

Feathered Friends are Never Forgotten

By Mr_M7

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Dedicated to those who lost their lives on September 11 2001, and, most importantly, to those who were left behind.

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Chapter 1 - Feathered Friends are Never Forgotten

2

1 - Feathered Friends are Never Forgotten

A MLP:FiM Fan fiction

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Owlowiscious was not well. Spike had been the first to notice the bird acting sluggish. "Well, well, well!" Spike had taunted, "Looks like looks like somebody just can't take the heat!" At first Twilight had simply attributed it to Spike's ego playing tricks on him. But over time Twilight did notice that the faithful and diligent bird was slaking on a few things; a misplaced book here, a lost inkpot there, nothing too drastic. But as weeks went on Spike's taunts at Owlowiscious' slackened pace turned to pleas to see the bird get better.

The real trouble began when they were helping organize Twilight's desk. Though the purple pony had a keen eye for organization, her study habits were best described as a tornado, wrapped in a hurricane and shoved in a blender, and her desk always got the worst of it. Spike was sorting and organizing Twilight's notes, while Owlowiscious set about restocking the quills and ink. The bird took yet another rest on his nearby perch while he fought to keep his eyes open.

"C'mon, feather brain," he said, his voice betraying him with concern, "you're not going to let me take assistant of the month that easily, are you?"

Owlowiscious's feathers bristled at this as if to say 'good sir, I accept your challenge!' Swooping down, he snatched a bottle of ink to place on the table. But as he fluttered over to the desk with bottle in claw it was as though his wings suddenly gave out and he toppled onto the desk, and rolled off onto the floor. Ink was spilt everywhere and the papers Spike had been working on were ruined.

"Whoa!" Spike leapt back in shock. Then rushed to the owl to roll him on his back, "Hey, buddy' You feeling alright?"

"Spike' Is everything alright' I heard a-" Twilight entered the room, surprised to see her desk looking in a worse state than before. "I thought you two were going to clean up, not make an even bigger mess."

"Uh, Twi'" Spike said, ignoring her comment, "I think there's something wrong with Owlowiscious."

Twilight trotted over to where the owl was lying. He definitely did not look in good shape. Feathers stuck out all around, and ink was smeared on his talons. "Oh, my." She said before turning to Spike, "Spike, I need our most recent edition of Practical Practices of Veterinarians, and after that go get Fluttershy and bring her here, she'll definitely know what to do."

Spike nodded in agreement and quickly set about his tasks. The book was easy enough to find. It was

one that Twilight rarely touched and was therefore still on the shelves. In the short time it took him to find that book, Twilight had made Owlowiscious a small bed or nest out a blanket. Spike glanced at the bird with concern as he handed Twilight the book. As he left to fetch Fluttershy he gave one last look to the owl who was groggily trying to stand. Under his breath he muttered, "You'd better be alright beak-breath."

Fluttershy had come as fast as she could to look at Owlowiscious. As she examined the bird a nervous Spike busied himself with cleaning up the spilled ink while an even more nervous Twilight flipped through the few pages of Practical Practices of Veterinarians that spoke on caring for birds. Twilight made a mental note to order more books on bird health after this, but remained attentive to Fluttershy and Owlowiscious. After what felt like an eternity (but was really only a few minutes) Fluttershy concluded her examination. With Twilight scribbling down every word, she began giving orders on what kind of medicine to give the bird and how to care for him, emphasizing that he needed rest. For the next few days Twilight followed Fluttershy's instructions to the letter, while the pegasus pony made frequent checkup visits.

For a while everything still seemed normal. Twilight still studied, Spike still slept longer than he was supposed to. The only difference was the twice daily regiment for Owlowiscious's medicine. All the other ponies showed their concern for the sick bird. Fluttershy kept up with her visits and often gave the bird kind words of encouragement and praise. Applejack had brought over an obscene amount of food, insisting that all he needed was 'a heaping' helpin' o' good ol' down-home cooking'. Pinkie Pie had thrown a 'Get Well Soon' party which was made all the more impressive when Rainbow Dash moved the clouds in the sky around to create a giant get-well card. Rarity had painstakingly made a fitted pair of pajamas for the bird, complete with nightcap and slippers made to fit his talons. She had insisted it was nothing but it was clear the amount of work that went into that gift. Even Spike had a way of trying to get his rival back on his wings.

