging in the dirt behind her.

"Excuse me?" she called out again while cocking her head to the side and squinting between the roots. "I just wanted to see if you were alright after the storm last--"

In a frenzy of dirt and fur, Fluttershy was startled by a small, furiously angry badger clawing its way out of the den it had made and snarling up at her with a fearless glare in its eyes. It didn't attack and stayed curiously pinned to the hole it had burrowed, but bared its teeth and sank its claws into the dirt while staring up at her.

"*O-oh!*" Fluttershy gasped, her ears pinning back against her head while she blushed slightly. She couldn't help but feel guilty about upsetting anybody, even if it was an animal. "I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean to b-b-bother you. I just wanted to see if you w-were, um, that you were..."

The mare's ears stood straight up atop her head at the sound of high-pitched squeal and quick rustling through the grass. Before she could turn to look, a white blur shot out of the underbrush and somersaulted through the air to land between her and the angry badger. Angel the rabbit bared his own (far less threatening) teeth and stomped his large feet on the ground. The badger was just as startled by the rabbit's appearance as Fluttershy was, but simply backed farther into its den before snarling even louder. Angel stooped to his haunches and began to advance, the hair on the back of his neck standing straight up.

"Angel! Stop!" Fluttershy yelled. She reached over and pulled him back with her hoof, the rabbit still chittering and spitting furiously over the mare's leg. Anyone who thought rabbits were timid, docile creatures had obviously never met Angel. Once he was out of the way, the rabbit turned and glared up at Fluttershy indignantly, tapping his long foot against the ground with a glare.

"*We talked* about this, Angel!" Fluttershy said, firmly. "We aren't trying to *fight* every animal in the forest! Most of them are just protecting their dens! You don't need to be so protective of me!"

Angel sat upright with a grumpy frown before gesturing toward Fluttershy's rounded belly.

"Oh...well um...Okay, I *am* a little more delicate right now, but that doesn't mean every situation needs to come down to violence!" Fluttershy huffed, feeling light-headed again and stroked her belly with a hoof, idly. "I wouldn't do anything to put myself or the foals in danger, you know that. I had this under control."

Angel raised an eyebrow, skeptically.

"I *did!*" Fluttershy huffed, stomping her hoof in the dirt. "All I needed was a few more--"

The mare stopped as she felt a slight, faint tickle against the side of her belly. At first, she thought it came from one of the foals, but she quickly realized it came from the outside. Angel froze as well, raising his hackles again as he glared around Fluttershy.

Carefully turning, she watched as the badger, who had apparently approached her while she and Angel were arguing, curiously sniffed and touched its nose to the side of Fluttershy's pregnant belly. She watched silently as the badger carefully touched a paw to her stomach, cocking its head to the side curiously.

"O-Oh! Hello!" Fluttershy said softly, trying not to move much to scare it off. "I'm not going to hurt you, I promi-*HCK!*" At what seemed to be the absolute worst time, one of Fluttershy's twin foals kicked out against the wall of her womb, pushing out a solid bump from inside just above the badger's head. It skittered back a few inches, its hair standing on end again, but seemed to relax more quickly and soon was curiously examining Fluttershy's belly again.

“S-Sorry about that,” the mare smiled bashfully. “That was one of my foals...they’re a little active when I’m hungry.” Fluttershy sighed and drooped her ears before adding, “Even though I’m *always* hungry.”

When the foal kicked again and began turning inside her, the badger didn’t run off again. Instead it stood on its hind legs and sniffed farther up her belly, curiously feeling the movements from inside her.

“I’m uhh...I’m a little bit pregnant right now,” Fluttershy said, blushing. “Although I think that’s a bit obvious at this point.” A soft, high-pitched squeak caught her attention and she glanced up from the badger curiously exploring her rounded belly to the mouth of the den. Out of the darkness beneath the roots, a tiny, pink shape waddled out into the light. It was a newborn badger pup, likely only days old, smaller than peach pit and crying out loudly. A second pup followed it, adding its voice to that of its cranky sibling. As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, Fluttershy could see at least three more inside the den.