"Sleeping on the job again," Spike would say, shaking his head, "Tsk, tsk, tsk. At this rate a certain dragon will be assistant of the month, leaving you behind in the dust."

"Who" Owlowiscious would say back.

"Uh, me. C'mon, I'm the only dragon here."

"Who"

"Me, Spike."

"Who"

"SPIKE. Seriously, we've been roommates how long now"

"Who"

"Fine! I give up! You win!"

"Who"

"You, I said you win!"

"Who"

At this point Spike would glare intently at Owlowiscious, "You're just messing with me now, aren't you"

Owlowiscious would casually turn his head, hooting innocently, "Who"

Then Spike would laugh, and say, "Seriously though, get better soon. I could use some help with these chores."

But then things seemed to happen quickly. One morning Twilight went into the study where Owlowiscious slept to check up on him and administer some medicine. She was shocked to find him not on his perch, as was customary. Instead the bird was lying lifeless on the ground. After carefully placing him in his nest she closed the door and locked it. She sent Spike on some errands while she asked Applejack for help in taking care of the bird. The earth pony was very understanding of Twilight's discomfort of taking care of the body. She brought an apple crate to use as a coffin and wrapped the bird in a clean blanket. When Spike arrived home Twilight broke the news to him as gently as possible, but he still took it hard, insisting that Owlowiscious was just playing a joke. It wasn't until he saw the make-shift casket that he finally accepted it.

Shortly after a small funeral service was held in the backyard. Twilight and her friends laid the bird to rest there. All of the other ponies who attended offered their condolences for the loss. It was a sunny day out, with a slight hint of autumn in the air, not the kind of day for a funeral, Twilight thought. In all her books funerals were always on rainy days, it just...didn't feel right to her.

In the days after that Twilight tried to pretend that everything was alright, that she was just fine. If not for her sake then for Spike's, he needed someone to keep it together and she could tell he was really missing his old rival. But inside, Twilight was screaming. Every time somepony asked how her day was she would tell them it was fine, all the while her mind was pointing out her pain. She silently blamed those other ponies when they just assumed she really was having a fine day, no problems at all. 'What's wrong with them' she thought, 'Can't they see' I'm not fine! Not at all! Why can't somepony see that and fix me!'

To try and dull the pain of her loss she buried herself in her studies, but that was hardly any better. The moment she started reading her mind drifted back to Owlowiscious. Though she just wanted to forget and move on so the pain would stop, she kept up the studying. It always reminded her of her feathered friend but it was better than trying to hide her tears from ponies.

It was during one such study session when she was trying to focus on infinite cube magic theory that a soft knock came to the door. She had sent Spike out on some errands so she threw down 'The Complete Collection of Confounding Conceptual Constructs' and answered the door, expecting somepony to be there wanting to borrow a book. She was a little surprised at just which pony was standing on her porch.

"Fluttershy' What are you doing here"

The yellow pegasus shuffled a hoof on the ground. "Oh, Twilight, ummm." She seemed to be looking for the right words, "can we...talk"

"Oh, gee, now' I don't know Fluttershy, I'm pretty busy." It wasn't a lie; Twilight was far behind in her studies. Of course it wasn't entirely true either; Twilight's studies were self-imposed and she could easily decide to change her schedule to be not busy at all.

"Can we just go for...a walk' Please'" she said in the sweetest tone imaginable and looked Twilight in the eyes. The unicorn was instantly convinced that Fluttershy could probably get the deed to Canterlot Palace put in her name if she asked Celestia in that same innocent tone.

"All right, a quick walk." Twilight consented.

The two walked in silence for a moment until they were on the outskirts of town. Unable to take it anymore Twilight spoke up. "Alright, so, what did you want to talk about"

"Well, I wanted to talk about Owlowiscious." She replied sheepishly.

"I...don't really want to talk about that right now."

"Well," Fluttershy mustered all her fortitude, and stamped a hoof on the ground, "tough! You need to talk about it."

Twilight struggled for the words for a moment. "W-What's there to talk about' You were there for it all."

"Twilight," Fluttershy said in her most caring voice, "you can't keep this all bottled up. You need to come to terms with what happened. You've been neglecting your friends and hiding in your study. It's not healthy."

Bitterness suddenly filled Twilight, "What would you know about this!" she spat accusingly, "you've never lost a friend!"