“Oh *my*,” she breathed before glancing down at the mother badger. “No *wonder* you couldn’t leave during the storm. I’m happy you all are safe.” Fluttershy giggled and stroked her belly with an affectionate hoof. “I’ll be a new mother, too, before much longer. Maybe you should be giving me advice.”

The mother badger dropped down from Fluttershy’s belly and glanced over her shoulder to her crying, hungry newborns. Before leaving, she glanced up at the pregnant mare with a curious twitch to her nose.

“My house is the biggest tree on the edge of the forest,” Fluttershy explained. “If you ever need somewhere to go, you can come to me. It’ll be...um...” She glanced down at her overfull middle and swallowed. “It’ll be a little *crowded* in a few weeks, but we’ll find room for you if you need it.”

The badger stared up at her and made a pleased little whining sound before turning and shuffling off toward the burrow and disappearing inside with her newborns. Fluttershy sighed and smiled proudly, happy that her pregnancy had come in handy and that she’d been able to share an intimate moment with a new mother of another species. She felt a sharp tug on the low-hanging curl of her mane and glanced down at an impatient Angel.

“*See, Angel?*” She said, feeling a little smug. “That’s what being *compassionate* can get you. The saying is ‘You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar,’ after all.” The rabbit tugged on her mane again and tapped the side of her belly to get her attention. He stomped his foot on the ground and pointed straight up.

“The...the sky?” Fluttershy paused. She turned her head up and winced in the sunlight. “No, the sun...” The mare gasped as she realized the sun’s position on the sky and began struggling up to her hooves. “It’s almost *three*! Oh no, oh no, oh no, I don’t think I can get back in time! We’re going to be late!” Fluttershy paused only for a moment to drain the water from her canteen before quickly galloping off into the underbrush. Of course, her ‘gallop’ was more of an awkward hobble beneath the weight of her twin-heavy belly.

“*Oh no...oh dear...oh...oh gosh...*” Fluttershy panted under her breath as she stumbled clumsily through the underbrush and back onto the old path. Her legs were weak and sore beneath her as every hoof-beat on the ground caused her muscles to jolt with pain. Even with as much effort as she was exerting, she wasn’t moving much faster than a normal, non-pregnant trot. Her belly rocked and bounced underneath her as she moved and rubbed uncomfortably against the insides of her back legs. Fluttershy could feel her twins protesting inside her, but didn’t have time to stop and calm them.

Angel, meanwhile, was hopping beside her at a leisurely pace, barely enough to break a sweat. A few times, he stopped completely on the path to scratch behind his ear or sniff something in the grass before quickly catching back up to the panting, ambling Fluttershy.

When she nearly stumbled and fell into the dirt, the pregnant mare slowed to a stop to catch her breath, still a long way from home. She winced as a hard kick poked her in the ribs and she used her

left hoof to reach back and stroke where the foal was sitting in her belly. Angel skittered toward her with a concerned look on his face.

“Angel...I don’t think I can make it...by three o’clock,” Fluttershy gasped, her belly heaving as she tried to catch her breath. “Please...please run ahead and tell her I’m going to be late. Can you do that for me?”

Angel cocked his head to the side in confusion and shrugged.

“She works with animals all the time, I’m sure you can make her understand,” Fluttershy said, smiling encouragingly. She flinched again at another kick to her ribs, at which Angel glanced worryingly.

“I’ll be fine. I just need to catch my breath,” the pegasus nodded. “Go on ahead, please. I don’t want to miss my appointment.”

Angel hesitated for a moment, rubbing his paws together while anxiously looking up at Fluttershy’s near-term baby bump, then furrowed his brow and nodded in determination before speeding off down the path and speeds even Rainbow Dash would be proud of.

Fluttershy sighed, glad she’d bought herself time to catch her breath. As long as she could just put one hoof in front of the other, she’d get home eventually. The mare smacked her lips and sighed, wishing she hadn’t finished all the water in her canteen so quickly. Her legs still felt like jelly underneath her, but she clenched her teeth and forced herself to continue at a slow canter, at least until her lungs stopped burning.

But even that was too much for her. She’d underestimated just how much energy her pregnancy was taking out of her. Just a few months before, she’d been able to make day trips into the forest a couple times a week, but she was forced to admit she was just too far along to be up and active in the same way. Maybe with only one foal she could have handled it, but not while she carried twins. Fluttershy sighed at the admission, but knew it was the best thing to do for the sake of her babies. The animals could handle themselves for a while.

Her spindly legs weak and exhausted, Fluttershy had no choice but to use her last resort. With the last of her strength, she galloped forward a few feet, picking up at least a little speed, before spreading her wings and taking to the air. A flurry of wing beats barely kept her heavy body off the ground, but once she’d risen above the trees, she was able to catch an updraft and glide. Unlike her legs, her wings were well-rested, but she knew they wouldn’t stay that way for long. Maybe a stronger flier like Rainbow Dash could still keep to the air at full-term, but Fluttershy simply didn’t have the endurance, especially not with the heavier twins in her belly. Still, she could keep herself up and moving faster than her legs could muster.

While making good use of updrafts to save her strength, Fluttershy had reached the edge of the forest and could see her home on the horizon before she was forced to land. Thankfully, the slight rest her legs had gotten was enough to carry her the rest of the way home at a slow trot. Rounding the side of her house, she spotted Angel sitting on a stump next to the front door. At her arrival, he perked his ears up and sighed in relief.

“I...I made it...” Fluttershy panted. She glanced through her window, but found the living room dark and empty. “Oh no...did she leave? Was I too late?”

Angel shook his head.

“Then...then is she here? Is she in the back?”

Angel shook his head again and threw his arms out in exasperation.

“Oh...so she’s...late...” Fluttershy blinked, before sighing dejectedly and hobbling toward the door. “Well...um...maybe she got caught up with something. I’m sure it...” She was too tired to come up with an excuse and simply pushed her door open. As she walked inside, she felt the bulging sides of her middle brush against both sides of the door frame, a daily reminder of just how enormously pregnant she was.

The first thing Fluttershy did was stumble toward the couch and flop onto her side. Getting off

her hooves felt nothing short of euphoric and she was happy to be back home and resting. The weight of her belly settled down on the couch and she finally felt like her back wasn't about to snap in half. She heard the door close and looked up, but couldn't see around the yellow globe of her foal belly. She watched the white blur of Angel as he darted from the door into the kitchen, but couldn't crane her neck far enough to see what he was up to. The moment she flopped her head onto a pillow, the rabbit reappeared next to the couch with a glass of ice water and a curly straw just long enough to nearly poke her in the eye.

"Oh Angel..." Fluttershy smiled, gently nuzzling the little bunny. She drank to her fill, nearly sucking down the entire glass with one gulp, and sighed in relief as the icy cold water ran down her throat. She felt a gentle nudge from her belly and glanced down just in time to see the bulge of a tiny hoof push out from her round middle. Smiling, she pressed her own hoof to the spot and felt the foal poke her back, as if giving her a hoof-bump from inside the womb.

Another kick from the other foal and the gurgling of her own stomach made her realize just how hungry she was. It had been only an hour or two since she'd eaten lunch, but the twins took so much energy from her that she was forced to eat five or six meals a day just to keep up her strength. Fortunately, the water and a little rest had helped and gave Fluttershy enough energy to awkwardly roll her pregnant body from the couch and waddle toward the kitchen.

On her way to the pantry to retrieve the bundle of carrots she had left, she caught sight of a small box on the counter that hadn't been there when she left. On top of it was a note, tied beneath a knot of twine. Fluttershy pulled the knot free with her teeth and watched the box fall open to reveal an enormous, superbly-decorated carrot-cake cupcake, topped with a pair of pacifiers, one blue and one pink. It sat on top of a book, but Fluttershy turned to the note first.