Fluttershy looked hurt at this comment, but only looked at Twilight with sadness in her eyes. Silently she trotted down the road a little further. She looked at the unicorn again and without another word disappeared into some nearby bushes. Twilight was instantly filled with guilt, "Fluttershy, wait." She went after her, pushing into the same bushes. Coming out on the other side Twilight saw a small clearing with odd little stones set up in an almost grid-like fashion. Fluttershy sat peacefully between two of the stones.

"I have lost friends, Twilight." Fluttershy said, "These are the animals that I couldn't help."

Realization dawned on the unicorn, those rocks in the patterns her head stones. This was a graveyard. "Fluttershy, I-I'm so sorry."

Fluttershy didn't acknowledge Twilight's statement, but got up and move to one of the grave sites. "This was a robin named Carissa that broke her wing. I tried to fix it but she got infected. Every morning she would sing me the most beautiful sang and I'd say, 'Carissa, we're going to have you singing for the

whole world in no time.' And this one was a baby squirrel. I found him after a bad storm. He was so badly bruised and so very scared. I remember he would hang onto me and never wanted to let go and I'd look down at him and smile and he'd look up and smile back." Fluttershy grinned at the memories before turning to Twilight, with seriousness on her face, "Just because our friends are gone does not give us the right to pretend they never existed. It's wrong." Twilight's stomach sank at this, she was trying to pretend Owlwiscious never existed, and now Fluttershy was the one chastising her, Fluttershy of all ponies! "We need to keep in mind what we still have. We still have memories of the good times we had together, and we still have friends with us."

Twilight pawed the ground, unwilling and unable to meet Fluttershy's gaze. After a while she muttered something, "But it hurts."

She felt a hoof raise her head up so she was looking into Fluttershy's eyes. They were not intense and terrifying as she had somehow convinced herself they would be. Instead they were filled with so much love and compassion that it felt as though warmth was flowing from them and hugging her.

"I know." Fluttershy said softly, "and that's part of life. Things will hurt. But you can't let that get in the way of what's really important."

Twilight felt tears running down her cheeks. "What should I do"

Before answering, the pegasus wrapped her hooves around her friend and whispered in her ear. "Help Spike. He's trying so hard to be so grown up about this, but he's still just a baby and he doesn't know how to deal with this. Owlwiscious was his friend too and it confuses and hurts him to see you trying to forget him. He looks up to you, Twilight, and you need to be there for him."

Twilight hugged her friend back, "Thanks Fluttershy, I needed this."

Later that day, when Spike had returned from his errands he found Twilight sitting in her study as usual. The odd thing was that instead of being surrounded by books and notes, she was surrounded by pictures and was gluing them into one big book.

"Ah! Spike! There you are!" She chirped happily as she levitated the dragon next to her. "I need your help with this. I'm making a scrapbook to help remember Owlwiscious, but I can't remember what this picture was all about." She showed him a photo of something very pink that seemed to be trying to hide from the camera behind a stack of books.

"Oh, yeah! I remember this!" Spike chuckled, "This was when he got into Rarity's make-up supplies and accidentally died himself pink! He wouldn't show his face for a week!"

"Yes, I thought that's what that was!" Twilight pulled out another picture, "What about this one"

"Oh yeah! We never told you about that one, did we? Well, it all started when he saw this girl owl in the Everfree forest"

The next morning in Canterlot, Princess Celestia found a letter scroll waiting for her, opening it she read;

Dear Princess Celestia,

Recently I lost a fine assistant and dear, dear friend. At first I was so afraid of the pain of the loss that I tried to pretend that it never happened. Thanks to some kind words from one of my friends I realize I was wrong. Just because a friend is gone it does not mean the friendship is, because we always have our memories. And yes, it hurt to lose that friend, and it will always hurt to lose the ones we care about. But I learned that pain is a part of life and we can't let it get in the way of what's really important; friendship. This experience has taught me to savor the good times and remember them forever. No matter how bad things get, no matter how much we lose there will always be good in the world. Even when we lose those we loved we can always remember the most things; that we loved them and they loved us.

Your faithful student,

Twilight Sparkle.

Then, with a warm smile, Princess Celestia pulled from her bookshelf a scrapbook, one of many she had collected over her many long years as ruler. Tenderly and lovingly she placed that letter next to a photo of Twilight.

"Well done, my faithful student, well done."