*HEY FLUTTERSHEY!*

*MRS. CAKE WAS SORRY SHE MISSED YOUR FOAL SHOWER AND WANTED YOU TO HAVE THIS BOOK SINCE YOU'RE THE ONE HAVING TWINSIES. I MADE THE CUPCAKE BECAUSE EVERY PRESENT IS BETTER WITH A CUPCAKE. WE GOTTA GET TOGETHER AND PARTY ONE LAST TIME BEFORE WE HAVE OUR BABIES LOVE PINKIE PIE*

Beneath the note was a pink crayon drawing of a very round Pinkie shaking a pair of pom-poms in the air with a smaller pony drawn inside of her, also waving pom-poms. Fluttershy smiled warmly and slid the note to the side while reminding herself to pin it up to the wall later on. Beneath the cupcake was an old, worn book with a picture of two foals titled *Double Trouble: An Equestrian Mother's Guide to Raising Twins*. The inside was filled with notes and scraps of paper with Mrs. Cake's writing all over it and was clearly a well-loved book. Fluttershy set it next to the note with full intention to pour over it later before hungrily staring down the cupcake.

The mare licked her lips, her wings twitching excitedly, as she peeled away the wrapping around the base, catching a whiff of the sweet scent of carrot cake. She carefully took off the pacifiers and set them aside before, carefully placing a napkin below her on the counter and finally taking a slow, savoring bite.

"*Salutaaaaaations, fellow life-giver!*"

Fluttershy gasped and nearly choked on carrot cake as she jumped to the side. Standing only inches away from her was Tree Hugger, her eyes half-lidded and relaxed with a padded mat tied to her back. Just between her legs was a slight bulge of her own; Tree Hugger's pregnancy was a respectable size on its own, but next to Fluttershy's full-term, twin-heavy belly, she looked practically malnourished.

"*Oh! T-Tree Hugger!*" the pegasus gasped, using her wings to catch her balance before she toppled over to the kitchen floor. "You're here!"

"I'm here!" she said, smiling gently. Tree Hugger always seemed like she was somewhere far away outside herself, but it was that ethereal quality that made Fluttershy so interested in her. The spacy earth mare glanced up at the ceiling, prompting Fluttershy to follow her gaze. "I've been here for a few hours, actually. Up in your attic. I hope you don't mind."

"Y-You have?" Fluttershy blinked, glancing at Angel over Tree Hugger's shoulder, who just shrugged in response.

"Yeeaaaahhh. I just felt something really *spiritual* up there near the branches, you know?" She sighed and touched a hoof to her own belly. "It's how I know the foal is gonna be a pegasus, you know? He feels *connected* with the *air*. I just *had* to get up there and *vibe* with all those *energies*."

"Oh...well," Fluttershy raised an eyebrow as she cocked her head at Tree Hugger. "I guess it is a nice attic...for, um...storing things."

"*I know*," Tree Hugger sighed, whipping her tail and closing her eyes. "Storing the *reserves* of your *energy*. Where the flow of *nature* climbs *up* from the earth and touches the *sky*." She took a deep breath, held it in, then sighed. Tree Hugger sauntered next to Fluttershy and leaned over to rest her head against the pegasus' bulging stomach. "Your foals are lucky to be living in such a spiritual place."

"Well, my husband is building us a new house closer to town," Fluttershy remarked as she felt the other pony hum gently against her belly. "But we're going to keep this one, too."

"Have you thought about giving birth here?" Tree Hugger said. "I think the energy flow would be good for labor."

"Uhm...I uhh... I don't..." Fluttershy felt her heart skip a beat at the thought of giving birth at home instead of at the hospital. The thought of labor drawing ever-closer was already enough to make her nervous by itself. "I haven't really thought about it, actually..."

"I'll be doing a water-birth at home with my entire crystal collection and a throat-singing band," Tree Hugger said. "My life-partner is going to see about convincing the weather team to make it rain on our house when I go into labor." She backed away from Fluttershy's belly and made an odd, fluid movement that looked partially like a dance move and partially like a martial art. "I can smell the incense already..."

"I think we might just go to the hospital when...when *it* happens," Fluttershy said. "Twins make it so much more complicated."

"Well...if you think that's best," Tree Hugger said, looking slightly disappointed. "At least burn some sage to cleanse the delivery room, okay?"

"Oh absolutely," Fluttershy nodded. "I'll make sure the room is *perfectly* sanitary...But what does *sage* have to do with it?"

Tree Hugger had closed her eyes and was trotting across the living room, making more humming sounds in her throat, as if looking for something. Her belly sat high, near her ribs, and gave her entire torso a pleasantly rounded shape. Fluttershy glanced back at her own lumpy, bulging pregnancy and sighed self-consciously as she uncomfortably waddled after Tree Hugger.

The earth pony rounded the living room while hugging the wall and humming deep in her throat. Fluttershy blinked curiously at her, not sure what Tree Hugger was doing, but not wanting to interrupt it, either. Eventually, she stopped pacing the room and extended a hoof out towards a spot toward the middle. Tree Hugger hopped forward, her eyes still clenched shut, before she firmly brought her hoof down on a spot in the middle of the room.

"*Here*," she announced with finality before sitting on the floor with her belly poking out slightly from between her legs. "*This* is where the energy flow of the room intersects with itself." She used her teeth to pull on the string tying the bundle to her back before unrolling the yoga mat with a whipping motion and letting it settle to the ground. Wrapped inside the mat was a small, portable stereo and an old cassette tape.

"Sit right here, Fluttershy," Tree Hugger said as she motioned to a spot across from the yoga mat. She picked up the cassette in her teeth before carrying it to an old outlet across the room, with

plug dragging across the floor behind her. Fluttershy frowned at the yoga mat and tried to think of something to substitute one for herself. Waddling to the bedding closet just before the stairs, she jerked an extra blanket out from a lower shelf and dragged it to the middle of the room before awkwardly sitting down on it. It was impossible to get totally comfortable, but the best she could do was lean back slightly to keep extra strain from her back and let her belly bulge out between her legs and to her sides. One of the twins squirmed uncomfortably and she sighed while touching a hoof to her stomach.

“Wow,” Tree Hugger sighed as she came back from plugging in the stereo. The sound of water and wind chimes played gently from the speakers. “You look *amazing*, Fluttershy.”

“You think so?” the pegasus blushed, glancing aside bashfully as her mane fell over her face. She shifted, grunting slightly under the weight of her belly. “I think I look a little ridiculous, actually...”

“Why? You’re, like, so *blossoming* with new lives, you know?” Tree Hugger sighed as she settled down on the yoga mat and tapped her hooves together. “You’re like...*in bloom*.”

“You mean like a flower?” Fluttershy paused, stroking her belly. “That sounds nice, actually...”

“*Yeeaaaahh*,” Tree Hugger nodded as she gestured to her own baby belly. “We’re, like, extensions of the great Mother Earth, you know? We’re experiencing a *transformation* from what we *were* into something *new*.”

“Uhm,” Fluttershy swallowed and cocked her head to the side. “Then what are we becoming?”

“*Life-givers!*” the earth pony sighed, closing her eyes as she stroked her bump. “Cradles of *Life*, you know? *Mothers*.”

“Oh. Well, um, I guess you’re right,” Fluttershy said before changing the subject to something she understood. “So, um, Rarity was the one that told me about these maternity yoga classes, but I didn’t know it was *you* that taught them.”

“Oh yeah, I’ve *totally* been a yogi for a few years now,” Tree Hugger said as she tossed her dreadlocks out of her face. She touched her hooves to her belly and lovingly stroked it. “But I had to learn a few things after I got pregnant, you know? It’s, like, a *totally* different experience to do yoga when you’re carrying, you know?”

“Oh I can imagine,” Fluttershy nodded. “It’s already hard enough to *move* now that I’m so far along.” She felt a sudden jab from one of the twins before she giggled and glanced down at her stomach. “Not that I really *mind* as long as the foals are healthy, but still...”

“It’s a magical experience to really *experience* your pregnancy through yoga and the way your body *moves* during this transitional state of being.” Tree Hugger took a deep breath and tapped her hooves together with a soft *clop*. “Shall we get started?”

Fluttershy nodded and put her hooves together in the same way.

“First, we *breathe*,” Tree Hugger sighed, closing her eyes as she inhaled deeply through her nose, held it for a few seconds, then quickly exhaled through her mouth. “Just like that.”

Fluttershy nodded, then shut her eyes and inhaled the same way, feeling her chest expand. However, the pressure her heavy womb was putting on her lungs made her breath more shallow than she was used to. When she exhaled, one of the foals swiftly kicked straight up toward her diaphragm and made Fluttershy hiccup violently.

“*Oh!*” She jumped, startling herself with the unexpected sound. “S-Sorry. One of the babies is being cranky.”

“That’s alright,” Tree Hugger nodded, touching her own belly. “I can feel the stirrings of my own foal, too. *Experience* it. Be in the *moment*. *Embrace* the feeling of your children interacting with the world from within the womb.”

“O-Okay,” Fluttershy nodded with a slight wince, as she was currently experiencing a hoof jabbing uncomfortably into her ribs.

Tree Hugger led Fluttershy through gentle breathing exercises that were surprisingly effective, filling her with a sense of calm and tranquility she usually didn’t experience until she was in bed and



about to fall asleep. It made her head feel dizzy, likely from the sudden change in the amount of oxygen flowing into her squished lungs, but Fluttershy slowly adjusted to the sensation.

“Alright,” Tree Hugger said in an airy, placid voice. She still had her eyes shut when Fluttershy peeked through her squinted lids. “Now, hold a deep breath, then reach as far out as you can and plant your front hooves firmly on the ground in front of you. Then exhale.” She demonstrated, keeping her back legs on the ground while stretching forward to the edge of her yoga mat and placing her hooves on the ground. Her rounded belly just barely touched the mat beneath her, Fluttershy noticed.

*Oh boy*, Fluttershy thought as she swallowed anxiously. She hesitated a moment, then took a few breaths before holding one and reaching forward. The muscles around her lower back stretched as she did, but not in an unpleasant way. But just as her hooves were a few inches above the ground, Fluttershy winced at an uncomfortable pressure against her belly and found that she was too big to reach any farther, her gravid stomach pressed against the ground.

“Oh...um...” Fluttershy mumbled as she shuffled her wings and tried to stretch over her belly. Tree Hugger peeked through one eye and glanced down at her friend’s predicament.

“Oh yeahhhhh,” she said. “I guess you might be a little *too* big for this one.”

“I think you’re right,” Fluttershy sighed as she sat back and bashfully stroked her overly full belly. “Sorry...”

“Why would you need to be sorry, ‘Shy?” Tree Hugger giggled as she effortlessly leaned back to her sitting position. Even with her own pregnancy to deal with, the mare had a remarkable degree of control over her body, something Fluttershy envied. Even before she was so far along, the pegasus often stumbled over her shifting center of gravity and frequently felt at odds with her own growing body. At full-term, Fluttershy felt more like a sack of potatoes on stilts than a pony.

“Let’s try this,” Tree Hugger said as she stood up. She extended her front-right leg and back-left leg as far out as they would go and balanced on her two remaining legs. “Can you hold this?”

“I can try,” Fluttershy nodded eagerly. She grunted slightly as she wobbled awkwardly to her hooves, feeling the twins shift and re-settle below her. She extended her wings for balance and carefully lifted her two legs from the ground to mirror Tree Hugger’s pose. Surprisingly, she found it easier to maintain than she expected and slowly stretched her legs out to their full distance. “I-I think I can do this one!” Fluttershy breathed excitedly as she wobbled slightly, but kept her balance.

“Awesome,” Tree Hugger said, nodding approvingly. She held the position effortlessly, barely wobbling an inch. “How does it feel?”

“Good...I think,” Fluttershy said, tilting her wings up and down to keep herself steady. “I like how it’s stretching my thighs.”

“Hold it for a few more seconds, then we’ll switch,” Tree Hugger said. Fluttershy nodded and bit her lip to concentrate and keep herself upright. As her instructor lowered her legs to the mat and lifted the other two, Fluttershy did the same.

“I think I’ve got it!” she exclaimed excitedly. Her happy grin became an uncomfortable grimace as one of the twins began awkwardly turning over in her womb. The foal pressed their hooves against the wall of their mother’s belly and the twins both shifted to the right side of Fluttershy’s uterus.

“Oh,” she said, wobbling uneasily as the weight of the twin foals made her dip to her right side. “Oh no, hold on.” She grunted and flapped her wings while trying to keep herself up, but the balance had shifted too far and she stumbled off her makeshift yoga mat. “Dang...” Fluttershy blushed at Tree Hugger before adding, “That...um...the twins were moving, that time.”

“No worries, ‘Shy.” Tree Hugger smiled as she lowered her hooves to the ground.

“Let me try again,” Fluttershy said as she hobbled back to her mat and tried to take the position again. She quickly realized that the even distribution of the twin foals in her belly had been essential to keeping her balance. With both of them shifted to the side, her own weight wasn’t enough of a counterbalance. Fluttershy huffed and kicked a hoof at the ground. “I’ll try again later when the babies are cooperating.”

“They have free spirits,” Tree Hugger nodded sagely. “I can tell.”

“Free spirits,” Fluttershy said as she felt another jab from her belly, “and big hooves like their father.”

“So like, who *is* your life partner?” Tree Hugger asked. “I don’t know if you’ve ever said.”

“He’ll be back later today,” Fluttershy said as she sat back on the ground and rested one leg over her round belly. “I don’t know if you two have met yet!”

“Cool, cool,” Tree Hugger smiled as she sat on her mat. She tapped a hoof to her chin as she pondered over the obstacle that was Fluttershy’s baby belly. “So let’s try something else.” The mare shifted to her right side, her own comparatively small belly resting on the ground, and raised her left legs high above her. Fluttershy nodded and flopped onto her side far less elegantly. Her protruding middle extended to the edge of her mat, but at least she could copy Tree Hugger’s position.

“Far out,” Tree Hugger smiled. “Okay, now exhale, and follow me.” Tree Hugger let out a long breath, then twisted her upper body until her chest, neck, and head were facing straight up. Fluttershy took a few extra breaths before pushing the air out of her lungs and doing the same thing. For once, her belly wasn’t impeding her movement much and the stretch to her shoulders and neck felt satisfying, but she wasn’t able to breathe at all while holding the form. Fluttershy was forced to turn back to the side each time she needed to take a breath, but would then quickly turn back and hold the position. She was desperate to find *something* she could do in her heavily pregnant state so that Tree Hugger wasn’t simply wasting her time.

“We can switch if you need to, ‘Shy,” Tree Hugger offered after the fifth time Fluttershy flopped to her side to gasp for breath.

“May...*hhaah*...maybe that’s a good...*hhaahhh*...idea,” Fluttershy breathed.

“Try this,” Tree Hugger said. She rolled onto her back and tossed her dreadlocks out of her face. She crossed her front and back legs over each other and stretched her body out from end-to-end of the mat, arcing her back beneath her and creating a small gap between her spine and the floor. Her belly was pulled taut and formed a gentle curve in the air before Tree Hugger gasped just as Fluttershy noticed a small, firm bump push out from inside it. “My bad, little starchild,” Tree Hugger said to her belly. “He doesn’t like this one so much.”

“I’ll give it a shot,” Fluttershy nodded. She bit her tongue in concentration as she rocked onto her back and stared up at the wooden ceiling of her living room. The weight of her gravid belly pressed down on her uncomfortably, but she was at least able to breathe. Fluttershy kicked her legs impotently in the air and glanced down to find she, unsurprisingly, couldn’t see her hooves below the yellow eclipse of her stomach. She tossed her mane out of her face and crossed both sets of legs together, then stretched them out as far as she could reach. The form pulled on her belly as it had Tree Hugger’s, but the twins already took up so much space that they didn’t seem to notice. Once she was fully extended, her belly protruding high into the air, Fluttershy attempted to arc her back like Tree Hugger had demonstrated.

“*Oh!*” she gasped in surprise as she felt a sudden *pop* in her upper back, between her shoulder blades. A sore spot that had been bothering her all afternoon sudden faded, leaving a dull throbbing in its place. “Something popped!”

“Popped?” Tree Hugger asked urgently, her normally dreamy voice suddenly growing serious. “Where? Does it hurt?”

“Upper back, but it doesn’t hurt,” Fluttershy said, wiggling on her back slightly and grimacing at the strain. “It feels a little good, actually. I think I just popped something back *in*.”

“Oh, right on,” Tree Hugger sighed, seeming relieved. “That can happen sometimes.”

Before she could respond, Fluttershy’s ears twitched at the wooden sound of her front door opening on its rusted hinges, followed by the creak of familiar, heavy hooves on the floorboards.

“Oh, hey dude,” Tree Hugger said, taken off guard by the sudden visitor.

“Sweetie! Is that you?” Fluttershy called out. She tried to flip to the side and glance around her

belly, she found she was stuck on her back. She kicked and struggled to turn over, but she was stuck on the floor like a turtle. “Um...c-could you help me up, please?”

Fluttershy heard a deep, masculine chuckle before a familiar voice answered, “Eeyup.”

Her husband’s hooves creaked heavily on the wooden floor and she felt a powerful, but gentle leg push Fluttershy onto her side far enough that she was able to wedge her spindly legs beneath her heavily pregnant body and push herself upright. She wobbled for a moment as the blood rushed from her head and she readjusted to her pregnant weight, but the tall stallion stepped closer for her to lean on while she regained her balance. She glanced up into Big Macintosh’s expressive green eyes and lovingly nuzzled her head against his neck while draping her wing across his back.

“This is my husband, Big Mac,” Fluttershy said, introducing him to Tree Hugger. The quiet stallion smiled and simply nodded in her direction. “Mac, this is Tree Hugger, my yoga instructor.” She hesitated and added, “Well, sort of.”

“Peace,” Tree Hugger nodded. She paused, then glanced between the huge, bulky workhorse and Fluttershy’s belly, where his twin foals were nestled. “I guess your uhhh...your size kinda makes sense now.”

“Oh, I’m well aware,” Fluttershy beamed proudly, nestling closer to her Big Mac. She felt the twins shift and jab out in her belly as Big Mac glanced down at the movement and smiled contentedly at her. “They’re happy you’re home.”

“Eeyup,” the agreed the proud father as he leaned down and pressed an ear to Fluttershy’s belly to listen for his foals.

“We still have more time, don’t we?” Fluttershy asked Tree Hugger as Big Mac nuzzled against her stomach. “Would you mind if he joined us?”

“No worries,” Tree Hugger shrugged. “The more the merrier. Good vibes all around.”

Big Mac, meanwhile, quickly stood up with a confused frown on his face and his ears pinned back before glancing nervously at Fluttershy.

“Don’t you want to try yoga?” she asked him, eagerly. “It’s fun!” She paused and shifted. “Well, it’s probably more fun when you can actually *move*.”

Big Mac glanced between his wife and Tree Hugger before anxiously shaking his head.

“Uhhh...Nope,” he said, backing away toward the couch.

“Suit yourself, then,” Fluttershy shrugged. She kissed his neck before waddling back to her mat and carefully flopping back on her side, but turned so she could still see her husband from around her belly, heavy and rounded with his foals inside her.

“Can we try that last one again?” She asked Tree Hugger, one hoof stroking her belly idly. “I think I almost had it.”